

A photograph of two children, a girl on the left and a boy on the right, both smiling and looking towards the camera. They are wearing school uniforms; the girl is in a purple vest over a light blue shirt, and the boy is in a light blue shirt. They are sitting in front of a textured, reddish-brown wall. A blue banner is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing the title and date.

Approach to support continuing education service during COVID-19

SAARC Disaster Management Centre (IU), Gandhinagar

2nd March 2023

Outline of the Presentation

- Background and how COVID affected Education Sector
- Approach or Framework for Learning Recovery to Education transformation
- Examples of what works or lessons learnt
- Way forward

Disruption in Education and its Consequences

At the peak in April 2020, estimated that pandemic related school closures disrupted education for over 1.6 billion children in 188 countries. Some of the major ways in which the pandemic has affected education are-

School closures

Access to education

Learning loss

Increased Workload on Teachers

Digital Divide

Mental Health

Disruption to academic calendars

Economic impact

LEARNING CRISIS – THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

- Even before COVID-19, the world was facing a learning crisis, with nearly 6 out of every 10 ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries suffering from learning poverty—a measure of children unable to read and understand a simple text.
- COVID-19 pandemic school closures and disruptions have deepened the crisis, sharply increasing learning poverty and exacerbating the inequalities in education.
- If children do not acquire the basics of literacy—together with numeracy and other foundational skills—the futures of hundreds of millions of children around the world, and their societies, are at grave risk.
- Without urgent action to reduce learning poverty, we face a learning and human capital catastrophe.
- There is a narrow window to act decisively to recover and accelerate learning.
- Appropriate core policies and strategies can help recover learning lost to the pandemic and also address the deeper underlying learning crisis
- Moving towards Resilient systems and Education transformation

The Challenge: Learning crisis around the world

Substantial losses in math and reading in several *low-, middle-, and high- income countries*.

Emerging evidence from countries like [Brazil](#), [Italy](#), [Kenya](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Ethiopia](#), and others show the *stark differences in performance between current and pre-pandemic cohorts*.



AFRICA

South Africa: Grade 2 students incurred learning losses equivalent to up to 70% of a year of learning

Malawi: Grade 4 students lost the equivalent to two years of learning



EUROPE

Netherlands: Students lost the equivalent to 20% of a school year

United Kingdom: two months of learning lost in reading, among primary and secondary students.



ASIA

India: 42% of grade 3 students have basic knowledge and skills in language and math.

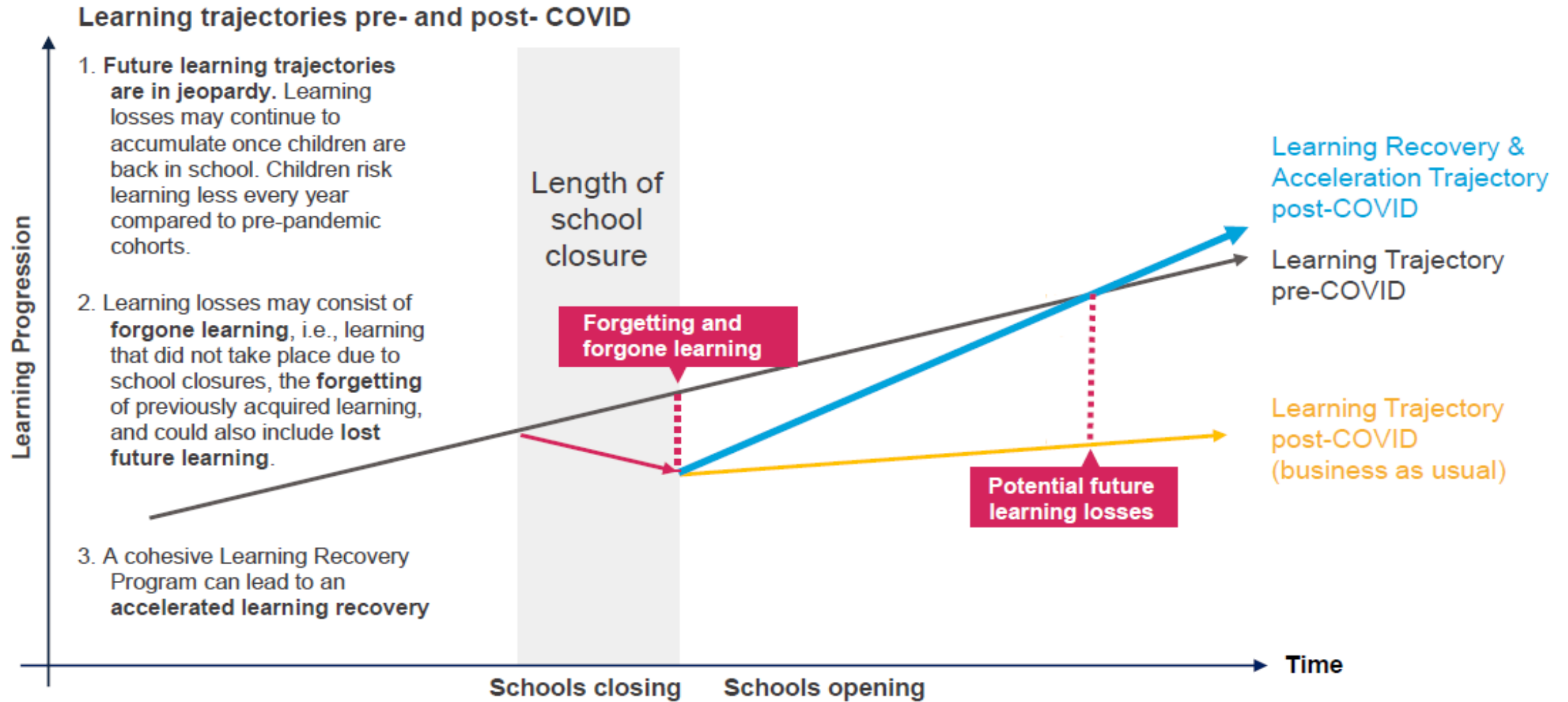
Indonesia: 53 % of children at late primary age are not proficient in reading.



LATIN AMERICA

São Paulo, Brazil: students learned only 28% compared to if face-to-face classes had continued

Future Learning is at risk without action



Framework: Establishing a learning recovery program


Reach every child and keep them in school




Assess learning levels regularly



Prioritize teaching the fundamentals



Increase the efficiency of instruction including through catch-up learning



Develop psychosocial health and wellbeing

Future learning and decades of economic and social gains are at stake: urgent action is needed to ensure this generation of students receives an education that is at least as good as that from past and future generations.

A Rapid Framework for Learning Recovery and Acceleration



- Reopen schools safely and keep them open
- Promote returning to the classroom through back-to-school campaigns
- Provide cash transfers to poor families
- Use early warning systems to identify at risk students

- Assess learning losses at national/sub-national level
- Provide teachers with tools for classroom level measurement

- Adjust curriculum across and within subjects
- Prioritize numeracy, literacy, socioemotional skills
- Focus instruction on closing the gaps between desired and actual student learning in specific subjects

- Use approaches that align instruction with learning needs: targeted instruction; structured pedagogy; tutoring; self-guided learning
- Support teachers continuously: build practical pedagogical and digital skills
- Expand instructional time
- Enhance learning with technology

- Build teachers' capacity to support their students' wellbeing and identify students in need of specialized services
- Support teacher wellbeing and resilience
- Invest in students' safety, nutrition, and access to water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities

- Reopen schools and keeping schools open is a pre-requisite for learning recovery
- Launch back-to-school campaigns to return students to classrooms
- Early warning systems to identify students at risk of dropping out
- Involving parents and communities in children's education
- Consider cash transfer, free schooling and meals to boost school participation

Back to School Campaigns, early warning systems, and family involvement

Re-enrollment Campaign in Ghana

- **Ghana** conducted a successful back-to-school campaign, managing to get nearly 100% re-enrollment.
- **Taskforces** made up of government stakeholders, CSOs, and the media assigned to each district carried out back-to-school campaigns through different means, including radio, TV, and community events.
- Special efforts were made to target girls.

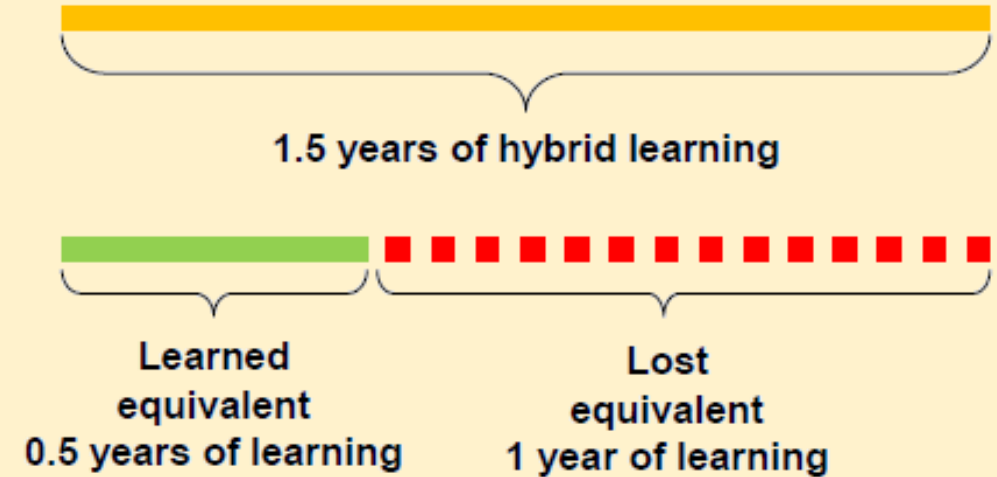
Early Warning Systems in Guatemala

- In **Guatemala**, a **cost-effective early warning system** implemented at scale successfully.
- Reduced drop-outs in the transition from primary to secondary school by 4% for below **US\$3 per student**.
- Components included short training on actionable strategies to prevent drop-out for principals and sixth grade teachers (including information on available scholarships) and the **importance of helping families fill out administrative forms**.
- The program helped school staff identify students at risk by using a simple algorithm to create school-specific lists, and school principals were sent monthly reminders to keep the issue top-of-mind and motivate action.

Assess Learning Levels Regularly

Two main types of assessments for recovery

- **System-level-** Estimating **how much** learning was lost, as well as **what specific content** was lost, can help the country design appropriate learning recovery strategies.
- **Classroom-level-** Diagnostic and formative assessments can help teachers and school leaders adapt teaching plans and pedagogical approaches to best help students learn.



Illustrative Example (*please note actual school closures and learning losses varied widely*):

1. Students missed 1.5 years of regular schooling, which was replaced by hybrid learning
2. Hybrid learning helped mitigate the learning loss, but was less effective than regular schooling, so students only learned the equivalent of, for instance, 0.5 years of learning
3. Students are now 1 year of learning behind as they return to school

National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021

- Largest National Achievement Survey globally
- 3.4 Million Children assessed from grades 3, 5, 8 and 10
- 1,18,274 schools from 720 districts across 37 States and UTs (State Govt., Govt. Aided, Private recognized and Central Govt. schools)
- 5,26,824 teachers and school leaders responded through questionnaires
- 1,82,000 Field investigators and 1,23,00 observers engaged
- 22 regional languages, 15 curricular subjects, 14 test forms
- NAS 2021 was administered on November 12, 2021

Overview of the Foundational Learning Study 2022

- **National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN BHARAT)** launched in July 2021
- All students at the **end of grade 3** to attain foundational skills by the year 2026-2027.
- FLS to provide first-hand understanding of foundational literacy and numeracy skills of students in government and private schools at the **end of grade 3**
- Establish a baseline for NIPUN Bharat mission
- Establish proficiency benchmarks for reading with fluency with comprehension for 20 languages
- Establish proficiency benchmarks for numeracy skills
- India to report on SDG Indicator 4.1.1.

Prioritise Teaching the Fundamentals

- Prioritize foundational learning and prerequisites for future learning, including literacy, numeracy, and socioemotional skills
- Dedicate additional time to the fundamental competencies of foundational learning
- Ensure time spent on foundational literacy follows the science of reading

Prioritise Teaching the Fundamentals

Teaching plans should prioritize foundational skills and conceptual pre-requisites

Skills that are the daily gateway to subsequent learning in an expanding number of subjects and disciplines. These refer to key skills in **reading** and **mathematics**, and increasingly also critical **digital skills** and **socioemotional competencies**.

Antecedents and pre-requisites are content that must be learned prior to learning subsequent content in the learning series.

Determine what is foundational or 'antecedent'.

What does it look like in practice?

Several countries have adjusted their curricula in order to prioritize fundamental skills and knowledge as a learning recovery response during COVID-19.

This involves:

- Rebalancing time allocations to devote more time to foundational skills in literacy and numeracy
- Focusing on key competencies within these focus areas; streamlining duplicate content; integrating topics based on logical connections
- Publishing updated learning objectives and outcomes; and producing updated curricular documents, teacher guides, evaluation criteria, etc.
- Providing schools greater flexibility to adjust teaching plans to their students' needs

India

- **Alternative Academic Calendar-** The week-wise plan consists of interesting activities and challenges, with reference to chapter/theme from the textbook. It was initially developed for 12 weeks and later extended to four more weeks. <https://ncert.nic.in/alternative-academic-calendar.php>
- In Chhattigarh, a unique program called 'Seekh' was introduced, which utilized the community resources to provide joyful learning opportunities while schools were closed.
- In Maharashtra, a Reading Campaign Goshticha Shanivar, which can be translated as 'Story Saturdays' was launched which aimed at encouraging the joy of reading and language acquisition among children and was successful in reaching over 2.5 million children.
- In Jammu & Kashmir, a home-based learning (HBL) module called Anganshala ('home-based') was developed that delivered a tailored learning package to pre-primary age groups (3-6 yrs.)

Increase the Efficiency of Instruction, including through catch-up Learning

- Employ evidence-based pedagogical approaches like structured pedagogy or targeted instruction for all students
- Consider small-group tutoring and self-guided learning for prioritized students
- Expand instructional time
- Support teachers instructionally, technologically, and in terms of resilience

Increase the Efficiency of Instruction, including through catch-up Learning

Country Highlights

Brazil: is scaling a learning recovery program that provides targeted instruction to groups of students with similar learning needs, during four, two-week periods in the school day.

Jordan: delivered hybrid home learning packages to children in grades 4-9 with cross-curricular material to help them review and practice key concepts at their own pace during school closures. After school reopening, they continue to be used as an instrument for learning recovery.

Mozambique: is strengthening learning readiness through an early-grade literacy program that provides scripted lesson plans, teacher training and coaching, and frequent assessment.

Develop Psychosocial Health and Wellbeing

- Build the capacity of the teaching workforce to deliver support to students, while addressing teachers' own mental health and wellbeing

- Prioritize communication, including community messaging about COVID-19 and mental health

- Ensure equitable coverage of school-based feeding & nutrition programs and water, sanitary, and hygiene (WASH) facilities

- Promote student safety in schools and at home

Develop Psychosocial Health and Wellbeing

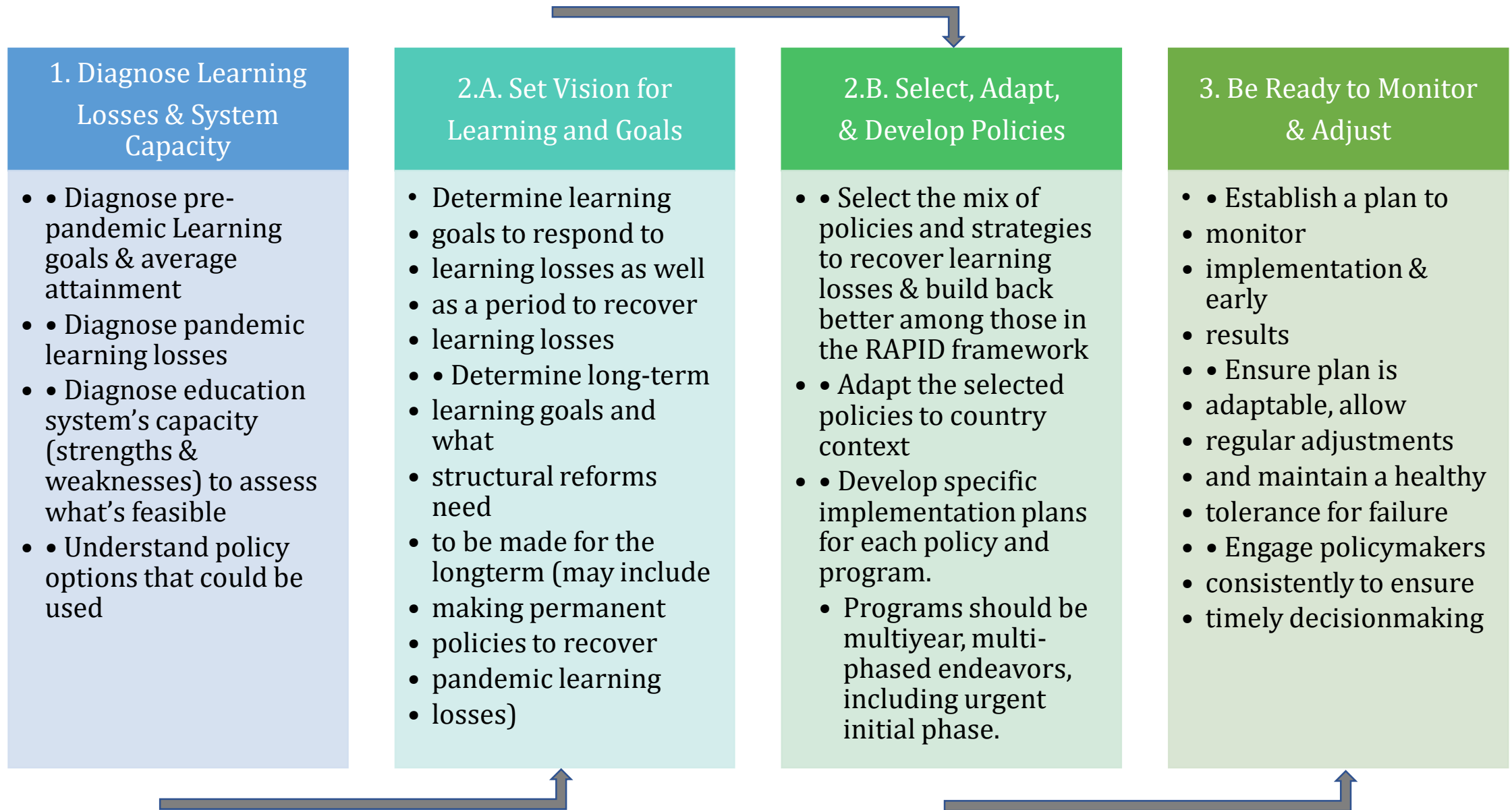
Dominican Republic: the government implemented a two-week psychological recovery program (developed by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and USAID) during the first days of in-person instruction following school closures during COVID-19.

Costa Rica: the Ministry of Education ensured continuity of its school feeding program during school closures by establishing collection sites where food baskets could be collected by family members.

Nagaland, India: a World Bank-supported project will address school-related gender-based violence through development of education information systems that collect gender-disaggregated data; state-wide protocols for confidential reporting of incidents; and capacity-building and engagement of teachers, parents and the wider community.

Kyrgyz Republic: the country has rehabilitated water supply systems and installed handwashing and sanitation facilities in schools, and has trained teachers on sanitary hygiene practices.

Steps to Establishing multi-year plans for Recovering Learning and Building back better



Steps 2.A. and 2.B. are iterative: As one selects, adapts and develops policies it may be necessary to go back and readjust learning goals.

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Way forward and discussions

- Strengthening resilient systems
- Education sectors analysis with risk informed programming
- Quality with equity and Scale up of interventions
- Reaching every child
- Inter-ministerial convergence and collaborations
- Partnerships with agencies and private sector
- Way forward

Thanks

Some of the UNICEF supported interventions across the globe

unicef  for every child

reimagine education



We urgently need to reimagine education. A modern education should build and accredit basic skills – reading, writing and math – as well as skills in problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking that young people need for life, work, sustainability and engaging productively in their communities. The availability and potential of technology means that **digital learning should be part of a basic basket of essential services** for every child and young person.

Learnings from key broad EdTech initiatives from across the countries

- **Policy:** New policies (New Edtech plans, vision documents, Strategic plans for digital education, one stop portals, Master plan)
- **Platforms:** Continuous education through Learning/Digital platforms (Learning passport and UNiLearn), APPs
- **Skill Development:** Capacity Building of teachers on developing e content, STEM, digital libraries, AI, MR
- **Connectivity:** School internet connectivity and mapping (Project GIGA)
- **Inclusive:** Inclusive Education by developing Assistive Digital Textbooks (ADT) and Assistive Technology for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Sri Lanka

Diagnostic learning assessment, curriculum adjustment and prioritization of learning competencies, teacher training and orientation for parents and differentiated teaching. UNICEF distributed 320,000 education materials and trained 7,600 teachers.

Maldives

- Monitoring attendance through MEMIS, primary level formative assessments, remedial education, and literacy enhancement programme in most of schools.
- Implementation of national strategy on literacy and mathematics, formative assessment, social emotional learning, parental programme, MHPSS, and ASE.

Afghanistan

The context is very different from other countries in the region. No government counter-part on learning assessment or education planning. Estimated 9 out of 10 children in Afghanistan can not read.

UNICEF visited all schools, collected EMIS data and conducted few strategic assessments to understand the current status. UNICEF supports 20,000 CBEs –there are more CBEs than public schools.

Continuous challenge on girls' education- UNICEF is exploring possibilities of distance/remote learning.

ECE is not possible at national level. But possible at sub-national level and there is a huge demand.

Best Practices

Nepal

- Recovery and Accelerated Learning Plan
- Comprehensive assessment on student learning,
- Measure skills acquisition, invest in numeracy and foundational learning, structural pedagogy
- Community Learning programme (Tole Shikchya) was adapted during school-closure to provide alternative/remedial learning opportunities.

Bangladesh

- National student assessment
- Online lessons, development of blended learning materials
- Distribution of health/hygiene supplies

Bhutan

Remote learning with online/radio and self-instructional materials

India

- Blended learning approach during the school closure, capacity building of teachers on safe return to school and involvement of community volunteers and parents on back-to-school campaign.
- School readiness, reading campaign, PSS, Nib-Ka App for data collection, competency based curriculum focusing on FLN and socio-emotional learning, E-library for teachers and students, Learning assessment.

Best Practices

More low- and lower middle-income countries reported a plan to implement national level policy measures for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in the school year 2022/2023

