

Guidance for Re-Opening of Pre-Schools and Kindergartens Post COVID-19

Europe and Central Asia Regional Office

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BACKGROUND

UNICEF and the World Bank are actively working with governments to support their efforts in assessing and deciding when and how to re-open pre-schools and kindergartens. Deciding to partially or fully re-open pre-schools should be guided by a risk management approach to maximize the educational, developmental and health benefit for children, teachers, staff, and the wider community, and help prevent a new outbreak of COVID-19 in the community.¹ In a recent framework for re-opening schools, UNICEF, World Bank, World Food Programme and UNESCO highlight six key dimensions to consider when planning for re-opening: policy, financing, safe operations, learning, reaching the most marginalized and wellbeing/protection.² The World Health Organization (WHO) has also recently published guidance with helpful considerations for re-opening of schools based on careful risk assessment of epidemiological factors and health system capacities, among other issues.³

Early childhood education (ECE)⁴ is unique in its educational approach. While some countries are considering opening ECE services later than the rest of the education system, others are considering opening ECE services early because high-quality remote learning for early learners has not been possible, especially for marginalized groups. Given the role that ECE serves to support parents/caregivers to return to work, the loosening of lockdowns means that families will need care options for young children urgently as parents/caregivers return to work.

This guidance note builds on the existing framework for re-opening schools and WHO guidance, but is specific to ECE settings, as these institutions are unique in their pedagogical approach and set up for young children, as well as their dual focus on nurturing care and learning.

The note outlines key overarching principles as well as practical measures that should be taken into account when re-opening ECE settings, specifically for children three years and above.¹

¹ *Framework for reopening schools*, April 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19*, May 2020.

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

⁴ This guidance focuses on early childhood education or pre-primary education programmes intentionally designed to include educational content for children aged 3 years up to the start of primary education, often around age 6. This includes preschools, kindergartens and other early childhood development centers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RE-OPENING OF ECE SETTINGS

A set of overarching guiding principles can help decision-makers in planning for and implementing the re-opening of ECE settings. These principles are anchored in the need to strike the right balance between, on the one hand, supporting the learning and wellbeing of young children effectively, and on the other hand, ensuring the health, hygiene and safety of children, staff and the community at large. Key principles include:

- 1. Take time to plan and prepare for re-opening of ECE settings.** Avoid rushing the re-opening of ECE settings without a proper plan in place for how different aspects of re-opening will be handled, including learning arrangements, shifts, hygiene protocols, etc. Clear communication and support to parents/caregivers, teachers, school administration, community and local government, are essential to disseminate key messages (see Annexes 3-5).
- 2. Prioritize training and support for early childhood educators and staff.** Staff and educators will need specific training as well as practical support to return to their classrooms. They will also have to balance between adherence to adapted health guidelines with guidance on developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices. Consider providing practical support on adapting curriculum activities and routines, providing regular check-ins between educators so they can share and process their experiences, as well as adding staff as needed to ensure teachers are not overwhelmed.
- 3. Take the scare out of protecting children.** Actions to keep children safe are essential, but ECE environments shouldn't start looking like hospitals. The past months have been unsettling for children (all have experienced changes in routines, confusing information, etc.). More than ever, children will need secure, enjoyable, and stimulating environments. Children are resilient and re-opening ECE settings should bring children back to some level of normalcy and routine as much as possible while ensuring protection in the environment where children play and learn.
- 4. Ensure ECE settings can maintain child-friendly and developmentally appropriate practices.** Keeping children a safe distance apart should not prevent social engagement, hands-on learning, and play that promotes all areas of development. Develop a clear plan for ensuring meaningful child-focused play and instructional activities in the context of physical distancing and adaptation of the curriculum and teacher practices that abide by developmental principles.
- 5. Establish healthy hygiene behaviours and practices among young children.** Integrate age-appropriate information about the virus into the curriculum, and support children with developing good hygiene practices through daily routines, including covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching the face, demonstrating and practising effective handwashing at key moments throughout the day.
- 6. Capitalize on teachable moments** to help children understand why certain measures are taken in their environment and the role that they play in ensuring their health as well as that of their peers, teachers, families and communities. Explain to children why certain toys are removed, why the windows are open often, what games they can play safely outdoors and why. Find ways to help children feel some control over their environment.

- 7. Partner with families to ensure a good transition from home confinement to pre-school attendance and ensure open ongoing communication.** Parent-staff relationships have likely been disrupted. Parents will also have anxieties about their children's safety. Communicate with families and parents clearly, positively and openly to avoid causing panic and fear among caregivers, ensure positive drop off and pick up experiences. Ongoing support children might be needed at home. This includes informing families of the protection measures and engaging them to support the practical application of these measures.
- 8. Adopt a coordinated and integrated approach to ensure children's holistic needs are met upon return.** COVID-19 has multi-faceted impacts on young children. As vulnerable children come back to ECE settings, there may be protection, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), health, nutrition, and other issues that emerge and that may need to be addressed due to the COVID-19 confinement. Ensure that ECE re-opening plans are inclusive of additional supports and/or referral mechanisms that may be needed.
- 9. Make adaptations to reach the most vulnerable children and families.** Ensure learning materials/platforms, information, services and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. Public health information and communication should be available in multiple, accessible formats, including for those with auditory or visual impairments. Modifications should be made to ensure water, hygiene and sanitation services are accessible. Plan for continuity of assistive services if schools are reclosed.
- 10. Plan ahead to support teachers, children and parents/caregivers in the event of reclosure.** It is important to develop an action plan for continuity of learning if ECE services are closed again. This includes strengthening remote learning practices and innovative approach to supporting teachers, enhancing support to parents/caregivers for learning at home, as well as adapting the academic calendar based on public health scenarios.

SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR DECIDING TO RE-OPEN ECE SETTINGS

- Take time to prepare for re-opening adequately. Avoid rapid decision making without sufficient time to prepare premises, re-design curriculum, if needed, support staff, parents and ensure smooth transition of children to new environments.
- In deciding to re-open (or partially re-open) ECE settings, consider key factors, including the following:⁵
 - Local situation and epidemiology of COVID-19 where the pre-schools are located;
 - Availability of testing (to conduct community surveillance and contact tracing) and implementation of measures to limit the spread of the virus;
 - Current understanding about COVID-19 transmission and severity in children, including emerging data on the role that children play in transmission of virus.
 - How early learning institutions, teachers and staff, parents and communities at large are coping with closures and the pandemic;

⁵ Adapted from *Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19*, May 2020.
<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

- Pre-school/kindergarten setting and the ability to maintain specific COVID-19 prevention and control measures;
- Rapid response surveys among parents and early childhood educators, in particular, are recommended to help inform the re-opening plans and provide critical information that needs to be taken into account – such as what % of parents/caregivers need to return to work, what schedules may be most what are their biggest concerns to address, what % of ECE teachers are able to return to work, etc.
- Consult with teachers and other education personnel and caregivers about their concerns and ideas for safe school re-opening. Share feedback on how their opinions and recommendations have been considered.
- Analyze the context-specific benefits and risks for re-opening of ECE settings and consider which classrooms (or parts of ECE settings) should be prioritized for re-opening; in which locations, which risk mitigation measures within pre-schools and kindergarten communities should be prioritized; and areas of focus for further support to parents and teachers.

SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR ENSURING SAFE OPERATIONS OF ECE SETTINGS⁶

Daily hygiene and health practices at pre-schools and kindergartens

- Schedule regular cleaning of ECE classrooms and environment daily, including toilets, with water and soap/detergent and disinfectant and appropriate disposal of trash.⁷
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, tables, toys, supplies, light switches, doorframes, play equipment and teaching aids used by children.
- Increase airflow and ventilation, where the climate allows within rooms.
- When feasible, staff members should wear face coverings within the ECE setting. Face masks for young children are not recommended, and cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under age two under any circumstances because of the danger of suffocation.
- Educate young children about COVID-19 prevention. This includes appropriate and frequent hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, as well as symptoms of COVID-19 children can be aware of.
 - Provide sufficient alcohol-based rub or soap and clean water at ECE setting entrances and throughout the ECE premises.
 - Create a schedule for handwashing or develop a way to track handwashing and reward for frequent/timely handwashing (sing a song while washing hands to practice recommended 20-second duration).
 - Consider visual posters in classrooms for children and staff to see and be reminded.
 - Use puppets or dolls to demonstrate symptoms (sneezing, coughing, fever) what to do if they feel sick (i.e. their head hurts, their stomach hurts, they feel hot or tired).

⁶ Suggested measures adapted from *Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19*, May 2020. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

⁷ WHO recommends 70% ethyl alcohol to disinfect small surface areas and equipment, or sodium hypochlorite 0.1% for disinfecting surfaces.

- Puppets or dolls can also be used to minimize stigma about COVID-19.

Safety and hygiene-related to preparation and administration of meals for young children⁸

- Enforce compliance with national food safety legislation and principles of proper hygiene and food safety by food handlers when purchasing, delivering, storing, preparing and distributing meals. Where appropriate, provide preventive material (masks and gloves).
- Display visual reminders on proper food preparation hygiene principles, including the daily cleaning and disinfection of food preparation surfaces, kitchens and eating areas as well as cooking tools and eating utensils.
- Ensure specific measures are in place to temporarily restrict staff members suffering an infectious illness/disease from food production or preparation areas. This is particularly relevant if they develop symptoms of fever.
- Discontinue buffet-style food options. Offer individual food servings and divide servings into portions in advance whenever possible.
- Meals can be arranged in the dining room or other rooms with larger space such as gym, library and other common areas (including outdoor areas) to keep the distance between children as large as possible.
- Safe distance can be considered between the children as they queue to get the food and whenever possible, make arrangements that the same children eat together.
- Minimize contamination risks. Remind children not to share or touch anyone else's food or drinks and discourage children from sharing utensils, food, etc.
- Limit other persons (for example, for cleaning, repairing or bringing food) entering the space used for dining when the children are in it.

Managing a sick child or staff member

- Communicate to staff the importance of being vigilant for symptoms and staying in touch with facility management if or when they start to feel sick.
- On arrival and departure from work, daily measurement of temperature is recommended for all employees with a non-contact thermometer, as well as determining whether they have respiratory symptoms or signs of other infectious diseases.
- Staff with increased body temperature, respiratory symptoms and other symptoms of infectious disease should not come to work, take care of children, or come to the premises of the institution.
- The ECE management should have in place a replacement scheme for staff that is activated in cases of illness. Ensure paid sick leave.
- Establish procedures to ensure children and staff who come to the ECE setting sick or become sick while at the ECE setting are sent home as soon as possible. Ensure that the stigma around COVID-19 is minimized.
- Keep sick children and staff separate from well children and staff until they can be sent home. Follow the appropriate national guidelines on this matter.

⁸ Although it is unlikely that the virus is transmitted through food, it is still critical to guarantee compliance of food handlers and other relevant staff with basic food safety recommendations when preparing meals. This is also necessary to prevent any foodborne illness which could further complicate the response to COVID-19 or make weakens children's immune system.

- Consider the need for record-keeping of the children recorded with increased body temperature and the onset of other symptoms while in pre-school to support tracing of contacts in case that COVID-19 is confirmed.

SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR ENSURING CHILD WELLBEING & DEVELOPMENT

Physical distancing in ECE settings

- Assess what can be done within reason to limit direct physical contact between children, keeping in mind developmental principles. For example, increase the spacing between tables, chairs or spots where children sit.
- Consider opening ECE settings in shifts to limit the number of children per group at any time. Half of the children can attend in the morning, the other half in the afternoon.
- Consider increasing the number of teachers, if possible, to allow for fewer children per classroom (if space is available).
- Assess the possibility to maintain a distance of at least 1 meter⁹ between everyone present at school – this includes between educator and children and between children, including spacing between tables, chairs or spots on the carpets/mats where children sit.
- In the context of the provision of care (for example, helping a child with changing clothes, supporting them with feeding, or ensuring emotional comfort when a child is in distress), it may not be possible or advisable to maintain physical distancing. Educators and managers should exercise discretion and adhere to developmental principles when agreeing on how to keep distance between staff and children reasonably.
- Discuss and introduce with children and staff non-contact greetings. Consider making these greetings fun and child-friendly, like saying hello in sign language, giving the peace sign, waving the hand, giving a wink, etc.
- Stagger recesses/breaks so that smaller groups of children are playing at once on the playground or shared spaces.
- Limit mixing of classes and groups of children. For example, children in a small group or classroom will stay in the same group/classroom with the same teachers throughout the day, without mixing with children and educators from other groups.
- If possible, at nap time, ensure that children's naptime mats are spaced out as much as possible, depending on space available. Consider placing children head to toe to reduce the potential for viral spread further.

Arrangements for learning

- Move lessons and activities outdoors as much as possible, weather permitting. Consider adapting the curriculum and instruction so it can be delivered outdoors. For example, using outdoor equipment and nature as teaching/learning materials (conducting circle time outdoors, learning about nature, etc.), enhancing learning experiences with outdoor physical activity (gross motor play, dance, sports, etc.).

⁹ *Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19*, May 2020.

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

- Ventilate rooms as much as possible throughout the day; set up the space for learning in a way that respects space between children while still making it feel like a community. For example, designate sitting or standing spots (using different materials like tape, circle spots, walking rope with handles, etc.).
- Group children into smaller groups of 2-3 children to support interaction between children while limiting large group activity.
- Adapt curriculum and use creative pedagogical practices to ensure playful learning experiences around the pandemic situation. For example, project-based learning building on children's experience with the pandemic; using imaginary play to help children to cope with stress and promote resilience; using teachable moments to help children learn about the pandemic and their role in ensuring public health.
- Balance individual learning activities with small group interactions; using creativity to mix individual and group interactions. For example, personal reflection/work, followed by "turn and show your neighbour".

Toys, materials, games and routines

- Remove toys and materials that are hard to sanitize or clean, such as soft toys. Many materials and games can remain in use if children are instructed to wash hands before and after their use. Instruct children to avoid putting toys/materials in their mouths.
- Setting up individual cubbies for each child with markers, scissors, crayons that each child can use is a good way to encourage continued creativity and art-making without the need to share these between children.
- Focus on imaginative play, physical games that can respect some social distancing, singing, individual art projects, etc.
- Games and projects where each child can contribute individually (one by one) will work great – i.e. let's all make a story as a class, taking turns; children taking turns to add to a mural painting; etc.
- Rely on interactive read-aloud and whole class entertainment activities such as a puppet show by the teacher, or a new song everyone can learn.
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.
- Avoid mixing toys between classrooms and groups of children before are washed and/or disinfected.

SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR ENSURING PARENTAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION

- Inform parents about the measures the ECE setting is putting in place and ask for cooperation to report any cases of COVID-19 that occur in the household. If someone in the household is suspected of having COVID-19, instructing parents to keep the child home and inform the ECE setting.
- Create a checklist for parents to decide whether children can go to ECE setting, with due consideration for the local epidemiology of COVID-19. The checklist could include:
 - Underlying medical conditions and vulnerabilities of children and/or family members;
 - Recent illness or symptoms suggestive of COVID-19;
 - Exceptional circumstances in the home environment, to tailor support as needed;
 - Consider helpful posters or visual reminders for parents around the school and at drop off.

- Enforce the policy of “staying at home if unwell” for children with symptoms. If possible, connect with local organizations to provide home care support and ensure communication between home and ECE setting. Communicate to parents the importance of measuring temperature to both him/herself and child regularly and keeping children home in case of higher temperature is recorded.
- Prepare clear drop-off and pick up procedures that don’t create panic among families and children; Children need reassurance from their parents and teachers after being away from ECE setting for weeks or months at a time. Minimize stress and trauma that might arise for children from “curb side drop-offs”.
- Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and/or have educators come outside the facility to pick up the children as they arrive. Ideally, the same parent/designated person should drop off and pick up the child. Advise against crowding during school pick-up or daycare, and if possible, avoid pick up by older/vulnerable family or community members (e.g. grandparents).
- Strengthen communication and coordination mechanisms that promote dialogue and engagement with parents regularly, to alleviate stress, anxiety and ensure continuity for children between home and school. Support teachers and management to send ongoing positive communication to parents.
- Check-in regularly with families on how they and their children are feeling. Develop referral mechanisms for families with psychosocial support needs.

SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR STAFF TRAINING AND SUPPORT

- Policies should protect staff, teachers and students who are at high risk due to age or underlying medical conditions, with plans to cover absent teachers and continue remote education to support students unable to attend school, accommodating individual circumstances to the extent possible. Consider flexible leave policies and practices and paid sick leave.
- Instruct employees on the obligation to monitor their health and the condition of children and to adhere to procedures following the recommendations related to the prevention of COVID-19 (including respect for social distance and use of personal protective equipment).
- Train administrative staff and teachers on implementing non-negotiable hygiene and safety practices and increase staff at pre-schools as needed. Cleaning staff, staff preparing food etc. should also be trained on disinfection and be equipped with personal protection equipment to the extent possible.
- Support teachers to adapt the curriculum and daily routine of children effectively, including re-thinking how whole-class activities and games can take place, how to utilize outdoor lessons/time, etc.
- Improve the competencies of pre-school teachers to support the socio-emotional needs of children. Equip teachers to deal with children’s mental health and psychosocial needs. Help teachers understand that, like the adults, most children are already unsettled and stressed, and this transition initially will be hard. Behaviour challenges are to be expected. Training efforts should explicitly improve teachers’ ability to meet children’s basic social-emotional needs, particularly in ECE settings, with a high proportion of at-risk students.
- Teachers should be trained to identify age-related behavioural and cognitive changes and provide age-appropriate learning support.
- Check-in regularly with teachers and staff and support their mental health and psychosocial needs.

CONCLUSION

In the post-COVID19 re-opening of ECE settings, the broader challenge for programme managers, directors, teachers, and families will be to work together to balance and integrate, on the one hand, the need for adherence to adapted and reasonable national public health guidelines, and on the other hand, the creation of a secure, enjoyable, stimulating environment that promotes physical health, emotional safety, social connections, and engaged learning for young children. Inclusive and early collaboration and communication between all stakeholders will be critical to implement necessary measures. It will be essential to maintain flexibility and modify approaches as needed, and to ensure learning and sharing of good practices.¹⁰

Re-opening ECE settings can provide much-needed emotional support and learning opportunities to children, as well as childcare services for parents returning to work. Though there will be challenges, young children are highly resilient and adaptive and with clear and consistent instructions and a nurturing environment, will be able to adjust and thrive in the new schooling environment.

The following annexes complement this guidance note:

- Annex 1: Continuing professional development for ECE teachers and directors
- Annex 2: Suggested questions for parents/caregivers on re-opening of ECE settings
- Annex 3: Key messages for ECE teachers on re-opening
- Annex 4: Key message for early learners on re-opening
- Annex 5: Key messages for parents/caregivers on re-opening

¹⁰ Ibid

Annex 1

Continuing Professional Support for ECE Teachers and Directors

As countries re-open ECE settings, an essential part of the planning and the effective transition back to teaching must be continuing professional support for programme staff, including classroom teachers as well as pre-school directors/managers. This document outlines goals, key content, and recommended methods to ensure successful orientation and support of these key staff from confinement back to early learning programmes.

Overall Training and Support Goals

Professional support prior re-opening and during the transition phase should ideally result in:

- A shared understanding of the multiple challenges facing children, families, and staff as they make this transition.
- The commitment to support holistic development and wellbeing of children by giving intensive attention both to health and hygiene and to the implementation of a child-focused, playful approach to early learning.
- The ability to implement specific measures and routines that ensure safe and healthy operations of early childhood education and care programmes.
- The ability to implement appropriate strategies and adaptations to the existing curricula.
- The ability to implement address parents' concerns and needs through supportive communication.

Personnel to Be Trained

Classroom teachers and programme directors/administrators,¹¹ as well as nurses and other professionals working in pre-schools, should receive training before re-opening and during the transition phase. Directors will be expected to give teachers continuing support in implementing an emotionally responsive classroom environment that promotes children's health and their holistic development, while also supporting and communicating with families. This will not be easy for anyone, and a strong team of teachers and administrators are key to success. Directors should ideally receive separate training, addressing the same content as for teachers but with additional administrative considerations (these will be noted below with a **D** for Directors). If possible, online group or individual follow-ups should be available to directors as well.

Timing of Training

Initial Training Before Reopening. Pre-schools and kindergartens should not open until staff have received initial preparation. This orientation may vary in length but should give at least beginning coverage of content below.

Continuing Support. Once programs have begun re-opening for children, staff will surely need additional opportunities to share experiences, pose questions, and receive additional information/guidance to help them implement programme adaptations effectively. Depending on the context, follow-up meetings (or video

¹¹ Other preschool personnel (helpers, nurses, food handlers etc.), depending on context, should be trained and oriented to key changes to routines, curricula and expected hygiene and health behaviors

conferences) can be planned in the 2-4 weeks following re-opening, with additional discussions a month or more later, or more frequent as needed. A variety of digital approaches could be used for this purpose.

Methods

Staff will need clearly presented information as well as for opportunities to process their concerns and questions. These needs suggest a balance of methods, including (for example) downloadable fact sheets, mini-lectures, demonstrations, online chats, paired discussions, and open-ended questions to help staff explore difficult issues. The balance during the first session might be more towards providing essential information/guidance, while follow-up sessions might build in more opportunities for staff to share with others and seek support related to what they are doing, seeing, and feeling in their programs.

Content Priorities for Training of Staff

The examples should be adapted to the country and local contexts.

Ensuring Safe Operations

- **Daily health and hygiene practices** (e.g., cleaning protocols; face coverings and handwashing; educating children about new hygiene procedures) **D:** educating and supporting staff re hygiene.
- **Safety and hygiene in meal preparation and service** (e.g., ensure safe distance during meals; remind children re avoiding food sharing, etc.) **D:** enforce compliance with standards, ensure food handlers' use of proper safety measures; post reminders for food preparers, etc.).
- **Managing sick children and staff** (e.g., know procedures for identifying and isolating sick children; record-keeping) **D:** communicate to staff how to watch for symptoms; have replacement scheme for sick staff; set procedures when a child becomes ill, etc.).

Ensuring Child Well-Being and Development

- **Daily health and hygiene practices of children** (e.g. plan how to support children to increase positive hygienic practices (handwashing, etc.) through daily routines, learning and play).
- **Age-appropriate Small group play and physical distancing if needed** (e.g., plan if and how to modify curriculum activities to ensure safe distances and other health precautions while continuing to support developmental principles; teach enjoyable non-contact greetings). **D:** (e.g., decide on necessary space and scheduling modifications).
- **Learning environments** (e.g., provide children with daily opportunity to be outside, play and engage in various activities in the natural environment and outdoor space; support open, extended and guided play in outdoor areas; split children into smaller groups and set up a rotation between "play centres"). **D:** communicate and support staff with changing learning arrangements.
- **Creating conditions for wellbeing of children and supporting the development of resilience** - prioritize activities to support emotional wellbeing and embed these activities in daily routines; key messages about how children exhibit stress, worry and fear and what strategies teachers can use to support children.
- **Toys, materials, games, and routines** (e.g., remove hard to sanitize toys for classroom; use frequent handwashing to allow some toy sharing; continue to use play-based activities but with necessary modifications; provide individual art supplies, etc.).

Ensuring Parental Support and Communication

- **Strategies to strengthen communication and promote dialogue with families-** continue to use digital channels of communication to communicate with parents regularly (e.g., texts or video calls, posters at drop-off points). **D:** Create a checklist for parents to help decide when children are well to attend; schedule arrival and pick-up to avoid crowding; enforce stay-at-home policies; inform re health measures being used and expectations of parents, etc.
- **Strategies to support caregivers and ensure continuity of learning for children** -key messages to parents on how children exhibit stress and worry and what parents can do about it; activities that can be shared with families to continue to support learning at home.

Annex 2

Suggested Questions for Parents/Caregivers on Re-opening of ECE settings

Introduction:

Below is a list of suggested questions to be included in relevant surveys and polls prior and/or during ECE setting re-opening to better inform plan preparation and ongoing support to parents and children. These questions will help assess (although not in-depth) caregivers' knowledge on COVID-19, common misconceptions, attitudes towards ECE setting re-opening, awareness of undertaken protective measures and what is expected of them, trust, self-efficacy and what other concerns they may have. A few notes to keep in mind:

- Questions need to be adapted and contextualized, and ideally pre-tested.
- Questions can be run as a survey or poll or integrated into another survey prior or after ECE setting re-opening, to provide a better understanding what parents know, feel and think about ECE setting re-opening, and how that can affect their children.
- Questions **in blue** are more generic questions. They are important but do not necessarily directly relate to ECE settings.
- Please consider if your country is taking a more systematic approach to field test the questions and 'validate' them.

Suggested Questions:

1. How would you rate your knowledge level on how to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus?

Very poor knowledge				Very good knowledge
1	2	3	4	5

2. Which of the following can be symptoms of the novel coronavirus? Please select as many as apply:

- Fever [Answer scheme: yes, no, I don't know]
- Cough [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Shortness of breath [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Sore throat [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Runny or stuffy nose [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Muscle or body aches [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Headaches [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Fatigue (tiredness) [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Diarrhoea [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]
- Loss of taste and smell [Answer scheme: see "Fever"]

3. Do you agree with the decision to re-open the ECE setting?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / cannot answer

4. Do you plan to send your child back to the ECE setting (when they re-open / if they re-opened)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure yet

5. Do you feel it is safe for your child to return to the ECE setting?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / cannot answer

OR/AND

What do you consider to be the likelihood of your child getting infected with the novel coronavirus, in the ECE setting?

Extremely unlikely				Extremely likely
1	2	3	4	5

6. Have you discussed with your child measures she/he can take to prevent infection with COVID-19?

- Yes
- No

IF YES, what are these measures?

- Wearing a face mask
- Wash hands with soap and warm water.
- Use hand sanitizers.
- Covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching the mouth, nose, eyes, face with unwashed hands.
- Wash hands frequently throughout the day
- Avoid touching surfaces.
- Using physical distancing (keeping minimum 2 meters).
- Eating garlic, lemon.
- Drinking water.
- Other: _____

7. Do you believe your child's ECE setting has taken adequate measures to prevent infection with COVID-19 among children, and between staff and children?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

8. Has your child's ECE setting communicated with you about any measures taken to adjust the curriculum and the learning environment in order to ensure smooth transition of children back to pre-school?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

9. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you assess the capacity of the ECE setting to prevent infection with COVID-19 among children, and between staff and children, while maintaining positive learning environment for young children?

Has no capacity				Has adequate capacity
1	2	3	4	5

OR

Do you believe the ECE setting has the adequate capacity to prevent infection with COVID-19 among children, and between staff and children, while maintaining positive learning environment for young children?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

10. Do you believe the ECE setting staff have adequate knowledge and skills to minimize the risks of COVID-19 among children, and between staff and children?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

11. Do you believe the ECE setting staff have adequate knowledge and skills to provide emotional and psychosocial support to children if they notice distress and fear among them?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

12. Does the ECE setting have clear guidance/instructions for parents about how and when to bring and pick their children?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

13. Do you know what you need to do if you suspect that your child may be infected with COVID-19?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

14. How confident are you (how would you assess your capacity) to support your child's learning and development at home?

- Very confident
- Quite confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not confident at all
- I don't know.

15. How confident are you (how would you assess your capacity) in using technology to support your child's learning and development at home and to maintain links with your child's teachers?

- Very confident
- Quite confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not confident at all
- I don't know.

16. On a scale of 1 through 5, how would you rate the communication and support you have received from the ECE setting staff over the time in confinement in terms of supporting your child's learning and development at home? How would you assess the level of communication and support provided?

No communication				Regular communication and support
1	2	3	4	5

17. Were you provided with any digital tools or platforms to support learning of your child at home while the ECE setting was closed?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

18. If yes, did you use resources from any digital tools or platforms that were made available to support learning of your child at home?

19. Were the resources provided through the digital platforms useful in helping you support learning of your child at home?

Not useful at all				Very useful
1	2	3	4	5

20. What has been your most trusted source of information that you have been relying on since the beginning of the COVID-19 emergency?

- TV
- Radio
- Social media
- Health workers
- Pre-school/kindergarten staff
- Other: _____

21. How much do you trust the following sources of information in their guidance/messages about COVID-19?

	Very little trust				A great deal of trust
	1	2	3	4	5
Public TV station(s)					
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp)					
Official, government press releases					
Health workers					
Preschool/kindergarten staff					
Other: _____					

22. What could the ECE setting do to better protect children from COVID-19 and to ensure positive learning environment? (open question)

23. What are your current issues and worries (or fears) as a result of COVID-19? (open question)

24. What do you think you can do to maximize your protection of being infected? (open question)

Annex 3

Expected result	Key Messages ¹²		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
Teachers are confident that it is safe to go back to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers safety comes first. The decision to re-open pre-schools is based on the fact that with the precautions taken, risks paused on teachers and children are minimal. Re-opening is planned in a way to ensure providing teachers and children with a secure, enjoyable, and stimulating environment. 		
Teachers are aware of new prevention and mitigation rules and regulations that will be enforced in pre-schools/kindergartens and are working to implement them for their safety and children's safety.	<p>All needed precautions for prevention and mitigation have been taken including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Frequency of cleaning, disinfecting and ventilation of classes (2) Revising curriculums to allow for prevention and mitigation (3) Adjusting the number of groups per class or possibly school shifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have a crucial role to play in enforcing the adoption and enforcement of the new policies and guidelines. Ensure pre-schools/kindergartens maintain child-friendly and developmentally appropriate practices. A safe distance between students should not prevent social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase spacing between tables, chairs, or spots on the carpet where children sit. Stagger recesses/breaks so that smaller groups of children are playing at once on the playground or shared spaces. Set up individual cubbies for each child with markers, scissors, crayons that each child can use is a good way to

¹² Countries need to adjust these messages based on measures that are taken at the country level

Expected result	Key Messages ¹²		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
	(4) Adjusting spaces between desks in classrooms (5) Policies for the use of face masks (6) Availability of hand sanitizers, and hygiene supplies (7) Time allocated for hand washing, (8) Guidelines for pick up and drop off of children (9) Policies for school transportation	engagement, hands-on learning, and play that promotes all areas of development.	encourage continued creativity and art making without the need to share these between children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on imaginative play, physical games that can respect some social distancing, singing, individual art projects, etc. • Rely on interactive read aloud and whole class entertainment activities such as a puppet show by the teacher, or songs. • If possible, at nap time, ensure that children's naptime mats (or cribs) are spaced out as much as possible, depending on space available. Consider placing children head to toe in order to further reduce the potential for viral spread. • Move lessons and activities outdoors as much as possible.

Expected result	Key Messages ¹²		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
Teachers are in close contact with parents to ensure good transitioning and continued children safety.		Partner with families to ensure good transition from home confinement to pre-school/kindergarten attendance and ensure open ongoing communication.	Strengthen communication and coordination mechanisms that promote dialogue and engagement with parents regularly.
Teachers encourage children to practice preventative behaviours to limit their exposure to COVID-19.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish healthy hygiene behaviour and practices (including Frequent handwashing; covering coughs and sneezes; avoiding touching the face) among young children. • Integrate teaching and supporting children with developing good hygiene practices in the curriculum and the daily routine. • Demonstrate effective handwashing and set aside specific times during the day when children can practice these behaviours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to children and inform them that they will learn a lot of new skills and techniques through lots of fun exercises and games, like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand washing competitions • learning new skills on greeting friends and connecting with them • Nice games on avoiding touching their face • How to cough and sneeze without harming others • Discuss and introduce non-contact greetings. like saying hello in sign language, giving the peace sign, waving the hand, giving a wink, etc.
Teachers help children understand the new routine and additional preventative measures		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize on teachable moments to help children understand why certain measures are taken in their 	

Expected result	Key Messages ¹²		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
enforced in pre-schools/kindergartens.		<p>environment and the role that they play in ensuring their health as well as that of their peers, teachers, families, communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to children why certain toys are removed, why the windows are open often, what games they can play safely outdoors and why. Find ways to help children feel some control over their environment. 	
Teachers are vigilant and observe children to early identify any suspected cases of COVID-19.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are key to identifying any suspected cases of COVID-19, be vigilant, observe children carefully and isolate immediately if any children show symptoms or signs, • Inform parents about the measures that pre-schools/kindergartens are putting in place and ask for cooperation to report any cases of COVID-19 that occur in the household. If someone in the household is suspected to have COVID-19, keep the child home and inform the pre-school/kindergarten. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be vigilant and observe students to early identify if any students are sick, separate sick children from well children until they can be sent home. Talk to the parents on the need to contact health authorities immediately. • Talk to parents about the enforcement of the policy of “staying at home if unwell” for students. • Communicate to parents the importance of keeping children home when they are sick.

Annex 4

Expected result	Key Messages ¹³	
	Prior to re-opening	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
Children go back to pre-school routines	Pre-schools/kindergartens are going to re-open, and you are going to be able to go back and re-unite with your friends and teachers.	
Children understand what is COVID-19 and its modes of transmission		<p>What is COVID-19? Coronavirus is a group of viruses that can make people feel sick. Viruses are tiny organisms that you can't see, they can only be seen with very special lenses that look at tiny things. Because they are so small, they can easily enter the body and can make people feel sick.</p> <p>Can coronavirus enter my body? Yes. But it doesn't fly alone, it travels from one person to another. Coronavirus cannot jump very far so to travel it uses the following ways: (1) It can jump from hand to hand when people shake hands or touch something. It is important to wash your hands with soap and water for the duration of a song. You can also use hand sanitizers, if there is no water available. (2) It can travel in the droplets that jump when someone sick coughs, sneezes or touches anything. This is why it is important to keep a distance between you and others so that the droplets do not reach you, and to avoid touching any surfaces.</p>
Children feel safe and protected at pre-schools	The pre-school will make sure that you are well and will take all measures to ensure you and your friends are safe.	Is it safe to be at my pre-school?

¹³ Countries will need to adjust based on the rules and measures enforced at preschools by country

Expected result	Key Messages ¹³	
	Prior to re-opening	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
	This might include taking your temperature every day, asking you to wear a mask, frequent hand washing or using hand sanitizers, stepping foot in foot cleaning foams, asking you not to share food or personal items with your friends etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is safe to be at your pre-school as all necessary precautions to make sure you are safe have been taken, and you also can protect yourself by following the pre-school instructions on your safety to avoid getting sick. • Strictly follow rules placed by the pre-school in relation to wearing masks, hand washing, using hand sanitizer and stepping foot in foot cleaning foams, using disposable cups, plates, personal utensils, not sharing your food or personal belongings with others, etc.
Children understand the new routines and additional preventative measures in pre-schools/kindergartens		<p>Is there any difference that I will see in my pre-school/kindergartens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will learn a lot of new fun things • You will have handwashing competitions, learn how to cough/sneeze without harming anyone, learn how to avoid touching your face, and connecting with your friends in new ways. • You will have dedicated times set to practice good behaviours to protect yourself <p>Will my pre-school be the same?</p> <p>Your pre-school/kindergarten will be the same, the only changes are:¹⁴</p> <p>Your class windows will be opened more often to allow fresh air and good ventilation.</p> <p>(1) You will get to enjoy more activities outdoors in the fresh air.</p> <p>(2) You will play with a smaller number of kids and teachers will give you more attention.</p> <p>(3) Some toys that cannot be cleaned have been removed and other more interesting toys will be used.</p>

¹⁴ COs will need to adjust based on the rules and measures enforced at preschools by Country.

Expected result	Key Messages ¹³	
	Prior to re-opening	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
Children practice preventative behaviours to limit the exposure to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will learn new techniques in pre-schools and a lot of new skills that will be fun You will have fun hand washing competitions. You will learn new skills on saying Hi to your friends and connecting with them. You will have games on avoiding touching your face. You will learn how to cough and sneeze without harming others. 	<p>How can I stay safe in my pre-school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wash your hands with soap and water 2. Use a tissue while coughing or sneezing or cough and sneeze into your elbow and wash your hands immediately 3. Keep a distance between yourself and your friends 4. Do not touch your face, mouth, nose or eyes 5. Do not share your cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others 6. Don't put toys in your mouth 7. Ask your teachers about anything that is confusing you 8. Be your own Hero and keep yourself safe 9. Share what you learn about preventing disease with your family 10. The school will take your temperature often to make sure you are ok <p>How can I Greet others without getting sick? When you are in your pre-school, if someone comes up to greet you, you can wave your hand at them without touching them. Your greeting can be just as affectionate with gestures and a smile!</p>
Children are able to notify teachers and parents if they feel sick		<p>What happens if Corona Virus enters my body? You might feel a little bad, like when you have a cold. You may have fever, cough, and trouble breathing. But just like other times you have been sick, after a few days you will feel better and you will play with your friends again! Almost everyone after a few days feels good again.</p> <p>What can I do I feel sick? Tell your parents, another family member, or a caregiver if you feel sick, and ask to stay home. If you feel sick adults will take care of you so you can get better soon.</p>

Annex 5

Expected result	Key Messages ¹⁵		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
Parents are confident that it is safe to send their children to pre-schools.	The decision to re-open pre-schools was made based on the fact that with precautions taken, the risks paused to children is minimal.		
Parents are aware of the new prevention and mitigation rules and regulations guiding the re-opening of pre-schools, strictly follow these rules and prepare their children for going back to pre-schools/kindergartens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision to re-open pre-schools (earlier than other schools) was made to help you go back to work, while your children are taken care of and are safe at pre-schools. • Be assured that pre-schools re-opening is planned to ensure providing children with a secure, enjoyable, and stimulating environment. • Pre-schools are adopting new policies to ensure establishing healthy, hygiene behaviour practices while at pre-school including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Teaching and supporting children to develop the needed practices, and allocating times during the day to practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your children about the re-opening of pre-schools and help them feel excited to go back to pre-school routines and reunite with their friends. • Prepare your children for going back to pre-schools and inform them that they will learn a lot of new skills and techniques and that they will have lots of fun through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Hand washing competitions (2) learning new skills on greeting friends and connecting with them (3) Games on avoiding touching their face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow rules and ensure your children abide by rules placed by the pre-school in relation to wearing masks, using hand sanitizer and stepping foot in foot cleaning foams, sending disposable cups, plates, personal utensils, or food etc. when you are at the pre-school. • Follow drop off and pick up procedures enforced by the pre-school. • Stay informed with pre-school updates to keep children safe.

¹⁵ Countries will need to adjust based on the rules and measures enforced at preschools by Country.

Expected result	Key Messages ¹⁵		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
	<p>and participate in related competitions and exercises.</p> <p>(2) Dedicating time for handwashing</p> <p>(3) Frequently cleaning, disinfecting and ventilating classrooms, and commonly used areas and toys.</p> <p>(4) Removing of toys and objects that cannot be cleaned.</p> <p>(5) Performing more activities in the open air</p> <p>(6) Taking temperature for children often to follow up on children health status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping children physically distant does not mean that children will be prevented from social engagement, hands-on learning, and play that promotes all areas of development. • Educators have been trained on practical support to pre-schools re-opening and how to enforce preventative measures. 	<p>(4) How to cough and sneeze without harming others</p>	
Parents are in close contact with the pre-school/kindergarten and collaborate to ensure children safety		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with your child to ensure good transition from home confinement to pre-school attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay connected with pre-school and follow new rules and guidance for prevention. • Talk to the pre-school, if you feel your child needs psychological support.

Expected result	Key Messages ¹⁵		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to pre-school personnel if you have any question or concern or require additional information or guidance.
Parents encourage their children to practice preventative behaviours to limit their exposure to COVID-19.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate your child on how she/he can stay safe in pre-school by emphasizing that they should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Wash their hands with soap and water (2) Use a tissue while coughing or sneezing or into your elbow and washing your hands (3) Keep a distance between themselves and their friends (4) Avoid touching face, mouth, nose or eyes (5) Not sharing food or drinks, cups, or eating utensils with others (6) Not putting toys in their mouth (7) Asking teachers about anything that is confusing (8) Being their own hero's in keeping themselves safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the same behaviours your child is learning at school in relation to hygiene, flu etiquette, and greeting others.

Expected result	Key Messages ¹⁵		
	Prior to re-opening	Part of re-opening process	With pre-schools/kindergartens re-opened
		(9) Sharing what they learn about preventing with their parents	
Parents are vigilant and do not send their children to pre-schools if they are sick			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is crucial to monitor your child and not send him/her to pre-school if they are not feeling well. This is key to ensuring that other kids do not get sick, and pre-schools stay a safe environment for children. • If anyone in the house is sick with COVID-19 or suspected with COVID-19, make sure to keep your child away from the sick person and don't send your child to pre-school for 14 days.