

HINDUSTAN TIMES, 14 JULY 2020

'10mn children may never return to school after Covid'

PANDEMIC Save the Children warns of education emergency; WHO reports record daily cases as total hits 13mn

Agencies
• letters@hindustantimes.com

LONDON: The Covid-19 pandemic has caused an "unprecedented education emergency" with up to 9.7 million children affected by school closures at risk of never going back to class, Save the Children warned on Monday as global cases hit a new grim milestone of 13mn.

The British charity cited UNESCO data showing 1.6 billion young people, or about 90% of the world's student population, were shut out of school and university due to measures to contain Covid-19 in April. "For the first time in human history, an entire generation of children globally have had their education disrupted," it said in the report, Save our Education.

It said the economic fallout of the crisis could force an extra 90 to 117 mn children into poverty, with a knock-on effect on school admissions. With many young people required to work, or girls forced into early marriage to support their families, this could see between seven and 9.7 mn children dropping out of school permanently. The charity warned the crisis could leave a shortfall of \$77 bn in education budgets in low and middle income countries by the end of 2021.

"Around 10 million children may never return to school - this is an unprecedented education emergency and governments must urgently invest in learning," Save the Children chief executive Inger Ashing said.

"Instead we are at risk of unparalleled budget cuts which will see existing inequality

explode between the rich and the poor, and between boys and girls."

The charity urged governments and donors to invest more funds behind a new global education plan to help children back into school when it is safe and until then support distance learning. "We know the poorest, most marginalised children who were already the furthest behind have suffered the greatest loss, with no access to distance learning - or any kind of education - for half an academic year," Ashing said.

Save the Children also urged commercial creditors to suspend debt repayments for low-income countries - a move it said could free up \$14 billion for education programmes.

"If we allow this education crisis to unfold, the impact on children's futures will be long lasting," Ashing said. "The promises the world has made to ensure all children have access to a quality education by 2030, will be set back by years," she said, citing the United Nations goal.

The report listed 12 countries where children are most at risk of falling behind: Niger, Mali, Chad, Liberia, Afghanistan, Guinea, Mauritania, Yemen, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Ivory Coast. Before the crisis, an estimated 268mn children and adolescents were already missing out on school, the charity said.

W.H.O. REPORTS RECORD RISE IN GLOBAL CASES

The World Health Organization reported a record increase in global coronavirus cases on Sunday, with the total going up by 230,370 in 24 hours.



Warisara Kwawida, a daughter of teacher Watcharee Kwawida, colours a drawing made to educate children on Covid-19 prevention methods at a Makkasan preschool in Bangkok, Thailand. AP

The biggest increases were from the US, Brazil, India and South Africa, according to a daily report. The previous WHO record for new cases was 228,102 on July 10. Deaths remained steady at about 5,000 a day.

Globally, coronavirus cases crossed 13 million on Sunday, according to a tally by Worldometer, marking another milestone in the spread of the disease that has killed more than 565,000 people in seven months.

Mexican officials said the number of confirmed Covid-19 deaths has passed 35,000, making it the country with the fourth highest total. A count by Johns Hopkins University has only the US, Brazil and Britain with more

confirmed deaths from the new coronavirus. Sunday's rise to 35,006 confirmed deaths moved Mexico, a country with 130 million inhabitants, past Italy.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador insisted the development of the pandemic in Mexico "is positive, it is good" because of the country's 32 states only nine had increases in infections.

South Africa reinstated a night curfew to reduce traffic accidents and has made it mandatory for all residents to wear face masks in public. South Africa's rapid increase in reported cases has made it one of the world's centres for Covid-19, now the 9th country most affected by the disease, according to Johns Hopkins Uni-

versity. The country has reported increases of more than 10,000 confirmed cases for several days and the latest daily increase was nearly 13,500. South Africa accounts for 40% of all the confirmed cases in Africa, with 264,184, including 3,971 deaths, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Argentina has registered more than 100,000 cases on Sunday, despite the Buenos Aires area - the country's coronavirus hot spot - being under extended shutdown. The country now has recorded 1,845 deaths from the pandemic with 100,153 positive cases and almost 43,000 people recovered.

S KOREA: 1 IN 8 COVID PATIENTS IMPROVE WITH REMDESIVIR

SEOUL: One in three South Korean patients seriously ill with Covid-19 showed an improvement in their condition after being given Gilead Sciences' antiviral remdesivir, health authorities said.

More research was needed to determine if the improvement was attributable to the drug or other factors such as patients' immunity and other therapies, they said.

Several countries including South Korea have added the drug to the list of treatment for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. There is no approved vaccine for it.

In its latest update on the drug, Gilead said on Friday an analysis showed remdesivir helped reduce the risk of death in severely ill Covid-19 patients but cautioned that rigorous clinical trials were needed to confirm the benefit.

The Korea Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Saturday results from a first group of 27 patients given remdesivir in different hospitals.

Nine of the patients showed an improvement in their condition, 15 showed no change, and three worsened, KCDC deputy director Kwon Jun Wook told a briefing.

The result had yet to be compared with a control group and more analysis was needed to conclude remdesivir's benefit. REUTERS