

Country: Ukraine

Issue: Preventing a Lost Generation: Managing the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Education

Committee: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

ISSUE AND POSITION: As the world and its institutions slowly heal from the damages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of learning loss has presented itself as an extremely severe challenge to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the United Nations. Solutions to learning loss must be constructed to tackle immediate and long-standing obstacles, while also maintaining financial feasibility for both developed and developing nations. In order to prevent the emergence of a "lost generation" of students internationally, Ukraine urges this committee to collaborate, discuss, and promote sustainable strategies that will allow our nations to reverse the projected and current ramifications of learning loss.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: In years past, learning loss was commonly used in reference to the "summer slide", a phenomenon in which students returning from summer vacations tended to be less capable of recalling the information they had acquired the previous school term. However, a 2021 study conducted by UNESCO estimates that approximately one billion children have missed out on at least one full year of in-person schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic alone; this is equivalent to at least 800 hours of learning being lost per child. In a world where knowledge is power, Ukraine recognizes just how detrimental loss of learning can be if not acted upon and has made tremendous efforts to improve education within its borders. Despite still recovering from the pandemic and being engaged in an ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science facilitated the delivery of over 50,000 Chromebook to teachers in need across the nation, providing them with better technological access to the students capable of learning remotely. Internationally, nations such as Columbia and Indonesia have instituted the Escuela Nueva Program and Madrasah Tsanawiyah Program respectively. These programs were instituted after the nations had suffered significant losses in student and teacher attendance following the COVID-19 pandemic. Both programs utilize community-based education styles that provide students with essential primary education until full-time teachers are fully trained and become re-qualified to educate the youth. Although Ukraine and other nations have made substantial progress, it is abundantly clear that any global strategies aiming to mitigate learning loss must take into account the capabilities of developed nations, developing nations, and nations engaged in ongoing conflicts that disrupt education.

PROPOSED ACTION ON THE ISSUE: Due to the utter pervasiveness and complexity of this issue, it is imperative that different regions of the world utilize both isolated and collaborative global strategies in order to combat learning loss. Ukraine proposes a four-branch and multifaceted solution in the form of the "FIRM" plan, whose acronym stands for Funding, Innovative Global Education Standards, Reporting, and Mental Health Awareness. The first branch, Funding, refers to the gathering of voluntary contributions from UNESCO member states, use of the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and member states utilizing their own public expenditure. The second branch, Innovative Global Education Standards, is where the nations will come together to organize what educational standards are most vital to reversing the effects of learning loss globally. These standards would be discussed primarily outside the main meetings of UNESCO and be assigned to a UNESCO committee, named the Learning Loss Prevention Committee (LLPC). This will operate in a similar fashion to how the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) allocates relevant tasks to its subsidiary organs that the main body of the UNGA may not be able to discuss over the duration of general debate. The establishment of the LLPC will ensure a fairer and more efficient development of the universal benchmarks. The third branch, Reporting, consists of how UNESCO will monitor and report data regarding the regression of learning loss internationally. This is a task that will be partially outsourced to the LLPC; through literacy tests, standardized testing, and surveys, member nations will be expected to report results to the committee for progress monitoring and analysis. Reporting is done to encourage international transparency so that the decline of learning loss can be assessed accurately and met with appropriate reaction from the main body of UNESCO. The final branch, Mental Health Awareness, will call upon UNESCO and its officially partnered non-government organizations (NGOs) to recognize and address the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, educators, and families. UNESCO and the NGOs will invest in international programs and organizations that educate young people on understanding and managing their emotions. By implementing the FIRM plan, our nations will be capable of ensuring that the educational aftershocks of the pandemic carry over into future generations not as waves of ignorance and loss, but as waves of enlightenment and perseverance.

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