

2020

COVID-19
COORDINATED EDUCATION RESPONSE PLAN
FOR GHANA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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1.0. Background

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic facing the world has forced over 124 countries to close schools as at 22nd March 2020 with an estimated 1.25 billion learners from pre-primary to tertiary education being affected.

On March 12, 2020, Ghana recorded its first two cases of COVID-19. The President of the Republic of Ghana on 15th March 2020, announced a series of measures to curtail the spread of the virus in Ghana. The actions taken by government were geared towards reducing the spread of the virus by instituting social distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols. The President directed the closure of schools beginning March 16, 2020. The initial school closure directives allowed final year students in both Junior High School (JHS 3) and Senior High Schools (SHS 3) to continue attending school to prepare for their exams with schools ensuring that social distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols were observed. Subsequently, on March 23, 2020 following West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) decision to indefinitely postpone West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), the Ghana Education Service directed schools to release the JHS 3 and SHS 3 students to go home until the President's directives were reversed.

Ghana's Case count has increased since the two cases were announced on March 12, 2020 to 132 as at 26th March 2020.

During the President's address to the nation and the directives to close all schools, the President also directed the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Communication to ensure that they rollout distance and remote learning programs to all students. In response, the Hon. Minister for Education constituted a team to propose a plan for all levels of education. The team comprised representatives from the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ghana Education Service (GES), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), Ghana Library Authority (GhLA), Center for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS), National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the University of Ghana (UoG).

This proposal is a forecasting of the associated risk and responses to be taken to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana. The Ministry of Education and its relevant agencies that are responding to the COVID-19 are guided by these proposals and in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service which is leading the coordinated national response.

2.0. Associated Risks of the COVID-19

As a result of the spread of the virus in Ghana, we believe that the following risk can be assumed to impact the education sector:

2.1. Closure of Schools

All public and private schools at all levels have been closed since March 16, 2020 as a measure to curb the potential spread of the coronavirus in Ghana until further notice. The closure has affected approximately 9.2 million learners from KG – SHS and about 500,000 tertiary learners. Closure of schools disrupt the academic calendar affecting teaching and learning and especially impacting negatively low performing students.

2.2. Stigmatisation of Affected Person

People who are affected by the virus and are able to recover from it might face issues of stigmatisation at the school level. There might be cases where teachers and classmates of recovered persons will worry about close contact with such persons affected for fear of the unknown. This can sometimes lead to drop outs by individuals due to the stigma.

2.3. False Spread of Information on the Virus (Infodemic)

There is so much information being propagated about how the virus spreads and infect people, however, most of this information are not scientifically proven and therefore inaccurate. This false information when not managed well will affect the psyche of a child, parents, community and have negative impact on education when schools reopen.

2.4. Uncoordinated Approach

In an emergency situation, often than not, efforts to address the situation are not properly coordinated. Different sectors act immediately to address the challenges not from a coordinated approach and sometime leads to duplication of efforts and resources. The MoE/GES will coordinate its response with major players in the education sector including the education sector working group and Development Partners to ensure that we eliminate duplication of efforts in responding to the pandemic.

3.0. The Education Responses during Outbreak of COVID-19

3.1. Remote Learning

The proposal considers strategies for the immediate and short term need (next 4 to 8 weeks), medium term (3 to 9 months) and a long term strategy (2021 and beyond). This is also segmented by grades as the follows:

- a) All KG and Primary School pupils are affected
- b) All JHS students are affected
- c) All SHS students are affected

Considerations covered review of the existing infrastructure to deliver content and facilitate distance and remote learning on the understanding that as many students as possible are provided with the opportunity to access the content. The next consideration was the content to deliver under the emergency situation and how it can best be packaged for delivery over the existing infrastructure. The infrastructure identified as most appropriate for remote learning for all the grades were Radio, Television and Internet. The strategy for leveraging these different media are presented below.

Radio

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) has indicated its readiness to collaborate with GES to use Radio as a means of providing content to all levels of students, from KG to SHS. The GBC has the capacity to and shall provide a production studio for radio as well as transmission. These facilities shall be made available to GES. The GBC has also committed to providing the technical support to enable the production and transmission. Additionally, production of appropriate radio content needs to be done by identifying the right technical assistance and skills to support the MoE and the GES to

co-create and produce content for radio. The support of Development partners in identifying the right resources to support radio production is necessary. We believe that radio has a wide reach and can help to bridge the gap on access if it is leveraged effectively.

Television

The GES has further secured the commitment of the GBC to use television as a means to deliver content. The support services include:

- i) A 24-hour dedicated channel that will simultaneously be carried on the GBC DTT platform and the National DTT platform as a Free-to-Air Broadcast.
- ii) A dedicated studio space at the Broadcasting House at Kanda for the exclusive production of educational content as specified by GES.
- iii) Additional production studios has been identified with Plan International to support the production of educational content for television broadcasting.
- iv) Available content from CENDLOS for SHS can air immediately a station is launched.

The GES proposes to name the dedicated TV channel as the **Ghana Learning TV (GL-TV)**, taking a cue from our aspirations as a “Learning Nation”.

To enable the GES implement this, NaCCA will support GES in the identification of Master Trainers on the new standard-based curriculum to help with the delivery of content. Additionally, the GES has identified the topic areas that have been covered in schools at all levels from KG to JHS across the country and will use that as a starting point for production to address the immediate need. All periods and timetabling for television shall be designed in collaboration with NaCCA to ensure that they meet the approved standards.

Online Provision

In the immediate and short term, the GES is working with the Center for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS) to provide access to the content on the iBox and iCampus to all SHS students. To date, all SHS students (approximately 1.2 million), have been registered on the iCampus system to allow them to do online and self-guided learning. GES in collaboration with the Ghana Library Authority is working to provide an online learning tool to all students at the Upper Primary, Junior and Senior High School level and with Scholastic to provide online content at the KG and Lower Primary level. In addition, the GES seeks to immediately begin the establishment of a robust integrated Learning Management System that can support the multiple learning resources, platforms and open source materials including the iCampus content and the Edmodo online learning tools which are being set up.

Parents are to be sensitised through television, radio and online facilities on the approach of the Ministry with respect to remote education and the role parents have to play to ensure their wards are following the broadcast schedules.

While remote learning strategies aim to ensure continued learning for all children, we know that the most marginalized children including those experiencing disabilities, low performing students, children on the move (migrant, refugee and internally displaced children), children in the most rural hard-to-reach and poorest communities and girls tasked with caring for ill family members may not be able to access these opportunities. At the same time in the poorest households where

caregivers/parents may have low educational attainment, never experienced distance schooling or themselves are experiencing disabilities, they may struggle to support their children's learning. Echoing the leading principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to 'leave no one behind,' and SDG 4 that aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,' the MoE/GES sees the need to ensure that no child is left behind during this period as well as facilitate strategies to support continued learning for children take into consideration the needs of the poorest and most marginalized children. This will ensure that all children benefit and are able to continue with their learning.

Considering the above, the MoE/GES will prioritise learning of most vulnerable children including children with special needs through the provision of learning devices/equipment and connectivity where possible, accessibility of instructions/language of instructions (sign language, subtitles, sending of recorded lessons etc), caregivers/parental engagement to support learning of their wards as well as help plan the structure and routine for the learning. The informal sector like the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programme, where out-of-school children are engaged in learning, will also be considered.

The MoE and GES will explore means to ensure that remote learning is properly assessed to measure how students are learning. Exercises should be given after each lesson and parents encouraged to supervise their wards. These exercises should be turned in after schools reopen as scores for continuous assessment of student/pupils. Teachers must be sensitised to follow through these broadcasts to know the assignments/exercises given to students/pupils during this period.

3.2. Psychosocial Support protection and Prevention/Management of Gender-Based Violence

Schools provide social environments where children interact and play with their peers. Being confined at home could have psychosocial impacts. As such, special efforts should be made to provide psychosocial support services via remote learning modalities. Girls may face increased protection risks such as increased violence, sexual exploitation and teen pregnancy. Often schools have referral mechanisms, but in times of school closures this line of communication is broken. The MoE/GES will provide tailored community engagement programs through communication and messaging broadcast over radio and the Ghana Learning TV. Teachers and heads of schools will be provided with materials through multiple means such as online, on TV, Radio and WhatsApp messages during the closure of schools to enable them provide psychosocial support to COVID-19 affected pupils/students or families when schools reopen. Parents and students/pupils should also be sensitised before schools reopen to avert any fears of spread or reoccurrence of the virus in schools.

3.3. Coordinated Approach

The positive outcome of the fight against the coronavirus till date has been as a result of coordinated effort across the globe. In the same vein, a successful approach in delivering education to our students/pupils as a Ministry, will be through a well and planned coordinated approach. There should be a focal person(s) to whom all correspondents on COVID-19 be sent to. There also should be a coasted plan on activities for the intervention, with timelines and responsible partners for each activity. The Chief Director of the Ministry of Education will be the focal person on COVID-19.

3.4. Improved Communication Initiatives

3.4.1 Intensify Awareness of COVID-19

Communication is very key in containing the spread of the virus. Managing miscommunication is therefore very key to ensure people have the right kind of information about the virus; its symptoms and how it spreads. The Ministry/GES through its PR offices will have to develop strategies to educate students/pupils on the virus and also sensitise stakeholders on which channel and medium to obtain information and directives from the Ministry in relation to measures on education during COVID-19 pandemic.

All other forms of communication mediums like, television, radio, online, newspapers, flyers and others should be explored to enable reach more targeted group of the sector.

3.4.2 Communication, Sensitization and Media Campaigns on The Value of Girls' Education

It is important to support community awareness and sensitization, particularly with community leaders, religious leaders and families, around protecting, upholding and perhaps accelerating girls' time for learning. When girls are out of school, they may experience an increased isolation from key peer support social networks and may be tasked to care for ill relatives, siblings and with household chores. This is especially important for adolescent girls who face the heaviest burden of upholding multiple roles. The MoE/GES will ensure to address harmful gender norms that may hinder learning opportunities and to instil positive gender norms through communication campaigns during this period.

4.0. Post COVID-19 Measures

It is the hope of governments around the world that, the COVID-19 pandemic will pass and life around the world return to normalcy and the education sector have all schools reopened for student/pupils at all levels. However, there are measure to put in place to avert the occurrence of such outbreak or pandemic in the future.

4.1. Back to School Campaign

The MoE/GES plans to develop a back to school campaign in collaboration with the media and other key stakeholders at the national, regional, district and community levels. The campaign will also highlight the need for parents to enrol their wards in school at the right age.

4.2. Improve Health Conditions of Schools

The health conditions of schools will have to be improved by providing WASH facilities for schools across the country. These facilities may include: hand wash facilities (Veronica Buckets), toilet facilities, boreholes and waste management among others.

4.3. Fumigation of Schools

Most infection are caused either by bacteria or viruses and periodic fumigation of schools will help minimise the infection rate of these bacteria and the likes. Senior High Schools will have their schools

fumigated before school reopens and at the end of the term. Basic schools' structures will also be fumigated before schools reopens.

4.4. Awareness on Hygiene and Safety in Schools

The MOE/GES in collaboration with MMDAs should intensify the awareness of school hygiene and safety. Schools should operationalize the safe school guidance and also equip schools with minimum hygiene packages. In an era of social distancing and the practicing of enhanced hygiene protocol, the MOE/GES recommends that all students, teaching and non-teaching staff be supplied with facemasks to prevent the spread of the virus when school are reopened. Ensure the circulation of life saving information material on handwashing and recommended safety behaviours at schools.

4.5. Accelerated Education, Remedial, And Catch-Up Programmes

It is known that not all children, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, will continue to access learning during the period of school closure. It is important that MoE/GES in consultation with key education stakeholders including school heads, teachers and school management committees develop plans to support such children to catch-up when schools resume.

4.6. Build A Resilient Education System That Is Future Ready

Recognizing that the outbreak of COVID-19 exposed the weakness in our education system to withstand emergencies, we propose the establishment of a very robust learning management system that is leveraged on a National Knowledge and Skills Bank and anchored with national content and curated aggregated content from third party content providers through a robust Ghana Library Authority. A strong focus will be to capitalize on the strategies and resources being put in place during this crisis to increase access and improve learning opportunities for all children. This includes ensuring that learning is accessible to students with special education needs and a particular attention to girls' education.

5.0. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Ministry of Education will have to monitor the implementation of the plan and evaluate to improve the plan should the closure of schools last longer than expected. Monitoring and evaluation tools would have to be developed to evaluate the measures being implemented during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.0. Theory of Change Education's response to the COVID-19

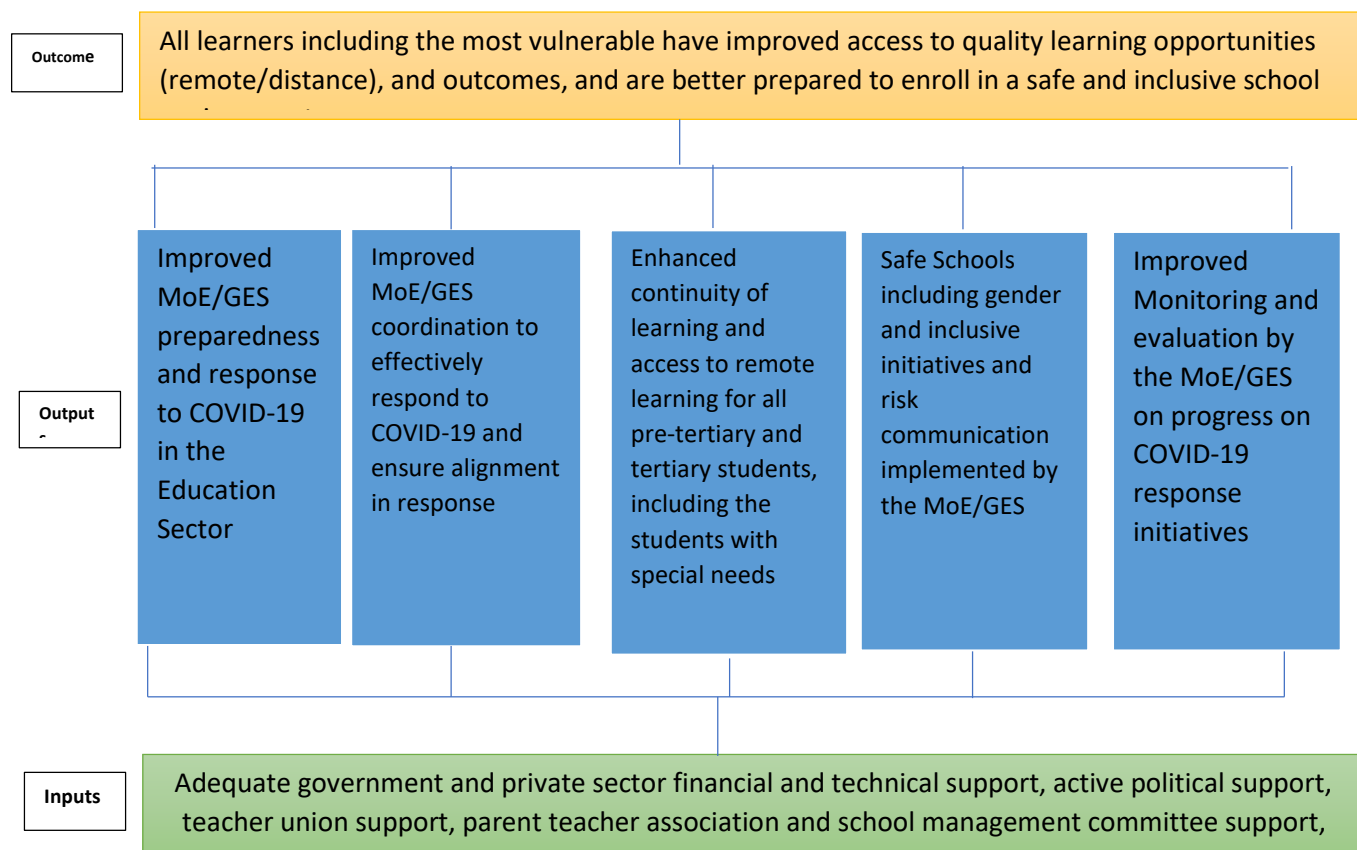
The Theory of Change (ToC) underpinning the preparedness and response of the MoE/GES as far as the COVID-19 is concerned is outlined in the assumptions below;

- **IF** the MoE/GES have improved preparedness and response to COVID-19 in the Education Sector, and;
- **IF** the MoE/GES have improved coordination to effectively respond to COVID-19 and ensure alignment in response, and;
- **IF** there's an enhanced continuity of learning and access to remote learning for all pre-tertiary and tertiary students, including the students with special needs, and;
- **IF** Safe Schools including gender and inclusive initiatives, and risk communication implemented by the MoE/GES during the COVID-19 crises and post-crisis, and;

- **IF** the above is evidenced by improved Monitoring and evaluation by the MoE/GES on progress on COVID-19 response initiatives;
- **THEN** all learners including the most vulnerable will have improved access to quality learning opportunities (remote/distance)/outcomes and are better prepared to enrol in a safe and inclusive school environment.

The above ToC can be effectively implemented provided there's an adequate government and private sector financial and technical support, active political support, teacher union support, parent teacher association and school management committee support, and development partner support.

The ToC have been captured in the framework below;



7.0. Table 1: Risks Identified for Implementation of MoE/GES

COVID-19 Plan

Risk	Potential Adverse Impact	Risk level	Risk Management Strategy	Responsibility
Inadequate Government Capacity to prepare and respond effectively to COVID-19 within the education sector	Education sector response will be uncoordinated and delayed	H	Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service is working with the sector working group, and other key agencies in the response.	Ministry of Education

Inadequate government funding	Outlined initiatives not fully implemented and target not reached	H	The MoE/GES coordinating with the lead coordinating Ministry, the Ministry of Health and is also working with the Development Partners to ensure adequate funding for the response.	Minister of Education and or designee
Distance learning initiatives not achieving the expected relevant learning outcomes for all learners	Vulnerable learners (children with disabilities, children in hard-to-reach areas, girls who are burdened with more chores, children exposed to violence etc.) will lose out on learning.	H	The MoE/GES will deploy all distance learning approaches that will reach out to every child including the most vulnerable. Distance learning packages will be designed to respond to the learning needs of children with disabilities. Also, the MoE/GES will facilitate the organization of remedial programmes to bridge the learning gap.	Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service.
Inadequate distance learning resources for teachers and learners and insufficient teacher capacity in the effective usage of the distance and remote learning approaches	Distance and remote learning resources including computers, radio, TVs, etc. not readily available for all learners and teachers to use for lesson delivery. Teacher capacity to deliver lessons remotely in using particular tools and applications is constrained which will affect reaching the targets with learning.	H	The MoE/GES will coordinate with organizations and agencies with improved capacity on distance/remote learning to learn lessons and deploy the appropriate tool to reach every student at every location. The MoE/GES will support teachers and learners with some remote teaching and learning resources as well as build capacity of teachers in remote lesson delivery.	Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service
Poor parental, caregiver, Parent teacher association, school management committees etc. support to the GES in the delivery of remote education to learners	School-community structures not proactive to support learning both in-school and out-school	H	The MoE/GES will embark of an advocacy campaign to educate school-community stakeholders on the HOW, WHAT, WHY to support children's learning	MoE/GES
Misinformation on the spread of the COVID-19 and stigmatization of	Unapproved information and practices among key education stakeholders,	H	The MoE/GES will work with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service to develop education context specific	MoE/GES

affected teachers, students etc.	contributing to fear, panic and stigmatization of affected persons		materials for COVID-19, as well as build capacity of teachers on psychosocial support	
Poor enrolment and attendance when schools resume, as well as fear of an unsafe school environment to promote retention of students	Decrease in enrolment, increase in drop-out, truancy and absenteeism due to fear of further spread of the virus as well as safety at school	H	The MoE/GES will embark on a Back-to-School campaign before school resumes. The GES will also roll-out the Safe Schools guidance in schools to increase attendance and retention	MoE/GES
Ineffective mechanisms and tools for data collection, monitoring and evaluation	Indicators in COVID-19 plan not adequately tracked, not achieved and limited quality of data	M	Strengthen monitoring and reporting measures at all levels and improve EiE coordination mechanism for progress tracking and planning.	MoE/GES

8.0. Conclusion

In implementing the contingency plan to address educational challenges during this crisis, issues of equity, inclusion and gender should be highly considered. All stakeholders must collaborate and coordinate activities through MOE/GES to have a harmonised approach in implementing the plan.

Remote/distance learning should be enhanced especially at the tertiary level to allow more senior high school graduates have tertiary education through such medium after the pandemic.

The ministry will continue to improve its work by closely working with sector working group which has multiple stakeholders in the process of developing and responding to emergencies in the country and ensuring that the education system is resilient to withstand any future shocks and crisis.