



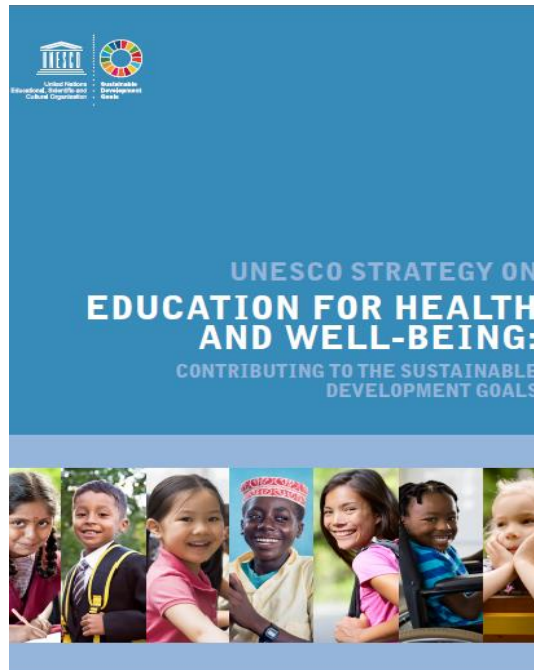
United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Supporting the Health and Well-being of Teachers and Teacher educators during the COVID-19 Crisis in Africa

## The context of teacher health and Well Being in ESA region



*Dr. Patricia Machawira, Regional Advisor Education for Health and Well-being UNESCO, Wednesday 22 July 2020*



- **Health is fundamental to education:** healthy and happy learners learn better, while poor health can have a detrimental effect on school attendance and performance.

## Two Strategic Priorities

- ☐ To ensure that all children and young people benefit from good quality, **comprehensive sexuality education** that includes HIV education
  - *HIV, puberty education, preventing early/unintended pregnancy, healthy and respectful relationships*
- ☐ To ensure that all children and young people have access to **safe, inclusive, non-discriminatory, health-promoting learning environments**
  - *Eliminating school-related violence and bullying, including gender-based violence; prevented health and gender-related discrimination in schools; nutrition and physical education; substance use prevention*

# UNESCO COVID-19 Video series

<https://youtu.be/MxgCrblxglQ> - UNESCO ROSA COVID-19  
Video Series 3: *Am I safe after lockdown?*



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Education  
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# Learners matter, and so do teachers

“ Heads and teachers are traumatised by the ravaging Covid-19 and, therefore, need social and financial support, there should be no threat posed on their lives and families, Government (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education) should ensure that a comprehensive budget and provision should be availed to all schools.” Zimbabwe Teachers Association (Zimta) Chief Executive Officer Dr Sifiso Ndlovu.

Voices from teacher unions on school re-opening in Zimbabwe

# What is the situation in the ESA region

## Teacher Health and Well being

## What measures have been put in place to address the health and well-being of students and educators?

- Guidelines/ SOPs provide guidance on how schools should operate to prevent and manage the COVID 19 pandemic as well as how to deal with issues of health and wellbeing of learners, staff and educators.
- Schools provided Personal Protective Equipment; learners, educators and non teaching staff provided with cloth mask and soap
- School buildings were cleaned and disinfected prior to re-opening and all learners and staff are screened for temperature
- Social distancing measures- reduce class sizes; cancel assemblies and sport
- Schools provided with guidelines on how to isolate learners and staff if a case is suspected and also on school closure when a case is identified

## What measures have been put in place to address the health and well-being of students and educators?

- Access to water and sanitation in schools including rural schools was strengthened
- Psychosocial support to both learners and staff to address the anxiety and distress accompanying the pandemic through guidance and counselling department or NGOs.
- Orientation of all teachers a week prior to reopening
- Designation a wellness room/sick bay for both teachers and learners
- Testing of teachers two weeks prior to opening, and routinely thereafter
- Designation of 1 Health Coordinator per school to coordinate all Covid 19 activities

## What challenges are teachers facing as schools re-open or during this closure period?

- Teachers had to find innovative ways to support learning remotely using online platforms which posed challenges as teachers found themselves in some situations having to use own personal data
- Teachers experiencing feelings of anxiety, stress in coping with the pandemic while they have to also provide support to learners in dealing with their own fears and anxiety
- With an average class of around 40 learners, classes had to be divided by 2 and in most cases, leading to additional work for teachers.
- Some took extra-working hours/days with some working weekends to cover up for lost contact time.



## What challenges are teachers facing as schools re-open or during this closure period?

- Teacher workload is also challenging as teachers are expected to provide remote learning support to those learners whose parents have chosen to continue lockdown learning from home.
- The disruption of learning when a case is identified in a school causes further anxieties among teachers and learners and the resultant school closure for decontamination also adds more strain and delays in the curriculum
- Most teachers from private schools are not on payroll
- Career exposure through professional interactions with peers; social distancing especially with overcrowded classrooms
- Lack of psychosocial support and adequate medical cover for teachers

# What needs to be done to safeguard health and well being of teachers?

The Health and Wellness of Educators is important; ensure teachers have access to counselling and support when needed. Revive the Health and Wellness program for staff.

Need to split big classes into smaller manageable classes to allow social distancing

Need volunteers or support teachers to help enforce social distancing among learners especially during break times.

Partnerships with private sector are important in supporting schools with provision of counselling and support for teachers when required.

School Based Support Teams provide support to schools to manage the accompanying emotional and psychosocial needs of learners and educators

Orientation on how to handle with infected children, ensure support is provided to ensure that learning institutions adhere to COVID 19 infection prevention guidelines

# A New World for teachers

## Key messages

- As schools reopen, the **safety and health of teachers, learners and education support staff** is of paramount importance. Each school must apply internationally recognized health and safety measures and hygiene protocols to the greatest extent possible, according to their school infrastructure, budget, staffing, resources and supplies.
- **Social dialogue** with teachers, staff and their representative organizations is essential in developing and implementing safety and health measures and all other school-related pandemic policies.
- Back-to-school responses to COVID-19 must anticipate the **psychological and social-emotional impact of the pandemic** on all learners, teachers and education support staff, and ensure that resources and support services are accessible and available to any members of the school community.
- It is vital that **teachers and school support staff receive adequate professional training and preparation** to facilitate the back-to-school effort. This should take into account health and sanitation protocols and guidelines, the requirements for teaching and learning in reconfigured schools and classrooms, the challenges of reduced classroom sizes and instructional time, and the demands on teachers who conduct both face-to-face and remote instruction.
- Education systems need to ensure **adequate qualified staff are mobilized, scheduling is updated and teachers' rights and working conditions are protected** during back-to-school efforts. Considerations should include: recruiting additional teachers; staggered or part-time schedules; teachers' own family obligations and personal risk factors; and the capacity to ensure minimum hours of instructional time during the school day.
- Despite pressures on financial resources, **investing in education responses is critical** to address teachers' and schools' changing needs.



## Supporting teachers in back-to-school efforts *Guidance for policy-makers*

*This document provides guidance to policy-makers on measures to support teachers and education staff when schools reopen, during and after the COVID-19 crisis*

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