

THEMAG

AIDE ET ACTION

N°155 / JUNE 2020 - WWW.AIDE-ET-ACTION.ORG

Special Report

COVID-19: THE RESPONSE OF AIDE ET ACTION IN THE FACE OF THE CRISIS



Aide et Action

Changing the world through Education

“Education plays a vital role during health crises too.”



Because education helps prevent epidemics, it teaches hygiene, it is sometimes the only solution to make up for the lack of vaccines; it can act on health problems everywhere in the world; education is a cure. This is why, in the face of the global health crisis that we have been going through for months, Aide et Action considers that education has more than ever a role to play!

I know that this period is a source of anxiety and doubts, for you as well as for us, but nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the essence: solidarity. While the disease has affected all populations, on all continents, it is still the most vulnerable and the most marginalized ones who are the first affected. Among them: children and young people. At the worst of the crisis, more than 1.5 billion were deprived of education, or 91% of the world's student population! Away from school, but also from life in society, many found themselves isolated, both academically and in terms of health.

In this context, Aide et Action quickly adapted its projects in order to support, at best, the populations we support on a daily basis. In India, Cambodia, Togo and Romania, we have developed emergency activities allowing to meet their specific needs such as food distributions, the installation of hand-washing stations, or the development of digital learning applications. So many essential devices that we detail for you in this special issue of our Magazine.

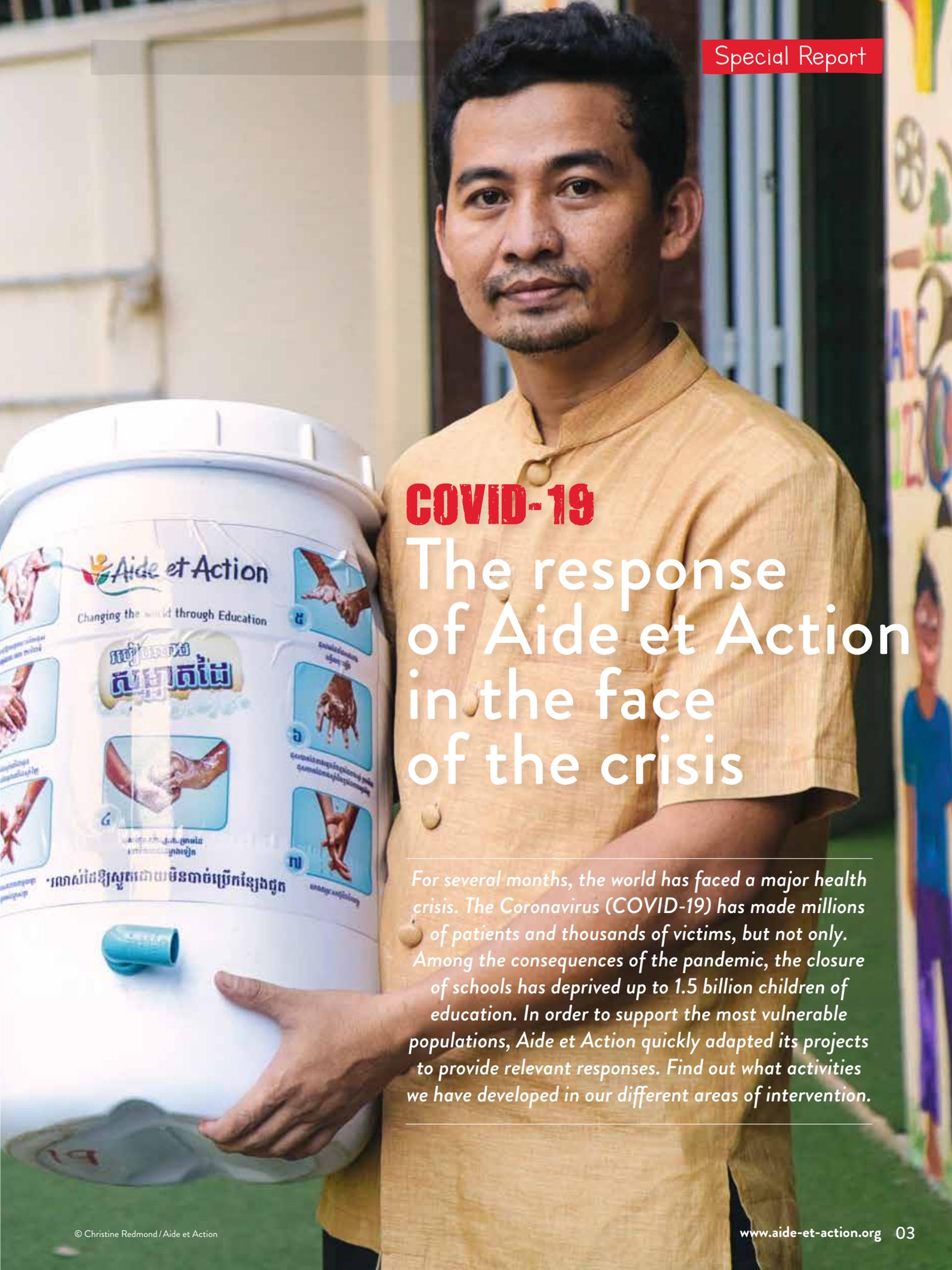
Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ballanger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Charles-Emmanuel Ballanger
CEO of Aide et Action

Quarterly magazine published by Aide et Action
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Director of publication: Charles-Emmanuel Ballanger. Editor in chief: Kristen Poels - Thanks to: Vanessa Martin, Vincent Reynaud-Lacroze, Naiade Plante, Didier Lahaye - Creation of model/execution/photo-engraving: tcgraphite - Cover photo: copyright Christine Redmond - Aide et Action is an organization to develop education without any political and / or religious attachment. Printing, lay-out and distribution are entirely financed by the subscriptions of Aide et Action sponsors and donors.



COVID-19

The response of Aide et Action in the face of the crisis

For several months, the world has faced a major health crisis. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has made millions of patients and thousands of victims, but not only. Among the consequences of the pandemic, the closure of schools has deprived up to 1.5 billion children of education. In order to support the most vulnerable populations, Aide et Action quickly adapted its projects to provide relevant responses. Find out what activities we have developed in our different areas of intervention.

In this period of crisis our priority is to protect the vulnerable and marginalized populations that we support on a daily basis and who are all the more vulnerable in the face of current health and economic risks. Since the start of the pandemic, everywhere wherever possible, Aide et Action mobilizes all its human and material resources, to develop its projects and provide relevant responses, both in terms of health and education.

At the height of the crisis, more than 90% of the world's student population was deprived of education due to school closings. The disruption it causes affects all communities; the consequences being particularly serious for underprivileged children and their families.

For this, our emergency response has developed around three main axes: hygiene education; moral and material support; and educational continuity.

Through this special report, discover how we support the populations who need it most in Asia, Europe and Africa. 🍀



COVID-19

Lack of education affects the entire society

Here are some of the reasons, listed by the UNESCO, which explain how the closure of schools is harmful at all levels.



1.5 billion

is the number of children and young people who have been deprived of education, at the height of the crisis, due to school closings, 90% of the global student population.

743 million

is the number of girls deprived of education because of the crisis; more than 111 million of them live in the least developed countries in the world, where it is usually extremely difficult to have access to education.

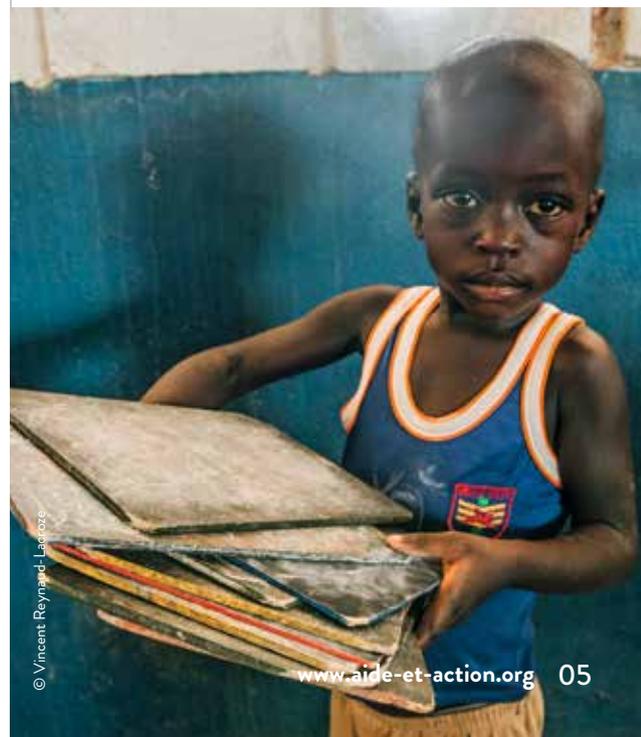
25%

this is the percentage of children at risk of dropping out of school after the crisis, according to the UNESCO. School dropout rates will reinforce gender disparities.

8,325

is the number of schools that Aide et Action accompanies and which were all closed for health reasons.

- **Interruption of learning:** teaching provides essential learning. The closure of schools therefore deprives children and young people of opportunities for development and improvement. The disadvantages are huge for underprivileged students, who generally have access to a more limited number of educational possibilities outside the school framework.
- **Food:** many children and young people rely on free meals or at a lower cost at school to eat a healthy diet. Consequently, the closure of schools has an impact on nutrition.
- **Lack of parental preparation for home schooling:** when schools close, parents are often asked to facilitate learning at home, but they may find it difficult to do this. This is particularly true for parents with limited education and resources.
- **Unequal access to digital learning platforms:** insufficient access to technology or a good Internet connection is an obstacle to continue learning, especially for students from underprivileged families.
- **Gaps in child care:** in the absence of other solutions, working parents often leave their children alone at home when the school is closed, which can lead to risky behaviour, including increasing influence of pressure by their peers and substance abuse.
- **High economic costs:** when schools are closed, working parents are more likely to be absent to babysit, often resulting in lost wages and reduced productivity.
- **Increased pressure on schools that remain open:** localized closures result in additional charges for open schools, since parents and authorities redirect children to these establishments.
- **Trend towards increasing drop-out rates:** it is very difficult to get children and young people back to school and stay there when schools reopen. This is particularly true for extended closures. 🍀



COVID-19

Hygiene education

Our teams regularly carry out hygiene awareness actions and good health practices. In this context of crisis, our association has stepped up its work with the most vulnerable.

Hygiene awareness

In many projects, Aide et Action aims to strengthen the quality of education by improving hygiene and sanitation conditions in schools through, among other things, the construction and equipment of sanitation works, user training and maintenance of health facilities, raising awareness among students and communities of hygiene rules in school and the family environment.

In order to limit the spread of the virus, where necessary, our colleagues transmit the right guidelines and try to counter rumours and false beliefs about the disease. Distribution of health advice via speakers, distribution of flyers or display of panels which present all the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), our teams are doing everything to get the message out, while respecting social distancing rules. In order to prevent, to avoid having to heal!

ACCOMPANYING CHILDREN FIRST AND FOREMOST

Vietnam Our teams were able to provide an emergency response to the crisis thanks to **hygiene awareness**. The children, identified as ambassadors within the communities, were trained in barrier gestures and received soap for their families.

In addition, in order to maintain the link with the children we usually accompany, a creative art competition was initiated by our teams (writing, drawing, video / photo) to raise awareness about children's rights, with a particular focus on health. Children were invited to explore what they can do to protect themselves in the event of a health crisis, what they expect from authorities and how to educate the people around them.

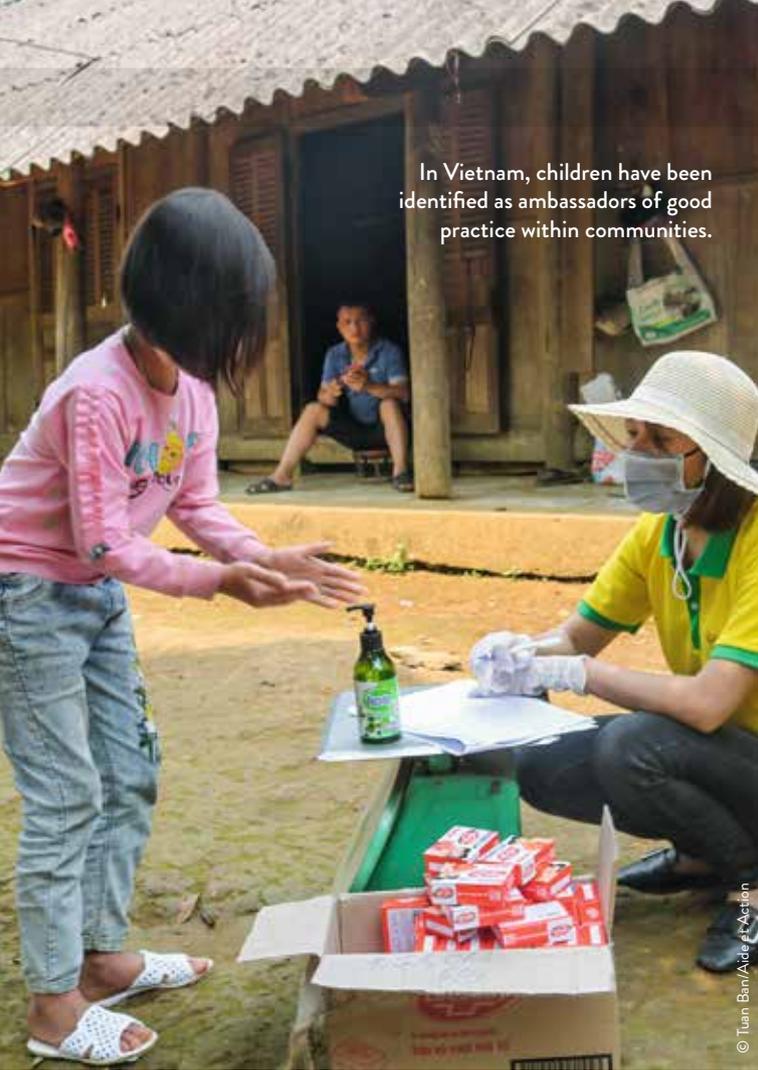
DEVELOP EFFECTIVE INITIATIVES

Cambodia We quickly implemented an effective solution to reach isolated villages,

despite the lockdown measures. We have converted our tuk-tuks - beforehand used as mobile libraries - into mobile health stations. Each vehicle was emptied of its usual books and filled with soap stocks, clean water and brochures and posters with information on practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Vehicles have also been equipped with a speaker system so that recommendation messages can be broadcast with an emphasis on social distancing. About 200 villages were reached in this way. To avoid the risk of spreading linked to sending employees based in big cities, we decided to work with volunteers from the communities concerned and that live on the spot.

DON'T FORGET THE MOST ISOLATED

Africa While urban centres are widely covered by information and awareness campaigns on barrier measures, the same is not true for more rural areas. This is why, in Togo, Aide et Action decided to carry out information and prevention activities in 11 villages in the country. This awareness is practised "door to door", in order to be able to reach all families. "Before this information session, we did not know the ways of transmission and we continued our habits like shaking hands or grouping together to discuss matters of family or community interest. Today, we know that the Corona virus really exists and that we can avoid it if we respect the barrier gestures," testifies Mr. Kpanabate, President of the village development committee from Pana-Bagou. 🍷



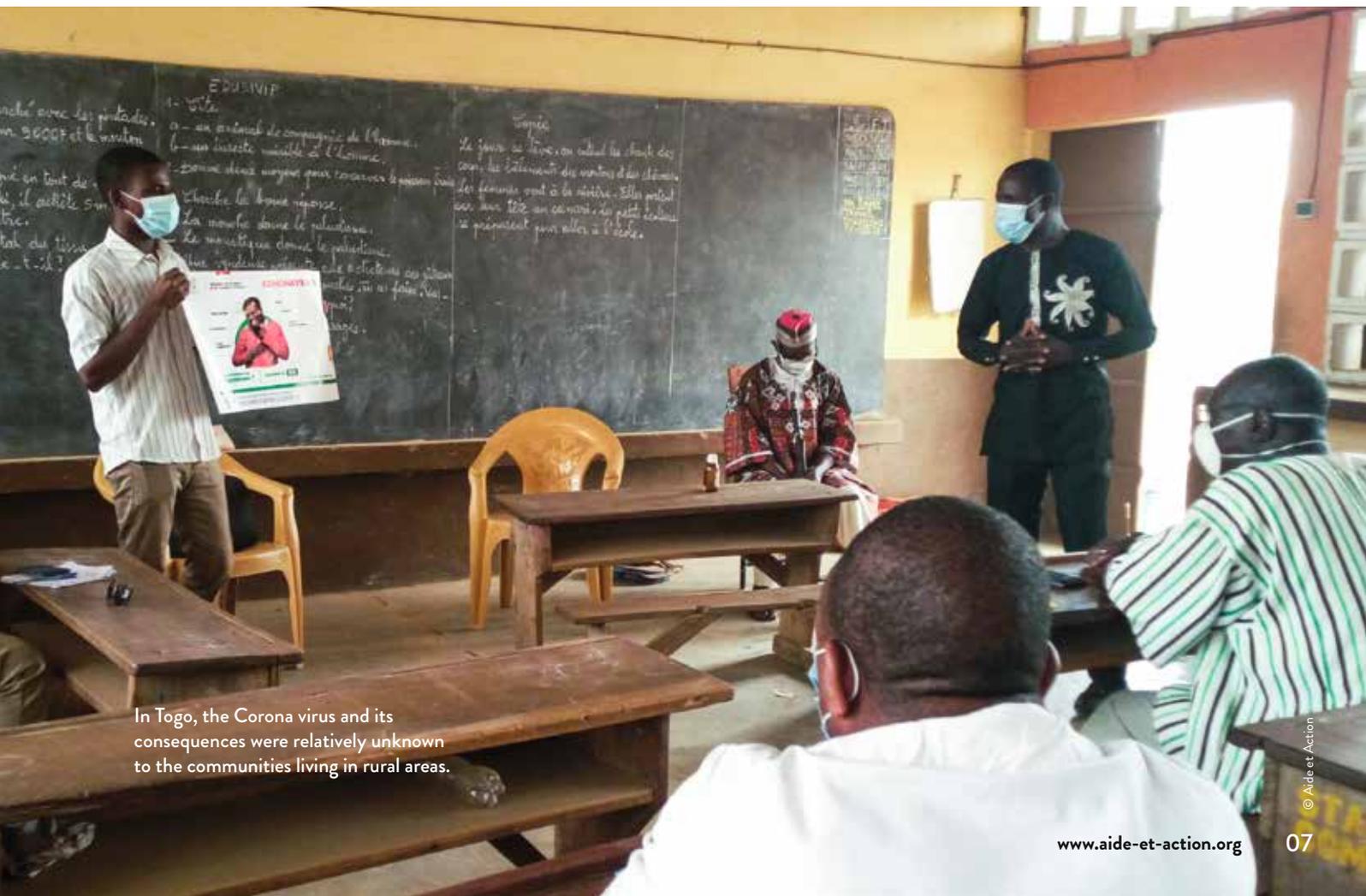
In Vietnam, children have been identified as ambassadors of good practice within communities.

© Tuan Bam/Aide et Action



In Cambodia, our teams quickly produced simple awareness tools that are understandable for all.

© Christine Redmond/Aide et Action



In Togo, the Corona virus and its consequences were relatively unknown to the communities living in rural areas.

© Aide et Action



In Romania, the already socially isolated community of Satmarel shantytown, found itself particularly futile.

© Sarah Hadrane/Stea



Support for migrant workers in India has been multifaceted due to the many difficulties encountered.

© Chandira Kiran Katta/Aide et Action



In Cambodia, installing hand-washing stations has been a key response for some communities.

© Christine Redmond/Aide et Action

COVID-19

Moral and hands-on support

The populations we support live in a very precarious situation. To prevent them from being forgotten and even harder hit by the health crisis, we decided to give them moral and hands-on support.



With the help of Aide et Action, I can financially support my sick daughter and provide medical treatment. I can't imagine what our condition would have been without it.

Arvind Kumar,
migrant worker in India.

Geographical and social isolation, poverty... There are many obstacles to the development of certain communities. To support them during this period, our teams distribute hygiene kits, soap and even food. They also defend their fundamental rights.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Romania Our local partner, the Stea association, was quickly mobilized to analyze the needs of the vulnerable community that we support in the shantytown of Satmarel. Initially, remote support by phone and internet was set up for families, as well as a permanent intermediary to continue to ensure distribution of medicines to those who need them. Then, secondly, emergency food aid was deployed. Packages containing potatoes, rice, sunflower oil, canned meat, and hygiene products were distributed. And for families, with school-age children, notebooks, pens and cookies were added.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES

India **Migrant workers** have been the hardest hit by the consequences of the government-imposed lockdown. Following the closure of Indian interstate borders and the loss of their source of income overnight, the impact on their daily lives has been considerable and devastating. In urban areas where we are implementing our interventions, we have succeeded in convincing

some brickyard owners to provide shelter and a ration of daily food to migrant families still there until the period of lockdown was lifted. We were also able to advocate with Indian state governments to include migrant families in their assistance program and support them by providing them with a food aid kit. We provided material support via food distribution and food aid kits. Finally, we have transformed our vocational training centres into resource and information ones for migrants that are victims of the crisis.

EQUIP COMMUNITIES

Cambodia Hygiene kits consisting of water cans, taps and soap have been allocated to remote villages, allowing the installation of around 100 hand-washing stations, as simple as they are effective, in communities that do not always have basic sanitation facilities. At the same time, in the poor neighbourhoods of the capital, Phnom Penh, we were able to support 200 families who usually depend on school meals provided in our informal education centres by distributing them 10 kilos of rice per month and hygiene products. Extending to the provinces of Kep, Kampong Thom and Kandal, this activity will support an additional 1,000 families, with a particular focus on women and girls who are particularly at risk. In this country, 32% of children under the age of five are stunted due to malnutrition, so the Corona virus poses an additional threat to their good development. 🍓

Migrant workers

In India, almost 100 million people are considered seasonal migrant workers. Among them, 10 to 15 million are children. Since 2009 Aide et Action has been working to take charge of them and enforce their right to education.

Our 3 key objectives:

- 1 Improving health and hygiene conditions of marginalized communities
- 2 Minimize disruptions related to the interruption of education
- 3 Invest in a long-term approach to minimize the impact of school closings



If there is a lesson to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that online education cannot just be seen as “a good option”, developed alongside the existing education system; it must be an essential, pivotal component of it and be integrated into it.

*Mary Burns,
Education Development Centre*

COVID-19 Educational continuity

In order to ensure educational continuity, our teams have mobilized themselves through the distribution of books to the most isolated ones; the support of schools and teachers in supporting children and families at home; or the development of learning platforms.

Radio, television, mobile phones or even online learning are the 4 main remote teaching options.

75% is the proportion of households that have access to radio worldwide according to the UNESCO.

1.67 billion is the number of homes worldwide that have access to television.

67% is the rate of possession of mobile phones in the world.

4,4 billion is the number of people who use the Internet.

In India, on 23 April 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, Aide et Action launched the “iDream Learning App”, a remote learning application for marginalized children. This aims to provide uninterrupted access to complete and adapted educational content, allowing the holistic development of the youngest. Indeed, the “iDream Learning App” offers a range of learning modules not only in Hindi and English, but also in other local languages. “*Launching the application in this time of global health crisis is an appropriate solution to deepen the lessons and offer learning activities within reach of every child without school,*” said Savy Lach, deputy general director of the association.

In Cambodia, most of the people we support live in remote areas and do not have access to learning resources and required infrastructure. That’s why, from 2013, Aide et Action has developed the “Khmer LEARN” mobile application, which offers more than 1,000 titles of digital children’s books, in Khmer and in the languages of ethnic minorities. During

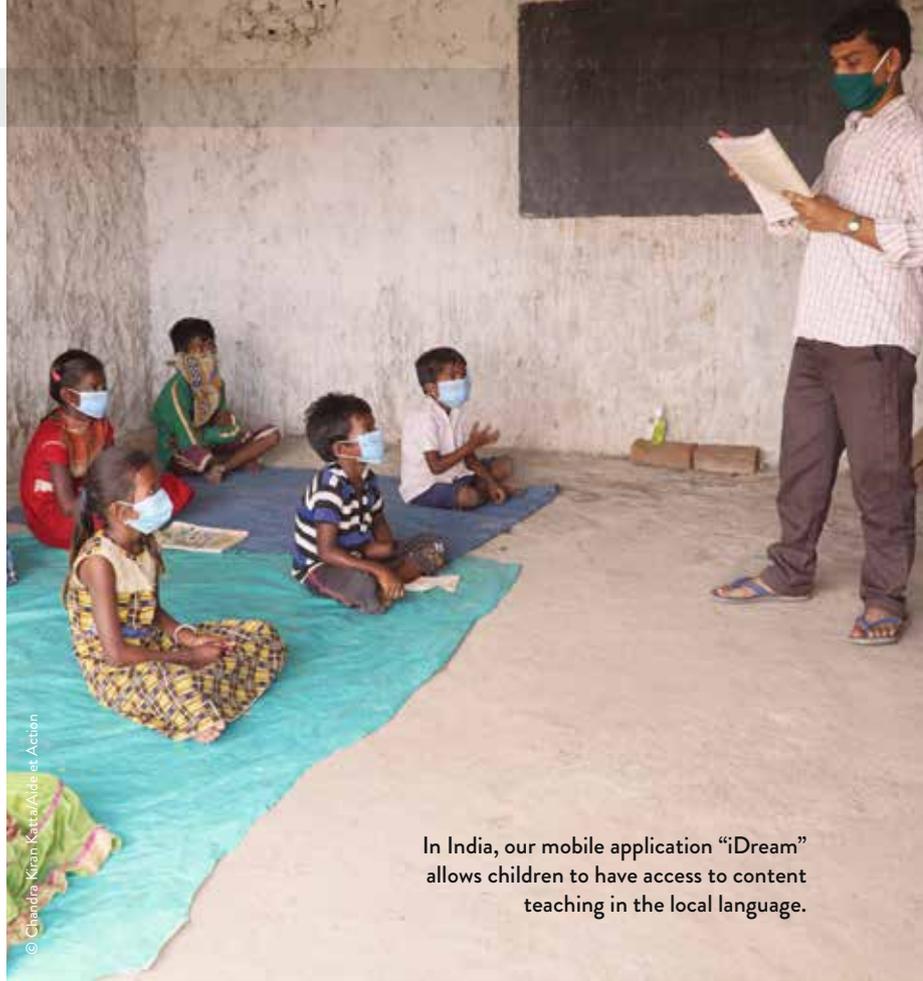
the crisis, our activities were therefore mainly focused on enhancing this platform. By the end of April, the application had been downloaded by 330,000 users across the country and had 1,000 new users every day. Audio books and educational games were made available and daily storytelling sessions were also put online. Aide et Action also worked on a platform especially geared towards staff, partners, teachers and parents to teach them how to use technology to educate children and facilitate learning at home.

Elsewhere in France, Aide et Action has distributed digital tablets with integrated educational software to children in the slums of Seine-Saint-Denis (93). And finally, in Benin, we have developed partnerships to support the emission of educational radio broadcasts. However, online and remote education is not a universal solution. Children without digital media, speaking a minority language or with a disability and with special needs still risk the consequences of their differences. It is therefore essential to think and offer specific and suitable content. 

In Cambodia, during the pandemic, our “Khmer LEARN” mobile application counted 1,000 new users per day.



© Prasth Chin/Aide et Action



© Chandra Kram Kaita/Aide et Action

In India, our mobile application “iDream” allows children to have access to content teaching in the local language.

IN CONCLUSION, EDUCATION AS A PREVENTION TOOL

In these times of crisis, at Aide et Action, we believe that education has more potential than ever to change the world and save lives. Health education has always been one of the priority areas of our organization because being in good health, having a healthy diet and in sufficient quantity and benefiting from basic care, are essential to flourish, learn, work and participate in the world as a citizen.

Through our actions, we aim for a double objective: to improve health of vulnerable populations to facilitate their access to education, and training, but also **make education the entry point for prevention and health awareness**. Indeed, in most of our countries of intervention, basic rules concerning hygiene, food, and ways of contamination and transmission of diseases are still largely unknown. When explained, they can however considerably improve survival rate and well-being. As we close this Magazine (May 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic

is receding and many countries have started easing lockdown restrictions, leading, among other things, to the reopening of classes. After the time of emergency, **today comes the time for a more sustainable approach to limit the negative impacts of any crisis on education**. It is from this perspective that Aide et Action wants to move forward. While we have done everything possible to adapt our action to the emergency situation and reinvent our intervention methods in order to reach the most vulnerable populations, we reaffirm that solidarity remains a key objective. Individuals, communities, organizations and governments must continue to support each other with the common goal of creating a better, “after”, post-pandemic world. **“In Africa, education is said to be an AIDS vaccine. Well, we want education to be the key factor that will allow the world to defeat COVID-19”** Aïcha Bah Diallo, International President of Aide et Action. 🍀



IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS, AIDE ET ACTION HAS LAUNCHED A GLOBAL INTERVENTION FUND FOR EDUCATION

Where Aide et Action intervenes, more than 8,325 schools have been closed for health reasons and the 1.9 million people that we support (of which 50% are women and girls) have been directly affected by the COVID-19 crisis. These populations are among the most vulnerable and underprivileged on the planet.

Today, more than ever, we need support to adapt our projects and implement our emergency response plan. This is why Aide et Action has launched a global intervention fund for education in response to the COVID-19 crisis, destined for its current or future partners (companies, foundations, institutes ...)

This initiative aims to raise 15 million euros by the end of 2021 in order to finance, as a first step, urgent preventive actions, first aid and learning continuity, then in the second place, to build a longer term approach to limit the negative impacts of any crisis on education. This plan will be implemented between May 2020 and December 2021. The first phase requires an investment of 8.8 million euros until the end of July.

We call on you to join our fight and invest more in education to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and prevent future ones. Education and solidarity are key; we are convinced!

For more information contact us
at this address: covid19.response@aide-et-action.org

<https://info.aide-et-action.org/covid-education-fund>



Changing the world through Education