



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Learning Bridges

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Jordan

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- ☐ Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- ☐ Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- ☐ Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- ☒ Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- ☐ Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Ministry of Education and UNICEF Jordan

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

National blended learning program linking school and home, textbooks and technology, subject and applied learning. Cross curricula (science, maths, English and Arabic), digital transformation, teacher innovation, grades 4 to 10.

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Learning Bridges is a national blended learning program that links school and home, textbooks and technology, subject and applied learning. Designed as an emergency response to COVID-19 related school closures, Learning Bridges is the only national blended learning program in Jordan. This curricula linked program enabled 500,000 students to continue to engage with learning during COVID-19 and is now a resource used by teachers and students to recover and accelerate learning on the return to the classroom. An impact study (see attachments) has evidenced the system level impacts of Learning Bridges on the capacity of the MOE in cross curricula design, teacher innovation and digital skills.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

The result of school closures across the world has led to countries reviewing their educational offer with a greater emphasis on blended learning. This is to ensure that students can continue learning remotely, with support from their teachers and, where possible, for learning to be combined with face-to-face teaching in school. Provision also needs to be made for students who do not have access to technology, and who are often amongst the most vulnerable.

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education (MOE), with UNICEF support, launched Learning Bridges in September 2020. Learning Bridges is a national blended learning programme, to help students from grades 4 to 9 recover and accelerate their learning following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme links printed materials with online resources to provide weekly activities based on core curricula. This innovative approach links textbooks and technology, school and home, and subject knowledge with applied learning. Every child in grades 4 to 9 receives an A3 printed activity pack weekly with guidance on how parents can support. Every activity pack has its own QR code linking to additional online resources. Audio files are embedded to provide accessibility for children with visual impairments or that have difficulty reading.

This blended and remote learning programme is designed to support students to recover lost learning from the previous year, and accelerate learning in the new academic year, regardless of the availability of face-to-face teaching. Learning is accelerated by using a cross curricular approach where the activity pack provided to students links together the key learning outcomes in the core subjects of Arabic, English, mathematics and science for that week's planned curriculum. Learning is recovered as students have access to a range of carefully chosen media resources that ensures they can work at their own pace, selecting resources where they need to build up understanding from the previous year's curriculum. Life skills are embedded in each of the weekly activities.

To support teachers and community facilitators, UNICEF and the MOE developed an online training programme to strengthen teachers' pedagogical understanding of blended learning, as well as providing practical ways to utilise the Learning Bridges resources. For every activity pack, teachers receive a guidance sheet on how to introduce the activity, support the student's learning and give feedback. By using the QR code, teachers also have access to extra resources to help them and their students. Learning Bridges Champions selected from among teachers and supervisors, encourage teachers to take part in the programme and to share good practices.

Parents are essential in supporting their children to learn and develop proactive study habits. Every student activity pack comes with instructions for parents on how they can help and become involved in their child's learning, without expecting parents to replace the role of the teacher. UNICEF has also developed a short series of videos and social media messages to encourage parents to support their children's love of learning.

In the first year of implementation, Learning Bridges reached almost half a million children and was implemented in over 70 percent of public schools with grades 4 to 9, representing 61 per cent of all children in the targeted grade groups. An impact study has informed the design of year 2 (2021/2), largely implemented in school with year 3 currently under design (2022/23).

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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The Learning Bridges program was designed from April 2020 and has been implemented by MOE in all public schools over the past two academic years, since September 2020. For the first year of implementation, Learning Bridges was implemented fully remotely due to school closures, with printed and online resources. In the second year of implementation, many schools reopened (though some are still on rotation) and Learning Bridges has become a resource for teachers to use in the classroom to support learning recovery.

The Learning Bridges materials were based on the principle of universal design for learning, to enable children of a wide range of abilities to engage and learn. Open-ended activities allowed children to work at their own level based on what they knew and could do. The project-based approach also allowed students to investigate and experience their surroundings and integrate gained knowledge into their daily lives, bringing their theoretical knowledge into action which contributed to building children's critical and problem-solving skills. Audio recorded resources ensured accessibility for children with visual impairments or poor literacy skills.

Learning Bridges Champions, selected from among teachers and supervisors, provided vital support to principals and helped secure the engagement of schools, particularly to increase participation of teachers in boys' schools. The Learning Bridges Champions interviewed all commented on their strong belief in the value of Learning Bridges, and their efforts made to encourage school principal participation.

Learning Bridges was designed by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF. It is implemented across all schools with the target grades of 4 to 10. Initial funds came from FCDO (then DFID) over \$200,000 and were supplemented by funds from Global Education (\$500,000) and US PRM (\$300,000).

To date, UNICEF has expended around \$1 million on Learning Bridges. The MOE has leveraged donor funding to co-fund Learning Bridges through the Accelerated Access Initiative (printing, consultancy for design) and implements using MOE supervisors and teachers.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

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Learning Bridges was designed as a programme that could be fully paper-based, with QR codes providing links to additional resources provided online. This was intended to overcome the lack of technology faced by low-income families and families living in remote areas. In the first semester, 392,284 students (54 per cent girls) including all children in refugee camps received printed Learning Bridges materials. UNICEF also provided monthly 10GB data packages to over 1,000 teachers and all 33,000 students across 54 schools in refugee camps, to support access to remote learning.

Between March and May 2021, there were over 432,000 visitors to the UNICEF Learning Bridges page. Over 350,000 visitors clicked on Learning Bridges activities with the intention of downloading. Materials were also available through the MOE website and their DARSAK online learning platform.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

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11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

While Learning Bridges provided continuity of learning for nearly half a million children during school closures, the more lasting impact may be on the quality of teaching and learning in Jordan. The Learning Bridges programme has enabled teacher innovation and introduced the integration of subjects through a cross-curricular approach. The programme is now included in the MOE’s Education During Emergency Plan – with budget committed – as a key strategy to support children’s learning recovery.

UNICEF decided to work with and through the Curriculum Department to design the cross-curricula content of the learning Bridge program. This meant MOE leveraging donor funds to hire 12 project writers under the line management of the Curriculum Department, with design of the curriculum framework and quality assurance of materials by a UNICEF international consultancy. This intensive process developed the capacity of the MOE in cross-curricula design.

For the Learning Bridges concept to work, it had to be based on key curricular content. The MOE reviewed the curriculum and identified key learning objectives across the four core subjects for each of the grade groups 4 to 9. Cross curricular weekly Learning Bridges activities are aligned directly to weekly taught content for each grade group and learning objectives are detailed on activity sheets for teachers, students and families. This contributes to making curriculum delivery more effective and accelerates learning.

This approach created the space and opportunity to re-imagine the delivery of the curriculum. All respondents at the MOE level noted this to be one of the most appealing design features of Learning Bridges and the integration of subjects was viewed as one of the greatest successes of Learning Bridges. Respondents felt this was beneficial to their own practice, exposing them to alternate ways of creating learning content, and encouraging them to think in new ways.

The blended learning approach enabled teachers to breakaway from the textbook and innovate in the delivery of the curriculum. Teachers and students also developed digital skills. The hand on, experiential learning enabled students to practice and apply concepts (see impact study). The online resources enabled students to 'recover' learning by taking them back to concepts taught in earlier grades and providing foundation for learning. These resources are now also used by teachers in the classroom.

Teachers have been challenged through Learning Bridges to think and act creatively towards the curriculum – to break away from the textbook. The programme has introduced supervisors, principals, teachers and students in Jordan to new ways of teaching and learning. These included problem-solving, investigation, research and experimental skills, as well as technology skills needed to engage in more innovative and participatory pedagogy. This was the first time that teachers had successfully undertaken online training at scale, enabled through the disruption of COVID-19. Over 30,000 teachers enrolled in online training for Learning Bridges, gaining skills on interactive pedagogies needed to support distance education, and 20,000 teachers received a certificate upon completion.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

[https://www.unicef.org/media/117551/file/Learning%20Bridges%20accelerates%20learning%20for%20almost%20half%20a%20million%20students%20\(Jordan\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/117551/file/Learning%20Bridges%20accelerates%20learning%20for%20almost%20half%20a%20million%20students%20(Jordan).pdf)

<https://www.unicef.org/jordan/reports/learning-bridges-impact-study>