

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: UNICEF Researches Remote Learning During COVID-19**

In response to the unprecedented educational challenges created by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 90 per cent of countries have implemented some form of remote learning policy. UNICEF generated data that estimates the potential reach of digital and broadcast remote learning responses, finding that at least 463 million students around the globe remain cut off from education, mainly due to a lack of remote learning policies or lack of equipment needed for learning at home. This data primarily stems from the UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures (June-July 2020), as well as household microdata from sources like Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). The Survey sought to answer the question “How many students attending school prior to COVID-19 continued to learn during school closures?”

Findings indicate hundreds of millions of students in high- and upper-middle-income countries benefited, but hundreds of millions more students in lower-resource settings were excluded from opportunities to continue learning. Partial and ongoing school closures mean that remote learning will continue to be an essential education platform for the foreseeable future. Blended learning approaches that combine in-person and remote instruction will be key to ensure students attending school can continue to learn, and they also provide an unprecedented chance to reach out-of-school children and youth. Policies must focus on modernizing both the infrastructure and delivery methods used by education systems and producing accessible, safe and secure remote learning resources based on the national curriculum. These vital improvements will make education systems stronger and more robust and can enrich learning opportunities for all children – including the estimated 258 million who are out of school whether schools are open or not.

Initiatives like Connect to Learn can fast-track safe access to technology and connectivity, increasing options for remote learning delivery and facilitating quicker responses to school closures. Digital and broadcast remote learning policies must address the needs of all households and accommodate situations where children do not have the necessary technological assets at home. To achieve this, identifying the best combinations of digital and broadcast remote learning should be a priority, and investments should be made to develop the infrastructure necessary to reach children who are

marginalized, live in remote and rural areas, or are displaced by emergencies. This approach will also help prepare education systems for future crises. Remote learning programs need to reach students, but students must access, use and learn the material. As such, policies should recognize that teachers, school professionals and parents also have to adapt to these new forms of learning and need to be trained to effectively manage virtual classrooms.

Skills gaps among teachers and parents are one of the most critical barriers to effective, safe and secure remote learning, yet more than one in three countries did not provide any training for teachers to use remote learning platforms. Policies that provide remote learning opportunities at the pre-primary level are vital. Enrollment in pre-primary education yields significant benefits to society, and has a tremendous impact on childrens' future learning as well as their lifelong earnings. There is a need to address the social and gender norms that prevent children — especially girls — from using computers and online learning to their maximum potential. Even in households where online learning is an option, in many countries, parental restrictions are among the most common barriers to digital access for children, and concerns about girls' online safety and the fear that girls will become exposed to content that goes against their community's values mean girls are discouraged from using the internet.

Further investments and innovation are needed to ensure the quality of remote learning and provide real-time monitoring of education outcomes, including formative learning assessments. Countries have engaged in a variety of measures to understand the usage and effectiveness of different delivery channels, but these activities remain a challenge for many. Democratizing safe access to remote learning for all children and young people is key to providing quality education during the pandemic and beyond. Improved remote learning infrastructure and policies, particularly those that use a blended approach, will play a valuable role in helping countries navigate intermittent closures well as prevent outbreaks of COVID-19.

UNICEF, also known as the United Nations Children's Fund, is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. U.N. headquarters is in New York City. For more information please visit [www.unicefusa.org](http://www.unicefusa.org).

To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness, alcohol and substance use in youth and adults at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).