



Digital Education for Youth and Children on the Move

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About Migration Youth and children Platform(MYCP)

MYCP is part of the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) – the official, formal and self-organised space for children and youth (aged below 30) to contribute to and engage in certain intergovernmental and allied policy processes at the UN since 1992. Our mission is to bridge children and youth and the UN system, with a focus on migration issues, in order to ensure that their right to meaningful participation is realised. We do so by engaging children and youth entities in formal and informal forms in the design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of sustainable development policies at all levels in four areas: Policy & Advocacy, Capacity Building, Youth Action and Knowledge.

Youth and children on the move

This term describes youth and children who have been directly or indirectly affected by migration and displacement, either internationally across borders or within the same country.

Digital Technologies For Youth and Children on the Move

Digital technologies can make the lives of young people and children on the move easier; migrants, refugees, and displaced young people and children can harness the power of technology to navigate the challenges and opportunities in their host communities and promote their access to different essential services like education, healthcare, skills, and employment. However, marginalized youth, including young people and children on the move, face unique barriers to accessing digital technologies and digital education that have been further exacerbated after COVID-19.

According to (UNHCR, 2021), an estimated 57 per cent of refugee or displaced learners who were enrolled in school before the COVID-19 pandemic were not supported by any digital or home-based learning program during school closure. When this is added to the number of refugee learners who were out of school before COVID-19, it is estimated that a total of 78 per cent of school-age refugee learners had limited to no access to learning opportunities during school closures.

Youth and Children on the Move face Several Challenges in Accessing Digital Education

In Africa, the critical question of digital education for migrants and refugees remains unanswered in many African countries. The lack of access to digital education and relevant training impedes the development of digital spaces. Africa remains the most underdeveloped across the world, with over 70% of the least developed countries in the world; this has led to inadequate educational infrastructure, including the lack of computers, tablets, affordable internet connections and the alarming lack of trained teachers, present a major challenge for integrating digital education into many parts of Africa. Limited access to technology hinders the spread of digital education in remote regions.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, youth and children on the move and young marginalized communities in general face several challenges in accessing digital technology. For example, vulnerable indigenous communities in the Peruvian highlands lack access to the internet or any technology, according to UNICEF. The high incidence of poverty is still a characteristic feature of the population in rural areas of Peru where, according to ENAHO 2017, monetary poverty affects 44.4% of the rural population, and extreme monetary poverty affects 12.8% of it is almost impossible to be able to access either due to economy -leading kids in school age to work on the crops or take care of their little sibling- or knowledge of any technology. The situation is even worse for displaced youth and children, as Peru has over 1.5 million forcibly displaced residents.

In the MENA region, young people's and children's access to digital learning varies not only among countries but also among the different communities in the same country. An estimated 37 million learners in the region weren't reached, and 40 % of students did not have access to and/or did not participate in the digital and broadcast remote learning options provided during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2021). With over 61 million children living in countries affected by war, a total child population of nearly 166 million (UNICEF), massive conflict-induced displacement within and across borders, and enormous and ever-growing humanitarian and protection needs in the region due to conflicts and instability are significantly hindering vulnerable youth and children protection at all levels, whether at home, in the community, in schools or online.

Despite that youth and children on the move around the world suffer from variant challenges in accessing safe digital education, three main challenges faced by all the young people and children on the move are Lack of access to digital connectivity, the unavailability and lack of access to digital content, and the lack of capacity to use digital content.

'The scalability, speed, mobility and portability of technology make it a suitable option for educating displaced people. But initiatives tend to provide content that is incompatible with national curricula in host countries. International organizations that support such partnerships need to ensure that they serve inclusion of refugees in national education systems'.

Digital Education for Youth and Children on the Move: examples from LAC, MENA, and Asia

In Latin America and the Caribbean, The Peruvian Government is providing laptops in such areas to have a digital education. In 2020, the Ministry of Education made the decision to acquire 719,000 tablets with mobile internet for students in rural areas (RPP, 2020). According to RPP (2020), teachers also require the same level of computer support, which is why 97,756 tablets were allocated to them, with appropriate mobile internet service and solar chargers where there is no electricity. Nevertheless, there are some challenges to tackle: most people in rural areas are not knowledgeable about how to even turn on a laptop. Workshops and more effort towards teaching how to use such technologies is vital for the success of it.

LAC

One of the leading initiatives to help learners on the move access digital education is 'Aprendo en casa', a national multiplatform initiative, has provided relevant and dynamic learning content broadcasting through TV, radio and online, to supplement teaching and learning processed for refugee and host community learners.

Nevertheless, some challenges remain such as the language barrier, as most rural people speak indigenous languages, and most computer programs are not prepared for that. The Government is trying to immerse young people in digital education through "Tambos" which are government-owned social places with internet signals in which school children can go to get access to the internet. Nevertheless, most of the Tambos are only open from 9am to 5pm (which is the usual school time). Through these tambos, students can go and get a laptop in the tambo to do their study work, with a government facilitator during the specified timings. Nevertheless, there is more to do towards inclusiveness, as most of these facilitators, do not speak the local language but only Spanish -the wide language in Peru-. Moreover, the accessibility of such Tambos are something to improve on, as there are kids who have to commute for hours to get to the closest Tambo, crossing mountains, rivers and dangerous hills.

MENA

In the MENA region, young people and children on the move are being supported through many initiatives. In Egypt, the Egyptian government has been supporting more than 9 million refugees in all aspects of life, including digital empowerment; the government has been working on establishing 8 digital community centres that work to empower refugees inside Egypt by developing their social and entrepreneurship skills while empowering and training them to benefit from the growing Egyptian digital economy. During the school closures in Jordan, UNHCR, Madrasati, and Learning Equality worked closely with the government to support the rollout of the e-learning program with curriculum-aligned digital content for refugees.

According to UNHCR, Ministries of Education across MENA, with the support of education stakeholders, implemented several strategies to bridge the digital divide within their student populations. These initiatives aim to enable all students, and especially the most vulnerable, to take part in learning activities, particularly where devices and connectivity are limited. These mitigation strategies for bridging the digital divide include:

- Internet zero rating or subsidised internet access (data free) for accessing Ministry of Education (MoE) websites during specified times of day. For example, free data packages were provided in Jordan by UNICEF between March and November 2020, to vulnerable students in camps.
- Extended electricity hours in refugee camps (e.g. Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan) to ensure children can watch television when MoE lessons are aired;
- Donated and/or subsidised ICT devices (tablets with hotspots) with preloaded learning resources provided to children. In Algeria, servers and routers were provided by UNICEF to expand coverage of existing distance learning platform⁵⁵;
- Access to online learning platforms enabled via mobile phones.

Asia

In Asia, the surge of initiatives aimed at promoting digital education signifies a transformative shift in how educational content is delivered and accessed. Countries like Pakistan and India have been at the forefront of this change, each deploying innovative strategies to overcome traditional barriers to education, especially for young people and children on the move.

In Pakistan, efforts such as the Digital Pakistan Policy, the National Digital Library of Pakistan (NDLP), TeleSchool, and Taleemabad have been instrumental in enhancing network accessibility and promoting digital literacy. Despite facing challenges such as infrastructural deficits and insufficient teacher training, these initiatives have made significant strides in reaching millions, including refugees, and offering quality digital content and resources, particularly in rural areas. Taleemabad's approach, merging national curriculum standards with engaging digital content, exemplifies the innovative direction of digital education in the country.

Mirroring Pakistan's commitment, the government of India has embraced digital pedagogy as a cornerstone of its long-term strategy in the education sector. With initiatives like PM E-Vidhya, DIKSHA, and E-Pathshala, India is reimagining e-learning. These programs are designed to bridge the digital divide, ensuring extensive sources of digital education are accessible to students, teachers, and parents across every State/UT. From the comprehensive program of PM E-Vidhya aiming to unify digital and online education for nearly 25 crore school students to DIKSHA's vision of 'One Nation, One Digital Platform,' India's efforts are paving the way for a new age of learning that transcends traditional classroom boundaries.

The impact of these initiatives is evident in the digital education market's growth across Asia. In 2020, the market size exceeded US\$38,257 million and is projected to surpass US\$162,160 million by 2030. Countries like India and China, with their significant investments in educational technology, are leading this expansion, demonstrating the potential of digital education to revolutionize learning experiences.

However, the digital education landscape in Asia is not without its challenges. Natural disasters, leading to internal migration, highlight the need for flexible and accessible educational solutions. In Sri Lanka, for example, frequent droughts, floods, cyclones, and landslides have prompted the government to blend traditional classrooms with digital access. Initiatives like the Smart Classroom Project, the ICT for Schools project, and the "One Child, One Device" initiative aim to enhance accessibility, flexibility, empowerment, and resilience among mobile youth and children. These efforts are crucial in creating stable environments for education and employment amidst the challenges of internal migration.

Even though the Sri Lankan government's has shown efforts to ensure the online human rights of young people in general a specific focus is not given yet to young people displaced by climate disasters or war conflicts. the general initiatives that exist are "National Cyber Security Strategy (2018)" which Aims to promote cybersecurity awareness and the Online Safety Bill which was passed by the Sri Lankan Parliament in January 2024 which has addressed raised concerns on potential impact on young people's online human rights.

The Way Forward

As the world has taken steps in transforming education, we need to push for more actions in reimagining education deliveries and in supporting the most marginalized children and youth, including young learners on the move, in order to enhance learning outcomes so they can fully realize their potentials in the digital era.

Sustaining the digital education initiatives mentioned in this document and other leading initiatives that help young learners on the move access safe digital education requires consistent monitoring and the addressing of sustainability challenges, such as providing ongoing teacher training. The journey toward fully integrating technology in education is ongoing, but the collective efforts of countries across the world signify a promising path forward. By leveraging digital platforms and content, nations are not only enhancing educational access and quality for young people and children on the move but are also preparing them to thrive in an increasingly digital world.