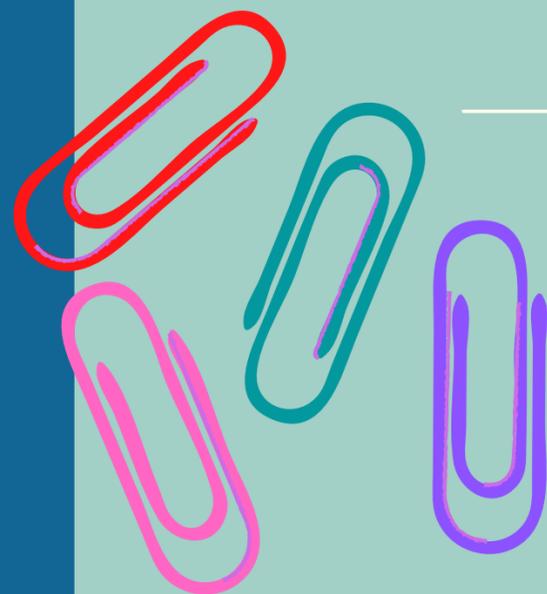




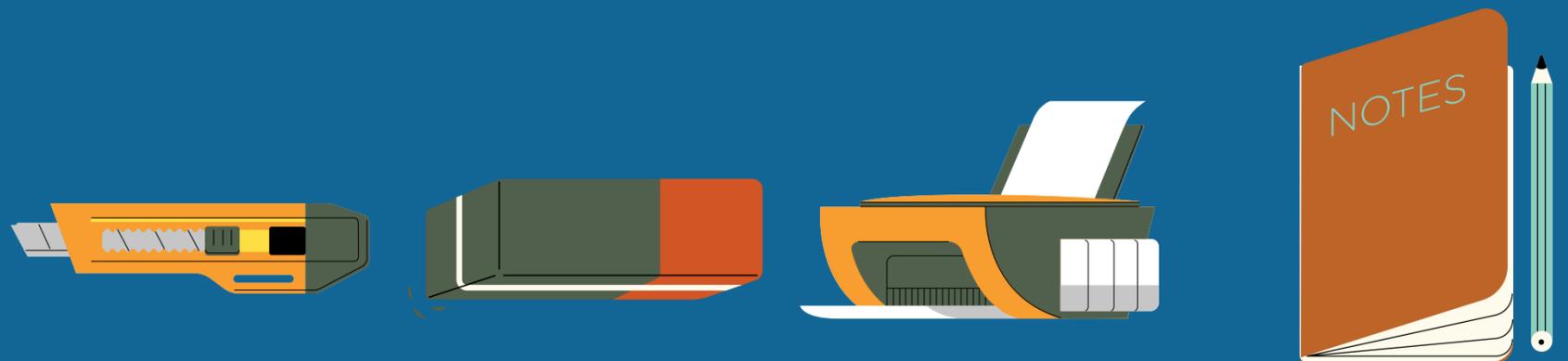
Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

DEVASTATING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES

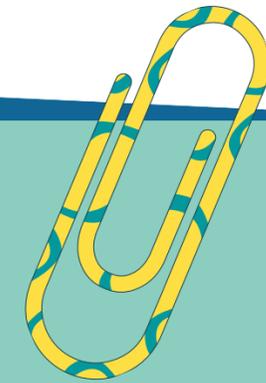


COVID-19 IMPACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has created more challenges and concerns than any other pandemic in the world's history. COVID-19 has caused the world to shutdown and whilst most governments focused on the impact that this would have on the economy, businesses and families, the issue of education was not given adequate attention.



EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT (ECW)



Yasmine Sherif Director of ECW says that The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted funding for millions of people already reeling from conflict, record levels of displacement, and climate change shocks. For these children, COVID-19 is a crisis upon a crisis. Some 79.5 million are currently displaced, more people than at any time since World War II. Almost half – 34 million – of those displaced are children, and youth and 48 percent of all school-age refugee children are out of school. Most have been out of education for so long that they now lack the most basic competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics.

COVID-19 has compounded the already existing devastation of conflicts, climate-related disasters, and forced displacement from Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, to the Sahel, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Venezuela to name but a few of the 38 crises where ECW is working with partners to deliver on the right of every girl and boy to a safe, quality education.

Source: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/06/education-cannot-wait-refugee-children-crisis-says-yasmine-sherif/>

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO has stated that with the school closures comes the high social and economic costs for people across communities. This is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized boys and girls and their families, especially for those living in countries of emergencies and protracted crisis.

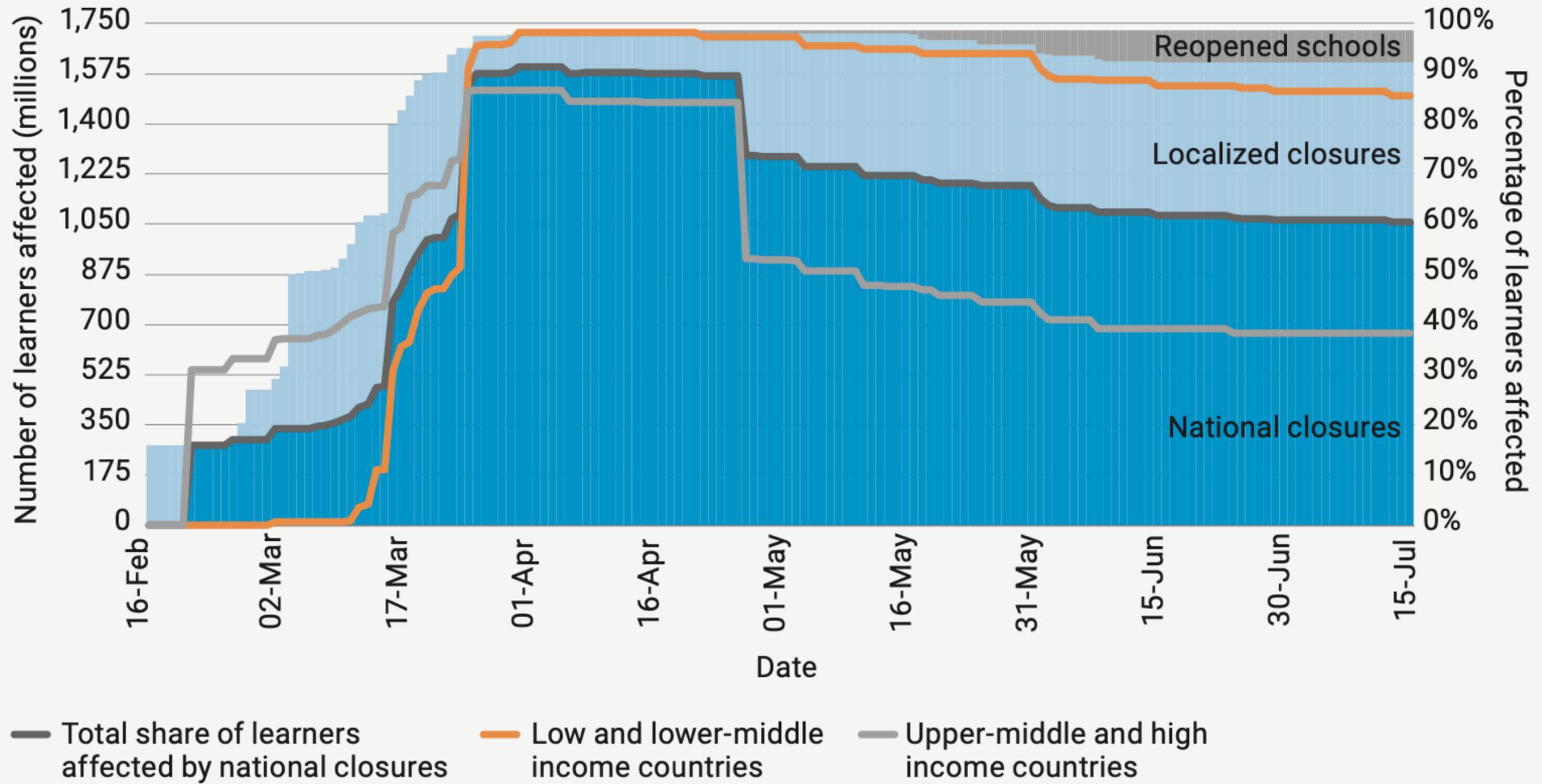
UNESCO has detailed the impact that COVID-19 is having on our children, including:

- **Interrupted learning:** Schooling provides essential learning and when schools close, children and youth are deprived opportunities for growth and development. The disadvantages are disproportionate for under-privileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities beyond school.
- **Poor nutrition:** Many children and youth rely on free or discounted meals provided at schools for food and healthy nutrition. When schools close, nutrition is compromised.
- **Parents unprepared for distance and home schooling:** When schools close, parents are often asked to facilitate the learning of children at home and can struggle to perform this task. This is especially true for parents with limited education and resources.
- **High economic costs:** Working parents are more likely to miss work when schools close in order to take care of their children. This results in wage loss and tends to negatively impact productivity.
- **Unintended strain on health-care systems:** Health-care workers with children cannot easily attend work because of childcare obligations that result from school closures. This means that many medical professionals are not at the facilities where they are most needed during a health crisis.
- **Increased pressure on schools and school systems that remain open:** Localized school closures place burdens on schools as governments and parents alike redirect children to schools that remain open.
- **Rise in dropout rates:** It is a challenge to ensure children and youth return and stay in school when schools reopen after closures. This is especially true of protracted closures and when economic shocks place pressure on children to work and generate income for financially distressed families.
- **Increased exposure to violence and exploitation:** When schools shut down, more children are recruited into militias, sexual exploitation of girls and young women rises, teenage pregnancies become more common, and child labour grows.
- **Social isolation:** Schools are hubs of social activity and human interaction. When schools close, many children and youth miss out on social contact that is essential to learning and development.
- **Challenges measuring and validating learning:** Calendared assessments, notably high-stakes examinations that determine admission or advancement to new education levels and institutions are thrown into disarray when schools close. Strategies to postpone, skip or administer examinations at a distance raise serious concerns about fairness, especially when access to learning becomes variable. Disruptions to assessments results in stress for students and their families and can trigger disengagement.

Source: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/consequences>



FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY SCHOOL CLOSURES GLOBALLY



Source: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> and authors' calculations.

EXAMPLE: AFRICA

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on many third-world countries in emergencies and protracted crisis. Take Africa as an example, particularly in the Sahel region, where schools were already closed for several months due to severe insecurity, strikes or climatic hazards. The COVID-19 pandemic has now prolonged the closure of schools across the nation.

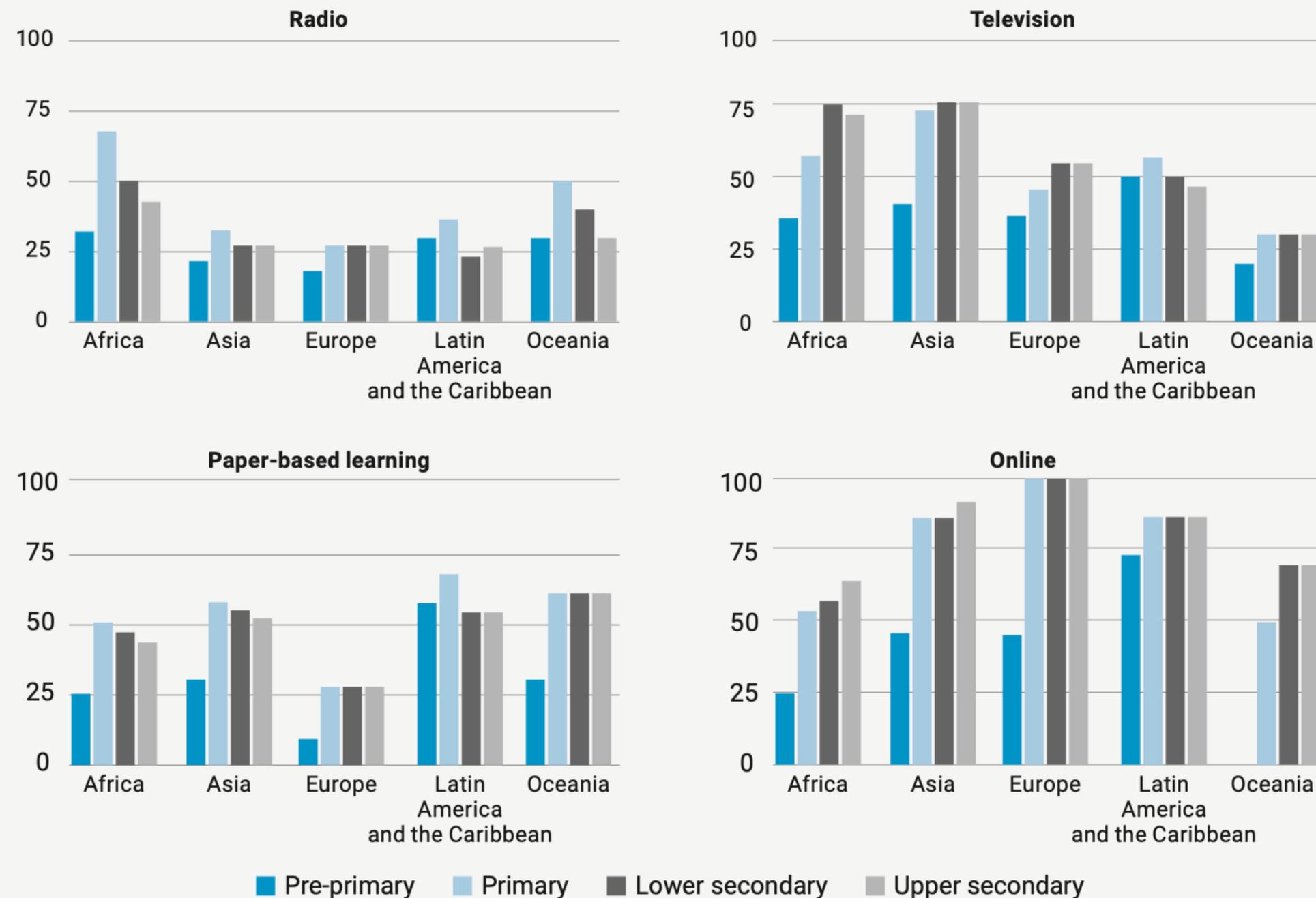
In Sub-Saharan Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation for education as prior to the pandemic there was already 47 per cent of the world's 258 million out-of-school children living in this region, with 30 percent due to the ongoing conflict and emergency.

Africa has one of the most fragile education systems and with the disruption that Covid has caused, it will have a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable students. Ensuring continuity of learning at home is limited, most parents are illiterate and cannot teach their children. Further, the presence of children at home can also complicate the economic situation of parents, who must find solutions to provide care or compensate for the loss of school meals.

There is growing concern that if these learners are not properly supported, they may never return to school. This would further exacerbate pre-existing disparities as well as aggravating the already existing learning crisis and eroding the social and economic resilience of refugees and displaced persons.

Source: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf

COUNTRY CHOICE OF DISTANCE LEARNING DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES WAS INFLUENCED BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND REGION (percentage)



Source: UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank joint database, May–June 2020, <http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/survey-education-covid-school-closures>.

EXAMPLE : AFGHANISTAN

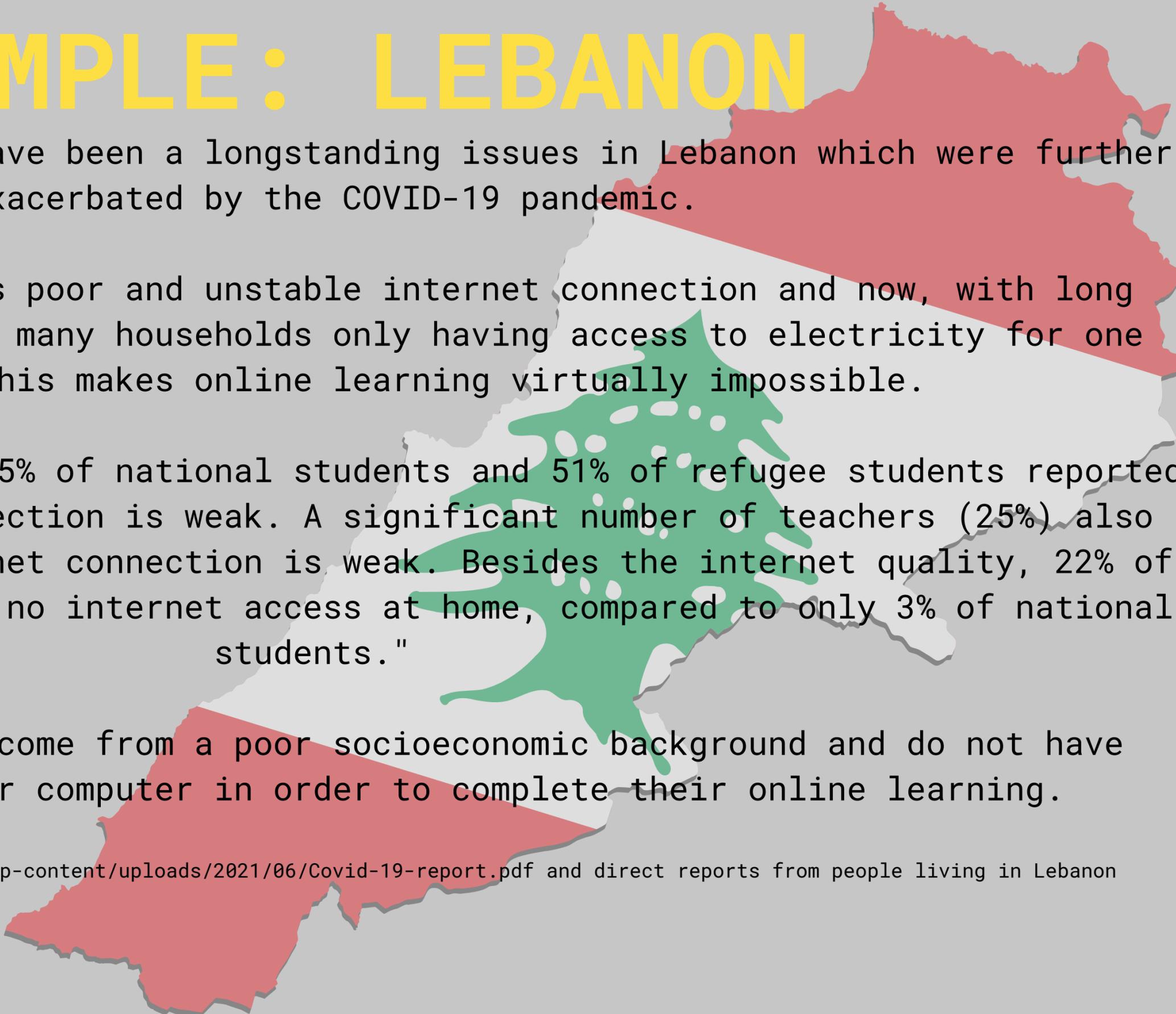
In mid March 2020, the Afghan Government introduced lockdowns, banned large gatherings and encouraged social distancing. The Ministry of Public Health set up testing centers and several new hospitals for COVID-19 patients.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government ordered schools and tertiary education institutions to shutdown and to offer online or distance education however this effort has faced serious challenges with enduring consequences for education access and equity:

- **Ongoing conflict:** "Nearly 5 million children have remained out of school or dropped out of school since 2001. During the spread of COVID-19, the Taliban, Islamic States (IS) and other insurgent groups maintained their attacks on innocent civilians and the Afghan government security forces in the first half of 2020. Incidents of violence have been reported on a daily basis in Afghanistan. As such, the prospects of access to education for the five million out-of-school children remain unknown for the foreseeable future."
- **Access to electricity, stable internet and learning equipment:** "For the enrolled students (around 7 million) in primary and secondary schools, the majority have not had access to regular electricity, stable internet and learning equipment at home to benefit from limited distance education provided by some of the private schools and local radio and television channels. According to a 2018 study, "roughly 70% of the population has no access to electricity, and 90% of those without electricity live in rural areas. The vast majority of its power is imported from neighbouring countries and is often subject to outages". Electricity outages make it effectively impossible for students to access stable internet and benefit from the limited distance education. At the same time, the widespread poverty in urban and rural areas (more than half of the population are under the poverty line) makes it difficult for families to support their children and provide learning equipment like computers or smart phones at home."
- **Low capacity:** "The education system and current textbooks in Afghanistan are highly teacher-centered and encourage rote memorisation schools. Apart from students who may have attended privately provided computer and English language classes, most teachers and students do not have basic literacy to use modern technology for distance education. Low levels of tech literacy amongst teachers and students and lack of training in distance education pedagogy have further hindered student learning. At the same time, many parents and families struggled to get their children to follow the limited education provided by the state-funded 'Education TV' and private TV channels."

Source: <https://www.indigofoundation.org/covid-19-in-afgh>

EXAMPLE: LEBANON

A map of Lebanon is shown in the background. The map is divided into three colored regions: a red region in the north and south, and a green region in the center. The rest of the map is white.

Conflict and Corruption have been a longstanding issues in Lebanon which were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lebanon is known for its poor and unstable internet connection and now, with long electricity outages with many households only having access to electricity for one hour a day. This makes online learning virtually impossible.

Studies have shown that "35% of national students and 51% of refugee students reported that their internet connection is weak. A significant number of teachers (25%) also reported that their internet connection is weak. Besides the internet quality, 22% of refugee students reported no internet access at home, compared to only 3% of national students."

Further, most students come from a poor socioeconomic background and do not have access to a tablet or computer in order to complete their online learning.

Source: <https://lebanesestudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Covid-19-report.pdf> and direct reports from people living in Lebanon

AUSTRALIA



The COVID-19 pandemic has also created challenges for students, parents and teachers in Australia.

Some of these challenges include;

- reduced one-to-one engagement with teachers
- difficulty in ascertaining engagement levels of students
- restricted ability to monitor individual student progress
- increased level of oversight required from parents and carers (particularly for younger children)
- increased social isolation and reduced ability to support student wellbeing
- interruption to learning support for those children with additional needs

differential levels of access to technology, including internet and devices, to support learning.

For families where there are multiple students at home, it also presents the challenge of access to technology and internet speed. Not all families are able to afford multiple devices to allow their children to complete their work. Some children need to share computers or tablets which makes it much more difficult for them to complete their work on time and further hinders their learning experience.

Source: <https://www.pwc.com.au/government/government-matters/covid-19-education-how-australian-schools-are-responding.html>