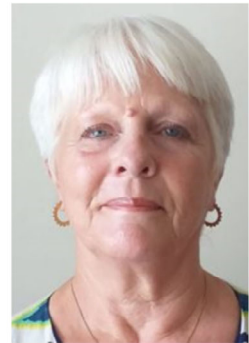


## **Promoting access to education and healthcare for all**

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Hello and welcome to this presentation on Promoting access to education and healthcare for all.

## The impact of COVID -19

- Broader immediate and longer-term effects on the achievements of the SDGs including:



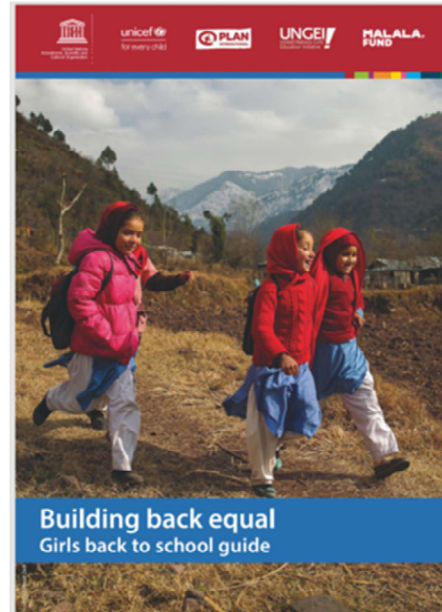
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The unprecedented disruption to education caused by COVID-19 has the potential to roll back substantial gains made on girls' education in recent decades, with broader immediate and longer-term effects on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **Building back equal: Girls back to school guide**

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UNESCO suggests that as schools and education institutions have started to reopen, we should see this as an opportunity not only to 'build back better' but also 'build back equal' and to this end, UNESCO, with the Malala Fund, Plan International, UNGEI and UNICEF has launched its 'Building Back Equal: Girls Back to School' Guide



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The guide considers four dimensions of school closures covering:

- learning;
- health, nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene;
- protection
- teachers

It presents recommendations for each dimension, emphasising an approach to 'build back equal' through gender-responsive measures that transform education systems, prioritise resilience and address the key bottlenecks and barriers to girls' education.



## Learning

"It is better to study from school as I can listen to the teacher and ask the teacher if I do not understand something. Now it is difficult for me to understand some of my school topics. If only I had access to technology, I could ask my teacher directly. In my house, only my Dad has a mobile phone that I can borrow from time to time."

Angel, age 13, Indonesia

An estimated 826 million pupils and students, half the total number of learners, do not have access to a home computer and 43 % (706 million) do not have internet at home

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Around the world, continuity of teaching and learning was supported through alternative delivery methods, which included online learning. For those most marginalised, online learning compounded the existing inequalities in education. Many of these students are girls living in the least developed countries where digital gender gaps are growing fast to girl's and women's disadvantage

Even in contexts with adequate infrastructure and connectivity, girls are less likely to have access to digital devices than boys.

## **Health, nutrition and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)**

"Previously, I would spend my time at school where I received education and training on girls' rights including sexual health and child marriage. Due to the coronavirus, this has stopped and I no longer have access to this support, which kept me informed."

Angela, age 17, Mozambique



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For many girls, schools provide a lifeline, offering vital information and support for their nutrition, menstrual hygiene management and broader psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health needs. Due to COVID-related school closures, roughly 370 million school children are missing out on school meals and other types of health support.



## Protection

"Young people are on the ground creatively responding to the inequalities girls are facing at home during this time. A youth-led network has set up a hotline with qualified individuals for young women and girls to report cases of gender-based violence and to receive counselling services...how are you going to partner with youth networks to ensure that girls return to school?"

Maryam, age 19 Pakistan

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Ensuring protection from physical, psychological and sexual violence remains an essential part of a gender-responsive, safe learning environment. Assuring this in the context of COVID-related school closures is a challenge, particularly when learning has shifted online or through other remote measures.

As schools reopen, governments will need to be prepared to address what children, including girls, may have endured during school closures and the potential impact on their learning and well-being. Support mechanisms and whole school approaches are needed to ensure schools are safe and supportive, with strong policies to prevent and respond to violence in all of its forms. Special attention should be given to girls with disabilities, and girls in settings of fragility, displacement, crisis and conflict, who face additional risks that affect their health and well-being and that have the potential to prevent their continuity of education and return to school.

## Teachers

"I prepare the lesson plans as well as teach my children at home. Sometimes, I talk to the teachers at school and also students through the phone. I ask my students about the lessons and their family's news. I want to know about their activities because if something happened in their family...I would love to help them."

Khankeo, teacher, Lao PDR



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Teachers are the most important in-school factor when it comes to learning, and female teachers have been found to have a positive impact on girls' education, particularly in contexts with rigid gender norms. More than 65 million teachers around the world have been affected by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these teachers are women; nearly 94% of teachers in pre-primary education, while about half of those in upper secondary education, are women. Teachers' roles have been rapidly evolving during school closures to respond to the need to facilitate quality distance learning and provide support to learners in high-stress environments. They have been doing so often with little professional support, training or additional resources and often in contexts where they must also support their own children's learning from home. As schools reopen, governments should support teachers to create a safe, gender responsive and inclusive classroom and school environment, in partnership with school leaders, communities and caregivers. The further recruitment and retention of female teachers is also needed, along with interventions to bridge the gender gap in teaching and school leadership.



## So what can we do to promote building back better and equal?

Soroptimists already undertake Programme Action projects which supports several of the recommendations in the report:

- Support the provision of menstrual health materials and safe disposal or washing of menstrual products in school to reduce girls' absenteeism or drop out during menstruation.
- Use role models and mentors to narrow the gender digital skills divide and increase girls' understanding of, and exposure to technology linked careers.
- Ensure every school has safe, accessible, age responsive and hygienic single sex WASH facilities to ensure safe spaces for female learners and staff, even in remote, fragile and conflict-affected areas.

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So what can we do to promote building back better and equal? Well we already do a lot such as:

- In the UK, Clubs supported the campaign against Period Poverty and worked with organisations such as The Red Box to provide period products to women and girls. The campaign resulted in the government promising to fund the provision of free period products in schools and colleges.
- In India and other parts of the Federation, Clubs have worked to spread awareness of reusable, sustainable menstrual products and to support women in setting up small business making menstruation products.
- Clubs in England have supported organisations such as The Girls' Network, which runs mentor programmes in schools to support girls from low-income communities and provides them with a female mentor to open up opportunities and networks that they otherwise would not have access to.
- Clubs across the Federation run STEM programmes to introduce girls to careers they may not have considered, including the digital world.
- In India, clubs have delivered digital skills workshops enabling young women to keep up with the demands of a technology driven environment.
- Clubs across the Federation have supported projects to provide toilets and safe

washing areas in schools; many by making donations to organisations such as Toilet Twinning.org or by making donations directly to the school in question.

## **What else can we do to promote building back better and equal?**

Use advocacy and lobby governments and campaign for:

- Curriculum reforms
- Stronger social protection systems
- Strengthening of national policies with regard to school meals

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What else can we do to promote building back better and equal?

Use advocacy and lobby governments and campaign for:

- Curriculum reforms that promote gender equality across all subjects and levels of education
- Stronger social protection systems such as cash transfers and nutritional aid to keep girls in school and to motivate families to prioritise their daughter's education despite difficult economic circumstances
- Strengthening of national policies, systems and programmes related to school meals to provide stronger, gender-responsive and resilient systems that are prepared for future shocks and school closures

## SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being

Recommendations for health in the Girls back to school guide:

- Strengthen CSE programmes in both traditional and virtual formats, as part of efforts to ensure girls' retention and broader well-being. Strengthen links between CSE and affordable, youth-friendly and gender responsive services, including access to modern contraception and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) commodities and services.
- Ensure the sustainable application of proven strategies to address the health and nutrition needs for marginalised girls, providing holistic support to their psychosocial, sexual and reproductive health, and nutrition needs

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However, as we have already seen, school closures have not just impacted on girls' education but also their health and well-being (SDG 3) and the report makes several recommendations on how this should be addressed when building back equal.

## Universal health coverage

Universal health coverage means that:

- all people have access to the health services they need,
- when and where they need them,
- without financial hardship.
- It includes the full range of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care.

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In addition to impacting girl's health and well-being, Covid-19 has highlighted huge disparities in the world's health care systems.

The world is falling short on its promise of universal health coverage by 2030 and the pandemic has exacerbated this. Drastic measures are needed to speed up the transformation.

## Shortage of health professionals

- Over 40% of all countries have fewer than 10 medical doctors per 10,000 people;
- Over 55% of countries have fewer than 40 nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 people

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The pandemic is highlighting the existing shortage of health professionals in many countries, particularly in regions with the highest burden of disease. An additional 18 million health workers are needed, primarily in low- and lower-middle-income countries, to achieve universal health coverage by 2030.

Health systems must be urgently strengthened in countries that are at greatest risk, with increased capacity for testing, tracing and treatment. Universal access to treatments and vaccines, when they become available, is essential. The World Health Organization (WHO) is leading and coordinating the global effort, supporting countries to prevent, detect, and respond to the pandemic

## **What can we do to support the target of universal coverage for all by 2030?**

- Support the work of the WHO by making donations to COVID-19 Response Fund
- Lobby governments and campaign
- Continue with our leadership programmes
- Continue with STEM projects

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## **What can we do to support the target of universal coverage for all?**

- Support the work of the WHO by making donations to COVID-19 Response Fund <https://covid19responsefund.org/> to ensure universal access to treatments and vaccines at a reasonable cost, when they become available
- Lobby governments and campaign for universal access to healthcare across the globe.
- Lobby governments and campaign for greater funding for health services to enable more fully

trained doctors, nurses and midwives are trained/recruited, particularly in the low to medium income countries.

- Continue with our leadership programmes to empower more women into leadership roles.
- Continue with STEM projects to encourage girls to consider training as doctors



## Thank you for listening

For further information please refer to:

- [Building back better Girls back to school guide](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020](#)

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Let's transform this crisis into an opportunity to build back equal.

#LearningNeverStops

Thank you for listening