



IDRC | CRDI

International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



KIX Africa 19 Hub

MEETING REPORT

Knowledge Sharing Virtual Meeting for Member States Reported by the KIX Hub Secretariat

Date: Tuesday, 17 November 2020

Time: 14:00 – 15:30 EAS

Participants: 41 participants: ACBF, IDRC, IFEF, IICBA, UNESCO, UNICEF and VVOB.

Country teams represented: Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, The Gambia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Meeting Objectives:

The following outcomes were expected from the Knowledge Sharing Virtual Meeting for Member States:

- Learning on member states' experiences with teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic shared
- A shared understanding of capacity strengthening areas to guide the Hub's upcoming activities

I. Introduction, IICBA

The Secretariat welcomed participants and Hub members and reviewed the meeting agenda. Chelsea welcomed and thanked the representatives from Lesotho, Sierra Leone and Malawi for preparing presentations for the meeting.

II. Member states' Experiences with Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Member States

Teaching-Learning Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, M. Ralenkoane (PHD), Lesotho

Ralenkoane presented Lesotho's experience responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through its teaching and learning methods. Lesotho has more than 400,000 students from ECCE to tertiary level who must continue learning. The government had three phases of response: stage 1 was a shutdown of all public schools; stage 2 was re-opening of compliant schools and stage 3, the current phase, is re-opening of all schools.

Stage 1 employed TV and radio lessons at pre-primary, primary and secondary level, and online classes at tertiary level. A core team of educators created TV and radio lesson modules, and a third party did the recording of the content, which was then approved by inspectors. However, it was estimated that only 40% of learners had access to TV, radio and online learning due to limited connectivity in rural and highlands areas. Therefore, in stage 2, self-instructional learning materials were developed, however printing and distribution has been difficult due to budgetary issues. Additionally, schools were re-opened if they complied with WHO guidelines; international examinations were postponed for external classes and the school year was extended to March 2021. In stage 3, all public schools are meant to open in November. Government and development partners have helped procured the PPE necessary to do so. Phase 4 will begin in December, including grade 6 when students take international exams, and grade 7, which is the last year before secondary level.



IDRC | CRDI

International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Post COVID 19, the government is preparing psychosocial support for children who have spent a long time at home. Learners will transition to the next grade, and accelerated classes will be implemented. There will be tight financial constraints, so support from within and outside the government is needed. Further sensitization for parents and communities will occur, to ensure families remain vigilant until the pandemic is over.

Sierra Leone's Experience with Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Emmanuel V. Deoud, Sierra Leone

Emmanuel explained how Sierra Leone currently has 2.5 million students from pre-primary to senior secondary level. The country did not record its first COVID 19 case until 31 March 2020, when schools closed, and now there are about 2,300 active cases. The government took measures learned from the Ebola outbreak, such as restricting travel and drawing on local leaders for community sensitization on proper sanitary practices. The government has a four pillar response, with TORs for each level: pillar 1 – communication and media; pillar 2 – continuous distance learning; pillar 3 – schools reopening and pillar 4 – operations, planning and policy.

Pillar 1 used TV and radio to educate the public about COVID 19 across almost all of its 93 chiefdoms. Pillar 2 allowed for teacher training on distance teaching of core topics, particularly via radio. Development partners also helped procure and distribute radios across different school districts. Pillar 3, school re-opening, was carried out by the government, starting with students in examination classes. To do so, the children assembled in each of the 16 district towns via buses, using the proper PPE and WASH procedures. Before schools re-opened, the government ensured that schools were sanitized using WHO standards, and the national standards for COVID 19 prevention were met.

One of the main issues faced by Sierra Leone is the financing gap, and development partners have been working with the government to raise funds. The Ministry is working to implement recommendations on awareness and prevention, inclusive stakeholder coordination and development of an adaptive and long term response for future crises. So far, the government has not seen any spread of COVID 19 through schools.

Teaching-Learning Response to COVID-19: The Case of Malawi, Valentino Zimpata, Malawi

Valentino began his presentation by describing the school closures in Malawi. The government of Malawi declared a state of emergency on March 20, 2020, and schools were closed on the 23rd. Five million learners were affected with only two weeks until exams. Alternative teaching and learning methods were quickly implemented, including radio, online learning and teaching notes shared through WhatsApp and social media.

However, Malawi encountered some challenges with online/distance learning: only 33% of students had access to radios; few students (around 25%) have gadgets to access online platforms and materials; only 16% of the population has access to internet; many students and teachers are not digitally literate; parents are limited in their help to children because they are not computer literate; internet data is expensive to purchase and teaching and learning materials were not in an online friendly format and needed to be adapted, which was time consuming.

The impact of school closure has affected many students adversely, especially girls who may not return to schools when they re-open. Private schools are lacking fees to pay their staff. Students' academic schedules have been disrupted for those on study leave and especially those working in seasonally dependent fields like agriculture.



IDRC | CRDI

International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



On September 7, 2020 schools re-opened in phases, starting with students in exam classes. The government prepared school re-opening guidelines, balancing school and free time and ensuring that sanitary procedures were followed. The provision of psycho-social support was also included. Community groups, teachers, students and parents were all trained on how attending school during COVID 19 would work. Schools were even trained and made masks for students who needed them. After re-opening, students and parents have been enthusiastic, the government has monitored schools and split classes or invoked double shifting so they can maintain proper social distancing.

III. Discussion, Question and Answer, Argaw Sapane, ICBA

Participants posed the following questions in relation to the member states' presentations:

Question 1: How has Malawi measured the impact of school closure?

- **Response:** Malawi has not conducted a specific study on how COVID 19 has affected the education system, but there was an assessment on the situation faced by girls and the number of unplanned pregnancies after public outcry. It was determined that the impact was large, about 14,000 girls became pregnant while out of school and they may not come back. Education institutions that depend on fees were unable to pay personnel and then parents were not able to help students at home, which had a large impact on learning. The economic impact has been harsh and it will be assessed. The government is planning a study in 2021.
- **Response from UNICEF:** It is difficult to measure impact now, although we may know some of the short-term effects. We should measure impact at the proper time.

Question 2: To what extent did lessons learned from Sierra Leone in the Ebola outbreak, especially in terms of radio learning, contribute to the overall COVID 19 response and its impact on the education system?

- **Response:** In terms of success stories, almost all schools are using hand washing stations because it is affordable and it has become almost a culture for the population since the Ebola outbreak. The government has mandated masks in public places so the usage is high in schools. From monitoring visits across the country we can see that many girls were impregnated after schools closed and many went home or to Liberia and Guinea and could not come back once the borders were closed. This also prevented them from taking their exams. However, the government has been transparent about the rate of girls' unplanned pregnancy and has encouraged re-entry for mothers after pregnancy.

Question 3: How has Lesotho managed to disinfect schools?

- **Response:** The government's guidelines defined disinfectants and PPE in schools. Schools cannot re-open if they do not show they have enough stock of the disinfectant or PPE. For public schools, the government provides the supplies and assists in the process. Lesotho is reopening in phases so they can manage the process appropriately.

Question 4: What has Lesotho done to ensure learners go back to school?

- **Response:** Many parents lost jobs and told the Ministry they were bankrupt. The Ministry of Social Welfare has worked with the Ministry of Education and is helping to ensure assistance for children to pay the fees to return to school.

VI. Conclusion, Beifith Tiyab, UNICEF



IDRC | CRDI

International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Beifith thanked everyone for making the time to participate in the meeting. One of the key words from the Hub has been “sharing.” It has been great to hear from Lesotho, Sierra Leone and Malawi and how they are responding to the COVID 19 pandemic to ensure continuity of learning for all learners. There were many comments and questions in the chat, showing that this is an important topic for all of us. We will plan another webinar to hear more about the COVID 19 response and give other countries a chance to share their experiences. We did not have time to go over the results you sent us about your needs in terms of capacity strengthening through the rapid assessment, so we will come back to you in the next webinars with more knowledge and experience sharing to address your needs.