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UNICEF EDUCATION

Case Study

RWANDA

Remedial catch-up learning programmes support children with COVID-19 learning loss and inform the national foundational learning strategy

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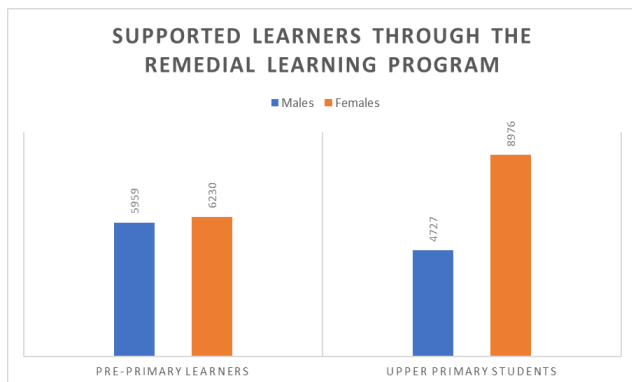
The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted children's education in Rwanda. In 2020 and 2021, schools were fully closed for 8 months and partially closed for 10 months. Pre-pandemic, Rwanda had obtained universal access to primary education with a net enrolment rate of 98.9 per cent (98.7 per cent for boys; 99.1 per cent for girls). When schools reopened in January 2021, 95 per cent of children returned to class but recent Ministry of Education statistics indicated that already high pre-pandemic repetition and dropout rates in primary and secondary had increased by two percent. Rwanda's Ministry of Education and development partners have partnered with UNICEF to support the pandemic education recovery effort centred on foundational learning. The recovery effort includes the development of a 'National Strategy for Accelerating Improvements in Foundational Learning' in pre-primary and lower primary grades.

Children at the pre-primary level who could not access Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres because of pandemic closures were included to develop their foundational literacy and numeracy readiness skills. Participating teachers selected from nearby schools were trained on the pre-primary competency-based curriculum and school readiness pedagogies such as *learning through play*, to help children transition to primary one. Teachers who supported children in upper primary grades were trained in effective pedagogies and formative assessment of students' learning progression. Overall, 402 (201 female) teachers and 201 headteachers were provided with Teacher Guides to support their delivery of the remedial education programmes and were trained on formative assessments, remedial learning, gender responsive pedagogy and digital literacy to catch children's learning up to their expected grade levels. Parental, caregiver and community support was a core part of the remedial education programmes. They observed remedial learning sessions, shared challenges that their children face at home and discussed how they could support their children's learning at home. Four hundred and two (201 female)

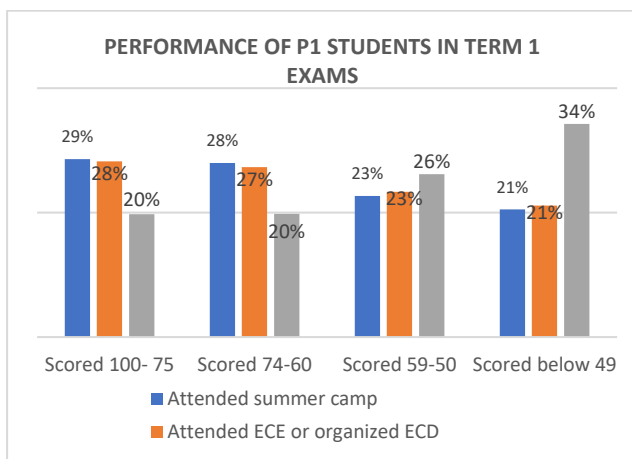
education workers were selected and trained on encouraging parents to enroll their children into the remedial programmes and provided guidance to parents on how to participate in their children’s learning, as well as monitor and report the status of children who have either dropped out and/or are at a high risk of dropping out, including those with irregular school attendance.

RESULTS

- 48,097 children (23,880 girls) enrolled in the 201 schools out of whom 12,189 (6,230 girls) pre-primary and 13,703 (8,976 girls) upper primary children completed the two-month remedial education programme.



- 28.6 per cent of children (28.8 per cent girls) scored above 75 per cent in term 1 exams. Teachers reported students were better prepared for the start of the school year and demonstrated increased levels of concentration.



- 8,442 children's story books were provided to support children’s learning.
- The Ministry of Education has renewed its focus on foundational learning with remedial education prioritized in school timetables from lower to upper primary so ‘Every Child Learns’.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Remedial education programmes can be used to develop children’s foundational literacy at the pre-primary level if ECE/ECD programmes are inaccessible or unavailable.
- Parents’ and Caregiver’s engagement increased the effectiveness of the remedial programme including identifying challenges children were having when they learned at home and determining solutions that would ensure their children’s continued access to education.
- Training headteachers led to their support and ownership of the remedial education programme. Headteachers who were part of the pilot programme, are now scheduling remedial learning sessions throughout the school year.

NEXT STEPS

The results, lessons learned and next steps that have been found from the piloted remedial education programme are informing the Ministry of Education’s National Strategy for Accelerated Foundational Learning, with the goal of reaching all children at the national level. The strategy’s priorities include building teacher capacity where teachers are trained on effective teaching methodologies for foundational learning, administering formative assessments and scaling up remediation programmes for struggling learners. UNICEF will analyze the learning outcomes assessment results in the 200 schools to assess improvements in the learning progress of children who participated in remedial learning activities.

Cost effectiveness: Hempel Foundation (HF) supported the design and implementation of the remedial education in 150 schools from 2021 for children in upper primary at a cost of US\$944,159. From April to October 2022, UNICEF invested an additional US\$325,000, with the financial contribution of the US government for the Mission Recovery Education in Humanitarian Countries programme, to also enable the inclusion of pre-primary and lower primary, reaching 26,897 beneficiaries in 201 schools.