

# Indicators for the reopening of Schools and other Education Institutions

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect education systems and communities in Africa and across the world. Despite the continued spread of the virus, many African countries have started lifting containment measures and reopening schools and other education institutions. The health, safety and wellbeing of students, teachers and education support personnel must be the number one priority in considering reopening of schools and other education institutions. A back to school roadmap that minimizes, not only the immediate impact of the closure, but also addresses the long-term safety precautions, should be a prerequisite for return to school. Governments and competent authorities should ensure that the following key indicators are adhered to when deciding to reopen or keep schools and other education institutions open during the pandemic.

## 1. Clear policy guidelines

Clear policy guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are in place and a committee is set up to ensure their full enforcement. The school community must be provided with accurate education, information and guidance on preventive measures. Timely updates regarding the pandemic should be provided to school leaders, teachers, education support personnel, students, and parents to minimise fear, uncertainty and anxiety associated with the pandemic.

## 2. Social dialogue

Social dialogue mechanisms are in place to ensure continuous engagement with teachers and education support personnel through their representative organizations. Such dialogue is essential in developing and implementing effective safety and health measures, including the policy guidelines proposed in 1 above and in coming up with decisions related to curriculum coverage, modes of teaching during school closures, teacher training and professional development, school reopening, recovery of lost instructional time and rescheduling of school calendars.

## 3. Emphasis on cleanliness

Thorough cleaning and fumigation of the school and education environment, including classrooms, staff rooms, toilets and



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has highlighted six conditions that should be met before governments start to lift current restrictions on social and physical movement related to the spread of COVID-19:

1. Disease transmission is under control.
2. Health systems are able to “detect, test, isolate and treat every case and trace every contact”.
3. Hot spot risks are minimized in vulnerable places, such as nursing homes.
4. Schools, workplaces and other essential places have established preventive measures.
5. The risk of importing new cases “can be managed”.
6. Communities are fully educated, engaged, and empowered to live under a new normal.

other amenities should be undertaken before resumption of classes and regular cleaning assured thereafter.

#### 4. Water and sanitation

Provision of safe and healthy teaching and learning environment that includes adequate running water and sanitation for all schools and education institutions, including those in rural and other marginalised areas. Adequate soap and hand sanitizers should be availed at designated places.

#### 5. Physical and social distancing

Adequate learning spaces that ensure safe social distancing between the learners and the teachers, including modes of travel to and from school are assured.

#### 6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Availability of PPE such as face masks, gloves and aprons/dustcoats for teachers and education support personnel and their use enforced when appropriate. Availability of face masks for all students.

#### 7. Persons with underlying medical conditions

Provision of guidelines on how to support learners and teachers with preexisting health conditions such as HIV & AIDS, diabetes, hypertension, and others, as well as mechanisms to address symptoms of mental illness.

#### 8. Testing and Treatment

Voluntary testing of teachers, education support personnel and students available free of charge. Availability of temporary isolation rooms and sick bays run by health professionals for educators and students who may test positive for COVID-19 while in the school premises. In instances where

educators and students have tested positive for the virus, resumption of classes must only happen after full recovery.

#### 9. Equity and inclusion

Measures to ensure the return of all children, including girls and boys, children with disabilities, refugees and migrants are in place. Equity audits should be undertaken in order to identify those children who have failed to return to school. Concrete measures are taken to prevent and deal with stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19.

#### 10. Staffing and working conditions

Teachers and education support personnel in numbers sufficient to handle the extra classes and provide the requisite support and services to meet the new conditions created by COVID-19 are available. Adequate funding is provided to recruit more teachers and ensure decent salaries and working conditions, including overtime pay where such arrangements have been agreed with education unions.

#### Other EI resources regarding the Covid-19 pandemic

Info Hub

<https://go.ei-ie.org/Covid19HubEN>

EI Guiding Principles

<https://go.ei-ie.org/Covid19GuidingPrinciplesEN>

EI Resolution

<https://go.ei-ie.org/Covid19EIResolutionEN>

EI Guidance on Reopening schools

<https://go.ei-ie.org/ReopeningSchoolsEN>

Forward to school

<https://go.ei-ie.org/ForwardToSchoolEN>



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