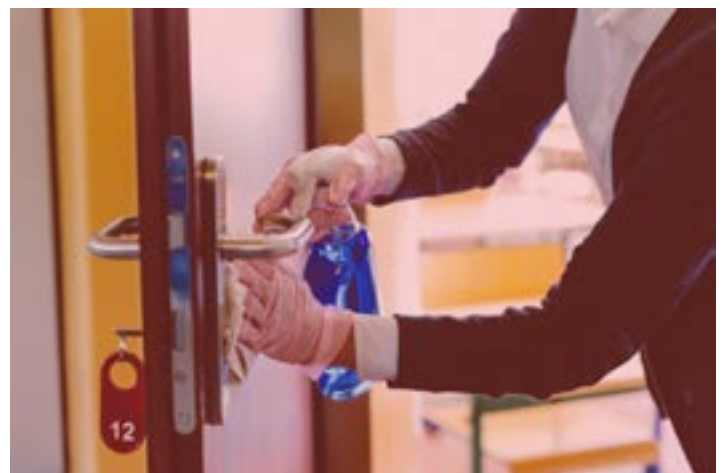


Checklist to support schools re-opening and preparation for **COVID-19** resurgences or similar public health crises



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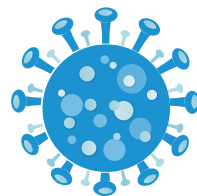
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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abbreviations	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background.	4
1.2 Purpose, scope and target users	5
1.3 Methodology for developing the checklist	5
1.4 Considerations for reopening schools	6
2. Multi-level coordination	7
2.1 Structure	7
3. Essential actions	8
3.1 At national level (eight actions).	9
3.2 At sub-national level (nine actions)	10
3.3 At school level (21 actions).	11
Annex: Guidance and resources	15

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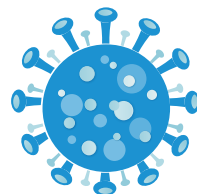
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Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MHM	Menstrual hygiene management
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
PHSM	Public health and social measure
PPE	Personal protective equipment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SST	School support team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNO	United Nations Organization
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, prolonged school closures may result in a reversal of educational gains, limiting children's educational and vocational opportunities as well as their social and emotional interactions and development. The longer a student stays out of school, the higher the risk of dropping out.¹ Additionally, students who are out of school – and particularly girls – are at increased risk of vulnerabilities (e.g. subject to greater rates of violence and exploitation, child marriage and teenage pregnancy).^{1,2,3} Furthermore, prolonged school closures interrupt and disrupt the provision of, and access to, essential school-based services such as school feeding and nutrition programmes, immunization, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).^{1,2} As the COVID-19 crisis becomes more protracted, there is a growing need to ensure that concerned stakeholders have appropriate mechanisms and capabilities to cope with their evolving local situations (Box 1).

Box 1.

The decision to introduce, adapt or lift public health and social measures (PHSM), or to scale up health system capacity, should be based on an analysis of the level of COVID-19 transmission, the health system response capacity and other contextual factors. Based on the joint assessment of these factors, a situational level should be assigned to a geographical area to inform whether and how to adjust PHSM. See *WHO interim guidance in Considerations for implementing and adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19* (4 November 2020).

On the basis of available data from individual countries and recent studies, children under the 18 years of age account for some 8.5% of reported cases. Also, fewer deaths have been reported in this age group compared to other age groups. Furthermore, infections in children have generally caused mild disease, while severe disease due to COVID-19 is rare among the under-18s. However, a few cases of critical illness have been reported and pre-existing medical conditions have been suggested as risk factors for severe disease and admission to intensive care units (ICUs) in children.⁴

The present checklist should be considered as part of overall efforts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's *Interim guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools*⁵ and the *Framework for reopening schools*.⁶

¹ Adverse consequences of school closures. Paris: UNESCO; 2020 (<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/consequences>, accessed 7 December 2020).

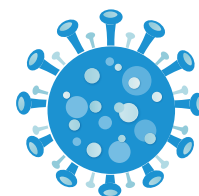
² Framework for reopening schools. UNESCO; UNICEF; World Bank; WFP; April 2020 (<https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/resources/framework-reopening-schools-april-2020>, accessed 7 December 2020).

³ The COVID-19 pandemic: shocks to education and policy. World Bank Policy Note. Washington (DC): The World Bank; 2020 (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33696>, accessed 7 December 2020).

⁴ Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/334294>, accessed 7 December 2020).

⁵ Interim guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools. Inter-Agency Standing Committee; 2020 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/interim-guidance-covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools-jointly-developed-ifrc-unicef-and>, accessed 7 December 2020).

⁶ Framework for reopening schools. UNESCO; UNICEF; World Bank; WFP; April 2020 (<https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/resources/framework-reopening-schools-april-2020>, accessed 7 December 2020).



1.2 Purpose, scope and target users

The purpose of this checklist is to enhance compliance and adherence with the public health measures outlined in the recently-updated *Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19* (see Annex), particularly taking into consideration children under the age of 18 years in educational settings and schools with limited resources. The checklist was developed in accordance with the health-promoting schools principles and approaches.^{7,8} It highlights the importance of multi-level coordination (i.e. national, subnational and individual school levels) and both participatory and co-designed approaches among various stakeholders (e.g. school staff, teachers, students and parents). This approach aims to optimize compliance with public health and social measures based on social and cultural contexts, as described in *Considerations for implementing and adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19*.

The checklist is aligned with, and builds upon, existing COVID-19-related WHO guidelines^{9,10,11,12} and is structured around protective measures related to: 1) hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; 2) physical distancing; 3) use of masks in schools; 4) environmental cleaning and ventilation; and 5) respecting procedures for isolation of all people with symptoms.

The checklist is designed to support policy-makers, staff and officials from the education and health sectors, local authorities, school principals/leaders and administrators, teachers' unions, community leaders, school staff, teachers, parents and caregivers.

1.3 Methodology for developing the checklist

In developing the checklist, specialists in children's and young persons' health, health promotion, education and emergencies – from WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Indiana University, New York University, Save the Children, international school health networks including the FRESH network, the School Health Europe network (SHE) and Education International – jointly reviewed the available recommendations and country responses on school reopenings and resurgences of COVID-19 in the current pandemic. Prior to finalization, the checklist was also reviewed by technical units of WHO, UNICEF, WFP and UNESCO, as well as by a multidisciplinary group of external experts, including teachers. In the absence of strong scientific evidence on student and staff adherence to recommended measures in schools, expert consensus among members of the working group provided the underlying basis for the checklist.

⁷ What is a health promoting school? Geneva: World Health Organization (https://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en/, accessed 7 December 2020).

⁸ Information Series on School Health. Geneva: World Health Organization (https://www.who.int/school_youth_health/resources/information_series/en/, accessed 7 December 2020).

⁹ Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/334294>, accessed 7 December 2020).

¹⁰ Advice on the use of masks for children in the community in the context of COVID-19. Geneva: World Health Organization; August 2020 (WHO Advice on the use of masks for children in the context of COVID-19, accessed 6 December 2020).

¹¹ Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19 (Interim guidance). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1275007/retrieve>, accessed 6 December 2020).

¹² Interim guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools. Inter-Agency Standing Committee; 2020 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/interim-guidance-covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools-jointly-developed-ifrc-unicef-and>, accessed 7 December 2020).

1.4 Considerations for reopening schools

Guided by national and local governments, measures to guarantee safe operation and learning conditions help to minimize and prevent the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) among school communities. The timing and approach to school reopening following closure is both complex and sensitive; it should be driven by data and the safety measures in place, as well as by the concerns of students, parents, caregivers and teachers.

Enhancing compliance with public health measures is influenced by the active engagement of concerned stakeholders – e.g. students, parents, caregivers – in decisions that affect their lives, families, safety and education. Students can be strong allies in strengthening efforts and reinforcing or amplifying messages.

As outlined in the WHO/UNESCO/ UNICEF/World Bank/WFP *Framework for reopening schools and Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19*, decisions to reopen schools following temporary closure should be based on assessments and analyses of context-specific risks and benefits. Such decisions should be taken in the best interests of students and public health considerations, including advice from health experts and epidemiologists. The framework highlights six dimensions to consider when planning for school reopening, namely: policy; financing; safe operations; learning; reaching the most marginalized; well-being; and protection.

All plans and measures to reopen schools safely should aim to reduce inequalities and

Box 2.

Example of vulnerable and/or marginalized students:

- Minorities
- Adolescent girls
- Migrants, children forcibly displaced or refugees
- Children living with disabilities
- Children living in institutions
- Children living in poverty
- Children living in countries affected by conflict and other protracted crises
- Children living in overcrowded housing
- Children living in informal settlements
- Orphans
- Child-headed households
- Children who are separated from their parents/caregivers
- Out-of-school children

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