"Back to School" During a Pandemic

With September just around the corner, the 'back-to-school' season is upon us in many parts of the world. This year, in addition to meeting new teachers, reuniting with friends, and learning different subjects, children around the globe are adjusting to COVID-19 guidelines and rules, to ensure they remain happy and healthy.

Since the start of the pandemic, school closures and stay-at-home orders have left many children worldwide out of school. While some education systems are returning to their pre-Coronavirus routine, others are still reliant on remote and virtual learning, and some are not going back to school at all.

IsraAID’s access to education programs across the globe are focused on assisting children, teachers, and caregivers throughout this challenging period. For locations with limited infrastructure, this means ensuring safe water access and adequate hygiene systems. In others, communities and educational staff may lack access to psychosocial support to ease this transition.

IsraAID remains committed to providing assistance to children and broader educational frameworks at this time, through our “Back-to-School” programming.
IsraAID’s “Back-to-School” Programs:

Dominica & the Bahamas

Hurricane Maria in Dominica in 2017 and Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas in 2019 caused long-term damage to schools - including hygiene and sanitation facilities - across each country. The major educational needs caused by these disasters have now been exacerbated by COVID-19.

IsraAID’s teams are working closely with each Caribbean nation’s Ministry of Education to ensure schools have the psychosocial support, hand washing infrastructure, hygiene supplies, and information they need to keep their staff and students safe.

In both countries, our “Back-to-School” distributions are providing educational facilities with personal protective equipment, thermometers, cleaning supplies, hygiene promotion posters, and hand sanitizer.

Mozambique

As schools across Mozambique begin to reopen after a country-wide lockdown, IsraAID is working to help rehabilitate hygiene infrastructure - such as hand washing stations - destroyed by last year’s Cyclone Idai. Currently, only 15% of schools in Mozambique are equipped with basic hygiene services.

IsraAID is working with its partners in Mozambique, including the Ministry of Education, to outfit schools across Sofala Province with adequate hygiene facilities to ensure that children can go back to school safely. In addition, our teams are providing educational materials to help teachers integrate hygiene promotion and disease prevention into the classroom setting, and supporting school communities to produce soap from locally-available materials - ensuring a long-term, sustainable supply.
Colombia

In Colombia, formal education facilities are to remain closed until at least January 2021. For many of the hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children, this exacerbates existing academic gaps after an already-long period out of school.

IsraAID’s team in Barranquilla has received formal permission from local authorities to reopen one of its Child Friendly Spaces to provide education support for these children according to coronavirus safety standards. Groups of five children will be able to attend 40-minute educational and psychosocial sessions twice a week, coupled with at-home, remote mathematics programming provided in partnership with Israeli start-up, Mathika, as part of IsraAID’s innovation piloting strategy.

Mexico

In Mexico City, the IsraAID team implemented our “Returning to My Healthy and Safe School” program for local teachers and education staff. This series of online workshops, alongside an implementation guide, garnered hundreds of participants from schools across the city.

Through IsraAID Back-to-School programming, 14,000 students received hygiene products for use in classrooms. The Ministry of Education is currently scaling this program to the national level, reaching even more teachers, staff, and students.

Greece

For several months, the “Secret Garden Educational Center,” IsraAID’s education and psychosocial support facility for refugee children on the Greek island of Lesbos, has been operating online, via daily digital content and the weekly distribution of homework and activity packs. Refugee camps on the island have been in complete lockdown since March, with stringent guidelines to stymie the spread of COVID-19. IsraAID’s team in Lesbos hopes to reopen the center shortly.

Refugee volunteers sew masks at Sindos Community Center, Thessaloniki. Some of the masks will go to refugee children on the island of Lesbos.
IsraAID’s team in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki have established a community-led mask sewing initiative and will be sending their hand made masks to Lesbos for children to use when they return to classes. In addition, daily classes will include hygiene promotion lessons in smaller groups with more shifts, to ensure that children are able to return to class in a safe manner.

**Story of Impact**

Mustafa, 11, been consistently attending the local elementary school in Sindos, Greece for the last two years.

When the scale of the ongoing pandemic led to a country-wide shutdown, Mustafa’s school was closed and classes were moved online. However, Mustafa’s family lives in an apartment without internet access, meaning that he was unable to participate in the e-Learning program that the rest of his classmates did during the lockdown. Now, with an even bigger academic gap between Mustafa and his classmates, Mustafa has to play catch up for the missed months of schoolwork.

IsraAID’s team at the Sindos Community Center are providing additional hours of extra-curricular tutoring to help ensure refugee children - like Mustafa - do not fall too far behind while they are unable to return to school.

**IsraAID COVID-19 Response: Videos to Watch**

![Elsie’s Story: The Venezuelan Refugee Crisis in Colombia, IsraAID’s work & COVID-19](play_button.png)

![Refugees in Greece & Germany sew face masks for vulnerable communities](play_button.png)

**PROFILE**

IsraAID is a leading international humanitarian non-governmental organization, based in Israel. Since 2001, IsraAID has become synonymous with a rapid response to humanitarian crises. Its medical teams, post-trauma experts, community specialists and other professionals have led international responses to disasters and civil strife around the world. After the initial emergency period, IsraAID shifts to long-term programs, accompanying communities and governments as they strive to build a better tomorrow. IsraAID has responded to crises 53 countries.

**Please Support IsraAID’s COVID-19 Appeal**