



CATCH UP CLUBS

**A PIONEERING APPROACH
TO GETTING CHILDREN
SAFELY BACK TO SCHOOL**



Save the Children

A once-in-a-generation education crisis for girls and women

Save the Children's biggest global priority right now is getting children safely back to school, because we know that when a child is excluded from education it harms their health, their safety, and their future life choices.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on children's education, **forcing schools to shut their doors to 1.6 billion children** worldwide in 2020.¹ This is the single biggest challenge to children's education for a generation, exacerbating an already dire educational crisis affecting hundreds of millions of children, and disproportionately affecting girls.

Even before the pandemic hit, **617 million children and adolescents around the world were unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and maths**, despite two thirds of them being in school.² **290 million of these were girls.**

With the continued disruption caused by COVID, the number of children falling behind is skyrocketing, especially as many children are not yet back in class. According to the World Bank, over 605 million children were out of school at the start of 2021³ and we estimate that at least 10–16 million children are at risk of never returning to school, based on the economic impacts of COVID-19 alone. While there is no data to show how many of these children have disabilities, before the pandemic, children with disabilities comprised some 15% of all out-of-school children.⁴

The economic crisis caused by COVID-19 could set back more than a decade of progress in reducing child poverty and a wholesale reversal of children's rights. As a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, an additional 2.5 million girls are predicted to be at risk of child marriage by 2025⁵. **Increases in poverty also place children at greater risk of child labour and exposure to harmful work** with studies predicting that for every 1% rise in poverty, child labour rates will rise at 0.7%.⁶

An investment in girls' education is an investment in the future. Primary and secondary schooling provide opportunities for individual girls and women to thrive, but also bring significant benefits that span across their health, nutrition, protection and wellbeing needs, and which positively impact society as a whole. When girls spend more years in school, fertility rates reduce⁷ and child nutrition outcomes,⁸ wage earning potential, and national GDP⁹ all improve. However, unless we take urgent action, the gains made in girls' education prior to 2020 could be lost as we reopen schools after the pandemic. Girls who have been forced out of school by COVID will have fewer future economic opportunities, compounding this problem and pointing to a likely \$1 trillion loss in GDP by 2030.¹⁰

Children who fall behind in their learning are less likely to unlock their full potential as adults.

Future opportunities will be even more limited for the most vulnerable and marginalised, including girls who live in poverty, conflict or whom have disabilities.

Extended time out of school has a drastic impact on children's lives. Lack of access to school meals, increased anxiety and stress can cause long-term harm to a child's physical and mental health. Being out of school increases the risk of violence and abuse at home, child labour and child marriage, and recruitment to gangs and militia. Since the start of the pandemic, **all types of violence against women and girls have increased**, especially domestic violence.¹¹

The current educational crisis will drastically alter the futures of millions of children and will have a devastating impact for generations to come. **It is essential that we act now to get children safely back to school.**



Our solution: **Catch Up Clubs**

Save the Children will build on its strengths and blend proven programmes, to create new Catch Up Clubs (CUCs). These will help children catch up on their education in the wake of COVID-19 school disruptions and reduce their likelihood of dropping out, enabling them to fulfil their future potential.

CUCs are a highly targeted, data-driven, and cost-effective intervention, that can be implemented and scaled up rapidly, providing the boost that is needed to **get millions of the most marginalised children back into school.**

This pioneering concept was designed through our collaborative Innovation Incubator process, which brought together the best ideas from Save the Children's frontline workers, innovation experts, and senior leadership across more than ten countries.

CUCs bring together elements of proven programmes that achieve results for children and demonstrate disproportionately positive outcomes for the most marginalised children, among them girls. They make effective use of our existing capacity and resources at the local community level, which makes them quick to implement. **This girls' education crisis demands a rapid response, so we are launching a solution that we can scale at speed.** If, as expected, our pilot proves successful, Catch Up Clubs can be piloted across a range of countries within 6–9 months. We will then scale this new and innovative model in 2021/22, with the potential to get millions of girls and boys back to school.

The three key components of our approach are:

1 A) Community-based remedial reading and maths: CUCs will identify learning facilitators within local communities and support them to provide remedial, accelerated activities in basic reading and maths, for those girls and boys who are most at risk of falling behind or dropping out of education entirely.

CUCs will build on our existing work with community-run camps and clubs that expand children's opportunities to learn beyond their regular school hours, as well as two of Save the Children's strongest flagship programmes – Literacy Boost and Numeracy Boost. We will use our knowledge of what works in over 30 countries to teach girls and boys the basic reading and maths they need to thrive. The clubs will use **Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)**¹²: using a simple learning assessment, CUC facilitators will organise the girls and boys into levelled learning groups (based on their learning level rather than age) and follow targeted activities to help them progress. This approach increases inclusion for all groups, particularly children with disabilities.

1 B) Instructional and livelihood support for facilitators: CUC facilitators will come from the local community and will not be expected to be teaching experts. Where appropriate, we will prioritise female facilitators, or pair one female and one male facilitator. We will provide them with a context appropriate, low-bandwidth support app that guides them to deliver remedial reading and maths lessons, monitor student attendance and track student progress. Facilitators will receive tablets pre-loaded with the CUC curriculum and materials, such as digital books, to be used alongside printed materials. They will also receive guidance on including girls and boys with disabilities. An additional benefit of this approach is that it will simultaneously develop the teaching skills of community facilitators, potentially providing a longer-term livelihood opportunity. We will provide the female facilitators with additional professional development support, particularly around navigating the professional training and certification process to become a teacher. We will provide facilitators with cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in return for organising and delivering education through CUCs.

2 Child Protection Case Management using Save the Children's Steps to Protect¹³ approach: Child Protection case workers will ensure that the most vulnerable girls and boys are referred from CUC learning facilitators and teachers to case management services, so that they can receive the timely individual services and psychological support they need to succeed. We will train the community learning facilitators on how to safely identify and refer girls and boys for case management services and create shared referral criteria for the CUCs.

3 Financial support to families: We will identify families unable to send their children to school because of the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the need for children's – especially girls' – support in the household. We will provide these families with Cash and Vouchers assistance (CVA) or links to existing social protection schemes to support girls' and boys' participation in CUCs. Delivering predictable cash transfers to caregivers¹⁴ – and where appropriate, directly into the hands of women, ideally through mobile money – has proven to be very effective at helping girls return to school and keeping girls in school. This also increases women's financial inclusion and empowerment.



These three key components will be coupled with one or more of the following interventions, following local assessments to determine which would have the most impact:

Girls' and boys' clubs:

in which girls gain confidence, boys learn to become allies in the struggle for gender equality, and both girls and boys gain essential life skills.

Caregiver workshops:

designed to increase home-based learning and academic support, regardless of caregiver education levels.

Gatekeeper media campaigns:

through which positive role models including caregivers, local leaders, religious leaders, and community leaders highlight the benefits of education for girls and women, as well as for the whole family and community.

Female teaching assistants:

women are supported to participate in teacher training while assisting classroom teachers, before entering a fast-track teacher certification programme.

All of these interventions are cost-effective, tested, and rapidly scalable.

Your impact: **help millions of children** get their lives back on track

With your support, we can pilot and scale up Catch Up Clubs quickly and cost effectively and help millions of the world's most vulnerable children get back into education and get their lives back on track.

This will:

- Expand future life opportunities for millions of the most vulnerable children, especially girls, who would otherwise fall behind in their learning or drop out of education entirely
- Provide livelihoods and skills training to community-based male and female facilitators
- Ultimately, contribute towards achieving the global SDGs, including:
 - SDG 1:** End Poverty in all its forms everywhere
 - SDG 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
 - SDG 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
 - SDG 10:** Reduce inequalities within and among countries
 - SDG 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainability development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

1 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/12/covid19-education-innovation-outcomes/>

2 <https://en.unesco.org/news/617-million-children-and-adolescents-not-getting-minimum-reading-and-math>

3 World Bank Education COVID-19 School Closures Map, 7 January 2021

4 UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020. Available at <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion>

5 Save the Children, The Global Girlhood Report 2020, 2020. Available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/global-girlhood-report-2020-how-covid-19-putting-progress-peril>

6 UNICEF, COVID-19 and Child Labour: A Time of Crisis, A Time to Act, 2020. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/COVID-19-and-Child-labour-2020.pdf>

7 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/health/female-education-and-childbearing-closer-look-data>

8 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X17300451>

9 <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/What-Works-in-Girls-Educationlowres.pdf>

10 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#>

11 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>

12 This methodology was created by Indian NGO Pratham and recognised for its cost-effectiveness by the World Bank

13 Steps to Protect from Save the Children's Catalogue of Common Approaches, available at https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/13223/pdf/common_approach_catalogue_2018_online_version.pdf

14 Save the Children, Keeping Girls in School, 2020, available at https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/16857/pdf/kgis_2_page_brief.pdf; and World Bank, Digital Cash Transfers in the Time of COVID-19, 2020, available at <https://www.cgap.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020.Digital-Cash-Transfers-in-Times-of-COVID-19-Opportunities-and-Considerations-for-Womens-Inclusion-and-Empowerment.pdf>

Save the Children has an opportunity to take a global leadership role on this urgent and critical issue. Once proven, our model could be replicated and used by other humanitarian organisations, multiplying our impact.



How **you** can help

We cannot do this alone, and seek additional funding to expand the pilot and scale up in communities where girls and boys need support to get back to school.

The world's children cannot wait. If we start now, Catch Up Clubs can be piloted across a range of countries within 6–9 months. We will then scale this new and innovative model in 2021/22, with the potential to get millions of children back to school. This can only happen with the help of our partners and supporters.

To discuss how you can help, please contact:

Luke Hayman Project Manager

Steve Morgan Safe Back to School Task Team Lead, or

Jasmine Jahromi Safe Back to School Deputy Lead

Thank you for your support.



Save the Children