



© UNICEF Somaliland/2021/Naftalin

From mid-March to August 2020, the Government of Somaliland ordered widespread school closures in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, disrupting the education of over 300,000 children and adolescents. The Somaliland Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) developed their own COVID-19 [preparedness and response plan](#) to ensure learning continuity for children affected by the crisis. As part of its strategy, the MoES created various distance learning solutions to address the needs of all learners, including those most vulnerable: the internally displaced, refugees, as well as rural and pastoralist children.

The MoES formed new partnerships with the largest telecommunication companies in Somaliland and with public as well as private television and radio broadcasters. They worked together to disseminate distance learning lessons when schools were closed.

Together with partners, the MoES established new distance learning infrastructure that promotes alternative education through easily accessible platforms, such as radio, TV and online. Classroom lessons such as history and mathematics—were [recorded and aired](#) through Somaliland National TV and Radio Hargeisa. These classroom lessons were broadcast every morning over a four-hour period. To make the lessons accessible for children with disabilities, each was also broadcast with sign language. All lessons were published online through the Somaliland National YouTube Channel as well as through the [MoES' Facebook page](#). By May 2021, Somaliland finalized the recording of video lessons for all primary and secondary grades so that these digital learning resources could be used to support in-classroom learning.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

- The MoES, supported by UNICEF, provided 97,241 children (41,814 girls) access to distance learning through TV, radio and online platforms which included Somali sign language to ensure access for learners with hearing impairments. Of these, 12,200 were grade 12 students (5,124 girls) who were preparing for the secondary school final exams which took place in June 2020.

- When compared with individual schools and teachers taking the responsibility for providing alternative education, the newly formed partnerships reduced the sector's unit costs for providing services and enabled more learners to access the digital learning resources.
- When schools in Somaliland reopened in August 2020, the MoES had successfully aired, broadcasted and disseminated video lessons for students in primary and secondary grades who were academically prepared to take their final exams.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Creating resilient education systems.** Using the new digital learning solutions the MoES can support children during periods of crises. Droughts and floods have particularly disrupted education in the past, leaving learners with no alternative education modalities when schools were closed, the new digital learning content can be used to mitigate the impact of such crises. This is a welcome addition to the list of measures that the MoES can utilize in times of emergencies. It also demonstrates that the MoES can rapidly deploy solutions when the sector works together.
- **Increasing access to technology.** With a majority of the population of Somaliland living in rural areas, learners and their families experienced several challenges in accessing the distance learning content developed by the MoES. A significant number of communities lack access to electricity and many are in areas not reached by TV, radio or internet networks. In addition, including in urban areas, many learners did not have the necessary technology to access the digital education content, nor could they afford to acquire it even after the outbreak of the pandemic. Until access is increased, most learners in urban and rural areas will rely on paper-based and other non-technological solutions to continue their education during school closures.
- **Addressing challenges with at-home learning.** Only a small proportion of Somaliland adults have gone to school themselves. This meant that families had limited capacities to support their children's learning at home. The training of teachers and parents on the use of distance learning and supporting students to use digital lessons will therefore be key for more effective home-based learning in the future.

NEXT STEPS

- **Averting further education crises.** UNICEF is supporting the MoES to develop contingency plans, incorporating the newly developed distance learning resources, to mitigate the impacts of future droughts and floods, which are common in Somaliland. No- and low-tech solutions must also be expanded as many Somaliland families and communities have limited access to devices, technology and connectivity.
- **Formulating a plan for digital learning.** In the coming months, UNICEF is supporting the MoES to develop a strategic plan for digital learning that goes beyond emergencies. This plan will need to address uneven access to digital learning for those living in hard-to-reach areas, as well as the training of teachers on the use of digital learning resources in schools.

Cost effectiveness: From May to December 2020, UNICEF, with valuable support from Education Cannot Wait, the Global Partnership for Education and Global Affairs Canada, provided US\$790,000 to develop distance learning content during COVID-19-related school closures, benefitting 20,250 children in Somaliland and costing US\$39 per child.

OTHER RESOURCES

For other resources, including more education and COVID-19 case studies, please click [here](#) and filter by 'Area of Work' (Education)

For more information, please contact:

UNICEF Somalia Country Office: mogadishu@unicef.org

© UNICEF September 2021

unicef 
for every child