

Teacher Task Force

Regional Virtual Meeting for sub-Saharan Africa

COVID-19 education crisis - Supporting teachers in distance learning and on school reopening

28 May 2020 14:00/ 4 June 2020 14:00 (Addis time: GMT+3 hrs.)

Final Report

A Regional Meeting for sub-Saharan Africa was held to discuss countries' challenges and national responses in relation to teachers in distance education and the reopening of schools (Annex 1). The meeting brought together a combination of country level perspectives and those from international organizations operating in the region. The meeting was conducted in two separate sessions including Teacher Task Force members from across sub-Saharan Africa. It included presentations from The Gambia, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda from Anglophone countries; and Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti and Senegal from Francophone countries. Additionally, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) presented its strategy for dealing with COVID-19, while Education International also presented its regional and global perspectives (Annex 2).

Across the presentations and during the question and answer session, the following considerations for COVID-19 education responses specific to support teachers and teaching emerged.

Challenges during covid-19 crisis:

Countries in the region appeared to be facing - to different degrees - one or more of the following challenges related to teachers and teaching in the context of COVID-19.

1. Access: Teachers have limited access to ICT, Internet and digital resources to deliver online or distance education materials. Moreover, nearly 89% and 82% of learners in sub-Saharan Africa also do not have a household computer and Internet, respectively, while another 11% live in locations not served by mobile networks, hindering students' capacity to continue learning. This is especially a problem for children from marginalised groups and may lead to drop out.
2. A lack of teacher professional capacity, preparedness and training to use ICTs in the delivery of distance education; for example, in Uganda, only 30% of the teachers can use digital learning resources.
3. A lack of psychosocial and socio-emotional support for teachers. Teachers are at the front line of the response; they feel the anxiety due to the uncertainty of crisis but at the same time they need to support students.
4. Difficulties of measuring learning and assessments, particularly when access is very unequal. Traditional assessments may be evaluated to adapt to the context and the unequal learning loss.
5. Health and safety concerns: When schools reopen, it will be necessary to ensure a safe learning environment for teachers and students.
6. Lack of social dialogue and inclusion of teachers in responses to COVID-19.

COVID-19 responses developed by countries and organisations

1. **Use of mixed ICT and media solutions.** All countries presented efforts towards developing multiple response strategies combining low-tech broadcast media with high-tech digital solutions to ensure the continuity of learning and address unequal access, the digital divide and equity. Countries are digitalising content. Additionally, some governments developed partnerships with service providers to ensure zero rate internet facilities or reduced fees.
 - a. **Benin:** National and community radio has played a key role to ensure continuity of learning by reaching 78% of primary students. Supported by UNICEF and the programme *APPRENDRE* of the AUF (Francophonie University Association), some teachers focused on the revision and creation of learning content to keep children engaged. The process used guidelines developed by the AUF. Work was done remotely and coordinated through WhatsApp application tools. Some teachers made audio and video segments to be disseminated for learning.
 - b. **Burkina Faso:** Uses national and community radio to broadcast produced courses. This has been built upon previous efforts due to school closures caused by terrorist threats.
 - c. **Cote d'Ivoire:** In order to mitigate learning loss, the loss of an academic year, and increasing drop out, national radio, television and online learning have ensured the continuity of education for many. Online course can also be downloaded and accessed without internet.
 - d. **Djibouti:** Radios distributed to the most vulnerable families has been the main strategy to ensure a broader range of student access to distance education. National TV has also been a platform to continue education reaching most students in their final year. The reach of distance education was positive with 88% of students having access. Djibouti has also developed e-learning platforms and distributed USB sticks to facilitate teachers' work.
 - e. **Gambia:** Coordinated through Ministry structures, education content was developed to be broadcasted through 27 radio stations and 7 television stations providing 500 lessons produced for pre-primary to secondary levels at a negotiated rate.
 - f. **Rwanda:** Through its response plan, the Ministry has tried to ensure continuity of learning through radio, television, and its e-learning platform.
 - g. **Senegal:** Established the "Learning at home" initiative (PROMET) using digital resources, creating virtual classrooms (e.g. Google); using also television and radio to broadcast content.
 - h. **South Africa:** Along with the use of radio, television and online learning platforms, ongoing efforts are also being made to ensure provision of devices, and addressing network connectivity in rural areas and working towards zero rating of platforms carrying education content, among other strategies. Radio and television receives some private sector funding. Both synchronous and asynchronous forms of online learning are being employed.

- Installation of hand washers;
- Access to clean water;
- Use of masks for all students, teachers and education personnel;
- Classes from 9.00 to 14.00.

Moreover, teachers with medical conditions or whom are at risk will not be part of the pilot on reopening schools. A safe mode of transportation is also planned for teachers so they can mobilise to schools with low risks.

- d. **South Africa:** Special arrangements been made to ensure that sick and vulnerable teachers and learners remain at home.
6. **Social Dialogue:** As recommended by in the TTF's [Call for Action on Teachers](#), the voices of teachers, teacher educators and their representatives (teacher unions) need to be included when designing context-sensitive resilience strategies. Efforts by countries to establish social dialogue with teachers, their representatives and other stakeholder organizations, emerged as an important aspect of the education response to COVID-19.
- a. **Gambia:** The teacher union is an active part of the decision-making process and sits on the technical team which developed the education response to COVID-19.
 - b. **Senegal:** The union was involved in government decision-making related to the provision of distance training through *Google Classroom*.
 - c. **South Africa:** Ministry had extensive consultation meetings with teacher unions, parent associations, principal associations and student organizations on measures to reopen schools. Teacher unions have been important stakeholders playing an active role to support Ministry efforts to ensure school safety and health protocols are followed during the reopening of schools.
 - d. **Uganda:** The Ministry is working with the teacher union to address the issue of payment of salaries; the Ministry is also collaborating with the union in designing guidelines for school re-openings and developing related COVID-19 responses; lastly, the union is using its network to distribute planning materials to teachers.
7. **Other responses:**
- a. Collaborations with the private sector in context of infrastructure provisioning, negotiations for reduced fees for connectivity enhancement, better broadcasting capabilities were all part of the different negotiations and collaborations sought.
 - b. Collaboration/partnerships with development partners and civil society organisations as reported by The Gambia, Rwanda and South Africa to provide technical and financial advice and guidance.
8. **Advocacy for teachers:** Education International advocates for teachers in the school closures and for their participation in the return to school efforts. There was also discussion related to key areas important to teachers during and after the crisis including: ensuring the health and safety of teachers, protecting those most vulnerable to the pandemic, including teachers and their representatives in school level responses, and providing teachers with psychosocial and socio-emotional support.

Education International is advocating for the preservation of teachers' salaries and mediating with governments - through mediation letters and other actions - in the case of non-payment. This includes the salaries of contract teachers who are more vulnerable to economic shocks in particular following school closures and education disruptions.

Concluding Remarks

The presentations and following discussions covered a number of distance and online technological solutions implemented at country-level. However, details are limited on the scope and depth of teacher training, preparation and support. As mentioned in the [seven dimensions discussed in the TTF guidance note on reopening schools](#), teachers will require significant assistance in the transition to online learning and using other distance education methodologies. Responses that include essential training and support will be instrumental to ensure teachers have the tools, knowledge and support to ensure the continuation of remote learning and deliver quality teaching.

Based on different country examples provided, the pandemic poses an opportunity to increase thinking about how teaching, learning and assessment can be conducted remotely. Precise data and information of the national context is key to understanding the challenges and developing effective remote learning policies and frameworks to shape teachers' roles. Moreover, the use of technology should not result that countries regress to traditional, rote-learning models of education; nor should it exacerbate tendencies to use data-driven models to centralize decision-making at the cost of developing and building trust in the professional autonomy of teachers.

The meeting also discussed aspects of the return to school including safety and health of teachers, psychological support and working conditions and rights as professionals. In order to move ahead, countries might focus on highlighting (in detail) the financial implications of different strategies based on current weaknesses as relates to national priorities and the TTF's seven dimensions for reopening schools.

The TTF plays an important role in supporting teachers in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and the return to school process. This includes its coordination efforts between various UNESCO teacher initiatives and those by different partners.

Countries may consider the [TTF Guidance Note on the Return to School](#) as well as the [TTF Toolkit for School Leaders](#) for guidance, tips and resources. Moreover, the new [TTF Knowledge Hub](#) provides Country members and the wider education community with a central repository of quality resources on teachers and teaching for policy-makers, decisions-makers and teacher educators to remain up to date on better practices and evidence-based research around teachers and teaching.

Annex 1: Concept Note

Background and Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted education in an unprecedented way, with, at its height, some 194 countries closing their schools, affecting 1.58 billion students and over 63 million primary and secondary teachers. Governments have had to act rapidly to continue providing quality education in a new environment, where face-to-face pedagogy is no longer possible and where teachers lack skills related to ICT, distance education and education in emergencies.

Throughout school closures, governments have adopted various measures to ensure learning continuity. In some cases, this has meant working with infrastructure constraints, such as a lack of connectivity or devices to ensure on-line learning. Teachers themselves have also been impacted by the crisis professionally and personally. As countries plan to reopen schools, teachers' role will shift significantly for a second time. However, their knowledge of learners' needs, and experience in teaching will be critical to developing school reopening plans. Furthermore, the voices of teachers, teacher educators and their representatives need to be included when designing context-sensitive resilience strategies.

Acknowledging these challenges, the Teacher Task Force (TTF) launched a [Call to Action on Teachers](#) that emphasises the following six key messages for governments and education stakeholders:

- preserve employment and wages;
- prioritise teachers' and learners' health, safety and well-being;
- include teachers in developing COVID-19 education responses;
- provide adequate professional support and training;
- put equity at the heart of education responses; and
- include teachers in aid responses.

Objectives of the regional meeting

[Previous data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) demonstrated few schools in the region are connected to the Internet, while the [TTF has shown](#) that nearly 89 and 82 per cent of learners in sub-Saharan Africa do not have a household computer and Internet, respectively. According to other data, another 11 per cent live in locations not served by mobile networks. Most countries face challenges related to access of information and communication technologies and connectivity, teaching staff preparedness to teach remotely and in emergencies situations. In some cases, countries suffer from conflicts or have large populations of disadvantaged communities and marginalized students where health risks, learning losses and lack of safety, support and well-being are magnified for teachers and learners.

The Regional Virtual Meeting for the sub-Saharan Africa region was organised by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 with the support of the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on two separate occasions of 28 May for Anglophone countries and 4 June 2020 for Francophone countries.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- Understand the challenges faced by countries in addressing issues related to teachers and teaching while designing education responses to COVID-19;
- Share promising practices to support teachers, including training, psycho-social support, and others; and
- Highlight challenges and opportunities in the reopening of schools.

Some of the main questions to be covered included:

- How are governments ensuring adequate training and support for in-service teachers to deliver effective distance/online instruction? How prepared are education systems in deploying online platforms and supporting teachers in using digital technology?
- How are governments supporting teachers working in areas with poor or no internet connectivity?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for the reopening of schools and how to best include teachers in responses? How should governments support teachers to meet their professional and personal needs?
- What measures are in place or planned that consider vulnerable populations (e.g. girls, disabled learners, cultural and linguistic minorities, displaced persons) to ensure equity in teaching and learning and mitigate dropout?

Annex 2: sub-Saharan Africa (Anglophone) Regional Meeting of Teacher Task Force Webinar Agenda and Participants

ITEM	TIME
Welcome, objectives and introduction of participants	10mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: Ms Yumiko Yokozeki, Director UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA)
Presentation of the TTF	5mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Task Force: Mr Borhene Chakroun, Head of TTF a.i., Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO
Presentation by ADEA and EI	10 min (5 min each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA): Mr Shem Bodo, Senior Programmes Officer Education International: Ms Assibi Napoe, Chief Regional Coordinator and Ms Lucy, Njura Barimbui, Regional Coordinator
Countries' perspective (3-4 presentations)	20 mins (5 mins each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uganda: Dr Jane Egau Okou, Commissioner, Teacher Instructor Education and Training, Ministry of Education and Sports Gambia: Mr Lamin Fatajo, Director, Ministry Of Basic And Secondary Education Rwanda: Mr James Ngoga, Head of the Teacher Development & Management and Career Guidance & Counselling Department, Rwanda Education Board (REB). South Africa: Mr Enoch Rabotapi, Chief Director: Teacher Development, Department of Basic Education.
Q&A and Discussion	40 mins
Closing remarks and Way forward	5 mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: Ms Yumiko Yokozeki, Director UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA)

Annex 3: sub-Saharan Africa (Francophone) Regional Meeting of Teacher Task Force Webinar Agenda and Participants

ITEM	TIME
Welcome, objectives and introduction of participants	10mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: Mr Saliou Sall, Senior Programme Coordinator, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA)
Presentation of the TTF	5mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Task Force: Ms Leila Loupis, TTF Secretariat.
Presentation by ADEA and EI	10 min (5 min each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA): Mr, Youssef Ario Maiga, Programme manager. Education International: Ms. Assibi Napoe, Chief Regional Coordinator- Africa.
Countries' perspective (3-4 presentations)	20 mins (5 mins each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benin: Ms. Alice Mingninou, Technical advisor, Minister of Pre-school and Primary Education. Burkina Faso: Ms. Aminata Ouedraogo, Executive director of educational support and initial and in-service education, Ministry of Education. Cote d'Ivoire: Ms. Yao Gnamien, Beugre, Director of middle and high schools. Djibouti: Ms Loula Ali Elabe, Director of public education (MENFOP) Senegal: Ms. Fatimata Ba Diallo, Director of education.
Q&A and Discussion	40 mins
Closing remarks and Way forward	5 mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: Mr Saliou Sall, Senior Programme Coordinator, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA).