



2022 UNESCO-KEDI Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Seminar

Learning Recovery: Saving a Generation of Learners

Concept Note

Background

As if a global learning crisis was not bad enough, mass and prolonged school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic have led to unprecedented disruptions of education and learning for many children, youth and adults in Asia-Pacific and further exacerbated inequalities in education and the pre-existing learning crisis. As of the end of 2021, 60 countries around the world had their schools fully or partially closed, affecting more than 1.6 billion learners in return¹. In Asia-Pacific, more than twenty-seven million children waited more than a year to return to school². In fact, full school closures have lasted for considerably different durations across countries ranging from a few weeks to over a year³. These school closures resulted in an estimated loss of 1.1 trillion hours of in-person learning across Asia-Pacific⁴.

Despite countries' efforts to provide some form of learning continuity through distance learning, the school closures brought significant learning losses for many learners. Learning losses or foregone learning are the results of learners not learning at the level they would have if the schools remained open. The learning losses from COVID-19 are estimated to be equivalent to seven per cent of expected lifetime learning in developing Asia⁵. The consequential effect of learning losses is substantiated by emerging studies that warn of deepening inequalities. In addition, a report jointly published by the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF presented alarming projections for our current generation of students who are at risk of losing \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value or 14 per cent of today's global GDP due to school closures⁶.

¹ UNICEF. (October 5, 2021). Teachers at the heart of education recovery: Joint message from UNSECO, UNICEF and Education International. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/teachers-heart-education-recovery>

² UNICEF and UNESCO. (2022). The future of 800 million children across Asia at risk as their education has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/future-of-800-million-children-across-asia-at-risk>

³ UNESCO. (2022). Global Monitoring Map of School Closures. Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

⁴ UNICEF and UNESCO. (2022). The future of 800 million children across Asia at risk as their education has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/future-of-800-million-children-across-asia-at-risk>

⁵ ADB. (2021). Learning and earning losses from COVID-19 school closures in developing Asia: Special Topic of the Asia Development Outlook 2021.

⁶ The World Bank. (December 6, 2021). Learning losses from COVID-19 could cost this generation of students close to \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/12/06/learning-losses-from-covid-19-could-cost-this-generation-of-students-close-to-17-trillion-in-lifetime-earnings>

Differences in learning losses between and within countries have exacerbated inequalities in learning outcomes. Between countries, some countries reported significant learning losses while others – very few and mostly high-income countries reported no learning losses or even gains⁷. As more regional and international assessment results become available in the coming years, the extent of the learning loss will become clearer. Within countries, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and other vulnerable groups were more affected by disruptions to their education and learning losses. Students from disadvantaged households benefited less than their peers from distance learning due to a lack of internet connectivity, electricity, devices, and caregiver support. Students with disabilities and girls also faced compounding barriers to learning during school closures⁸. An estimated 10.7 million learners in Asia-Pacific are at risk of not returning to community care centers, schools, or universities after the pandemic⁹.

As the pandemic begins to subside, discussions on learning recovery have recently been increasing as countries set-up policies and strategies to re-engage learners in learning and mitigate the learning losses. Internationally, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank are supporting this effort through the development of a learning recovery framework known as the R.A.P.I.D (Reach, Assess, Prioritize, Increase, Develop). Regionally, ministers/deputy ministers from 46 Asia-Pacific countries as well as key education stakeholders endorsed in June 2022 the “[Bangkok Statement 2022: Towards an effective learning recovery for all and transforming education in Asia-Pacific](#)” and committed to urgently taking action to “re-open schools and set up effective learning recovery strategies with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable, to ensure that all learners catch-up on lost learning”. These efforts call upon countries to identify learners who dropped out and ensure a safe return to in-person education for all.

Along with upholding the Bangkok Statement 2022, the Korean government has strived to develop policies and strategies to address learning losses arising from the COVID-19 outbreak while continuing to combat the learning gaps that existed before the crisis. One such policy is the three-step safety net (in-class, in-school, and out-of-school support) to ensure basic academic ability. These include providing customized guidance to prevent learning deficits during classes, supporting student-centered customized programs through the formation of multiple support teams in schools, and enhancing comprehensive support for students with learning deficits due to multiple factors including out-of-school factors¹⁰. After the COVID-19 outbreak, the Korean government has been putting an effort into learning recovery along with the “Comprehensive Plan for Educational Recovery” since its announcement in July 2021. Furthermore, drawing upon comprehensive data and lessons learned, the government has been committed to establishing more equitable, accountable, and resilient education systems to ensure teachers’ and students’ health and emotional and psychosocial well-being in schools as well as out of schools¹¹.

In recognition of the urgency to act and the different contexts and challenges in each country in the Asia-Pacific region, the 2022 UNESCO-KEDI Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on “**Learning recovery: Saving a generation of learners**” will aim to discuss and share the key challenges and opportunities for learning recovery and ideas for what must be done to ensure that we do not lose a generation of learners.

⁷ UNICEF. (2022). Where are we on education recovery? Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/where-are-we-education-recovery>

⁸ The World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF (2021). The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery. Washington D.C., Paris, New York: The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF.

⁹ UNICEF and UNESCO. (2022). The future of 800 million children across Asia at risk as their education has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/future-of-800-million-children-across-asia-at-risk>

¹⁰ For more information, please refer to the website for supporting basic education improvement which is in Korean (<http://www.basics.re.kr/kucu/story/kucu3StepView.do>)

¹¹ Ministry of Education. (2022). 2021 Education in Korea. Retrieved from:

<http://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/viewRenewal.do?boardID=282&boardSeq=91023&lev=0&searchType=null&statusYN=W&page=1&s=english&m=0502&opType=N>

Seminar Overview

Objectives

The seminar aims to:

- Discuss key challenges and efforts for learning recovery and ideas for what must be done to ensure effective learning and mitigation of learning loss
- Share lessons learned from the Asia-Pacific countries on effective learning recovery strategies
- Discuss concrete actions and policy recommendations for consideration of enhancing learning recovery

Format

The seminar is structured as a mixture of presentations and panel discussions. Participants are highly encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences.

Audience

The audience for this seminar will be regional and national level education stakeholders (including policymakers and implementers) and the general public interested in learning recovery.

Language

English will be the main language of the seminar. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in Russian and Thai.

Date and Time

The seminar will be held on 29 September 2022 from 14:00 to 16:50 (Bangkok Time).

Modality

The seminar will be conducted via Zoom.

To register, please click here: <https://bit.ly/UKAPRS22ZoomR> or scan this QR code.



Organizers

The seminar is jointly organized by:

- UNESCO Bangkok, Section for Inclusive Quality Education (ige.bgk@unesco.org)
- Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), Office of International Cooperation (international@kedi.re.kr)

Session Guide

[Session 1] Panel Discussion: Policy responses for learning recovery

This session aims to present and highlight the efforts made by governments and education authorities from different countries around the Asia-Pacific region to ensure safe return to in-person learning for all learners and mitigate the learning losses encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel discussion will highlight challenges and lessons learned in ensuring learning recovery. The panel will also discuss policies and strategies put in place in countries for learning recovery.

[Session 2] Safe return to schools for all learners

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asia-Pacific countries experienced school closures of varying lengths ranging from no closures, a couple of weeks, to over a year. Despite countries' best efforts to ensure learning continuity, school closures had negative impacts on learning and the well-being of many learners, in particular those from low socio-economic backgrounds and vulnerable groups. As countries re-open schools and learning institutions post-COVID, it is important that policies and strategies are put in place to reach all learners and ensure their effective re-enrolment and retention in schools. Countries also implement policies to ensure school safety and promote learners, teachers and other school staff's well-being. This session will present examples of promising practices for ensuring a safe return to school. Presentations will showcase examples of successful programs to re-engage learners, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Presenters will also highlight good practices for promoting health and well-being in schools and learning environments.

[Session 3] Learning recovery approaches and strategies

To recover from learning losses, countries are setting up strategies to identify learning needs and put in place adequate learning recovery strategies. This includes diagnostic assessments, catch-up programs and differentiated learning, as well as adapting the curriculum and the school calendar. This session will explore strategies and practices that have a proven record of addressing learning losses. Presentations will cover effective strategies for diagnosing learning losses using assessment tools and increasing the efficiency of instruction through catch-up learning for students returning to classrooms with very different levels of knowledge and skills.