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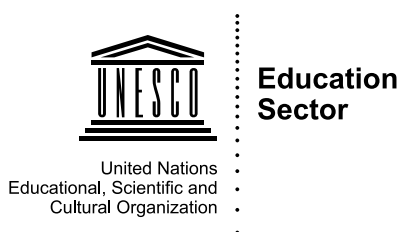
Working Papers
on Education Policy



Fiscal responses to education and training in the context of COVID-19

UNESCO Education Sector

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This is a living document. Given the urgency of the research and rapid changes in governments' response, some factual errors may remain in the document. We will continue to monitor the evolving situation and update the document in accordance with changing information.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Section 1. How Much Does Education Weigh In Governments' Fiscal Measures?	9
Section 2. Examples of Governments' Fiscal Response to Education.....	11
Section 3. Making a Case for More and Better Investment in Education.....	16
References.....	18
Annexes	21
Annex 1: List of Countries Used in Estimating Education Stimulus Packages	22
Annex 2: Country Examples of Education Stimulus Packages	23
Annex 3: Fiscal Measures and Strategies for Education and Training	27

Executive Summary

This paper aims to assess to what extent education has been addressed in massive governments' fiscal responses being taken since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and to make a case for sustained investment in education and training.

In the face of the spread of the virus and subsequent threats to social and economic conditions, governments around the world have been taking massive fiscal responses, which in mid-September 2020 amounted to around US\$12 trillion, representing 12 per cent of the global gross domestic product (IMF, 2020). UNESCO, with support from several members of the Global Education Coalition,¹ analysed the data on 192 countries, sourced mainly from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and also other sources to find out how the fiscal measures established by governments in response to COVID-19 addressed education and training.

Countries worldwide have invested US\$ 11.8 trillion in total as a fiscal response, mostly in high-income countries (84 per cent). During lockdown and the immediate aftermath, most of the fiscal responses aimed to save lives and livelihoods. Among social sectors, health was a priority, as well as education — though to a very limited extent. According to UNESCO estimates, the share of this fiscal response allocated to education represents a mere 0.78 per cent, or US\$ 91 billion, out of which US\$ 73 billion was spent in high-income countries. Europe and North America allocated the largest amount to education (US\$ 56.9 billion) followed by Asia and the Pacific (US\$ 30.5 billion), while other regions may have spent around US\$ 3.8 billion altogether. On average, it is estimated that countries in Europe and North America allocated 0.73 per cent of their fiscal packages to education, compared to 0.85 per cent and 0.69 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively. Supplementary allocations to education seem to be particularly low in high-income and upper middle-income countries (0.74 per cent and 0.62 per cent, respectively), while these figures are 1.56 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa and 1.08 per cent for Arab region.

Many governments have announced packages in several phases and areas in response to the evolving impacts of COVID-19 and according to the diverse needs of education systems. The scale, focus and nature of national responses have varied in accordance with national circumstances and capacity, but in most of the cases, they have occurred in the following three phases: 1) Immediate support during widespread lockdown/school closures; 2) Transition/preparation for gradual reopening; and 3) Support for post COVID-19 recovery (see Table 3, also Annexes 2 and 3 for more details of governments' responses and strategies).

The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to jeopardize years of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG4) in the 2030 Education Agenda. As the world enters a phase of gradual recovery, the time has come to increase efforts to mitigate and curtail the impact of the current crisis on education systems and to leverage education and skills development as an effective and efficient means for economic revival and sustainable development.

UNESCO advocates for protecting, even increasing investment in education in the world, for its own sake as a human right as well as a strategy for an efficient, effective and sustainable economic recovery. From emergency and relief response that governments have taken to contain the virus and to ensure social protection, countries are in the process of shifting to the recovery phase to boost employment and economic activities, as well as to facilitate transition into a post-pandemic economy.

¹ See the Global Education Coalition website for more information: <https://globaleducationcoalition.unesco.org/>

Governments' education responses in recovery plans and stimulus packages may prioritize enabling areas for achieving SDG-4, including the following:

- **Leave no one behind:** The current crisis risks pushing 100–110 million people globally into extreme poverty (IMF, 2020). About 24 million students are at risk of not returning to education institutions in 2020. Governments need to provide direct and targeted support to vulnerable populations in order to mitigate massive numbers of dropouts, while international aid must prioritize countries most in need of support.
- **Skills for economic recovery:** The post-COVID-19 pandemic is expected to call for an inclusive and green recovery and structural transformation of the economy. To prepare for economies to create jobs and boost economic activity, governments need to develop and implement education and training policies that equip people with the relevant skills.
- **Smart investment in education and training:** The crisis has revealed the weakness of traditional education systems. Flexible, hybrid and blended learning have been tested, indicating that change is possible and can be quick. This requires investment, possibly high in the short term, but with longer-term benefits to strengthen the resilience of education systems. Additional investments in safety and sanitary infrastructures is also needed. Smart investment in education can trigger inclusive economic growth, employment and sustainability. For instance, investing in local education technology ecosystems including local content production, development and maintenance of online platforms, services to schools, data protection and security, infrastructure development and capacity building and training services.

UNESCO advocates for protecting education, even increasing investment in education as human capital during the gradual recovery and post-COVID-19 era in pursuit of SDG4—2030 and as a strategy for an efficient, effective and sustainable economic recovery. This includes smart and better investment in education, while reducing education gaps, through reallocating public education spending to the poor, thus contributing to reducing inequality and promoting economic growth.

Introduction

The roadmap to achieve the SDG4 — 2030 Education Agenda provides guidance to governments and partners on how to turn commitments into action in the field of education and training, with a focus on equitable and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to reverse progress made by education systems. Unlike the 2008 financial crisis, the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy is exogenous to the global financial system, with a drastic shock forcing the real economy to stagger.

As of mid-September 2020, governments around the world have taken large-scale fiscal and monetary measures worth US\$ 11.8 trillion, representing some 12 per cent of the global GDP (IMF, 2020). These actions included additional spending, lost revenue, temporary tax cuts, liquidity support, such as loans, guarantees, and capital injections by the public sector. The sectors most frequently targeted include health, tourism, transportation, communication and technology, construction and infrastructure.

This paper assesses how education has been addressed in massive governments' fiscal responses, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. It provides a global overview with aggregated data on governments' stimulus packages aimed at health response, social protection and economic recovery from COVID-19 and an analysis of how much, where and how these stimulus packages are targeted to the education and training sector, based on a deep dive of governments' fiscal responses (representative of diverse income levels) to education financing. Analyses are based on government-led economic stimulus measures, with a focus on fiscal policies directed to education and training. The analysis covers 192 countries, of which fiscal responses for education have been compiled for 43 countries.

In most OECD countries, governments have mobilized additional resources to mitigate the impact and to support economic activity, channelling them through the following main groups of responses (OECD, 2020):²

1. **Businesses and workers:** The support has focused on sustaining businesses' cash flow by deferring or reducing tax expenditure obligations and increasing access to credit. The support to employees and workers has been through government-funded allowances in lieu of wages and salaries, either by reducing or eliminating the waiting period for access to government benefits.
2. **Households and individuals:** Support has prioritized the elderly, the vulnerable and those who provide care for children and other household members. The support is in the form of direct payments and targeted assistance for energy and other costs.
3. **Industries and sectors:** The health sector has received priority to ensure access to additional resources. In some instances, the education sector has also received additional resources, as governments have encouraged study and retraining.

In developing countries, however, especially in the most low-income economies, governments often relied on international financial support in addition to domestic stimulus packages of a relatively small scale. (UNESCO/UNICEF/ World Bank joint survey, 2020)

Countries' responses to the COVID-19 crisis in general, and to education financing in particular, vary significantly based on the scale and speed of the spread of the virus, available fiscal space, and local financial capabilities.³ From emergency and relief response that governments have taken to contain the virus and to ensure social protection, countries are in the process of shifting to recovery phase in order to boost employment and economic activities, as well as to facilitate transition into a post-pandemic economy.

² OECD. 2020. Initial Budget and Public Management Responses to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic in OECD Countries. Working Document.

³ The need to have real time cross-country peer-exchange on response efforts is invaluable, and several useful trackers providing information on governments' fiscal and financing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been provided by a number of international organizations, notably IMF Fiscal Monitor, IMF Policy Trackers, OECD's COVID-19 Policy Trackers, KPMG's Government Stimulus tracker, CABRI's COVID-19 Africa Public Finance Response Monitor. Yet, such a tracker for sectoral funding appears missing although the World Health Organization (WHO) has attempted to conduct a survey in March, and desk reviews in May and June 2020 to find out that more than 40 countries around the world have established funds to support their broader response to the COVID-19.

The paper is divided into three sections: the first section synthesizes data and findings of 192 countries mainly from IMF Fiscal Monitor, and published sources on governments' fiscal measures and financing responses to the COVID-19 crisis for the education and training sector compared to other sectors. The second section takes a closer look at selected countries and examples of governments' fiscal spending on education, while exploring how much, where, and how the stimulus packages are being pumped into the education sector. In the third section, through an analysis of country-level interventions and experience and policy dialogue across countries, UNESCO advocates for a better and sustained investment in education and training. This last section also makes recommendations for governments and the international community to consider in order to take a resolute transformative approach towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on education through smart investment, skills for economic recovery, and leaving no one behind.

The data presented in this report is collected from various sources, mainly from the publicly available, online sources that track countries' public policies aiming to reverse or mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at the national and sectoral levels. The main sources selectively used include the IMF Fiscal Monitor, IMF Policy Tracker, government official websites, UNESCO field offices, KPMG, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other international organizations. Due to the fast-moving pace of change, it may not always reflect the most current developments in a given country or territory. However, efforts have been made to collect as much and as most updated data as possible.

This paper, nevertheless, acknowledges certain limitations that mainly result from the rapidly evolving governments' fiscal responses and current dialogues on fiscal trade-offs which often lead to changes in the estimates. This is for instance related to the changing landscape such as the delays in implementation of the recovery plans (e.g., France) or the renegotiation of the recovery plan itself (e.g., United States of America). Furthermore, education and training as a whole is a broad area, so governments' fiscal support may be channelled through dedicated ministries in charge of education and training or several other ministries and/or national agencies providing, for example, in-kind or cash transfers to support education and skills development. Qualitative data and evidence were rapidly collected, primarily based on information retrieved online, which may exclude other resources and data available through other means. In order to address these limitations, UNESCO will continue the research and analysis of in-depth quantitative and qualitative data as soon as the situation permits it, with a view to improving the depth and accuracy of the analysis.

Section 1. How Much Does Education Weigh In Governments' Fiscal Measures?

In order to measure global education funding size in fiscal response to COVID-19, this section analysed the stimulus packages from 192 countries which have been launched as of mid-September 2020. The analysis included two steps: first, the share of education funding identified in each country's stimulus package. Second, as only 43 of the 192 countries had readily available information on the amount allocated to education stimulus packages, the median share of education in stimulus packages in three income groups (high-income, upper-middle income and low-/lower-middle income) was taken in order to minimize the effect caused by extreme values. The global stimulus package amount allocated to education was then estimated by applying the median share of education to each of the countries.

As shown in Table 1, a total amount of US\$ 11.8 trillion was allocated to stimulus packages in 192 countries, of which 84 per cent occurred in high-income countries. As much as US\$91 billion may have been allocated to education globally; however, of that spending, US\$ 73 billion occurred in high-income countries. Globally, this represents 0.78 per cent of the total stimulus package amount. Table 2 illustrates that, as it relates to regional distribution level, Europe and North America allocated the largest amount to education (US\$ 56.9 billion) followed by Asia and the Pacific (US\$ 30.5 billion).

Table 1: Estimated Education Stimulus Package by Income Level (million US\$)

Income level	Number of Countries	Total Stimulus	Estimated Education Stimulus	% Education
High-income	60	9,936,355	73,042	0.74%
Upper-middle-income	58	1,524,510	9,515	0.62%
Lower-middle/Low-income	74	306,882	8,673	2.83%
Total	192	11,767,746	91,230	0.78%

Table 2: Estimated Education Stimulus Package (million US\$) (Region)

Region	Number of Countries	Total Stimulus	Estimated Education Stimulus	% Education
Sub-Saharan Africa	43	55,009	856	1.56%
Arab States	20	68,093	732	1.08%
Asia & the Pacific	45	3,573,440	30,532	0.85%
Europe & North America	49	7,745,431	56,857	0.73%
Latin America & the Caribbean	35	325,772	2,252	0.69%
Total	192	11,767,746	91,230	0.78%

Figure 1 shows that low- and lower-middle countries allocate relatively small amounts to education fiscal response, as compared to other income groups who seem to dedicate a higher proportion of their stimulus packages to education.⁴ This is the same case when it comes to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Arab region, as Figure 2 shows.⁵

⁴ The share of education in stimulus package varies considerably from one country to another, ranging from 0.01 per cent to 25.28 per cent. Comparing the median values of each income group, low-/lower-middle income countries dedicate a higher share of their stimulus packages to education compared to high-income and upper- to middle-income countries.

⁵ The analysis has its own limitations for the following reasons: (i) Information on education-related allocation in stimulus packages was available in only limited number of countries, mostly in high-income countries; (ii) Among the countries with data, the share of education in stimulus packages vary considerably. The study used the median for the estimation, while it may lead to ignoring the precise value of individual country's education stimulus; (iii) Due to the lack of clear definition of "education-related activities" across countries, the activities supported under "education" funding may vary. In most cases the information was collected more conservatively (e.g., only including those allocated to the Ministries of Education) and it may have led to an underestimation of the overall amounts; (iv) A large number of countries have introduced fiscal measures to support the economy in the face of COVID 19. In reality, the components of the additional fiscal packages come from different donors and sources. However, this study only takes the national fiscal measures into account, the funding from international donors and ODA are excluded from the analysis.

Figure 1: Estimated Total Stimulus Packages and Share of Education by Income Level

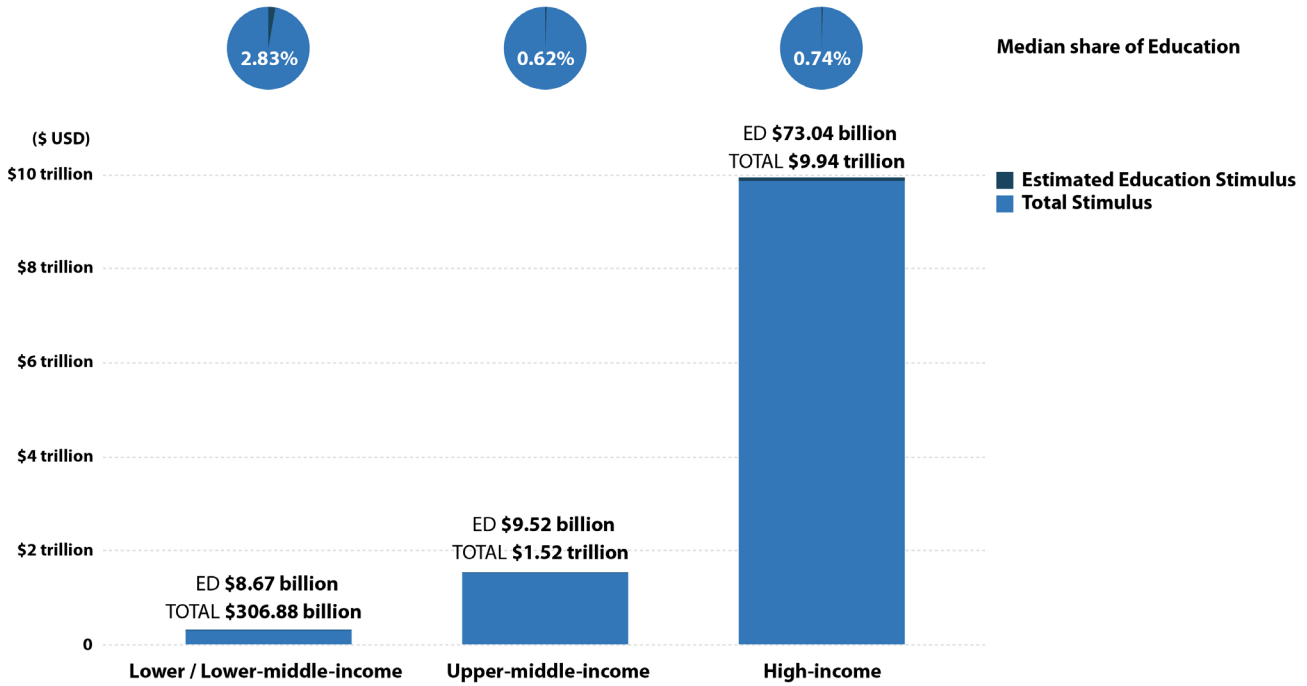
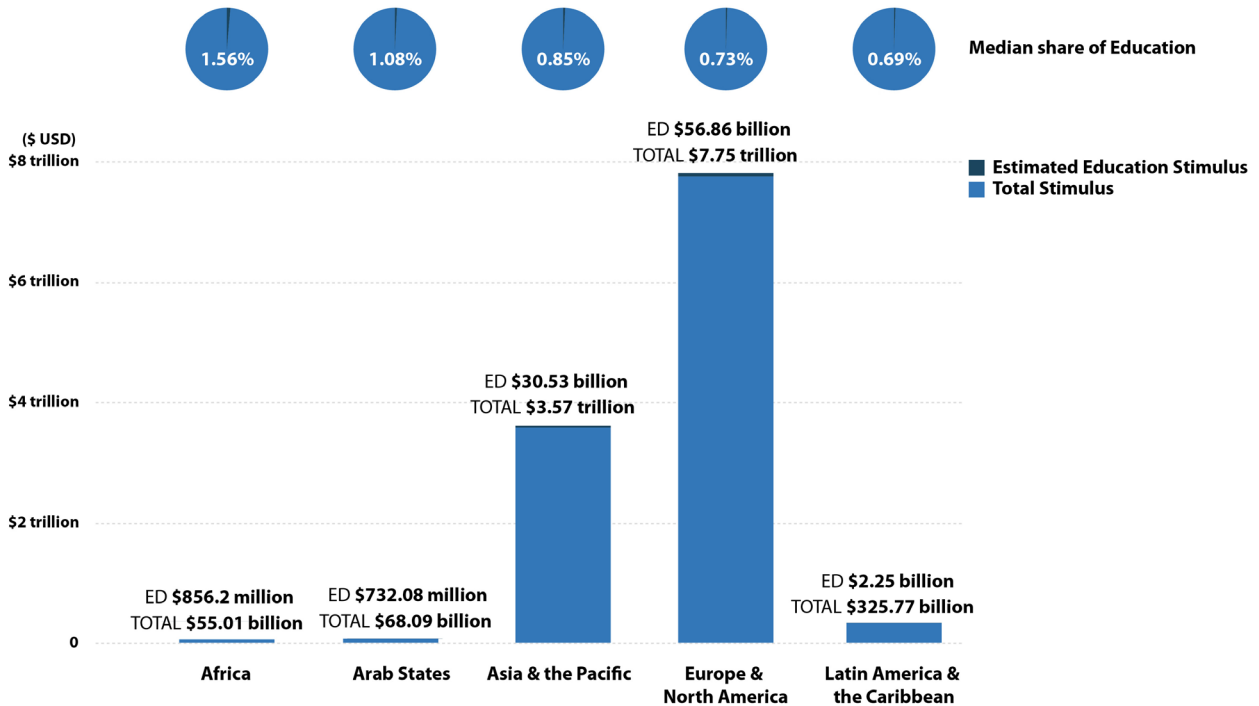


Figure 2: Estimated Total Stimulus Packages and Share of Education by UNESCO Region



Section 2. Examples of Governments' Fiscal Response to Education

In this section, we analyse government-led economic stimulus measures in selected countries. Education-specific data and information are compiled from different sources for a more qualitative analysis, including a deep dive of some governments' fiscal responses representing diverse income levels and for which the data are available.⁶ The information is scanned for insights into the following:

- Whether education is part of the fiscal stimulus package;
- Funding instruments/schemes used for funding education (from the total fiscal stimulus packages);
- Strategies for creating more fiscal space to support education and training; and
- Other financing measures to support education and training.

Many governments have announced packages in several phases and areas in response to the evolving impacts of COVID-19 and according to the diverse needs of education systems. The scale, focus and nature of national responses have varied in accordance with national circumstances and capacity, but in most of the cases, they have occurred in the following three phases: 1) Immediate support during widespread lockdown/school closures; 2) Transition/preparation for gradual reopening; and 3) Support for post COVID-19 recovery (see Table 3, also Annexes 2 and 3 for more details of governments' responses and strategies).

Table 3: Phased Fiscal and Financing Strategies to Support Education and Training

Category	Description	Countries/Territories
Immediate support and relief		
Health & sanitation	Support provided to contain the spread of the virus, such as distribution of masks, medical equipment, cleaning and sanitary measures	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Korea, United States of America
Childcare relief to families and frontline workers	General support given to early childhood care and education, including special support to daycare centres or families for medical and critical staff required to report to work during total or partial lockdown	Australia, Republic of Korea, Senegal, United States of America
Cash or in-kind transfers	General or targeted transfers to families in cash or in kind to ensure social protection, feeding and also compensate for economic burden to support education, esp. during lockdown. This category is often not counted as education packages	Argentina, Bolivia, Bahamas (The) Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tabago, Uruguay, Venezuela
Deployment of distance learning programmes	To support the continuity of teaching and learning, at school and university levels through upgrading ICT infrastructure, purchase of digital devices, developing distance learning platforms, etc.	Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tabago, UAE, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela
Transition/preparation for gradual reopening		
Developing tools and solutions for enhanced distance/remote learning	Development of new tools or enhanced, integrated solutions for the delivery of distance/remote learning programmes, for example teacher training, digital curriculum content development, connectivity, etc.	Chile, China, Republic of Korea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, UAE
Financial aid grants to students	General or targeted financial assistance for the payment of tuition fees of young people at school, TVET and university levels, e.g. waiving or subsidizing the fees, provision of student loans	Botswana, Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Mongolia, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, United States of America, Virgin Islands

⁶ Our intent is not to provide the answer to "why" stimulus money may be allocated to particular areas, but mostly address "what" the funding might be allocated to, and "how."

Support to training institutions and HEIs	Direct financial support to training institutions (e.g. technical and vocational schools, HEIs) struggling to make up for lost revenues following school closures	Australia, Lebanon, Sudan, United States
Research & innovation	Support to research for innovation, green recovery, vaccine, as well as in anticipation of post-COVID economic and social transformation	Australia, France
Support for post COVID-19 recovery		
Skills training	Support for retraining, reskilling for transition to active labor market, including for internship, apprenticeship programmes	Australia, Brazil, Guatemala, France, Malaysia, United Kingdom
Public investment	More general support emphasizing job creation, green recovery/growth	France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom
Debt relief	Debt relief to ease or create additional fiscal space for financing development	Mozambique

Funds are mainly drawn from broad-based fiscal stimulus options with a few countries using other fiscal instruments such as bond issuance (e.g., Japan), or a grace period for credit instalment payments (e.g., Colombia). In developing countries, cash transfer, in-kind food/voucher scheme and the improvement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure may have been the focus, while in developed countries, funds were mainly directed to digital innovation, research and green campuses.

The packages blended continued support for those most affected by the crisis, with broader fiscal stimulus allocated to areas in the initial stages of recovery and areas where sanitation responses are required. Some recovery packages contained support for areas that also fund education and training, such as innovation (Australia, France), skills training (Australia, Brazil, Guatemala, France, Malaysia, United Kingdom), green growth (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom), expanded digital infrastructure and internet connectivity (Chile, Germany, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Japan).

Many advanced economies announced several fiscal stimulus packages as the sanitary situation evolves and to respond to emerging needs in education. An example of such countries is the Republic of Korea. The Government has taken four rounds of stimulus packages, taking a diversity of measures, including deployment of digital infrastructure for K-12, support of remote learning for universities, strengthening teacher capacities in remote teaching and development of Korean MOOC (online content; see Box 1).

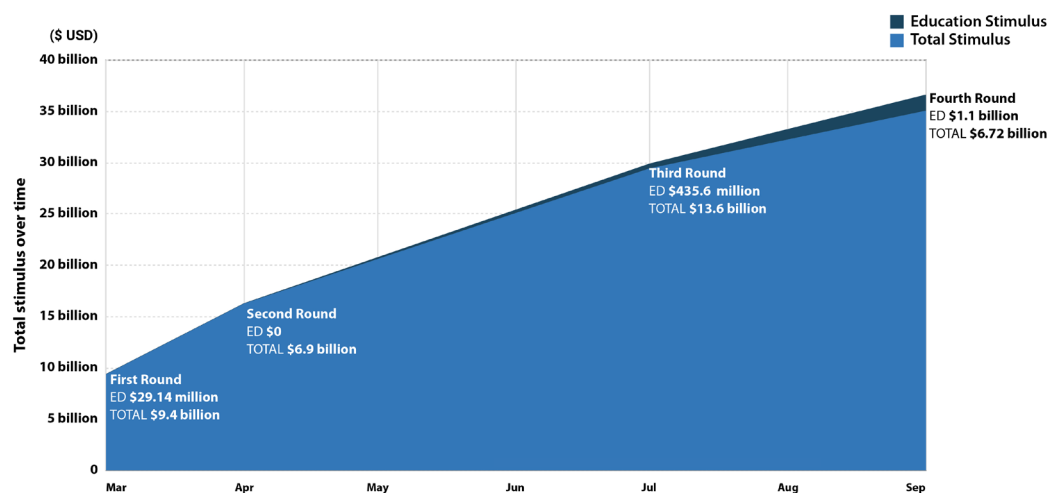
Box 1: Case of Republic of Korea: Stimulus packages in 2020 (Million US\$)

In the Republic of Korea, four stimulus measures have been rolled out since the outbreak of the COVID-19, with education responses included in three to respond to evolving needs in the education sector. The share of education and training is 4.3 per cent of the total stimulus packages.

Rounds	Total Amount	Education-related	Activity Descriptions
1st round (17 March 2020)	9,396.55	29.14	Support kindergarten organization Support online university courses
2nd round (30 April 2020)	6,896.55		Comments: Cash transfers to families (max 1 million Won per 4-member family)
3rd round (3 July 2020)	13,620.69	435.60	Deployment of digital infrastructure for primary, middle and secondary education (connectivity, replacement of old devices, etc.) Support remote learning for universities Strengthen online education for national universities (replacement of connectivity, distance education centres) Strengthen teacher capacities in remote teaching Support university students' tuition Develop KMOOC (online content) Purchase masks and prevention materials for K-12 Support recruitment of university online course support staff
4th round (22 Sep 2020)	6,724.14	1,095.60	Support protection and care of 5.32 million children and students (out of school due to closures) Support remote learning o 1.38 million middle students (age 13-16), 150,000 won per student
Total	36,637.93	1,560.34	4.26%

Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea, 14 October 2020

Figure 3: Total of Stimulus Package Over Time



Several countries, especially those with advanced economies, have taken measures to address diverse needs in the education and training sector, ranging from early childhood to skills development to higher education. Among these countries is Australia, with a combination of federal and state-level measures, including measures to address skills training and job market needs. (Box 2).

Box 2: Case of Australia — Multifaceted Educational Response

Since the start of the pandemic, Australia has taken several relief and recovery measures. Relief measures mainly targeted workers affected by COVID-19, essential workers and vulnerable children with immediate support. Recovery measures laid out additional investments to reform critical sectors to help drive the economy. The Commonwealth government has focused on education, skills and training, and employment services.

- **Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package:** The Australian Government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020 with the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package to support children of essential workers, and vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The package gave AUS\$ 12 million to childcare services, AUS\$ 800,000 to increase the level of funding for in-home care providers, noting they provide education and care predominantly to essential workers and vulnerable children.
- **Higher education and employment of graduates:** The Job-ready Graduates Package will increase funding of AUS\$ 2 billion by 2021. The package will create up to 30,000 new university places and 50,000 new short course places by 2021 and provide additional support for students in regional and remote Australia. In 2021, an additional AUS\$ 1 billion is to be allocated to support the vital research activities of Australia's universities. The changes will deliver more job-ready graduates in the disciplines and regions where they are needed most and help drive the nation's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Skills:** The Australian Government will invest AUS\$ 2 billion to give hundreds of thousands of Australians access to new skills by retraining and upskilling them into sectors with job opportunities. The "Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements" will fund 100,000 additional apprenticeships through a AUS\$ 1.2 billion wage subsidy, paid to businesses who take on new apprentices from October 2020 to September 2021. The Government also announced a range of smaller measures focusing on rectifying systems or processes involving elements of the Vocational Education Training (VET) system.
- **Key insights:** Government has focused on job creation that is necessary and important. However, the pathways for learners remain complicated, because of an education system that is disjointed. This is compounded by the perennial challenges of meeting labour market skills needs, particularly given the uncertainty in Australia's post-COVID economy.

Successfully implementing these reforms depends on a highly complex interplay between the States, Territories and the Commonwealth, and the broader economy.

Different state responses include:

- Building on the commonwealth measures, single states have taken different and additional initiatives. The state of Victoria funded 4,100 tutors across state schools to support 200,000 students who may have fallen behind due to the pandemic. Western Australia also invested in schools with AUS\$ 492.2 million to upgrade and expand public schools in the next four years.
- Other states have invested to protect international students. Victoria set up a AUS\$ 45 million International Student Emergency Relief Fund, while New South Wales issued a AUS\$20 million package for international students who are remained blocked Australia due to the pandemic.
- All states in line with the central government priority invested in job skills and training systems. New South Wales, for example, funded additional 108,000 free or low-fee training places. Queensland dedicated AUS\$ 20 million for additional free training targeted particularly to young people and women who have borne a disproportionate burden through job losses nationally. Western Australia assisted young people under 25 by offering 15 free short courses and reducing course fees for a further 39 high-priority courses.

A number of developing countries have focused on providing school meals and sanitary measures, while developing tools for distance education, as has been the case of countries in Latin America (Box 3).

Box 3: Case of Latin American Countries

As of October 12, 2020, the information collected on 28 (33 in total) countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and five overseas territories of non-LAC countries shows that most of the measures taken in the education sector are related to the provision of school meals and the implementation of tools for distance learning.

- Twenty-two of 33 countries have maintained school feeding programmes in various forms. The most used (12 countries) is the delivery of food kits for home preparation, followed by the provision of lunches (five countries) and, to a lesser extent, cash transfers and delivery of food vouchers (four countries). There is no detail about the form of implementation in Venezuela.
- All overseas territories have maintained school feeding programmes mainly by providing cash transfers (direct payments, food vouchers). Only the Virgin Islands has made in-kind transfers under the "No child goes hungry" food initiative (distribution of breakfasts and lunches).
- Twenty-four of 33 countries (73 per cent) in the sample have provided tools for distance learning (online platforms, TV, radio, distance-learning materials). Additionally, 12 out of 33 countries have included the delivery of technological devices, such as tablets and computers, among the measures adopted to implement distance learning activities. There is no information on whether the five overseas territories of non-LAC countries have implemented any of these distance learning tools or provide technological devices.

Some examples include:

- **Chile:** starting in September, tablets with a free internet connection will begin to be delivered to more than 16,000 students in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes.
- **El Salvador:** The Government distributed 9,000 computers to teachers in the public sector. This meant an investment of US\$ 2.7 million.
- **Jamaica:** Cabinet approves procurement of 65,000 tablets for provision to students and teachers as well as provision of offline servers for schools to facilitate offline learning.
- **Peru:** purchase of 719,000 mobile internet tablets to support rural students; 123,000 tablets for urban poor students; and 97,000 tablets for teachers. This meant an investment of 600 million new soles (US\$ 169 million).
- In countries such as Colombia, Jamaica and Virgin Islands, students in higher education with refundable credits benefit from payment easiness.
- The Dominican Republic launched "Bono Estudio Contigo" (BEC), a new programme to support university students finishing their studies. This programme will invest about RD 200 million pesos per month (US\$ 3.4 million).
- Brazil launched 122,000 thousand free-of-charge vacancies in distance professional qualification courses (the "New Paths" programme). This meant an investment of 60 million Reales (US\$ 11 million).
- Finally, to carry out distance learning activities, 14 countries considered the provision of resources for teacher training, especially with regard to tools for the use and management of information and communication technologies (CEPAL-UNESCO, 2020).

In conducting this research, a number of country cases and examples were collected and analysed to build greater insight into what policies have been put in place and how fiscal and financing policies have been adopted, to ease the funding demands of the education and training sector. Categories of governments' fiscal responses in education and their examples are presented in Annexes 2 and 3.

Section 3. Making a Case for More and Better Investment in Education

This paper has attempted to synthesize how education is featured in massive governments' fiscal responses and to make a case for sustained investment in education and training.

Governments worldwide have launched emergency and recovery plans on an unprecedented scale in order to support health systems, mitigate the effects of the economic recession, targeting interventions to protect workers and their families and to safeguard economic sectors most impacted by the crisis. Fiscal measures announced as of mid-September 2020, are estimated at US\$ 11.8 trillion globally, or close to 12 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP), (IMF, 2020).

During the early stage of the pandemic, most of the fiscal responses aimed to save lives and livelihoods. Among social sectors, health has received priority, as well as, to a limited extent, education and training. Many governments have tried to ensure continuity of learning through various means of remote teaching, including online, TV/radio and other modalities. However, based on available information, the share of the stimulus packages allocated to education and training was a mere 0.78 per cent. This may be understandable as most of the fiscal responses up to now may have aimed to save lives and livelihoods and to ensure social protection.

As the world is entering into a phase of gradual recovery, while for the pandemic to be under control through effective vaccines or treatments, time has come to mitigate and curtail the impact of the pandemic on education systems and to leverage education and training as an effective and efficient means for economic recovery and sustainable development.

Education and training need to be included among priority areas in the future fiscal responses to support an inclusive and green recovery and structural transformation of the economy. In order to prepare economies that create jobs and boost economic activity, governments need to develop and implement education and training policies that equip people with the right and relevant skills. Last but most importantly, since the crisis has revealed the weakness of traditional education systems, intervening through "Smart investment in education and training" provides flexible, hybrid and blended learning. Governments are advised to consider the following arguments in the future recovery and stimulus measures:

- 1. Pro-poor strategy** to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. The current crisis risks pushing 100–110 million people globally into extreme poverty, reversing the decades-long declining trend (IMF, 2020). According to UNESCO estimates, about 24 million students (from pre-primary to tertiary education) will be at risk of not returning to education institutions in 2020, including care centres, schools, universities or other training institutions due to the impact of economic shocks. The largest share of learners at risk of not returning to school will be in South and West Asia (5.9 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (5.3 million). Tertiary education is most affected, with an estimated 3.5 per cent decline in enrolment, resulting in 7.9 million fewer students. This is followed by pre-primary education with an estimated 2.8 per cent decline in enrolments, corresponding to 5 million children. Young children, students living in poverty and marginalization and those affected by conflict and migration are hit the hardest. In light of economic constraints, governments, therefore, need to provide direct and targeted support to marginalized families in order to mitigate massive dropouts, while international aid must prioritize countries most in need of support.

- 2. Skills for post-pandemic economy:** The post-COVID-19 pandemic is expected to further promote an inclusive and green recovery and structural transformation of the economy. In order to prepare for economies to create jobs, boost economic activity and to transform to more resilient and inclusive economies, governments need to develop and implement education and training policies that equip with right and relevant skills. Governments will gain by addressing as early as possible the potential losses in human capital because of unemployment, as well as skill mismatches as demand shifts from high-contact sectors to those that permit social distancing (IMF, 2020), while directing the post-pandemic economy to become more digital and greener.
- 3. Smart investment in education:** The crisis has revealed the weakness of the traditional education and training systems, thus requiring a review for relevance at this critical juncture. The focus on schooling rather than on learning has shown its limitations, demonstrating the need for innovation and future solutions. The crisis has shown that learning is possible during school closures, though with varying and mixed results across and within countries. Flexible, hybrid and blended learning that the education community has long advocated for the future of education have been tested, indicating that change is possible and can be quick. However, many challenges remain in filling the digital gap, advancing equity and inclusion, safety and sanitary facilities and supporting innovation in education. More investment is needed for learning to take place, within and outside of schools, including investing in digital infrastructure and connectivity in school and in family; for pedagogies to support learning, therefore to innovate and prepare better the teaching profession while supporting parents / families in teaching and attending to the needs of children in learning process in anticipation of future shocks; for education and training systems to facilitate learning that occurs lifelong and life-wide while recognizing pathways and recognition of learning that occurs outside of school buildings; for schools to value not only academic knowledge, but also and increasingly the transversal competencies. This requires investment, possibly high costs in the short term, but certainly longer-term benefits to strengthen the resilience of education systems, while promoting the access to, quality and relevance of learning. Smart investment in education can trigger local inclusive economic growth, employment and sustainability. For instance, investing in local education technology eco-systems including local content production, development and maintenance of on-line platforms, services to schools, data protection and security, infrastructure development and capacity building and training services. Additional investments in safety and sanitary infrastructures is equally important.

UNESCO advocates for protecting education, even increasing investment in education as human capital during the gradual recovery and post-COVID-19 era in pursuit of SDG4—2030 and as a strategy for an efficient, effective and sustainable economic recovery. This includes smart and better investment in education, while reducing education gaps, through reallocating public education spending to the poor, thus contributing to reducing inequality and promoting economic growth.

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Annexes

Annex 1: List of Countries Used in Estimating Education Stimulus Packages

Africa	Asia & the Pacific	Europe & North America	Latin America & the Caribbean
Botswana	Australia	Canada	Brazil
Equatorial Guinea	Japan	France	Mexico
Mozambique	Republic of Korea	Germany	Chile
Senegal	New Zealand	Italy	Colombia
	Pakistan	Spain	Dominican Republic
		United Kingdom	El Salvador
		United States	Jamaica
		Austria	Peru
		Belgium	Haiti
		Denmark	Guyana
		Estonia	
		Finland	
		Iceland	
		Ireland	
		Latvia	
		Lithuania	
		Luxembourg	
		Norway	
		Portugal	
Sweden			
Albania			
Bulgaria			
Georgia			
North Macedonia			
Serbia			

Annex 2: Country Examples of Education Stimulus Packages

The information in the following table is derived from several sources.^{7 8 9}

Category	Description of category	Country Examples
Immediate support and relief		
Health & sanitation	Support provided to contain the spread of the virus, such as distribution of masks, medical equipment, cleaning and sanitary measures	<p>Antigua and Barbuda: schools are currently being inspected by the Ministry of Health to ensure they are up to the guidelines/protocols.</p> <p>Argentina: direct monetary transfers to schools for the purchase of supplies such as alcohol, bleach, cleaning supplies, masks, etc.</p> <p>Burkina Faso: distribution of free masks to students and teachers</p> <p>Mozambique: additional funds were spent by the Education Sector mainly in the preparation of conditions, especially sanitation, for returning to classes.</p> <p>Nicaragua: UNICEF delivered to the Ministry of Education, 1,650 hygiene kits.</p> <p>Peru: acquisition of hygiene kits for public schools and universities.</p> <p>United States of America: US\$13 billion to support school districts, covering a wide range of activities, including cleaning and sanitizing schools.</p>
Childcare and education relief to families and frontline workers	General support given to early childhood care and education, including special support to day care centres or families for medical and critical staff required to report to work during total or partial lockdown	<p>Australia: provided free childcare to around one million families through mid-July (AUS\$0.3 billion) and announced targeted support to the education system. In addition, AUS\$2.6 billion COVID-19 Childcare Package to keep early education and childcare services around the country open during the pandemic.</p> <p>Republic of Korea: financial Support for kindergarten organizations</p> <p>United States of America: providing US\$ 3.5 billion for supporting childcare providers through the crisis, ensuring that workers in the health care sector, emergency responders, sanitation works, and other essential workers have access to childcare to enable them to work.</p>
Cash or in-kind transfers	General or targeted transfers to families in cash or in kind to ensure social protection, feeding and also compensate for economic burden to support education, esp. during lockdown. This category is often not counted as education packages	<p>Anguilla: is providing children in the school feeding program with XCD\$200 a month per child.</p> <p>Bolivia: is providing children of low-income families who attend public and private schools with monetary transfers to replace school breakfast</p> <p>Costa Rica: is providing food delivery for children, pregnant and lactating mothers enrolled in the Child Care and Protection services (API). Also, delivery of food packages to families that have students in the school meal program.</p> <p>Colombia is providing grace period in credit instalments, temporary reduction of interest, extension of repayment periods for students</p> <p>Martinique: is providing direct payment due to the cancelation of school canteen service to low-income families.</p> <p>The Bahamas: is providing cash vouchers for vulnerable students in the school meals program.</p>

7 For Latin American countries: ECLAC, Database of Social Protection Measures to face COVID-19 (measures classified as "education", and selected measures from those targeted to children and adolescents). World Bank, classification of countries for the current 2021 fiscal year.

8 UNESCO, World Bank, and UNICEF Survey results, July 2020.

9 Respective official government websites.

Deployment of distance learning programmes	To support the continuity of teaching and learning, at school and university levels through upgrading ICT infrastructure, purchase of digital devices, developing distance learning platforms, etc.	<p>Chile: delivery of tablets with a free internet connection to more than 16,000 students in TVET programmes.</p> <p>El Salvador: the Government released 9,000 computers to teachers in the public sector. This meant an investment of US\$ 2.7 million.</p> <p>Japan: is investing in distance learning programmes and infrastructure.</p> <p>Jamaica: acquisition of 65,000 tablets as well as provision of offline servers for schools to facilitate offline learning.</p> <p>Kazakhstan: the government is providing 500,000 computers for learners from disadvantage families for 2020-2021 academic year.</p> <p>Peru: purchase of 719,000 mobile internet tablets to support rural students; 123,000 tablets for urban poor students; and 97,000 tablets for teachers. This meant an investment of 600 million new soles (US\$ 169 million).</p> <p>Republic of Korea: is strengthening online education for national universities (replacement of connectivity, distance education centres), Develop KMOOC (online content), and strengthening teacher capacities in remote teaching and support recruitment of university online course support staff</p> <p>Sweden: Swedish municipalities and regions will get an allowance of 20 billion SEK to strengthen municipalities and regions capacity to support the continuity of learning.</p> <p>UAE: is providing 1,191 computers for the Ministry of Education to support remote learning and securing more than 600 computers for orphaned children for remote learning.</p> <p>United Kingdom: Schools can claim up to 75, 000 GBP, depending on their size to support the continuity of learning and teaching.</p> <p>United States of America: as part of US\$ 13 billion purchasing educational technology such as laptops and hotspot devices, training educators to use online learning tools, and ensuring access to education for students with disabilities.</p>
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Transition/preparation for gradual reopening

Developing tools and solutions for enhanced distance/remote learning	Development of new tools or enhanced, integrated solutions for the delivery of distance/remote learning programmes, for example teacher training, digital curriculum content development, connectivity, etc.	<p>China: Hebei City in China launched an online training for the city's 500 kindergarten staff on epidemic prevention and control, distance learning strategy, how to give the epidemic prevention education to the children after the school re-opening.⁷</p> <p>Saudi Arabia: The Ministry of Education launched an e-learning platform Madrasty which is an electronic learning management system that includes tools that support the teaching and learning processes, and contribute to achieving the educational objectives of the curriculum and to support the achievement of skills, values and knowledge for students and students to be in line with the digital requirements of the present and future.</p> <p>Republic of Korea: deployment of digital infrastructure for K-12, support of remote learning for universities, strengthening teacher capacities in remote teaching.</p> <p>Qatar: launching a two new online learning platform called "Mzeed" and "Qlearning" that facilitates distance learning services by the Ministry of Education and that works without the constant need to connect to the internet. These platforms offer digital and interactive resources prepared by a qualified team of teachers, early education mentors and curricula specialists.</p> <p>Serbia: has developed two channels for distance learning: TV channel with national frequency and an online platform.</p> <p>UAE: activating virtual learning for nearly 1.2 million students from various schools and universities. In addition, investing in training 25,000 schoolteachers and administrators remotely.</p>
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Financial aid grants and subsidies	General or targeted financial assistance for the payment of tuition fees of young people at school, TVET and university levels, e.g., waiving or subsidizing the fees, provision of student loans	<p>Botswana: The government established a COVID-19 Relief Fund with a 2 billion Pula (about 1.1 per cent of GDP) contribution from the government that will: i) finance a wage subsidy amounting to 50 per cent of salaries of affected businesses (1,000-2,500 pula per month for a period of 3 months; ii) finance a waiver on training levy for a period of 6 months (150 million pula).</p> <p>Colombia: the government created a Solidarity Fund for Education in the amount of US\$ 59 million to mitigate dropouts caused by COVID-19 and encourage permanence in the education sector.</p> <p>Mongolia: the Government of Mongolia increased monthly child allowance from US\$ 7 to US\$ 35 for 6 months.</p> <p>Netherlands: €244 million will be invested in a subsidy scheme for primary education, (secondary) special education, secondary education to provide extra support to children, pupils and students</p> <p>Republic of Korea: support university students' tuition.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia: providing direct transfers to families</p> <p>Sudan: supporting families and parents in coordination with the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security.</p>
Support to training institutions and HEIs	Direct financial support to training institutions (e.g., technical and vocational schools, HEIs) struggling to make up for lost revenues following school closures	<p>Australia: providing higher-education relief packages to students, an additional AUS\$ 1 billion through the Research Support Program to support universities continue to deliver world-class research.</p> <p>Lebanon: training teachers on how to use appropriate technology means for distance learning during the blended learning period, as well as training them after a long interruption, and focusing on the emotional and social learning aspects of students.</p> <p>Sudan: training teachers on education under emergencies, alternative plans, and life skills under emergencies</p> <p>United States of America: providing direct financial relief to institutions of higher education struggling to make up for lost revenues following school closures and requires that institutions spend some of that funding on emergency financial aid grants to students</p>
Research & innovation	Support to research for innovation, green recovery, vaccine, as well as in anticipation of post-COVID economic and social transformation	<p>United Kingdom: is investing in quality-related research</p> <p>United States of America: US\$ 8.3 billion bill for coronavirus vaccine research and development.</p>

Support for post COVID-19 recovery		
Skills training	Support for retraining, reskilling for transition to active labour market, including for internship, apprenticeship programmes	<p>Australia: focused on skills and training, employment services, paying particular attention to addressing mismatch between education and labour market skills needs. Apprenticeships and a direct link into jobs are at the heart of the Government's Skills announcements. \$49.5 million to fund an additional 14,485 places in the Skills for Education and Employment program to support new jobseekers who lack basic language, literacy and numeracy skills.</p> <p>Iceland: launched two different measures directly supporting education, training and skills. A total of 5.3 billion ISK is expected to be allocated to support summer measures for students and effective job-seeking.</p> <p>Republic of Korea: 4 rounds of financial packages, with dedicated funds to support education and training.</p> <p>Serbia: Minister of Finance has announced that the Government will allocate RSD 1.2 billion (approx. EUR 10.2 million) for the programme of professional retraining and skills development.</p> <p>United Kingdom: is allocating 30 billion GBP package plan for jobs, Hardship funds, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Lifetime Skills Guarantee to give adults the chance to take free college courses valued by employers.</p>
Public investment	More general support emphasizing job creation and green recovery/growth	<p>Chile: is in the process of approving the "COVID-19 Transitional Emergency Fund" for US\$ 12 billion, of which US\$ 224,8 million (CLP 173.8 billion) will be allocated to Education according to the 2021 budget.</p> <p>Mexico: President López Obrador announced economic support actions to widen social wellbeing programmes. The expansion of Welfare Programmes (MXN 50 bn) include MXN 5.8 billion (US\$ 267.9 million) for education.</p> <p>United Kingdom: Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) and COVID Corporate Financing Facility.</p>
General Funding		<p>Equatorial Guinea: spending measures were taken to ensure continuity of education (0.4 per cent of GDP).</p> <p>Senegal: education funding in response to COVID-19 (28 per cent of the total economic stimulus package)</p>
Others		<p>Serbia: on 13 August 2020, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Decree on the Youth Employment Incentive Programme "My First Salary" with a goal is to help high school and college graduates to obtain first employment during and after the crisis caused by the COVID- 19.</p>

Annex 3: Fiscal measures and Strategies for Education and Training

Revenue sources and pooling

In the context of already challenged fiscal realities, digital and internet connectivity infrastructure and service delivery systems, many governments have reprogrammed their existing budgets, activated contingency reserves, and adopted supplementary budgets. Countries have drawn on a wide range of funding sources - budgetary resources, private donations, and external sources - to maximize the revenues available for financing emergency responses (Table A1). Private donations have been important in some countries (e.g., Jordan, South Africa), while direct contribution of households to education spending tends to be greater in poorer countries² (e.g., households in Kenya and Uganda devoted 15 per cent of their domestic and interregional remittances to fund the education of their family members).

Table A1: COVID-19 Funds — Revenue Sources

Mostly public	Mostly private	Mixed funding sources (public, private, official development finance)
Australia, Austria, Colombia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, Uruguay, Zambia, United Kingdom, United States	Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Pakistan, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe	Armenia, Bhutan, Botswana, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Togo

Source: Compiled by UNESCO staff based on different sources. The main source is IMF (2020). COVID-19 Funds in Response to the Pandemic

In some countries that depend on external aid (e.g. Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda), the establishment of the COVID-19 funds has been supported by donors in order to ring-fence external financing of the emergency response and to reduce fiduciary risk. Official development finance can play an important countercyclical role, particularly in these countries just as it has done in previous crises of global scale.³ Indeed, multilateral and bilateral donors have taken first steps to support developing economies:

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has announced over US\$ 100 billion in emergency lending and US\$ 1 trillion it could mobilise for its members. The World Bank Group will lend about US\$ 150 billion in the next 15 months.⁴
- Despite tightening national budgets due to increased domestic spending, members of the DAC have declared to “strive to protect ODA budgets.”⁵
- Recent COVID-related commitments by bilateral donors might therefore reflect shifts in already planned assistance towards the health sector rather than increasing ODA budgets.
- The G20 have announced a freeze on debt payments by the 76 IDA-eligible countries.⁶ The OECD estimates that the G20 debt moratorium will delay payments to public bilateral creditors worth US\$ 16.5 billion.⁷

Dedicated COVID-19 funds for education and skills training

To create more supplementary budget for education and accelerate emergency spending, many governments have drawn funds from the broad-based existing stimulus packages. While most funds are not appropriated in the budget (i.e., they are off-budget), some have used on-budget arrangements (for example, appropriations through specially created programmes or subprogrammes of the budget). Most funds operate through separate accounts, financial management and reporting arrangements, outside regular public financial management channels in the current financial year or are proposed as amendments to the budget bill for 2021 and beyond (Table A2).

Table A2: Dedicated COVID-19 Funds for Education and Skills Training, Selected Countries

Countries	Funding packages/instruments	Amount (US\$)
Australia	Research Support Programme	No data
	Job Ready Graduate Package	\$903.5 mil
	Job Trainer Fund	\$500 mil (over 1 year)
	Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package	No data
Chile	COVID-19 Transitional Emergency Fund (to finance education in 2021)	224.8 million
Colombia	Solidarity Fund for Education	No data
	MOE's investment budget	No data
	Cash transfer to more than 2 million families and youth	No data
	Educational kit baskets for children aged 0-5 (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare)	No data
	School feeding programme (take-home adjustment), in-kind food/voucher scheme (valued US\$ 13) to support 6.9 million young children and youth	No data
France	Third amendment of budget law for 2020	No data
	2021 draft budget bill and the investment program for the future	No data
	The European Union's European Recovery Plan	No data
Japan	MOE's 2 Stimulus Packages for 2020, funded by bond issuance	No data
Mexico	Support to parent associations for the maintenance of 31,000 school sites	No data
Republic of Korea	4 rounds of financial packages, with dedicated funds to support education and training including deployment of digital infrastructure for K-12, support of remote learning for universities, strengthening teacher capacities in remote teaching and development of KMOOC	US\$1,560.34 mil
Saudi Arabia	Direct transfers to families	No data
	Indirect support to education services	No data
Senegal	Small supplementary funds for MOE for online deployment and daycare centres	No data
United States	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act	US\$31bil
	Emergency education funding to students, schools, institutions and states	No data
	Immediate relief to federal student loan borrowers	US\$4.3bil
	Childcare relief to families and frontline workers	No data

Source: Compiled by UNESCO staff based on different sources. It is worth noting that the desk reviews may not have captured all existing funds, as operating modalities keep evolving and are being further defined and refined.

Different legal instruments have been used to establish COVID-19 funds. In many countries, they result from presidential decrees (e.g., Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia), sometimes by virtue of the powers arising from a state of emergency (e.g., Colombia, Republic of Korea). In others, they were established by the legislature through a new law (Austria, Chile, Italy, Mexico, United States), an amendment to an existing law (France, Nigeria), or by decisions of the council of ministers (Lebanon, Mauritania). In most cases, legal provisions for establishing COVID-19 funds have often excluded important institutional and governance arrangements, including how

decisions on spending should be made and how the fund, government bodies, and the budget system work together⁸. In our review of countries for which the data is available, it shows a mixture of criteria that has been used combining targeted beneficiaries, priority areas and the phase of the pandemic, with declared or unspecified amounts for each programme or activity. For example, during the lockdown period, many fiscal packages focused on immediate support and relief providing support to health and sanitation measures, childcare relief to families and frontline workers, and cash or in-kind transfers.

There are several motivations behind the creation of these funds, including the need to (i) establish centralized and high-level control and management of COVID-19 measures, for example, under the President's Office; (ii) raise and pool together different resources including in-kind transfer, official development finance and private resources, which standard budget practices may not allow; (iii) bring together different sectors and regional and local governments affected by the pandemic to facilitate implementation of emergency spending; (iv) streamline or bypass some steps in the budgeting, spending, or procurement processes which, however necessary in normal times, may slow down the response to the crisis; and (v) separate COVID-19 spending from other spending to enhance financial transparency and accountability, and create a clearly defined audit trail⁹.

Diverse and phased strategies for supporting education and training

The scale and design of the responses by each country vary in accordance with national circumstances but in most of the cases, they are identified to belong to one of the following three phases:

Phase 1 — Acute and widespread lockdown/school closures

Phase 1 largely occurred in March 2020 for many countries, although the precise timing differed from one country to another. This phase is characterized by severe restrictions on both individuals and institutions (lockdown) as part of the containment of the virus. Many education and training institutions have been required to close, and switch to distance/remote learning in order to ensure learning continuity. Aggregate learning disruption is likely to be most widespread during this phase. The policy responses during this phase focused on providing immediate support and relief in the form of emergency or relief funds to contain the spread and mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 (e.g. purchase of masks, ensuring preventive measures in place, protection and care of young children, maintaining provision of school meals).

Phase 2 — Transition/preparation for gradual reopening

The timing of this phase is counted when any lifting of restrictions are announced, and in some cases, announcements on restrictions can be reintroduced if necessary, for example to respond to the second wave of the virus contamination. There is obvious enormous uncertainty with respect to future teaching and learning conditions and future restrictions on movement and distancing. The policy responses during this phase focus on the preparation for school reopening, either for face-to-face or hybrid teaching and learning with transition packages, for example, to upgrade digital infrastructure, develop tools and solutions for distance/remote learning (such as online platforms, TV, radio, distance-learning materials, etc.), strengthen teacher capacities for remote teaching. Despite substantial government interventions in many countries, many education and training institutions still find it challenging to going back to the new normal and thus are in need of additional financial support.

Phase 3 — Support for post COVID-19 recovery

There is no clearly defined criteria for defining this phase, but the responses during this phase can be perceived as to support the longer term outcomes of government interventions, mostly through indirect support through skills training, public investment and debt relief programmes for post COVID-19 recovery (e.g. retraining, reskilling and upskilling for transition to active labour market, general support emphasizing job creation and green recovery/growth, debt relief).

Fiscal responses to education and training in the context of COVID-19

20 October 2020

This paper assesses how education has been addressed in massive governments' fiscal responses, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. It provides a global overview with aggregated data on governments' stimulus packages aimed at health response, social protection and economic recovery from COVID-19 and an analysis of how much, where and how these stimulus packages are targeted to the education and training sector. Analyses are based on government-led economic stimulus measures, with a focus on fiscal policies directed to education and training.

The paper also makes recommendations for governments and the international community to consider in order to take a resolute transformative approach towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on education through smart investment, skills for economic recovery, and leaving no one behind.