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SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Trixie-Belle Nicolle, World Food Programme Regional Bureau for Southern Africa

REGIONAL PROGRAMME ADAPTATION TRENDS

- Government leadership
- Shift in focus from rural to urban
- Agility and flexibility to implement new programme modalities
- Re-thinking of monitoring approaches



REGIONAL UNICEF AND WFP COLLABORATION

- UNICEF and WFP [Joint Messages](#) (released end May)
- [Checklist for school re-opening](#) (released end July)

World Food Programme UNICEF

Joint Message on School Health and Nutrition in the context of the COVID-19 in Eastern and Southern Africa

Background

As a mitigation measure against the COVID-19 pandemic, 199 countries globally have undertaken school closures, which keeps over 1.6 billion children out of school (91% of total enrolled learners) as of 20 April 2020. In Eastern and Southern Africa, 24 countries* covered by UNICEF and/or WFP have undergone country-wide school closures. This leaves at least 120 million children and youth in the region not able to attend school (preprimary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary). This will have a negative impact not only on children's right to education but also on other human rights including the right to food as well as other related risks (e.g. increased protection risks). More than 16 million affected school-children in the region rely on school meals and nutrition services: either it's the only meal they consume in the day or it contributes a significant part of their daily nutrient requirements. Although it is difficult to predict how long school closures will last, health specialists argue that it might become a prolonged crisis, therefore it is crucial that governments take immediate measure to prioritize the provision of healthy and nutritious food for children in two different cases: where schools remain closed and schools re-open.

*Total number of countries covered by WFP and/or UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa regional office (17 countries are commonly covered)

Right to Education



Right to Food

School Closure

- Maintain flexibility and responsiveness to changing conditions for supply and distribution of food and provision of nutrition services, while ensuring compliance with COVID-19 protocols.
- Ensure that the most vulnerable groups are prioritized for nutrition/ food assistance such as preprimary children in Early Childhood Centers.
- Use available resources to safeguard schoolchildren's food security and nutrition.
- Build upon existing safety-net structures to cover vulnerable schoolchildren.
- Ensure food and nutrition needs of vulnerable schoolchildren are considered when designing any large-scale national response to COVID-19.
- Plan for the future school re-opening.

Examples of alternative modalities to on-site meals: take home rations, cash/vouchers, home deliveries (incl. non-traditional partner; postal service), etc.



School Opening

- Refer to guidance of [Framework for Reopening of School](#) and adapt locally.
- Promote optimal water, sanitation and hygiene services and ensure optimal hygiene and other key behaviors of children, teachers and foodservice staff/volunteers, school canteens and regulation of food vendors.
- Ensure and continue the provision of comprehensive school health and nutrition package.
- Avoid potential deterioration in food safety and quality standards.
- Ensure meal's adequate nutrition content to safeguard immunity of the school children.
- Create contingency plans for the distribution of school meals using alternative modalities in the event that the schools close again.



For the detail of each action point mentioned above, please see ["Mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition of schoolchildren"](#) (developed by FAO, UNICEF and WFP)



MULTISECTORAL CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL RE-OPENINGS AND SCHOOL-BASED NUTRITION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Prepared by:
UNICEF and World Food Programme Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices

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