COVID-19: IFRC, UNICEF and WHO issue guidance to protect children and support safe school operations

Guidance includes practical actions and checklists for administrators, teachers, parents and children

Download the joint guidance on protecting children and schools from COVID-19: https://uni.cf/33hxaSd

GENEVA/NEW YORK, 11 March 2020 – The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) today issued new guidance to help protect children and schools from transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The guidance provides critical considerations and practical checklists to keep schools safe. It also advises national and local authorities on how to adapt and implement emergency plans for educational facilities.

In the event of school closures, the guidance includes recommendations to mitigate against the possible negative impacts on children’s learning and wellbeing. This means having solid plans in place to ensure the continuity of learning, including remote learning options such as online education strategies and radio broadcasts of academic content, and access to essential services for all children. These plans should also include necessary steps for the eventual safe reopening of schools.

Where schools remain open, and to make sure that children and their families remain protected and informed, the guidance calls for:
• Providing children with information about how to protect themselves;
• Promoting best handwashing and hygiene practices and providing hygiene supplies;
• Cleaning and disinfecting school buildings, especially water and sanitation facilities; and
• Increasing airflow and ventilation.

The guidance, while specific to countries that have already confirmed the transmission of COVID-19, is still relevant in all other contexts. Education can encourage students to become advocates for disease prevention and control at home, in school, and in their community by talking to others about how to prevent the spread of viruses. Maintaining safe school operations or reopening schools after a closure, requires many considerations, but if done well, can promote public health.

For example, safe school guidelines implemented in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone during the outbreak of Ebola virus disease from 2014 to 2016 helped prevent school-based transmissions of the virus.

UNICEF is urging schools – whether open or helping students through remote learning – to provide students with holistic support. Schools should provide children with vital information on handwashing and other measures to protect themselves and their families; facilitate mental health support; and help to prevent stigma and discrimination by encouraging students to be kind to each other and avoid stereotypes when talking about the virus.

The new guidance also offers helpful tips and checklists for parents and caregivers, as well as children and students themselves. These actions include:

• Monitoring children’s health and keeping them home from school if they are ill;
• Encouraging children to ask questions and express their concerns; and
• Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth and nose.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

Follow UNICEF on Twitter and Facebook. For more information about COVID-19 and guidance on how to protect children and families, visit www.unicef.org/coronavirus

About IFRC

IFRC is the world’s largest humanitarian network, comprising 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies working to save lives and promote dignity around the world.

www.ifrc.org - Facebook - Twitter - YouTube

About WHO

For updates on COVID-19 and public health advice to protect yourself from coronavirus, follow WHO on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube

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PRESS RELEASE

Seminar on International Women's Day 2020 at Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS)

March 10, 2020, Islamabad: To celebrate International Women’s Day 2020, Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), Women Parliamentary Caucus, UNDP and UNFPA jointly organized a seminar with parliamentarians, provincial commission on the Status of Women, Social Welfare and Labour Departments of the four provinces, civil society, lawyers, nurses, academia and...
people belonging to various walks of life at PIPS, Islamabad. The women’s day theme being celebrated globally this year is “I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights”. In this backdrop, the local theme of event focused on Marking Ten Years of Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2010. The event stood as post-legislative scrutiny of the Act which thoroughly discussed the progress, gaps and barriers to effective implementation.

Executive Director PIPS Mr. Mohammad Anwar welcomed the participants of seminar and underscored the importance of holding such events leading to an intellectual discourse for resolving legislative issues. He further stressed upon the need of effective post-legislative scrutiny regarding Acts of crucial importance for the society at large. Resident Representative of UNDP Deputy Representative Ms. Aliona Niculita said at the occasion that, “Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 is an important legislation for safety and protection of women at workplaces. She commended the Government’s efforts to create a safe working environment for women in Pakistan. Ms. Lina Mousa, Representative emphasized that “Gender Based Violence is a grave human rights violation that undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims”. She stressed on joint efforts to eliminate violence, discriminatory and harmful practices against women and girls, by strengthening the capacity of the relevant government institutions to better respond to the needs of victims of abuse and harassment.

MNA Shahida Rehmani presented the Salient Features of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2010. She said that the bill has provided mandatory protection to women who are a part of labour force. Maliha Hussain, representative of Mehergarh, presented a review of ten years performance of the act and underlined its various features. Furthermore, she applauded the role of ombudsperson in handling the complaints and issues regarding harassment. Farida Shaheed, Member National Commission on the Status of Women said that the parliamentarians deserve appreciation on this landmark legislation.

The session was followed by a thorough panel discussion among women parliamentarians of the national and the four provincial assemblies to discuss the situation in different provinces regarding protection of women rights and the role
of provincial WPCs. They highlighted that the provinces have made tremendous progress in spreading awareness about women rights and protection against harassment. Parliamentarians discussed various aspects of the bill and the role women MPs are playing to strengthen ombudsperson offices. They emphasized on the need to strengthen committees to address various challenges to women and complains of harassment.

Chief Guest of the occasion, MNA and Secretary Women Parliamentary Caucus of National Parliament, Ms. Munazza Hassan stressed on the inclusivity of the legislative process. She highlighted that we need to accept the flaws of our society and try to deal with the issues of sexual harassment with effective implementation of relevant laws.