



# UGANDA NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION

UNESCO IICBA REGIONAL WEBINAR ON SCHOOL  
REOPENING, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE SHARING  
FOR TEACHERS IN AFRICA



PRESENTATION BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY, UNATU  
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# Teacher preparation for school reopening

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## Key issues to consider

1. Teacher needs
  2. Teacher safety
  3. Teacher well being
  4. Teacher readiness
  5. Teacher mental health
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# 1. Teacher needs

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## ***FACT: Schools can not remain closed forever***

Currently some countries are faced with a challenge of balancing the health concerns brought about by COVID-19 and the social -economic repercussions of keeping schools closed.

As countries consider full or partial re-opening of schools, it is important to consider TEACHER NEEDS as they are the drivers of the education system

Government planners and policy makers can not adequately consider the teachers' needs while working in isolation. The voices of the teachers must be heard in the policy and planning process for re-opening.

***Recommendation: The teachers through their representative labour unions MUST be actively involved in the planning and decision making processes for school reopening.***

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## 2. Teacher safety



- On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020, H.E the President of Uganda announced that schools in Uganda will reopen on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 for finalists and candidate classes. This declaration has stirred anxiety, fear and panic in some of the teachers who are constantly asking UNATU, 'Are we safe?'
- UNATU previously issued proposed guidelines to Government that must be considered before school reopening to safeguard the lives of the learners, teachers, the entire school community and parents. We are not yet convinced that the required preparation has been done. Our teachers remain at risk.
- **Recommendation: Countries must take steps to reassure teachers that the school environment is safe for their return or else many will not report back over concerns for their health and safety**



# 3. Teacher well-being

- All capitation and other school grants must be fully paid to enable schools operate as required
- A deliberate school feeding strategy must be in place to ensure that learners and teachers are well fed and nourished. School feeding remains a big challenge in most of our institutions
- Beyond timely payment of salaries, government should consider provision of personal protective equipment for teachers working under the current risk situation as is the case with the health workers. Teachers are the front line workers in the education sector and should be protected accordingly for the daily risk.
- More teachers should be recruited to avoid stress emerging from burnout and work overload as teachers try to make up for lost time within the given time frame





## 4. Teacher readiness to handle task ahead

-Besides health and safety, another concern raised by teachers is the lack of adequate preparation on how to recover the lost time and best support their learners. Their question is; ***where do we start from?***

Teachers are afraid that as is the common practice; They will be issued with a revised school calendar with exam dates, given a reporting date and left to work out the learning recovery process on their own.

- **Countries must support teachers by finding ways of addressing their concerns such as;** How will I finish the syllabus? How will I manage within the given timeframe? Will all the resources I need be available in time? If am not able to complete the syllabus on time, will I be penalized? What if the candidates do not perform as expected, will I be blamed?





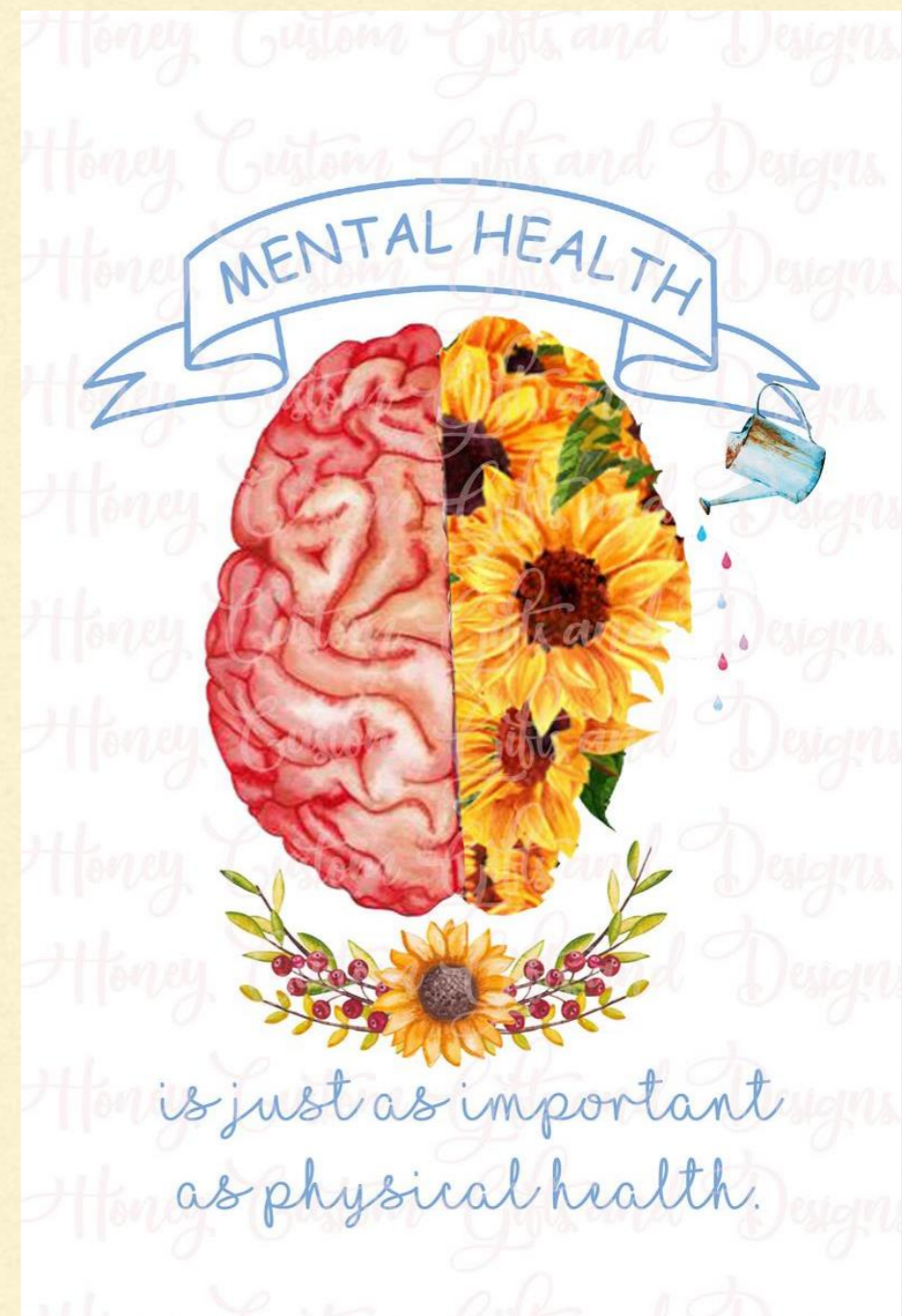
# 5. Teacher mental health

Teachers, most of whom are parents and have the same worries and concerns for the safety and well being of their children as schools reopen also have an additional responsibility to offer the much needed psycho-social support to learners as they return to school.

Most learners are genuinely struggling psychologically due to the disruptions brought by the pandemic. They are worried about their safety, being able to catch up with learning after a long absence, whether or not they will have their old routine back. Some are even considering not returning to school.

What if a COVID-19 positive case is identified among the learners, are teachers trained and supported enough to manage the panic that could ensue among the learners?

As schools plan for reopening, it is imperative that we consider the mental health needs of the teachers to enable them thrive in the 'new normal' era.





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## **5. Final thoughts**

It is important that all countries anticipate a re-opening of the education process. However, any plans to re-open should not be made in isolation by Government and other policy makers if we are to safe guard the lives of the learners, teachers, the entire school community,parents/ guardians and the particular communities where they hail from.

We put the entire country at risk if all key education stakeholders particularly teachers are not involved and in mutual agreement with Government on the guidelines and procedures for reopening.

**...Thank You...**

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