

TEACHFORINDIA

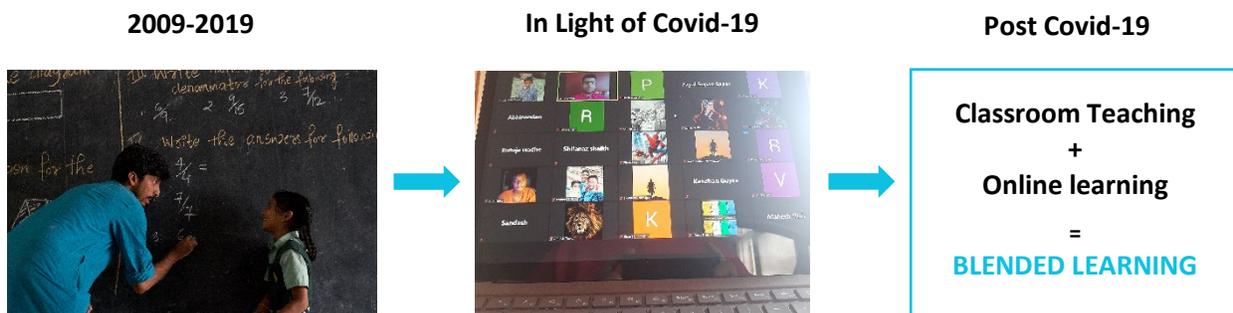
In the Light of Covid-19

Part 1: How We Have Changed

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted us overnight and changed us, perhaps, forever. As an organisation, we had to adapt, become agile, and innovate, all the while collaborating with our Students, our communities and long-standing partners. With the upheaval and disruption that we witnessed, we, at Teach For India, realized that we need to **continue doing what we had been doing, but do it differently.**

Students and families from low-income communities across the world have taken the biggest hit. According to a recent [UN report](#), the **pandemic has forced nearly 1.6 billion learners out of schools across 190 countries**, which is 94% of the overall student population. This corresponds to **320 million children in India** being impacted on the basis of the [UNESCO report](#). The learning loss, set to erase decades of progress if we don't act now.

With the well-being of our Students, Fellows and Staff in mind, we were one of the first few organizations to shift to the virtual realm even before the lockdown was imposed. Despite the challenge, it has been heartening to see our community come together and support one another. Overnight, we went from an in-person Fellowship to a **virtual Fellowship** focused on **supporting the immediate needs of our Students' families**, while **continuing to work towards an excellent education through a blended learning approach.**



Part 2: Big Shifts in Our Work

A] For our Students: As soon as the lockdown was announced, our immediate response was to understand the impact it would have on our children and their families in terms of their well-being and financial condition. We ran surveys, enlisted the help of our Fellows and requested support from our partner organisations to help distribute ration and groceries thereby providing immediate relief to the communities that we serve, where many parents belong to the informal sector. Through the relentless efforts of many stakeholders, we have been able to **support close to 13,000 families.**



We, simultaneously, created a task force to ensure that our Students continue learning. Aligned on the need to proceed with a **blended learning approach**, we focused on **synchronous and asynchronous learning** to maximize Student outcomes. Once we were able to ensure their immediate needs were met, we started focusing on their access to a stable internet connection and a device to enable online learning. Despite having made tremendous strides since March, we are still a long way away from our goal as the majority of our Students are not able to access classes online.

B] For our Fellows: Our Fellows have demonstrated incredible agility ever since the lockdown was announced. From a 100% in-person classroom teaching Fellowship, we have evolved to a **100% virtual Fellowship for the time being.** With their own challenges to face, our Fellows have selflessly been connecting with their Students, checking on their well-being, and leading their classrooms, schools and communities at a heightened level of leadership.

Our **recruitment process also moved online** as the health of our candidates and Staff is of utmost importance. Our 2020 cohort was the first to experience our first-ever **virtual Institute**, a big shift from the 5-week residential program that we have had for the past decade. To ensure continuous support, we are learning, engaging and connecting with each other through alternate platforms.

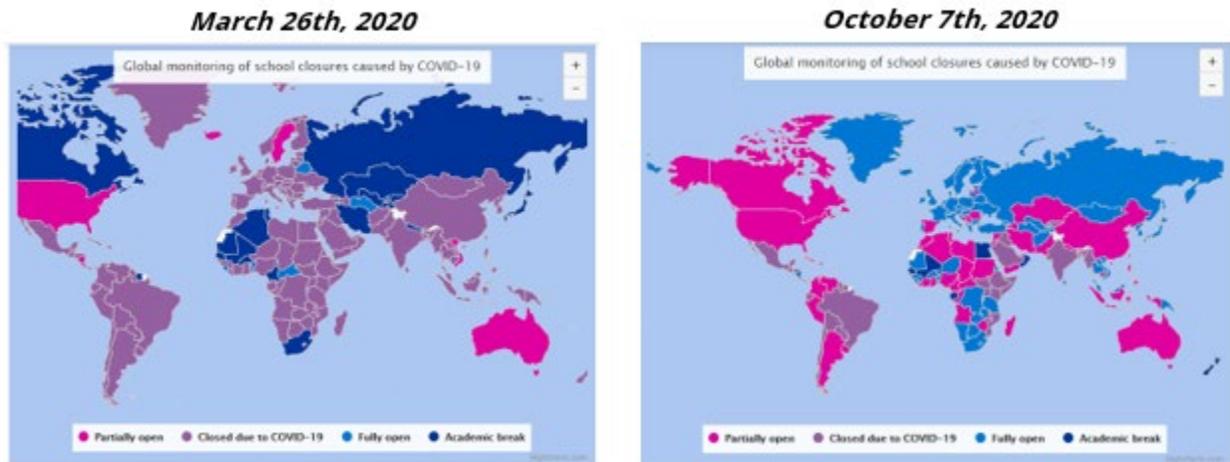


C] For our Staff: Our Staff has been working tirelessly to identify and implement ways to support the virtual nature of our Fellowship, as well as other areas including our work with Alumni, our Innovation Cell initiatives and more. Across all verticals, initially, teams **reprioritized work to support the immediate needs** of our community that stemmed from the impact of the pandemic, which included focusing on the well-being of Students, families, Fellows, Alumni as well as Staff. We have since reimagined our processes and reevaluated our overall goals to enable our work to continue in 2020-21.

D] For our Alumni: Our **3,400 Alumni have been instrumental in helping us face this crisis**. We were able to collaborate with many of their organizations to support our children, Fellows, Staff and the overall Alumni community. Many great initiatives were launched by our Alumni to directly impact our children, their families and the larger ecosystem. We also created spaces for well-being and a special taskforce to support our 2018 cohort with employment opportunities during this challenging time.

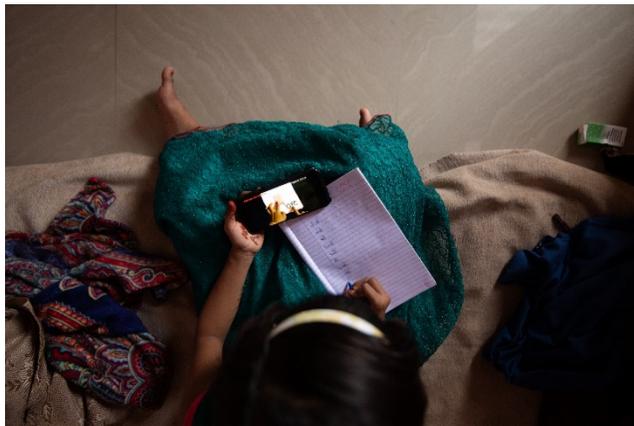
E] For our families, communities & larger ecosystem: We are engaging with our **Students' parents** through virtual PTA meetings, and staying in touch with the **schools** we operate in, to stay updated on their plan for reopening. We have also been able to collaborate with our **Teach For All network partners** to learn and share best practices as we are all facing similar challenges. We continue to work closely with **NGO and government partners** to fight this crisis.

Part 3: Our Work in The Coming Months, A New Future



Source: (UNESCO, 2020)

Our highest priority is the safety of our community. We will not be encouraging any meetings until schools are safe to reopen for our children, and we have the go-ahead from the government. We will continue to monitor recommendations from multiple sources and will input those into our safety measures accordingly.



Once schools do open, we look forward to resuming stronger and better, than ever before. For the Fellowship, in particular, this will mean not only resuming our work in person and on-ground, but also continuing to leverage technology in new and exciting ways to maximize our Students’ learning. In other words, we believe that the future is blended and are striving to accelerate learning outcomes through this approach. You can read more on our early insights and learnings with blended learning, and the role technology has played in providing a modern day education in the white paper- [Blended Learning: A Digital Equalizer](#) that we published.

NOW MORE THAN EVER we need leaders at all levels of the system to bridge the divide and end the inequities heightened by the pandemic. In spite of everything that we have faced, we believe that this is a **huge opportunity for us to REIMAGINE EDUCATION, especially for those most vulnerable and, therefore, most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Here are our key takeaways:

1. **Teachers matter!** - Even though the world is moving towards digital-first learning, teachers remain paramount in providing an excellent education and bridge the gap between students, technology and learning practices.
2. **Technology can enhance learning for children** - Technology can allow us to personalise learning, deepen practices and increase accessibility.
3. **With blended learning, we can make the most of instructional hours** - Our Students in government and low-income schools get just ~4 hours of learning in classrooms, which we know is not enough. However, asynchronous and synchronous learning enabled by technology, after school hours, can help address this issue in the future.

REFERENCES

- Senapaty, E. F. (2020, October 5). *Covid shut schools, but teachers making sure learning is not stopped in India*. Retrieved from UNESCO: <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-shut-schools-teachers-making-sure-learning-not-stopped-india>
- Teach For India. (2020). *#DontStopLearning*. Retrieved from Teach For India: <https://www.teachforindia.org/dont-stop-learning/>
- UNESCO. (2020). *Education: From disruption to recovery*. Retrieved from UNESCO: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>
- United Nations. (2020, August). *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond*. Retrieved from UN: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf