IICBA Webinar Series on

Online Module on How Transformative Pedagogy and Fostering Ethical Reflections can Support Teachers during COVID-19 for Resilience and PVE

Date and Time: **13 May 16.00 to 17.30 CET**

Keynote speech   **10 minutes**

Keynote speaker: Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, Director & Representative, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

Title of Webinar: *How can education respond to learning needs during the COVID-19, including fostering resilience and children's well-being during the pandemic?*

Guiding Questions for the key note:

- *What is the impact of covid-19 on the education of children and youth in the African context?*

  The COVID-19-19 pandemic has led to school closures all over the world. As a result, many countries have reverted to distance and online modes as an option for continuity of learning. This requires, among other prerequisites, a distance education infrastructure; Internet connectivity, access to devices, and trained teachers to deliver the online lessons, so that children can attend online and/or distance classes.

  However, Africa does not have the level of internet connectivity to benefit many of its children who are staying at home due to the pandemic. The affected children therefore miss out on this important mode of learning. Even the relatively inexpensive radio and TV are not as widespread as in other parts of the world. This raises the issue of equity and will have major adverse effects on the education of children and youth in the African context.

In situations where the online option will not work, offline solutions can be explored. With some of the offline options, learners would need to be provided with print materials to carry on self-learning. But, printing and distributing print materials may not be easy to many of the countries in Africa as it would require a lot of financial resources and logistical capacity that may not be present, leaving children and youth with very little to continue their learning.

- *What are the key challenges that the education sector faces in this context, particularly addressing the needs of the most vulnerable?*

    The key challenge that the education sector faces in the context of the pandemic, particularly in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, is the absence of the **infrastructure to reach learners in remote locations** with distance and/or online lessons. This has the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities in access to quality education.

    The other major challenge is the **availability of properly developed online lessons fit for radio, TV and/or Internet-based classes**. A well-prepared lesson for distance education should have interactivity and capacity to assess learning built into it. As the pandemic has come totally unannounced, there is a scarcity of lessons for interactive teaching and learning at distance.

    The third major challenge is that of **teacher capacity** - most teachers in Africa do not have the training and skills to undertake teaching via distance and online platforms. In fact, a good percentage of African teachers lack the basic qualification and initial training. The pandemic has added another dimension to the challenge of unqualified and untrained teachers.

- *How can education respond to these challenges during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic?*

    The education sector needs to find solutions to minimize the effect of the pandemic. One way of doing so is enlisting the support of other sectors such as the Ministry of Telecommunications and Infrastructure

of countries in order to utilize already available infrastructure such as radio and TV broadcast stations, community radios, and free or reduced internet connectivity charges. The education sector can also work with the Ministry of Health for relevant and appropriate health messages and preventive measures to communicate to learners.

The sector can also look at the adaptation of already available learning materials to compensate for lack of properly developed lessons for distance teaching. Very many online content providers and distance education organizations have now made their learning materials freely available to countries. These resources need to be tapped into to solve the problem of lack of appropriate material for distance teaching and learning.

The Ministry of Education can also launch online teacher training courses to enable teachers to use distance and online tools and other resources in their teaching. Teachers are now expected to handle distance and online teaching via radio, TV or other online tools. Most of them may not have had the training to use the platforms effectively. They therefore need to have their capacities strengthened via training opportunities provided by governments or private organisations working to minimise the negative effects of school closures due to the pandemic.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic - an opportunity to build back better**

  The pandemic could also be seen as an opportunity to build back better systems in view of the fact that already there are quite a number of out-of-school children and adolescents, low quality of learning, inequity, among other perennial challenges. The opportunity of a low-tech solution using off-line solutions that can be the game changer and equalizer if countries can mobilize to deploy this option in addition to other online solutions. The advantages are many and varied. They include responding to the issues of access to and quality of learning for disadvantaged or hard-to-reach learners, as well as tackle the problem of out-of-school children.

In addition, investing in ICT and energy infrastructures to expand the coverage and use of Internet-based solutions; the building of the capacity of teachers for distance and online teaching and assessment of learning; strengthening of the capacity of education managers on the launching and operations of online digital learning platforms; production of offline print-based teaching and learning materials; and the effective use of low-tech solutions such as radio and TV for distance learning; can prepare the education/school system to withstand future pandemics or mass school closures due to man-made or natural disasters.

These are opportunities and measures that need to be explored and concretized to prepare national education systems to withstand similar future pandemics.

Thank you for your kind attention