

UNICEF Water for Life Calgary Impact Report 2022



Learners return to class after prolonged school closures

It is a great and exciting time in Uganda.

After nearly two years, schools reopened on January 10, 2022 - one of the longest school closures since the COVID-19 pandemic - to the excitement of learners, their teachers, parents and caregivers.

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education and Sports to ensure safe reopening of schools through various initiatives, including orienting teachers and head teachers on school-based surveillance for early identification, reporting, and management of emerging COVID-19 cases in schools, provision of psychosocial and mental health support to children as they settle back in school, as well as provision of water, sanitation and hygiene materials to support handwashing with soap and water – a critical requirement for safety in schools.

As schools reopened, teachers prioritized safety of the pupils and themselves to support effective learning. In addition to handwashing, other safety measures like regular sanitizing, wearing masks and social distancing have been introduced. With those in place, the pupils are ready to learn, and the lessons have begun.



School at last

“It feels better coming back to school. I missed my education while away from school. I was learning on TV but sometimes the teacher was fast, and I could not understand some work. While away from school I missed learning and I missed my friends. I am not sure what to expect. I pray they don’t close the schools again. To ensure safety, I will be wearing my mask and I will wash my hands regularly.”

Florence Nabukenya, 12 years

Before schools closed, many children relied on school meals. With school closures, many missed out on the nutritious food served as the pandemic affected the livelihoods of their families. Reopening of schools means they can enjoy regular meals while they learn.



Sarah Kharunda, Arts Bishop's Senior Secondary School.

“I am happy to come back to school because many people have not made it back to school due to several challenges - pregnancy, finances, domestic violence and others. While at home I missed my teachers’ mentorship. At school they teach you how to live your life in any circumstances, they mentor us to move in the right way. My fear is hearing about another school closure. I pray it never happens again.”

Sarah Kharunda, secondary school student

Impact of School Closures

The global disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is without parallel, and its effects on learning have been severe.

Growing evidence on the impacts of school closures on children's learning depicts a harrowing reality. Learning losses have been large and inequitable with younger and more marginalized children often missing out the most.

Schools ordinarily provide critical services that extend beyond learning and offer safe spaces for protection. During school closures, children's health and safety was jeopardized, with domestic violence, early pregnancy and child labour increasing.

The cost of keeping schools closed is steep and threatens to hamper a generation of children and youth while widening pre-pandemic disparities. Reopening schools and keeping them open should therefore be the top priority, as growing evidence indicates that with adequate measures, health risks to children and education staff can be minimized. Reopening is the single best measure that can be taken to begin reversing learning losses.

The generosity of the Calgary UNICEF Water for Life donors are changing lives in communities in Uganda. Although the in-person 2021 UNICEF Water for Life Gala was transitioned to a virtual event, our **supporters rallied to raise almost \$570,000**, which is an extraordinary achievement. By working together, we are helping to make safe water and education a reality for every child.



Students of Bishop's Secondary School

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