



## The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee Recommendations for COVID-19 Education Response

2 April 2020

*The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis as well as an educational crisis, with over 1.5 billion learners affected by near-universal school closures. It has hit at the start of the Decade of Action to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Following an emergency virtual meeting, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee calls on all governments and partners to respect the following policy recommendations in their response to COVID-19.*

### **Make inclusion and equity the guiding principle of all COVID-19 education responses**

Learning cannot stop – the protection of the right to education is all the more primordial in times of crisis. The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee calls on all governments to renew their commitment to leave no single learner behind. Inclusion and equity must be the guiding principle of every educational response to prevent educational, socio-economic and digital inequalities from widening and to ensure equal opportunities for all – especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized, including refugees.

The Steering Committee calls on all partners to join forces to ensure that learning continues for all and that our education systems come out of this crisis stronger, more resilient, innovative, responsive and inclusive. It stresses collaboration with health and other relevant sectors to assure the safety and well-being of all learners, and places particular vigilance on protecting girls' right to education, given their heightened risk of sexual abuse, early marriage and pregnancy in the face of school closures. Monitoring and disaggregated data will be vital to prevent widening inequalities. The Steering Committee endorses the Global COVID-19 Education Coalition launched by UNESCO as a platform for united and coordinated support to countries.

### **Recognise and support the critical roles that teachers play in the COVID-19 response and recovery**

The Steering Committee draws attention to the 63 million pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 education response and under considerable pressure as they adapt to distance delivery modes. They also play a pivotal role in maintaining community cohesion and in combating discrimination and exclusion. Teachers, particularly those serving in remote and under-resourced areas, require professional development and support to empower them with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to deliver learning in this time of crisis.

In line with the [call for action by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030](#), the Steering Committee calls on governments to prioritize teachers' and education personnel's safety, health and wellbeing; preserve their employment, rights and wages; and provide professional support, training and collaborative platforms to share good practices and innovations. At the same time, we recognize that many students are doing their schoolwork with no or little teachers' support, and urge education authorities to provide guidance and support to parents and families as they struggle to provide learning assistance.

### **Ensure adequate political commitment and investment in education in the recovery phase**

The successful re-opening of schools will be key to an effective recovery. However, the Steering Committee expresses deep concern that the socio-economic shock of COVID-19 will negatively impact education spending in the medium to long term, exacerbating the already large funding gap to achieve SDG 4. With pre-existing high levels of debt prior to the crisis, low- and middle-income countries will be particularly hard hit.

The Steering Committee urges governments to maintain strong political commitment and investment in education throughout and after the crisis, and calls upon bilateral and multilateral institutions to mobilize funding for education in low- and middle-income countries through both current and innovative financial instruments. Governments should take into account the power of education, especially education for girls and women, on growth and development. The Steering Committee reiterates that education financing is not a cost but an investment in empowering people and building more equal, inclusive and sustainable societies; and calls for renewed international solidarity and multilateral cooperation for the enhanced resilience and preparedness of education systems.