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## New ways of supporting mental health in challenging education settings - evidence on Interventions and Innovations

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### Biography

*Dr Anna Dabrowski is a Senior Research Fellow in the Education and Development department at the Australian Council for Educational Research, and an Adjunct Lecturer in Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. Anna's research focuses on teacher wellbeing, mental health support in low-middle income and emergency contexts, and system and school improvement in the Asia Pacific region. Anna has led numerous large-scale, mixed-method projects for DFAT, EEF, UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID, with studies focused on education reforms in Australia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and currently, Samoa. Anna holds qualifications in the areas of education, linguistics, and psychology.*

### ABSTRACT

Early childhood education, schools, and learning environments play a critical role in promoting, protecting, and caring for children's and young people's mental health, and are more influential on children's development than any other social institution besides the family. However, the pandemic has disrupted health and education systems globally, and impacted heavily on communities and individuals in disadvantaged contexts. As research indicates that mental health conditions have increased across all age groups, there is a need for new and innovative practices that support mental health and wellbeing in the education sector.

This session presents the findings of a recent global review of evidence commissioned by UNICEF, focused on mental health programs that are suitable for implementation in low, middle-income, and emergency education contexts. The review covers programs targeting learners aged 3 to 18 years in formal and informal education settings, as well as educators and caregivers. Importantly, the session focuses on the use of remote modalities including paper-based, radio, phone, TV, and digital approaches, that can provide alternative support in the education sector when face to face intervention is not possible.

Based on analysis of academic literature, policy documents, and consultation with experts responsible for the implementation of mental health programs in education settings globally, the findings of this study demonstrate that remote modalities offer great potential to support the mental health needs of children, adolescents, educators, and caregivers. The session will also highlight characteristics of effective remotely delivered interventions, to inform those seeking to develop, adapt, or implement innovative methods of mental health and wellbeing support.