COVID-19 AGE EDUCATION: SCHOOL YEAR STARTED ACROSS KAZAKHSTAN

NUR-SULTAN - As noted recently by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "education and digital technology are two of the most important investments we can make, as we respond to COVID-19 and lay the foundations for a strong recovery and the achievement of the SDGs." As the school year has kicked-off in Kazakhstan, some 33 mln schoolchildren, 465,000 high school students and more than 600,000 university students began a new academic year on 1 September. While the majority will continue to study via distance learning via a mix of technologies, such as e-learning platforms and TV broadcasting, about 780,000 primary schoolchildren will study in special groups at schools. Earlier, Minister of Education and Science of Kazakhstan Askhat Ahamambetov said that the current approach to studying is a combined one. It depends on the epidemiological situation. Children in grades 1-4 can study in the special classes at the request of their parents with a limit of up to 15 children per classroom. At the same time, sanitary requirements will be strictly observed with constant temperature checks of both children and teachers, mandatory masks, frequent use of sanitizers, cleaning, airing and quarantining the classrooms.

On 31 August during the WHO high-level meeting on schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, Minister of Health of Kazakhstan Alwasy Teyt stated that Kazakhstan will support the implementation of the Framework on safe schooling in the time of COVID-19, and mentioned that indicators and measures proposed in the document are feasible for the country. On 26-28 August, UNICEF in partnership with the National Center for Public Health Care supported a three-day training on child injury prevention for 45 school health workers, educational staff and parents of schoolchildren. The aim is to increase knowledge and ensure there is understanding of roles and responsibilities of adults in creating a safe environment for children, as well as reducing the number of unintentional childhood injuries, including during COVID-19. More on emergency health response on page 2.

HIGHLIGHTS

IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING DURING AND AFTER COVID-19

Director of the UNESCO Cluster Office for Kazakhstan Krista Pikkat in her Op-Ed noted that stringent lockdowns and lack of social interactions with peers have adversely impacted the emotional and physical health of children. Young adults abruptly lost access to quality education, employment, and other social, cultural and professional opportunities for growth and development. Since March, the UNESCO Almaty Office has engaged with and supported the Ministries of Education in Central Asia through promoting policy dialogue, organizing capacity-building and developing quality online educational content. UNESCO Almaty is conducting a series of online training on various digital tools and distance learning solutions for ministry officials and teachers throughout the year. The trainings will teach instructors to use Learning Management Systems and Content Management Systems, develop high-quality content for distance learning, and assess student work during remote learning. More on risk communications on page 3.

UN SUPPORTS KAZAKHSTAN IN MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL

On 25 August within joint UNDP and ADB project, the equipment for the treatment of infectious waste and containers for safe waste collection were handed over to the Nur-Sultan City Centre of Phiphisiology and Monography, which had been redesigned to serve patients with COVID-19. Immediate disposal of medical waste inside hospitals can prevent the spread of an infection outside of the premises and decrease COVID-19 cases among health workers. It is expected that the new UNDP-ADB initiative will help design standard operation procedures for health workers and enhance their capacity to properly collect, sort, transport, dispose and monitor medical waste in hospitals. The project will also develop effective digital healthcare waste management database for all the regions of Kazakhstan. The new initiative is expected to lay the foundation for a sustainable medical waste management system not only under COVID-19 conditions but also beyond. More on socio-economic response on page 2.
TOWARDS A CONSENSUS ON SAFE SCHOOLING

COVID-19 has created the largest disruption of education systems in history affecting nearly 16 billion learners in more than 190 countries, and our region is no exception. Most countries in the Region closed schools to assist with the containment of the virus. Recognizing that many parents, educators and children themselves have several concerns and anxieties about going to school during these times, a framework to ensure the safety and well-being of children, their families and communities was developed by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and Member States.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT AND RESPONSE

- Over 1,000 civil servants, of which 39% are people with disabilities, completed the training programme on key digital and teleworking skills jointly implemented by UNDP, Agency for Civil Service Affairs of Kazakhstan, the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Kazakhstan and the Astana Civil Service Hub. The participants represented both central and local executive state bodies. The learning module included such topics as adaptability to change, emotional intelligence, effective digital communication, productivity management in crises settings and digital skills.
- UNICEF, in collaboration with Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools Laboratory of Pedagogical Excellence, facilitated an online training for 30 trainers on strengthening the system aimed at preventing children from dropping out of school in Kazakhstan. Inclusive education, school level planning, supportive relationships and learning process, including during COVID-19, partnership with parents, practical tools and other topics were covered at the workshop.
- UN system in Kazakhstan developed and presented the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 Report and UN’s Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Support Plan, which are also fully compatible with the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2021-2025. Also, a special report on COVID-19 impact on children is being finalized.

EMERGENCY HEALTH RESPONSE

- WHO works on preparation of the follow-up webinar on Clinical Management of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C).
- WHO supports development of Kazakhstan country strategy, by providing technical advice for health programmes, systems and policies.
- WHO coordinates with national authorities on the amendment of the national guideline on influenza.
- WHO conducted two webinars on case management and laboratory biosafety.
- WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO held a joint webinar on schools reopening with participation of national partners.
- A team of the national technical experts from Kazakhstan attended the WHO, UNICEF web-conference "Child and adolescent health during COVID-19."
- UNICEF, jointly with MoH conducted immunization workshop with all regions of Kazakhstan. The main challenges include parents refusal and fear to get infected with COVID-19 when visiting health facilities, shortcomings related to technical arrangements of vaccination points, measures to ensure social distance and availability of disinfectors, expiration of vaccine and lack of vaccine stock assessment.
- WHO Behavioral Insights Study’s third round data collection has started, using an updated questionnaire with a stronger focus on COVID-19 vaccination.
- WHO continues to support the implementation of age-stratified sero-epidemiological investigation for COVID-19 and the investigation of confirmed and probable SARS-CoV-2 cases and their close contact.
- SOLIDARITY trial has re-adapted its protocol and now it will include four treatment branches: standard of care alone or standard of care plus Remdesivir (daily infusion for 10 days) or Acalabrutinib (orally twice daily for 10 days) or Interferon (8a (daily injection for 6 days). Lopinavir/Ritonavir and Hydroxychloroquine were withdrawn from the study based on Solidarity trial Executive Group due to drugs futility.

COVID-19 RESPONSE SUPPLIES

- WHO delivered 475,000 examination gloves for healthcare workers, which will be distributed to the Health Departments of all regions across Kazakhstan.
- WHO delivered 25,000 PCR-tests to the National Center of Expertise.
- UNODC provided Almaty-based Republican Mental Health Centre with reusable anti-plague suits, medical goggles, gloves and masks, shoe covers, and bactericidal irradiators-recirculators to protect the frontline staff.

USEFUL INFORMATION

TOWARDS A CONSENSUS ON SAFE SCHOOLING DURING COVID-19

UN continues to provide direct assistance to stranded migrants. Over 200 Tajik migrants who had been recently stuck at the Kazakh-Uzbek border were transported by IOM to their home country, Tajikistan, via the territory of Uzbekistan. So far, during the quarantine period, IOM assisted more than 2,500 migrants. UNICEF, in partnership with the "Sane Sezim" Legal Center for Women’s Initiatives, with the support of the European Union Delegation, in Kazakhstan delivered hygiene kits to around 350 labour migrants from Tajikistan, including children, who are now stuck on the southern border of Kazakhstan. The kits included masks, sanitizers, gloves, drinking water, information brochures on the prevention of COVID-19, as well as contacts of organizations that provide assistance to migrants.
UN RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- UNICEF celebrated COVID-19 Champions for Children (social workers, psychologists, patronage nurses) with dedicated social media campaign.
- UNICEF translated and localized a special video on COVID-19 preventive measures.
- WHO further promoting #WearAMask challenge, tips for COVID-19 safety for youngsters.
- UNDP adapted to Kazakh and Russian videos on COVID-19 contact tracing and safe return to school measures.
- UNDP published an analytical piece on unpaid care work globally and in Kazakhstan, which also highlights the increase of women’s workload with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Media coverage on UNDP - ADB new initiative on medical waste management in Kazakhstan.
- UNDP shared a set of facts related to the COVID-19 impact on education, including the gender aspect.
- In the framework of the sub-regional project implemented by UNFPA Central Asian countries held a meeting to share Kazakhstan’s experience on the Multi-Sectoral Response to Gender-Based Violence and to exchange challenges and progress made in each of the five countries in implementing this response. Discussions focused on different services to GBV survivors and how they interact (health, police, psycho-social), as well as on teaching different tools and using guidelines to build capacity of service providers on how to act when confronted with survivors and perpetrators.
- UNESCO held a sub-regional informational meeting for UNESCO Associated Schools Network in Central Asia attended by 33 schools and 80 teachers.
- UNESCO held a panelist debate titled “Young Professionals of the Cinema Industry in Central Asia: Future Perspectives during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic” Panelists included filmmakers and creative professionals from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- As COVID-19 poses multiple issues in the field of culture, particularly in the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO organized the fourth session of the sub-regional “Training of Trainers in safeguarding cultural heritage in Central Asia.”
- National hotline 116-116, operated by IOM partner NGO, continues to provide consultations to the victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants.

USEFUL INFO MATERIALS

- Secretary-General’s remarks at Virtual High-Level Meeting on Generation Unlimited: “Connecting Half the World in Opportunities”
- UN Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism
- UN Secretary-General’s Task Force on Digital Financing Final Report: Harnessing Digitalisation to Finance a Sustainable Future

COVID-19 AND PEOPLE WITH HIV

UNFPA and the Public Foundation for Social Support Revansh produced a video about the project being conducted with UNFPA’s support in providing life support and gender-sensitive services for women living with HIV and at risk of HIV residing in the Center during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond in the circumstances of social isolation.

ARTICLES AND INTERVIEWS

- UNFPA article highlighting the role of protective face shields in providing vital services to people with hearing impairments during COVID-19.
- UNFPA article about the meeting on Multi-Sectoral Response to Gender-Based Violence (based on the example of Kazakhstan).
- Psychologist from National Center for Mental Health (partner of UNICEF) Zhuldbay Alieva’s interview for Alkyn.kz on mental health advice and recommendations.

QUICK CIVIL SOCIETY SURVEY ON MISINFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19

UN would like to hear from civil society representatives across all countries on what types of misinformation are reaching the general public and the sources. In this public health emergency, the UN needs the help and effort of civil society to disseminate accurate information and counter stigma and myths including examples of targeting of specific groups and hate speech. Share your solutions and inspire solidarity!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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COVID-19 SITUATION REPORT

WOMEN IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA SPEND ON AVERAGE 4.3% 2.2 MORE HOURS IN UNPAID CARE WORK. FIND OUT MORE

They also work longer hours than men paid work and unpaid care work combined.

UN IN KAZAKHSTAN MEDIA COVERAGE

TOTAL REACH 11 MLN
ENGAGEMENT 320K