Crises and the COVID-19 pandemic: education responses and choices during times of disruptions

A global synthesis and Sub-Saharan African country analysis:
Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Mali,
Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda

Yusuf Sayed, Marcina Singh,
Joseph C. Pesambili, Eva Bulgrin
& George Mindano

July 2021

Education International (EI)

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites teachers and education employees.

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Acknowledgements:

Foreword

The Future of Work is not just making the headlines - it has become an issue of increasing importance for students, teachers and the whole of society. While there is always an element of anticipatory anxiety when facing the future there has also been real concern about the arrival of Artificial Intelligence, its potential to disrupt the labour market and changing skills requirements in the workplace more generally.

This led Education International (EI) at its 8th World Congress in Bangkok 2019 to consider two resolutions, one on the Future of the Teaching Profession and one on the relationship between Information and Communications Technology, Teacher Policy and Student Learning. The former had a strong focus on the impact of Artificial Intelligence on education and the need for a human centred future including equitable access to future jobs. The latter acknowledged these developments and called for an update on EI's ICT guidelines and for teachers to have more of a say over which technologies they use.

The ILO in its Work for a Brighter Future showed that they too are concerned about developing a better society. They advocate for building human capabilities and making lifelong learning a reality for all. The future must include just transitions and opportunities for all people to grow, not only in their learning, but also in their ability to be productive, engaged and active citizens.

This report on EI's survey about the Future of Work in Education lays out a clear landscape of the problems and opportunities we will face. While educational technology clearly has the potential to save teachers time doing mundane tasks and it is important to recognise that education would have ground to a complete halt during the pandemic without digital technologies connecting teacher and students, EdTech clearly, like Janus, has two faces.

It is also an extremely profitable market growing at 16% and is estimated to reach over $400 billion by 2025, according to HolonIQ[1]. Data and privacy are particular concerns for teachers as EdTech giants mine our clicks for profit. This is explored in some detail in this report with a particular emphasis on the need for unions to get involved in data

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1   https://www.holoniq.com/notes/global-education-technology-market-to-reach-404b-by-2025/

governance.

The survey responses clearly point out that member organisations are positive about what digital technologies can offer for educators, but access is inequitable. Richer schools in urban areas have better access and regional differences are significant. The pace at which education systems are turning to digital technologies is not matched by an increase in continuous professional learning and development.

Education unions are also rarely consulted about the digital technologies teachers use. This has to change if improving teaching and learning is the goal. It is possible for teachers to retain their professional autonomy, make informed choices about which technologies they use and when, and for the learning experience to be improved for everyone. This will not happen by accident and requires governments to do more to involve teachers' representatives in the formation of policy related to educational technologies.

As education unions we need to grow our expertise so we can better predict the impact of technological innovations on teachers and be prepared to take action as necessary. This has never been clearer than it is now, with the impact of Covid-19 on education. Unions must be equipped to respond to this rapid change with a proactive agenda for digital technology so that when our demands for consultation are met, we can engage effectively. Education unions need to take the lead ensuring the tech chosen and used has clear benefits for students and teachers.

Education International is firmly committed to working with member organisations to achieve positive change. Our Future of Work in Education reference group, who provided crucial guidance on this report, has gathered leading academics and union leaders from around the world to work out a strategy for change. Our members are engaged and ready to act to ensure the future of work in education is human first.

David Edwards
General Secretary
Education International

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ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DBE	(South African) Department of Basic Education
EAC	East Asia and the Pacific
FEMOE/MOE	Federal Ministry of Education/Ministry of Education
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICT	Information and communication technologies
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LIC	Low income countries
LMIC	Low to middle income countries
MENAPLN	(Burkina Faso) Ministry of National Education, Literacy, and National Languages Promotion
MOOC	Massive open online course
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OER	Open educational resources
PPE	Personal protective equipment
REB	(Ethiopian) Regional Education Bureau
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SDG 4	(UNESCO) Sustainable Development Goal 4: Education
SNEC	Teacher Union for National Education and Culture (Syndicat Nationale de l'Education et de la Culture, SNEC)
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (originally the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
VET	Vocational education and training

Introduction

1. Report background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on social, political, and economic realities worldwide, forcing governments to respond swiftly with policies to minimise the present effects while weighing future implications. COVID-19 has wreaked havoc, uncertainty and unpredictability, impacting every aspect of life the world over. It has exacerbated social inequalities, further marginalised the impoverished, and plunged fragile economies into disarray. This moment of crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to examine how education systems can more thoughtfully and deliberately respond to these types of systemic disruptions by asking questions about the purpose and values of education so that all learners, particularly the poor, have access to quality and equitable education in contexts of uncertainty and disruption. How do countries respond when education is disrupted and face-to-face learning is not possible? Given the difficulties with technological infrastructure and problems with broadband connectivity, how can equitable and quality learning continue effectively? What are the implications for teacher professionalism and decision-making? How might governments and teachers' unions work together to ensure students are learning in times of disruption? And how might we use these moments of disruption to more closely align education offerings to support the full development of the human personality as anticipated by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Apart from these enquiries, another area of concern that the report addresses is the impact of policy responses on teacher autonomy. More specifically, the report illuminates how teachers are empowered (or not) to take decisions in the current situation and connect with their peers, their school leaders and their learners. Insights into how policy responses have manifested globally, given the highly differentiated education contexts, are also discussed.

In the context above, this research pays attention to how education responses during the pandemic ensure equitable and quality education for all, and crucially, meaningful engagement with stakeholders such as

students, parents, teachers, teachers' unions and education officials in formulating policies. In this respect, a key issue to debate is whether the new modalities of education introduced are provisional and should be abandoned post-COVID, or whether they are here to stay. In examining these choices and responses in the eight countries participating in the seminar, we illuminate education policies, choices and plans in response to the COVID-19 crisis in the Global South.

The overarching research question will be explored through the following two questions.

What policy choices and trends have manifested in the selected countries in supporting teacher professionalism and agency?

The report responds to this question by addressing the following themes:

- Professional development and psychosocial support for teachers, including teacher autonomy;
- The transformation of curriculum and assessment during the pandemic; and
- Modalities of education delivery during school closures.

What have been the policy-making processes in the eight selected countries since the beginning of 2020 when the threat of COVID-19 became a global reality?

The latter question aims to illuminate how policy responses to education made globally have impacted the attainment of quality education as delineated in the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal 4: Education (SDG 4), with a particular focus on teachers. More so, the second research question seeks to examine:

(i) who was involved in processes of policy-making; and

(ii) what is the nexus between science/social science evidence and policy-making in education? We will pay particular attention to factors shaping policy decisions in education during the pandemic.

This research was commissioned by the *Open Society Foundation* (OSF) and *Education International* (EI) with the aim of understanding the global policy responses to education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research also aims to understand how various states have responded

to the pandemic in the midst of existing global crises and disruptions. The assumption is that when crises interlock, their effects are amplified because the context is already found to be weak and vulnerable. This report thus maps these global responses, with a particular focus on the effects on equity and equality.

2. Structure of report

Using COVID-19 as an exemplar, this report aims to map the manner in which various interlocking crises manifest themselves globally. Crises have been tightly woven into the fabric of society and in some cases even define the social, political and economic dynamics of a region. Crises have been part of society since the beginning of time, with seemingly little change in this modern context. But what has changed is the manner in which society has dealt with the blows afflicted by these crises, particularly in contexts where multiple crises interlock and dovetail into stark social and economic realities.

This report is divided into three parts. The first part provides a synthesis of the global response to COVID-19 based on a documentary review. The second part focuses on the eight selected countries in *sub-Saharan Africa* (SSA), drawing on document and interview data. The country selection includes Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda. The third part synthesises the findings of the global as well as country specific insights.

Part A (Point I) provides a conceptual orientation of crises by defining the concept and noting how crises manifest in a modern context. It then discusses the global responses to education more generically to map the common, and in some cases, varying policy responses to education instituted globally in this current crisis. This is followed by a synthesis of the policy responses by region, including Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, and the Arab states.

Part B (Point II) reviews the selected countries in *sub-Saharan Africa* (SSA) noted above, focusing on their policy response to education.

Part C (Point III) synthesises the findings revealed in Part A and Part B. This synthesis is discussed in relation to several macro themes, including global effects on equity and equality; teacher development and support; the future of high stakes testing; and educational resilience and

preparedness in the context of crises and disruptions. Part C concludes the report with a brief summary.

3. Methodology

As previously noted, the focus of this report is on the policy choices taken by certain states to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning. It firstly draws from a desk-based review and then on semi-structured interviews with union and government officials from various states in SSA to provide empirical evidence relating to government policy responses to education. This report is not without limitations, however. The findings reported here and the insights drawn from these findings are taken directly from available literature relating to the report focus. However, information, statistics and other evidence relating to COVID-19 is constantly changing as researchers discover new information. Every effort has been made to report the most accurate and most recent information. At all times, multiple sources have been consulted and facts checked. However, omissions and the risk of reporting imprecise information may still exist.

Whilst the findings reported in Part A draw largely on a qualitative desk-based review, Part B employed multiple data collection techniques, primarily semi-structured interviews and a review of policy documents. These are mapped in the table on next page.

This study took place in a multilingual context. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Portuguese. We acknowledge that the translation process for this study is embedded in a particular socio-cultural context and the team was supported by translators where appropriate. Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington (2010, p. 17) define translation as "the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language". They point to several challenges that arise in conducting qualitative research in bi- or multilingual contexts, such as maintaining accuracy when translating, but also the time-consuming and resource-intensive aspect of translations. However, we believe that the translation processes can also benefit the researcher. As Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington (2010, p. 22) argue,

> *The process of translation and transliteration can widen the academic audience for a piece of research without jeopardizing its validity.*

Table 1. Overview of research methods for Part B of this report

Geographic & Linguistic Focus	Country	Policy Review	Desk-based research	Interviews
Group 1	*Ethiopia*	Concept Note for Education Sector COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, Ethiopia	*Yes*	Ethiopia: Yohannes Bent, Ethiopia Teachers Association
	South Africa	Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 Guidance for childcare facilities and schools on COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures for the prevention, containment and management of COVID-19 in schools and school communities Coronavirus orientation: Guidelines for schools	*Yes*	Union Officials (x2) Basil Manual, NAPTOSA Mugwena Maluleke, SADTU Government Officials (x2) Gerrit Coetzee, DBE Enoch Rabotapi, DBE
	Uganda	Framework for Provision of Continued Learning during the COVID-19 Lockdown in Uganda Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19	*Yes*	Filbert Baguma, Teachers Union General Secretary Dr Jane Okou, TTF Focal Point
Group 2	*Burkina Faso*	Plan De Réponse Du MENAPLN Pour La Continuite Educative Dans Le Contexte Du Covid-19 Note De Couverture De La Requête D'Un Financement Accéléré Covid-19	*Yes*	Oudien Taore Teachers' Union Sema Blegne Government official
	Ivory Coast	Plan De Reponse Du Secteur Education-Formation Contre Le Covid-19 Avril 2020	*Yes*	Raphael Zouzou, Teachers' Union Ibrahima Kourouma, Government official
	Mali	Strategie De Lutte Contre La Pandemie Du Covid-19 En Milieu Scolaire. Reponse Du Secteur De L'education Au Covid-19 Mali Pour Le Financement Accelere De La Riposte A La Covid-19 Du Partenariat Mondial Pour L'education	*Yes*	No interviews

Geographic & Linguistic Focus	Country	Policy Review	Desk-based research	Interviews
Group 3	*Cape Verde*	-	*Yes*	Abraao Borges, Union General Secretary Jose Manuel Marques, (Government) Director of Planning, Budget and Management
	Mozambique	UN Multi-Sector Response Plan to COVID-19 for Mozambique—June 2020—Mozambique	*Yes*	Teacher Union Official: Rosário Quive

I. Conceptual Orientation and Global Mapping

1. Conceptual orientation

A. Defining crises

Definitions of what constitutes a crisis are not in short supply. Hermann (1972, p. 13) defines a crisis as a "*situation that threatens high-priority goals of the decision-making unit, restricts the amount of time available for response before the decision is transformed and surprises the members of the decision-making units by its occurrence*". Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1997, p. 279) contend that a crisis is a "*serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a social system, which – under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances – necessitates making critical decisions*". A crisis, also defined as potentially life-threatening and requiring an immediate response, can also be shrouded in uncertainty, both in terms of nature and impact (Fygetákis, 2007, cited in Koutsoukis, Nikitas-Spiros and Farantos, 2015, p. 35). Crises are non-trivial threats to life (Leidner, Pan and Pan, 2009), a malfunctioning of essential elements of society (Mitroff, 2005), characterised by uncertainty and imminent threat (Boin et al., 2005). The manner in which the term crisis is defined in this report is based on the World Health Organization's (2007, p. 7) comprehensive definition of crisis as an

> *event or series of events representing a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community, usually over a wide area... [as well as] armed conflicts, epidemics, famine, natural disasters, environmental emergencies and other major harmful events [that] may involve or lead to a humanitarian crisis.*

Furthermore, due to the manner in which these emergencies manifest, crises are understood to encompass social, political and economic events.

B. Types of crises

Crises can manifest in different ways. The World Economic Forum released a report in 2019 regarding global risk trends, including the manner in which these risks are interconnected and interrelated (World Economic Forum, 2019). Figure 1 suggests that global crises are multiple and include risks relating to the economy, the environment, geopolitics, society and technology.

This report examines four categories of crises as depicted in the diagram below, demonstrating that a crisis rarely occurs on its own and often overlaps with other risks and crises which are likely to amplify the destructive nature of the events. Whilst some crises are global in cause and effect, others are localised within a specific geographical context.
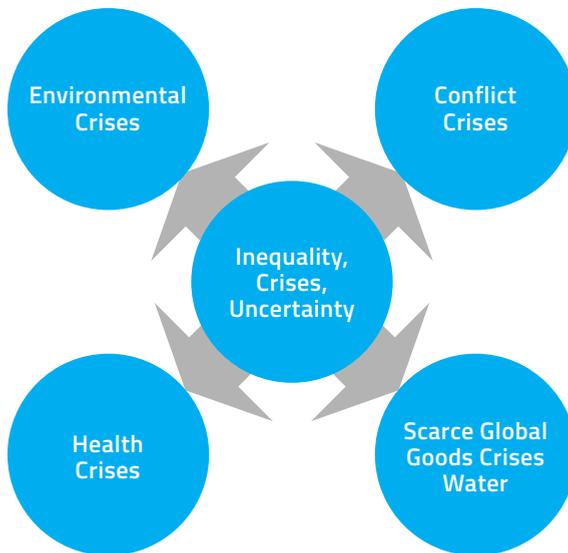
Figure 1. **Conceptual Framework for mapping interlocking crises**

C. Crises of the environment

The most notable crisis impacting the environment that is both local and global in cause and effect is global warming, characterised as a climate crisis. The United Nations (2020a) argues that "*climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it is happening even more quickly than we feared*". Combating climate change, a key global policy focus, is evident in policies such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 13 that calls for climate action. The escalating

competition for resources poses a major threat to international peace and security (United Nations, 2019). In addition, scientists have cautioned world leaders that the world may face some deadly pandemics as a direct result of deforestation and biodiversity loss (McKie, 2020). Almost a third of all emerging diseases have originated as a result of a change in land use.

A 2019 report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) noted a dramatic change in climate between 2015 and 2019 which has resulted in at least five notable global trends.

First, there has been a consistent increase in temperatures both on land and sea. Second, there is a consistent rise in sea-levels. Third, there is a decrease in sea ice extent. Between 2015 and 2018, the extent of Arctic sea ice during September was below average (WMO, 2019). Fourth, there have been deviations in precipitation globally: 2015-2018 saw high levels of precipitation in some regions in South and North America as well as Eastern Europe and sizeable portions of Asia. Lastly, there has been an increase in extreme weather conditions such as heat waves, tropical cyclones, floods and tornadoes. These extreme events "*bring substantial loss of life or population displacement, others may have limited casualties but major economic impacts*" (WMO, 2019, p. 11). Droughts have devastated regions in Africa and Australia with a huge economic impact on their respective economies.

D. Crises of politics

Brechner (1996, p. 127) asserts that "*crises, conflicts, and war are intricately interrelated, both conceptually and empirically" and result from "mutual mistrust between adversaries, turmoil, tension and hostility*". A conflict, occurring when two or more parties engage in hostile behaviours, can range from a singular dispute to multiple disagreements. Crises may or may not lead to war and can terminate, persist and erupt with or without violence. The twentieth century was characterised by political crises, included conflicts such as World War I (1914-1918), Germany's remilitarization of the Rhineland (1936), World War II (1939-1945), the Cold War (1947-1991), the Vietnam War (1955-1975), Iraqi-Kuwait territory conflict (1961; 1994), the Cambodia-Thailand border dispute (1958/59), Ethiopia-Somalia territory dispute (1960-1978), Iceland-UK "Cod Wars" (1973-1976) and conflicts related to the British mandate over Palestine (1948).

The OECD (2011) reports that in 2009, one-third of all aid in developing states went to fragile states characterised by "challenges such as poor

security, weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, violence or the legacy of civil war" (OECD, 2011, p. 3). This suggests that political crises like war have large scale economic and social effects on global relations. A number of notable conflicts in the 21st century have impacted social, economic and political relations globally, either strengthening or fraying the bonds of multilateralism. These include the Second Congo War (1998), the Syrian Civil War (2011 – the present), the Darfur conflict (2003), the US-led invasion of Iraq (2003), the NATO-led war in Afghanistan (2001), the war against Boko Haram (2009) in Nigeria, the Yemeni civil war (2015), the Ukraine conflict instigated by Russia (2014), and more recently, a resurgence of conflict in Mali (2015, 2020).

An immediate consequence of physical warfare is the imminent need for safety and the derailing of access to basic services and goods such as water, food, housing and reliable financial income. In the current global context, the Syrian war is the biggest driver of migration in the world. Whilst many families fleeing from civil war have relocated to various areas in the European Union. Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Hungary, Austria and the United Kingdom have received the bulk of the asylum applications.

E. Crises of health

The World Health Organization (2019) asserts that the world currently faces several health threats ranging from "*outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles and diphtheria, increasing reports of drug-resistant pathogens, growing rates of obesity and physical inactivity to the health impacts of environmental pollution and climate change and multiple humanitarian crises*". There are currently ten health threats affecting population groups globally in need of urgent attention by the World Health Organization. These include air pollution, non-communicable diseases, influenza, fragile and vulnerable communities, antimicrobial resistance, high threat pathogens such as Ebola, weak primary health care, vaccine hesitancy, Dengue fever and HIV-AIDS. More recent threats have been the reoccurrences of coronaviruses such as SARS, MERS and COVID-19.
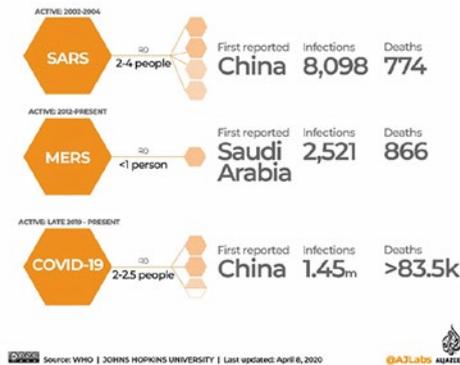
Figure 2. **Comparison of infection rates between SARS, MERS and COVID-19 (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020a)**

COVID-19

In the latter part of 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in China reported several cases of pneumonia, later identified as the novel coronavirus. By March 2020, more than 20% of the world's population was under lockdown and mandated to stay home (Kaplan, 2020). In India, this meant that 1.3 billion people were confined to their homes (Mahbubani, 2020) and in China, half of the population (780 million people) restricted in terms of movement (Yee, Xiong, Wang and Deng, 2020). As of 31 August 2020, the World Health Organization recorded 25 085 685 confirmed cases globally, including 843 927 deaths as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, 216 territories have been affected. Statistics released by Johns Hopkins University noting the top ten most affected countries in the world demonstrate that COVID-19 is a virus that does not discriminate on the basis of economics, but is a virus of opportunity.
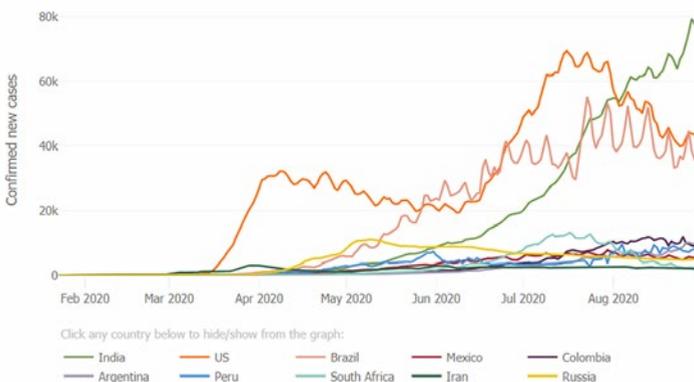
Figure 3. **Ten most affected countries in the world as of August 2020 (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020b)**

As of August 2020, India recorded the highest numbers of infection rates followed by the USA and Brazil. COVID-19 has resulted in shrinking economies, job losses and increased poverty globally, stymying progress towards the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The enigmatic nature of the virus is worrisome, particularly with regards to the R (effective reproduction number). The R0 for COVID-19 is worse than the seasonal flu which is R0 of 1.3, but better for measles for which R0 is between 12 and 18; however, we have vaccines for seasonal flu and measles, but vaccines have only recently been developed for COVID-19 (Beech, 2020), and it will be a considerable time before they are widely available on a global scale.

F. Crises of consumption of global goods

Access to basic needs such as clean drinking water, electricity and food remains a challenge for the world's most impoverised nations, particularly nations in the Global South and East. Three issues in relation to this are discussed here: access to water, access to electricity, and food insecurity.

Water wars

The World Economic Forum (2019) asserts that in 2017 alone, Thewater was a major factor in conflicts in at least 45 countries, with Syria affected more than most countries. Research relating to the water crisis in Syria contends that

> *The most intensive drought ever recorded in Syria lasted from 2006 to 2011. Water scarcity hit households, businesses and infrastructure, while in the countryside crops failed, livestock died, and entire families moved to the country's cities. The subsequent eruption of civil war in 2011 led to as many as half a million deaths, as well as massive migration flows to neighbouring countries and beyond, and untold misery. Syria's war has been a tragic illustration of the central, driving role that water insecurity can play in instability and conflict. (van der Heijden and Stinson, 2019)*

Poor access to water exacerbates existing conflict and can be weaponised to cripple economies, playing into the hands of those who wish to exercise control. The World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report (2019) has argued that the water crisis, including the lack of access and general water insecurity, remains one of the top five global crises impacting society, and has been for the past eight years.

Electricity

As a resource that is foundational to economies, electricity shortages can be a threat to sustainable economic development. This is evident in the negative impact electricity shortages have had in countries such as China, Pakistan and South Africa. Whilst electricity shortages are common in most developing contexts, South Asia seems to be plagued with the poorest and most irregular electricity supply. Grainger and Zhang (2017, p. 2) note that

Electricity shortages in South Asia are especially widespread, with the average firm experiencing nearly an outage per day, lasting roughly 5.3 hours each. Within South Asia, Pakistan has the most severe power shortages where firms report 2.5 outages each day with an average duration of 13.2 hours.

Ou, Huang and Yao (2016, p. 1) insist that "*the fluctuation of the economic situation, as well as the delay of electric power investment, will unavoidably lead to an [im]balance between electricity supply and demand*". Electricity shortages not only affect trade, but also impact employment rates, education provision, health risks and existing inequalities.

Food insecurities

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020a) in a recent news release, noted that "*690 million people went hungry in 2019 – up by 10 million from 2018, and by nearly 60 million in five years*" with the majority of food insecure communities based in Asia, but quickly expanding in Africa. More specifically, "*Asia remains home to the greatest number of undernourished (381 million), Africa is second (250 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (48 million)*". Given this, realising SDG 2: Zero Hunger by 2030 seems doubtful.

G.   An interlocking system of crises and disruptions

In countries suffering from multiple crises, social and economic inequalities are typically pronounced. Each regional focus discussed in this report demonstrates that crises are not only a common factor of modern-day society, but are multiple and interlocking. These are particularly magnified in regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, Arab states and sub-Saharan Africa: "*The anticipated bottlenecks and constraints – in food, water, energy and*

other critical natural resources and infrastructure – are bringing new geophysical, political and economic challenges, and creating new and hard-to-manage instabilities" (Lee, 2020, p. 1101).

2. Global education responses to COVID-19

Much has been documented regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems globally. However, this review discusses these responses as follows:

- Education governance and policy response;
- Education responses relating to the delivery of education;
- Education responses relating to curriculum and assessment; and
- Education responses relating to teacher professional development.

A. Global education policy response

With COVID-19 a common adversary, global education responses to limit the spread of the virus have resulted in a number of similar trends. The national lockdowns enforced by multiple states not only included the closing down of various industries important to maintaining stable economies, but also involved the closing of schools. By the latter part of March 2020, countless schools across the globe were either fully or partially closed, as demonstrated in Figure 4 below. By mid-April, 1.725 billion students world-wide were affected by school closures, impacting about 99% of the world's student population (UNESCO, 2020a).
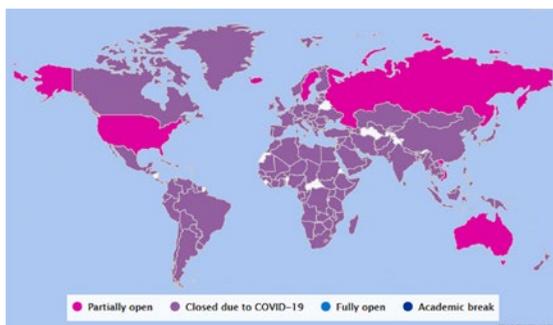
Figure 4. Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19 as of 26/03/2020 (UNESCO, 2020a)

In Portugal, Spain, and India, regional school closures were applied. Russia, specifically in Moscow, instituted a 'free regime' of school attendance that allowed families to either send their children to school or keep them at home if they chose. In Finland, schools were closed, but with kindergartens remaining open for families needing childcare (World Bank, 2020a).

Despite a seemingly necessary mechanism to contain the spread of the virus, the closure of schools has had several adverse effects on local population groups, particularly the poor and already marginalised. UNESCO's COVID-19 Education Response overview asserts that "*school closures carry high social and economic costs for people across communities... [and] their impact... is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized boys and girls and their families*" (UNESCO, 2020b). School closures, globally, have brought a number of disruptions including interrupted learning, anxiety for teachers and learners, challenges with regards to distance learning, challenges relating to childcare, rise in learner dropout rates and increase in cases of violence and abuse of children, particularly female children.

The reopening of schools remains controversial across the globe. By the end of August 2020, schools started reopening (see Figure 5 below). However, many regions, particularly in the Global North, were on academic breaks. According to UNESCO (2020c),

> *900 million of the world's 1.5 billion [pre-primary to secondary] students were set to return to school between August and October... however, only half of them – 433 million in 155 countries – will return to classrooms at this stage... one billion students, two-thirds of the global student population, face either school closures or uncertainty...[while] the most vulnerable populations, particularly girls, are especially at risk.*

UNICEF's Framework for Reopening Schools issued jointly with UNESCO, UNHCR, the World Food Program and the World Bank, was developed to guide authorities on opening schools safely. The guidelines stipulated in the Framework aim to guide decision-making processes and support national preparation and implementation procedures whilst mitigating the spread of the virus and ensuring the delivery of quality education.
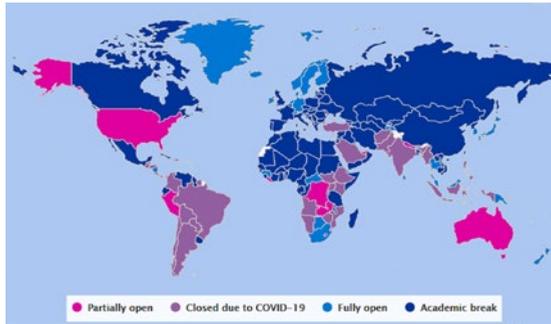
Figure 5. Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19
as of 31/08/2020 (UNESCO, 2020c)

In New South Wales, Australia, in an attempt to ensure that students were able to see their teachers regularly and to allow teachers to check in with vulnerable groups, schools have resumed face-to-face teaching once a week since the beginning of May 2020.

> *That way, schools could maintain social distancing without restricting return to only certain grade levels. Students continued with distance learning the other four days.... even during the shutdown, school buildings weren't officially closed – but the government encouraged parents to keep their children home if they could. (Will, 2020)*

Denmark instituted an 'enclave' approach, meaning that (elementary) students would not move around to attend elective classes. Instead, they would remain in their enclave. By 18 May 2020, Danish authorities eased the restrictions and Grades 6 to10 returned to school, followed by Grade 11 on 27 May. The Grade 12s did not need to return to school as they had already met the requirements for graduation. Preschool classes were limited to ten learners to one teacher. Single subject teachers, such as art teachers, were utilised as teacher substitutes to fill the homeroom teacher shortages that resulted from employing social distancing measures. In Taiwan, wearing face masks has become a compulsory part of schooling, helping to uphold social distancing measures.

> *The Taiwanese government provides all adults nine masks every two weeks, and all children 10 masks every two weeks...[and] during the school year, the private school[s] give staff members an additional five masks every two weeks so they can have a new mask every day. (Will, 2020)*

Schools in Taiwan were closed for most of February but then reopened at the end of May until the beginning of their summer break. One of the biggest adjustments to the schooling process was the cafeteria setup. Schools no longer have open salad bars. Instead, all meals are prepacked for students to collect. Students are also allowed 'chin breaks', which means they can step away from others to temporarily pull down their masks when feeling hot.

A number of schools reopened in May 2020. France commenced their reopening by allowing the lower grades to return. New Zealand has also reopened schools under very strict measures. The US and UK, despite high infection rates, have also reopened schools, although schools in the UK have, in some instances, defied government's order to reopen. Italy chose to remain closed till September.

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, countries have been hard hit by the pandemic, particularly Brazil, where schools remain closed till further notice. However, Uruguay seems to be the outlier in the region, managing infection rates more effectively: "*The progressive South American country of 3.4 million has the region's lowest rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths, and it never shut down its economy entirely*" (Spires, 2020, Para 19). Students in Uruguay returned to school in a staggered approach starting with small rural areas, then slowly reopening schools in urban centres. By the end of June, students in the capital returned to school. Uruguay also incorporates a blended-learning approach where students alternate in-person and virtual learning.

Many schools in sub-Saharan Africa remain closed due to a deficit of resources and infrastructures such as running water and classroom space to mitigate the spread of the virus. A survey of 39 countries in SSA conducted by the World Health Organization demonstrated that only six countries were fully open by 20 August 2020. The WHO (2020b) contends that schools "*are closed in 14 countries and partially open (examination classes) in 19 others...[and] around a dozen countries are planning to resume classroom learning in September, which is the start of the academic year in some countries*". The socio-economic effects of school closures are particularly worrisome as violence against children is up and nutrition rates are down. After the Ebola outbreak in 2014, pregnancies amongst teenage girls in Sierra Leone doubled and these girls were unable to return to school. Increase in teenage pregnancies is thus a possible consequence in the SSA region if schools remain closed for much longer.

What the education policy responses to education suggest, in terms of how states manage school closures and openings, is that the

success of interventions depend largely on the existence of good basic infrastructure as well as sufficient financial support. In states that were already struggling with poor teaching and learning contexts, interventions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic were weakened. The delay in returning to school due to poor infrastructure also delayed quality teaching and learning for many learners in disadvantaged contexts, which means that learning losses for poorer learners are higher than those from more affluent backgrounds with better teaching and learning contexts.

B. Global education responses relating to the delivery of education

As a direct response of school closures, "more than 90 per cent of countries have implemented some form of remote learning policy" (UNICEF, 2020a). In some regions, such as Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, ministries have distributed hard copy resources, particularly in poor, remote and rural areas.

A joint survey conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank investigated the education delivery responses of 110 countries whilst schools were closed. The survey found that internet-based, radio and television were the most commonly used modalities for continuing teaching and learning. Figure 6 below, extracted from survey data, demonstrates that across all grades, digital technology was the most common modality for teaching and learning.

Sources: UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures (2020) and UNICEF country offices (2020).
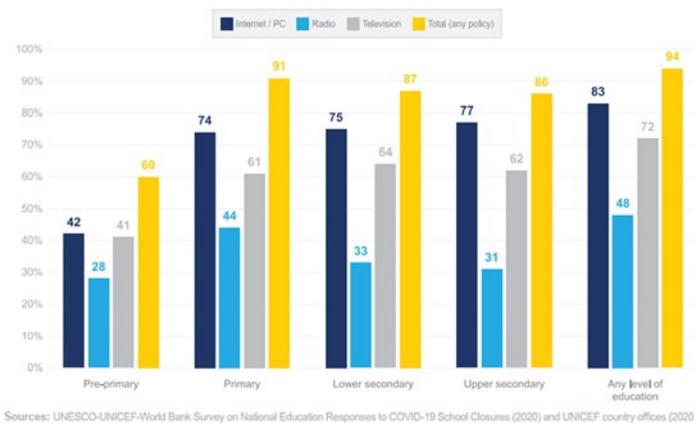
Figure 6. Share of countries that implemented digital broadcast learning policies by education level (UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank, 2020)

When the survey data was stratified by economic regions (i.e. lower income, lower-middle income and upper-middle income),

the survey found that radio was the more common modality to continue teaching and learning than internet-based technologies in low-income countries.
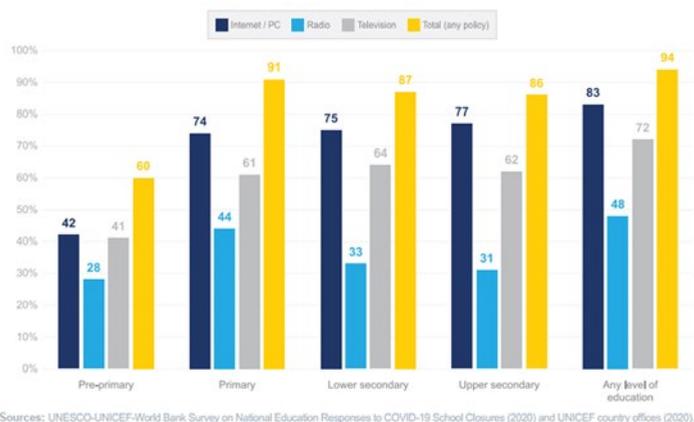
Figure 7. Share of countries that implemented digital and broadcast remote learning by country income group (UNICEF, 2020a)

Global school closures "have laid bare the uneven distribution of technology needed to facilitate digital and broadcast remote learning at home, as well as the lack of systems to support teachers and caregivers in a safe, effective and secure use of technology for learning" (UNICEF, 2020a). Thus, even though digital and broadcast technology became the de facto response to continue teaching and learning, not all learners in the world were reached in low income countries (LIC), particularly countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. More specifically, about 463 million students (equating to 31% of the world's schoolchildren) could not be reached (UNICEF, 2020a). Figure 8 below demonstrates the number of schoolchildren that could and could not be reached, stratified by global region.
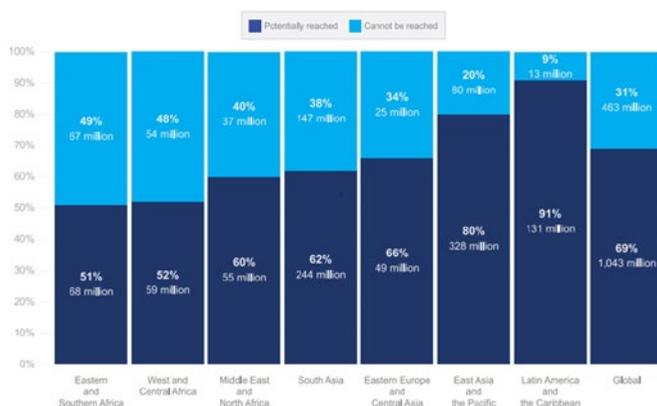
Figure 8. Number of schoolchildren reached and not reached by global region (UNICEF, 2020a)

The UNICEF-UNESCO-World Bank survey also revealed notable trends with regards to the education response for the delivery of education globally:

- 31% of students ranging from pre-primary to upper secondary could not be reached due to a lack of policies supporting digital and broadcast learning.
- Eastern and Southern Africa had the highest minimum share of students who could not be reached, estimated at 49%.
- There is an increase in reach between pre-primary and upper secondary students.

Overall, the report concluded that

The regions with the highest concentrations of students who cannot be reached are South Asia (147 million), East Asia and the Pacific (80 million), Eastern and Southern Africa (67 million) and West and Central Africa (54 million) – again, these figures represent minimums, and the actual students who were not reached are likely much higher. (UNICEF, 2020a)

Lastly, the survey noted differences in reach between male and female learners and rural and urban contexts. Female students and students living in rural contexts have limited reach and far less access to remote learning infrastructure.

Examples of Learning Platforms by Region	
Africa	Angola has Tele Aulas (TV) that broadcasts didactic content. In Benin, Radio Scolaire et Éducative (RSE) delivers education for youth, with a particular focus on moral and civic values. In Botswana, the Ministry of Education developed Botswana Educational Television to broadcast lessons via TV. In Kenya, KCID is an online programme that provides distance learning content. In Mauritania, an e-learning platform allows students graduating from secondary school to continue the remaining courses online with the help of video lessons and e-books. They also have a radio programme that broadcasts content to 6th graders.
Arab States	In Algeria, the National Bureau for Distance Education and Training developed online resources for all academic grades. In Palestine, It-Mohae provides learning materials based on the curriculum. In the United Arab Emirates, a number of resources have been made available such as Alef Education, a resource for parents, teachers and students with learning content; EduShare is an electronic depositary that provides videos and other electronic resources to assist teaching and learning; and Swift Assess is the ministry's comprehensive assessment management platform.

Examples of Learning Platforms by Region	
Asia and the Pacific	In Bangladesh, the Digital Content platform provides interactive multimedia content to teach Bengali, English, Mathematics, Science and other core subjects in alignment with the primary curriculum (first-fifth class) prepared by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). In the Maldives, Yes TV is a public service media that delivers classes focusing on Grade 10 and 11 students in preparation for upcoming examinations. In Samoa, radio lessons for different subjects are broadcast on 2AP radio station.
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	In Czech Republic, UčíTelka provides lessons to elementary and 1st Grade leaners via television. In Mongolia, over 3020 tele-lessons and 206 e-textbooks have been made available for students. Sixteen television channels of the Mongolian Television Association are broadcasting educational programmes. In the Republic of Moldova, the ministry provides lessons to students between Grades 9 and 12 in preparation for examinations.
Western Europe and North America	In Canada, various platforms have been made available in different provinces in both English and French. Curriculum Novia Scotia is the official platform of Nova Scotia containing resources aligned with the curriculum in English and in French for K-12, organised by level and subject area. In Alberta, Engaging All Learners! delivers multimedia content to all learners at different grades. In Manitoba, the My learning at home/Mon apprentissage chez moi provides resources that support distance learning. E-platforms are available in Ontario (Ontario Learn at home/Apprendre à la maison), Prince Edward Island (Prince Edward Island Home Learning Resources) and Quebec (Quebec Open school/ L'école ouverte). In France, Ma classe à la maison and Maison Lumni provide resources for students online and on television respectively. In Gibraltar, the online Home Learning Programme provides support for students, teachers and parents.
Latin America and the Caribbean	In Argentina, Biblioteca Digital is a digital platform with portals for students and teachers for all schools in the country to access more than a hundred classical books and novels. In El Salvador, Material para la continuidad educative is a platform developed by the local ministry to provide pedagogical resources for students at all grades. In Haiti, PRACTIC provides online resources to students and Tele Ecole broadcasts educational programmes to primary and secondary school students.

(UNESCO, 2020d)

The responses to global education delivery serve as empirical evidence for the existence of the digital divide. Despite the availability of various platforms to learners across the globe, access to these platforms has not been equally available. Online learning is only accessible to learners who have the technological infrastructure as well as data and connectivity. Television and radio programmes can only be used as a learning tool if learners have access to these and if programming is aired at a suitable time for learning.

C. Global education responses relating to curriculum and assessment

Whilst there has not been much literature that suggests changes have been made to curriculum content, the platform for delivery has changed radically as "*many countries have... developed broadcast curricula, especially for primary and lower secondary students*" (UNICEF, 2020a). The education responses to high stakes examinations and assessments, on the other hand, have been addressed in different ways across the globe.

For example, UNESCO (2020e) reported that various countries around the world have employed a number of different strategies pertaining to curriculum and assessment. Some of these strategies include postponing or rescheduling examinations, cancelling examinations, shifting examinations to online platforms or developing alternative assessment strategies.

The global education response to curriculum and assessment illuminates the orthodox educational framework adopted by many states, both in developed and developing contexts. The responses suggest that the understanding of learning and schooling is underpinned by the notion of content learning, with little emphasis on the affective dimensions of schooling, such as social skills, a sense of community and belonging, and learning the dominant social norms and values of society. High stakes testing is still regarded as the golden standard for validating learning. Whilst some states have incorporated other alternatives for validating learning that do not include high stakes testing, these states are in the minority. The pandemic has encouraged education policy-makers to rethink what the future of schooling may look like, to re-evaluate the role and purpose of school.

D. Global education response to teacher professional development

The COVID-19 pandemic presented teachers with a "*quintessential adaptive and transformative challenge, one for which there is no preconfigured playbook that can guide appropriate responses*" (Reimers, Schleicher, Saavedra and Tuominen, 2020, p. 2). The pandemic has not only forced teachers to adapt very swiftly to the new reality, but has also illuminated existing gaps in teacher knowledge – particularly with regards to ICT competencies. The OECD released a report in May 2020 summarising teacher preparedness to navigate teaching and learning using platforms other than face-to-face learning. The data for this report was based largely on the results of the 2018 TALIS Report

(Teaching and Learning International Survey) that surveyed 260,000 teachers across 48 countries (OECD, 2018). Teachers were asked if they could support student learning through the use of ICTs. Figure 9 below quantifies the responses of teachers who noted that they could support students 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'.

Percentage of lower secondary teachers who feel they can support student learning through the use of digital technology "quite a bit" or "a lot"
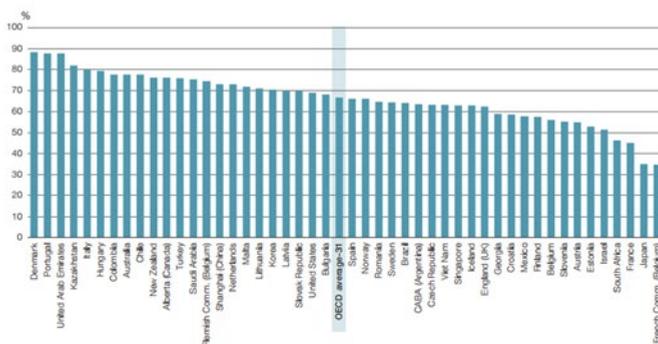
Figure 9. Teachers' self-efficacy in supporting student learning using ICTs (OECD, 2018)

More than 80% of teachers from Denmark, Portugal, Kazakhstan and UAE insisted that they could support learners 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'. Just under 30% of teachers from Japan and Belgium (French) gave the same response, meaning that almost 70% of teachers did not feel that they could support student learning through the use of ICTs. The TALIS Report (2018) also revealed that amongst the participating countries, the majority of respondents reported low levels of collaborative professional learning (Figure 10 below). China reported having the highest levels of collaborative professional learning and the Slovak Republic the least.

Percentage of lower secondary teachers who report participating in collaborative professional learning in their school at least once a month

\ (Argentina): Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (Argentina).
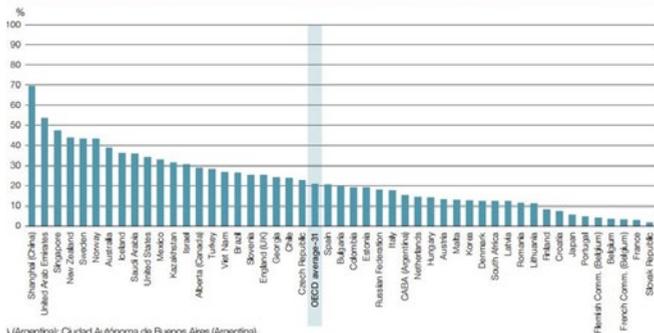
Figure 10. Teachers who participate in monthly collaborative professional learning (OECD, 2018)

What this suggests is that during the pre-COVID-19 era, there was already a lack of regular teacher professional development globally. Although not a common occurrence, there have been countries that have created platforms accessible to teachers to ease the transition to online learning and develop pedagogical skills suitable for this platform. Similar trends, to that found in the OECD TALIS Report, emerged from research conducted by Education International (Egan, 2020).

In Jordan, the Teachers Platform was created to prepare teachers for distance learning through online courses. In Afghanistan, Radio Television of Afghanistan in 32 provinces and private TV stations cover teacher training programmes. In Kazakhstan, Uztaz is a portal for educators that provides free lesson plans and online courses. In Cyprus, schools.ac.cy supports teachers in web development and learning materials for all levels. In Ireland, PDST is a platform that provides a collection of resources for teachers to promote continuity to students during the health crisis; and in Costa Rica, Caja de herramientas is a digital toolbox for teachers to navigate online learning.

What the TALIS Report data and global trends in teacher professional development suggest is that teacher training content is typically intended for strengthening face-to-face teaching strategies rather than focusing on alternative platforms. Teachers note that their skills to teach online do not match their skill levels in teaching face-to-face. What the responses from teachers in the TALIS study also demonstrate is a deficit of teacher training in ICTs, which likely contributes to the existing digital divide. Globally, teaching teachers how to manage ICTs in their classroom practice is an important developmental focus for those training to become teachers as well as existing teachers; this would promote the notion of quality teaching advocated in SDG 4. While the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated teacher anxieties, it has also revealed weaknesses in current professional development programmes.

E.   Global overview key takeaway

In terms of the initial policy response globally, most states agreed that one mechanism to reduce the number of COVID-19 infections was to restrict behaviours that resulted in groups of people gathering, including in schools. However, there was a difference in the manner in which this crowd reduction approach manifested around the world. For example, in some countries such as South Africa, all education systems were closed, from early childhood education centres to university level. Other countries instituted partial lockdowns of their

education institutions, such as Finland, where schools were closed, but kindergartens remained open. Sweden on the other hand did not lock down schools, but instead focused their interventions on citizens over 70 years old, who seemed to be the hardest hit by the pandemic. The closing of schools, particularly in the Global South and Global East, affected progress of many of the social challenges experienced in these parts of the world, such as promotion of gender equality, eradicating hunger, decreasing the digital divide and more generally, all efforts made to ensure the delivery of quality education. The reopening of schools, an important conduit to reopening the economy, revealed the dire school context in which many students in poorer nations must learn. The pandemic turned the spotlight on issues such as poor sanitation, failing infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms and under-resourced schools. Furthermore, the pandemic highlighted other social problems such as high levels of poverty that result in hunger and child stunting.

Governments rushed to continue teaching and learning to minimise the learning loss that students would suffer with school closures. However, this suggests a narrow understanding of the role of school. These education responses to delivery of education suggest that schooling for most is understood as relaying content information and participating in and completing end-of-phase high stakes examinations. The insistence of governments to continue learning suggests that most education systems are unable to adapt to changing times and that systems of education remain rigid, traditional, parochial and resistant to change. Very few states were willing to find alternative ways of validating learning or to scrap high stakes testing completely. This limited view is also proven through the pittance of psychosocial support made available to teachers and students to assist with anxieties from the pandemic. A study conducted on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth suggests that they are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety from the social isolation (Radesky, 2020).

Due to the enigmatic nature of the pandemic, policy responses with regards to the delivery of education further suggest that policies were instituted due to popularity in the global context rather than suitability to the specific context. Moving to online teaching and learning contexts became a default modality, instituted despite many teachers and students, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia lacking access to these technologies. There was also an assumption that teachers would be able to adapt to the 'new norm' with relatively little or no guidance. Alternative strategies for teaching and learning accelerated anxieties in teachers and learners. In fact, data from the latest TALIS (2018) Report

revealed that many teachers in less developed contexts were not able to facilitate meaningful teaching and learning without assistance. Even so, responses to the delivery of education were still mandated by education departments globally. Although television and radio were also used as more common tools to facilitate learning, the poor logistical facilitation and lack of financial resources impacted the overall efficacy of these modalities.

Despite financial support provided by various states to soften the blow of the economic effects, existing inequalities have increased. The pandemic has set back many LIC and LMIC states financially and crippled economies. An overview of economic policy responses suggests that developed nations are financially able to increase the capacity of hospitals and react more efficiently to the social effects of the pandemic. Wealthier nations are also able to provide aid to poorer nations, but the value of the aid is not sufficient to mitigate the disastrous effects of the pandemic, as that would require large scale financial resources to improve public systems such as health, education and other social services. What remains to be seen is whether the aid directed to schools and other education institutions will remain in a post-pandemic era. Overall, it also remains to be seen whether teaching and learning as we traditionally understand it will be transformed in the journey back to normalcy once the pandemic is over.

3. Effects of COVID-19 on higher education

COVID-19 will leave no sector unaffected and although many discussions, interventions and allocation of resources have been focused on learners at primary and secondary school level, the pandemic has also adversely impacted the higher education community. To mitigate the effects of the virus, most higher education institutions globally have ceased face-to-face learning as well as other university activities, including sporting and cultural events. These closures have had a number of adverse effects. These include the economic effect on students as well as institutions, the impact on the quality of education delivery, and effects on equity, particularly for foreign students, as discussed below.

Firstly, the closure of universities has resulted in financial challenges for most higher education institutions, including the more affluent universities. Rogoff (2020) asserts that "*the University of Michigan anticipates a pandemic-induced loss of up to $1 billion by the end of 2020, while Harvard University is projecting a $750 million revenue shortfall for*

next year" (Para 4). The problem is also worse for private universities who "*operate along a business model and are heavily dependent on students' fees to cover staff salaries and operational costs*" (Mohamedbhai, 2020, p. 26).

Not only has university revenue been affected, students have also been affected. Some countries have responded to this challenge by instituting relief packages such as the Higher Education Relief Package launched by the Australian government. These packages allowed for a reduction in fees for online courses and for exemptions from paying loan fees, and guaranteed funding for domestic students. Similarly, in April, Canada launched the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit that provided financial support to post-secondary students who are unable to find employment over the summer due to COVID-19. Student grants in Canada will also be doubled (Trudeau, 2020) and additional funding will also be made available for students affected by the pandemic (Canada Ministry of Education, 2020).

Secondly, inequities have increased. This has been more pronounced in the Global South. Whilst universities were pressured to close to limit the spread of the virus, continuing learning via ICTs during the lockdown period was easier for some than for others. Mohamedbhai (2020, Para 4) contends that

> *The process has laid bare the digital divide within the African continent: between those countries that have better ICT infrastructure than others; between higher education institutions within the same country, with some being far better equipped and experienced than others; and between students within the same institution – the rich who live in urban areas and the poor in rural areas who can barely afford to access the internet, when and if it is available.*

Third, whilst much progress has been made to improve the quality of education provision globally as promoted by SDG 4, in some instances the quality of education has decreased substantially. As Mohamedbhai (2020, Para 9) astutely notes:

> *It is a fallacy to believe that online learning can be effective by merely posting a lecturer's notes online or having a video recording of the lecture. Yet, this is what is generally happening at present. Experience has shown that quality online learning requires that the teaching material is prepared by a professional instructional designer, that the lecturer is pedagogically trained for delivering the programme and the students are equally exposed to the pedagogy*

of online learning. The unprepared online delivery will have an impact on the quality of the programmes. This is unfortunate at a time when significant achievements have been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning in African higher education institutions.

Fourth, the school to university pipeline will be affected. School closures and cancelling of exit level examinations may impact the university intake processes.

Fifth, the pandemic has impacted foreign students. About 6% of students across OECD countries are foreign and this number increases to 22% for doctoral students (Schleicher, 2020). In the USA alone, Chinese students make up 33.7% of the foreign student population, while Indian students comprise 18.4% (World University Rankings, 2020). Many of these foreign students, particularly Chinese students, are unable to return to the country where they are registered to study. Figure 11 below demonstrates the number of foreign students per OECD country.
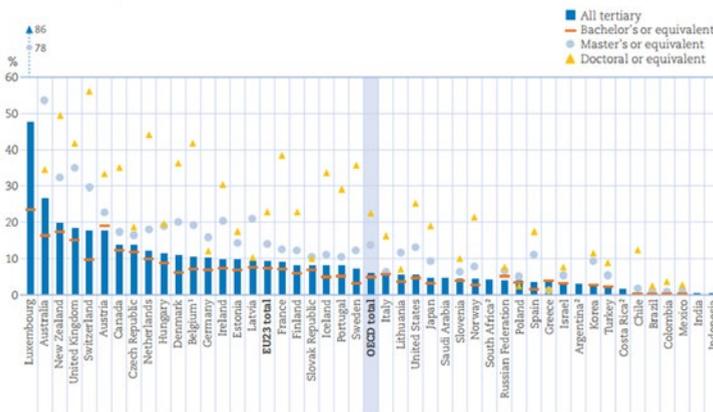
Figure 11. Incoming student mobility in tertiary education, by level of study, 2018 (Schleicher, 2020)

The pandemic has affected their continuity of learning, their safety and legal status as well as their perceptions of the value of completing a degree abroad (Schleicher, 2020). Also, in countries such as the Netherlands, "*many of the off-campus and foreign students who usually rely on part-time jobs to cover university tuition lost their income due to the closure of non-essential economic activities*" (UNESCO, 2020f). In a survey conducted with 11 000 international students in the early part of 2020, 46% noted that the pandemic had impacted on their study plans, 47% noted they would defer their studies to 2021 and 8% noted that they no longer wished to study abroad (QS Survey, 2020).

Sixth, students in vocational programmes have been hard hit by the crisis compared to general university programmes. Vocational programmes "*suffer a double disadvantage as social distancing requirements and the closure of enterprises have made practical and work-based learning that are so crucial for the success of vocational education difficult or impossible*" (Schleicher, 2020, p. 23). In some instances, the practical learning component of these vocational programmes can account for more than half of the total learning and assessment. Programmes such as engineering, agriculture, construction and crafts will struggle the most with distance learning.

Lastly, students with disabilities were not always able to continue their learning during lockdown because of "*support and teaching tools that are not always available in distance learning*" (UNESCO, 2020f). This means that students with disabilities are not able to progress as much as their able-bodied counterparts and may be disadvantaged in terms of how long it may take them to complete their qualification and apply for employment.

Over and above these effects on HEI's globally, the increased use of technology in teaching and learning has also led to some long term implications as EdTech firmly embeds itself into these institutions. A study conducted by William and Hogan (2021), commissioned by Education International, noted several of these long terms effects. The report noted that

- The pandemic and other emergency situations "*produce catalytic opportunities for market-oriented privatisation policies and commercial reforms in education*" (p, 1)

- The health crises has led to reimagining HEI's as a "*digitally innovative and data-intensive sector*" (p, 2)

- EdTech has become highly influential in the HEI space shaping institutional behaviour and working affecting social and technical infrastructure.

- EdTech has increased the number of public-private partnerships.

- EdTech has increased the deployment of data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, and

- The increase of EdTech in HEI's has challenged academic labour, freedom and autonomy.

As with schooling, higher education institutions have also been adversely affected by the pandemic. Many students from the Global South and

Global East, who study abroad in the hopes of pursuing better quality education to improve their economic status, have been particularly affected. Students with disabilities and students who are pursuing practical careers have also been affected due to a lack of suitable learning alternatives.

4. Regional overview of education responses

An overview of six global regions, as defined by UNESCO, is discussed in this regional overview. These include Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, and sub-Saharan Africa. The latter is discussed using a country case study approach.[2]

A. Europe and North America

North America and Europe straddle two continents and have some of the world's wealthiest economies. However, economic strength does not mean this region is exempt from experiencing crises. For example, North America, particularly the USA, is well known for the frequency of its deadly hurricanes like Hurricane Katrina that obliterated much of New Orleans. In the last decade, the European region has had to contend with a crises of mass migration of people flocking from war-torn countries as well those in abject poverty illegally entering European shores in the hope of safer life and economic prosperity. More recently, COVID-19 has affected the region, with USA recording the highest number of infections and deaths in the region. France and USA were the first countries in the region to report COVID-19 cases.

Currently, as of September 2020, the USA reported 6 605 733 confirmed cases and 195 915 deaths; Canada has 140 900 confirmed cases and 9 239 deaths; the United Kingdom has 376 670 confirmed cases and 41 753 deaths; Italy has 289 900 confirmed cases and 35 633 deaths; France has 433 906 confirmed cases and 31 007 deaths; and Greece has 13 730 confirmed cases and 313 deaths (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020b). In the North America and Europe region, the USA, UK, and France have some of the highest rates of infection, with Greece amongst the lowest. In Europe, as of 10 September 2020, the region had 4 139 193 cases, with the five

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2   The statistics related to COVID-19 discussed in this section are based on the available evidence between August and September 2020. The aim of the report is to discuss policy responses that resulted from the pandemic, thus illuminating trends and making the specific statistics a secondary focus.

countries reporting most cases as follows: Russia (1 057 362); Spain (566 326); France (373 911); the United Kingdom (365 174); and Italy (286 297). On the whole, Europe had 213 967 deaths within the same period, with the five countries reporting most deaths being the United Kingdom (41 623); Italy (35 603); France (30 910); Spain (29 747); and Russia (18 484) (ECDC, 2020).

As in many regions globally, most of the countries in Europe and North America closed schools in response to the pandemic. Yet, as this report has argued above, with the combination of the pandemic's worldwide economic impact and school closures, it is feared that the learning crisis could turn into a generational catastrophe. Researchers in Canada estimate that the socio-economic skills gap could increase by more than 30% due to the pandemic (Haeck and Lefebvre, 2020). Besides other challenges highlighted earlier in this report, the closing of schools in Europe and North America affects the ability of many parents to work, considering that a significant share of working parents rely on childcare and schools. In countries such as France, Germany, Italy, the UK and USA, 60% of parents have been unable to find alternative solutions for schools and day-care centres. A recent study determined that women are bearing the greater share of additional time spent on childcare and household tasks (Krents, 2020). One implication is that, considering the present economic disruption, this may contribute to wider earning gaps and greater gender inequality.

Education governance and policy response

As indicated earlier, the default policy response to national lockdowns enforced by multiple states in North America and Europe and across the globe included the closing of schools. Countries such as the UK, USA[3], Spain, Costa Rica, Canada, Italy, France and Germany closed schools by the end of March 2020. While Finland opened kindergarten to those who needed childcare, Russia, specifically in Moscow, instituted a 'free regime' of school attendance that allowed families to choose between sending their children to school or keeping them at home (World Bank, 2020a). Whereas most countries in Europe and across the globe closed schools and then began monitoring the situation, countries such as Sweden followed a different path, leaving many education institutions open. Sweden established a unique policy concerning school closures, keeping schools for children aged 7 to 15 and preschools open. On 13 March 2020, a new act was adopted, allowing the government to temporarily

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3   Responses to schools closures differed between states in the USA.

close preschools, schools and other educational activities should the situation deteriorate. A new ordinance was put in place, giving the responsible organiser the right to temporarily close an educational activity under certain conditions, for example if a large number of teachers should be unable to teach due to illness or if COVID-19 should become widespread locally.

Nevertheless, most of the countries in Europe and North America, like others across the world, are starting to reopen schools as part of lifting lockdowns and addressing ailing economies. On April 15, Denmark became the first European country on lockdown to reopen its schools, beginning with children in day care and Grades 1 through 5 as part of Denmark's plan to gradually reopen the country following a decline in the rate of new infections. Denmark announced its first lockdown measures on March 11 before the country reported any coronavirus deaths and closed schools on March 16. Between 18 and 27 May, the Danish authorities eased restriction, allowing Grades 6 – 11 to return to school. Grade 12 students did not need to be considered as they had already, by this time, fulfilled the requirements for completing their exit level qualifications.

Norway began reopening its kindergartens on 20 April, followed by primary schools for children in Grades 1 – 4 on April 27. Schools were encouraged to divide classes into groups of no more than 15 students. Germany reopened high schools on 20 April to high school seniors. Chancellor Merkel advised schools to prioritise graduating students when reopening gradually. In the UK, schools finally opened at the beginning of September, with expectations that they would teach a broad and balanced curriculum, with staggered start and finish times, minimising pupil contacts, putting classes or year groups into 'bubbles', avoiding assemblies or collective worship and avoiding contact sport and unnecessary sharing of objects.

In North America, the Canadian province of Quebec reopened some of its schools late April, although some parents and teachers expressed uncertainty over the safety of that move. In the USA, on the other hand, after lengthy debates regarding when to bring children back into classrooms, phased-in reopenings took place as schools in Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and Indiana opened their doors for the first time at the beginning of August after the coronavirus pandemic had abruptly shuttered classrooms across the states.

A common practice among the countries within these regions has been the application of stringent measures to protect learners,

teachers and other education officials. In most countries, while classes have resumed, desks have been placed six feet apart and student arrivals staggered, among other measures, in adherence to social distancing guidelines. For example, in Denmark, to encourage social distancing, the government has urged schools to divide classes into groups of no more than 15 and have children wash their desks daily as a precaution. Teaching staff there are under strict instruction to maintain social distancing. In compliance, some teachers are taking pupils outside and writing with chalk in the playground.

In Switzerland, children at Geneva's La Tour School had to adapt to new procedures, with parents dropping them off at a distance. Classrooms were half full to reduce crowding and desks spaced two metres apart. In the Netherlands, the Springplank School in Den Bosch installed plastic shields around the desks and disinfectant gel dispensers at the doorways. The Ecole St-Gerard, in a suburb of Montreal, Canada, opened with staff wearing visors and using hand sanitizer. Across France, primary school pupils sat at least a metre apart in small classes and listened to teachers in masks on their first day back after two months of home schooling. In Cyprus, health workers wearing personal protective equipment tested students for COVID-19 at a school in Nicosia after high schoolers were allowed to return, beginning May 11.

Delivery of education

For the majority of the countries in North America and Europe, ensuring continuity in learning to the extent possible was prioritised. The majority of the countries within the region responded by introducing or scaling up existing distance education modalities based on different mixes of technology. For most countries within these two regions, this meant organising teaching and learning processes online, often supplemented by production of lessons and learning through radio and television. A UNICEF (2020) report showed that countries' different levels of digital readiness meant that many teachers and trainers had to become digitally literate virtually overnight. Ministries, local authorities and other stakeholders, including private businesses and volunteers, provided access to resources, advice and support to teachers, trainers, learners and their parents. As a direct response of school closures, "*more than 90 per cent of countries have implemented some form of remote learning policy*" (UNICEF, 2020a). A joint survey conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank (2020), investigating the education delivery responses of 110 countries whilst schools were closed, found that

internet-based, radio, and television were the most commonly used modalities for continuing teaching and learning.

In almost all countries in North America and Europe, teachers and school administrators have been encouraged to use applications to support communication with learners and parents as well as deliver live lessons or record massive open online course (MOOC) styled lessons. Learning content has also been delivered through TV and other media.

Several platforms have been developed in different countries to ensure continuity in learning. For example, in Canada, various platforms have been made available in different provinces in both English and French.

In Europe, for example in Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain and Sweden, existing digital resources and tools ensured a smooth transition to distance learning (RefNet, 2020). RefNet is Cedefop's network of institutions providing information on vocational education and training (VET) systems and policies in the EU member states, Iceland and Norway. In Luxembourg, a webinar offered to support VET teachers in developing knowledge on distance learning for practical courses. In Latvia, a dedicated educational video channel (tavaklase.lv) was created, while in Romania a digital platform (digital.educred.ro) gathered relevant, validated and recommended e-learning platforms and online learning resources in one place.

Some countries, including Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Spain and Sweden took measures to identify and support disadvantaged learners in terms of access to online learning. Following recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Sweden, upper secondary schools, municipal adult education, vocational adult education and higher education institutions provided distance learning from as early as mid-March. The overall impression was that the shift to distance learning has worked out well. Schools took enormous efforts to overcome digital challenges and safeguard access to online resources. Many schools were already utilising digital platforms and digital tools even before the pandemic outbreak. The use of existing digital tools and teaching strategies facilitated a smooth transition to distance learning.

On the whole, for EU countries, the Digital Education Action Plan presents measures to help member states and education and training institutions to reap opportunities and meet the challenges presented by the digital age. The Plan seeks to support the use of

technology in education and the development of digital competencies (EIT, 2020).

However, as countries within these regions have ensured continuity in learning, such innovations and responses have also exposed inequalities between people from various socio-economic backgrounds in North America and Europe. This was prevalent in a UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank survey (2020), which identified the most vulnerable learners as those who have poor digital skills and least access to the hardware and connectivity required for distance learning solutions implemented during school closures. In half of the 21 European countries surveyed, Grade 4 pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds were half as likely to have access to the internet as their more advantaged peers. The survey also revealed that in most European countries, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to lack reading opportunities, a quiet room, and parental support during school closure. In low income and upper-middle income countries alike, children in the poorest households receive significantly less help with their homework. On average, children who lack resources and support were already lower performers before the crisis. They are likely to have lost further ground during the COVID-19 school closures, further exacerbating European educational inequalities.

This further confirms UNESCO estimations that globally, 23.8 million additional children and youth (from pre-primary to tertiary) may drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic's economic impact, suggesting that a substantial number of learners from poor backgrounds in both Europe and North America will not be spared the impact.

These challenges are not only common to Europe and North America. A report (2020) by Brookings suggests that by mid-April of 2020, while less than 25% of low-income countries were providing any type of remote learning with a majority using TV and radio, close to 90% of high-income countries were providing remote learning opportunities, including online opportunities. Over and above the cross-country differences of access to remote learning opportunities, within-country differences are also staggering. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, during the COVID-19 school closures, 1 in 10 of the poorest children in the world's largest economy had little or no access to technology for learning. And UNICEF estimates that 463 million children – at least one-third of the world's total, the majority of whom are in the developing world – had no chance at remote learning via radio, television or online content.

Curriculum and assessment

Europe and North American countries responded differently in their quest to adapt curriculum content. This was done mostly in response to the platform for delivery, as many countries developed broadcast curricula, especially for primary and lower secondary students. Various international organisations such as UNICEF reacted by developing Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools Across the Globe. The messages have revolved around an array of needs:

Make sure to listen to children's concerns and answer their questions in an age-appropriate manner; don't overwhelm them with too much information. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings. Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. (UNICEF, 2020b)

Within the two regions though, the education responses to high stakes examinations and assessments have been addressed in different ways. The strategies have varied and included maintaining examinations, cancellation, postponement, rescheduling, organising high stake examinations online and introducing alternative approaches to examinations and validation of learning.

On March 14, the World Health Organization announced that Europe became the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic. While several European countries had decided to close their schools entirely, a number of countries nevertheless opted to continue holding the examinations on the examination dates originally set (UNESCO, 2020e).

Some countries, decided to introduce alternative approaches to examinations and validation of learning (e.g. reducing the number of examinations, modifying the test format, appraising student learning portfolios without examination results). In France it was announced that written tests for post-baccalaureate competitions allowing access to selective training courses of the first cycle of higher education would be replaced by an examination of the academic files of the candidates, as part of the national pre-registration procedure via the Parcoursup platform (UNESCO, 2020e). The French prime minister and the minister of education announced that, given the situation, it would not be possible for high school students to take the baccalaureate examinations under normal conditions in June

or even in July. The tests would have to be organised in a new way, based on continuous assessment only, using grades of the three first semesters; grades obtained during lockdown would not be taken into account.

In the United Kingdom, it was also announced that the calculated grade process would take into account a range of evidence including non-examination assessment and mock results, and the approach would be standardised between schools and colleges. The Department of Education announced that for A levels, AS levels and GCSE grading in summer 2020, students would receive a calculated grade. For each student, schools and colleges provided a 'centre assessment grade' for each subject – the grade they would most likely have achieved had examinations gone ahead – taking into account a range of evidence including, for example, non-examination assessment and mock results. To make sure that grades are fair between schools and colleges, examination boards put all centre assessment grades through a process of standardisation using a model developed with Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator. Ofqual developed a process that takes into account a broad range of evidence, including assessments by schools and colleges of the grades that students would likely have obtained if examinations had gone ahead, and their prior attainment (UK Government, 2020).

In Germany, it was announced that the Abitur (examinations at the end of secondary education) would be maintained and schools were required to take safety measures to minimise the risk of infection. This is the case, for example, in Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate, where the Abitur examinations would continue to be held under strict hygiene conditions.

The Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test, SweSAT (*högskoleprovet*), that was scheduled for 4 April was also cancelled. The cancelled SweSAT had consequences for the admittance to various HEIs and university programmes. The government explored possible measures together with the Swedish Council for Higher Education (for example increasing the possibility of admittance on the basis of grades). The National Agency for Education in Sweden also announced the cancellation of the semester's remaining national tests in compulsory school and upper-secondary school. In Spain, diagnostic tests for primary and secondary students (3rd and 6th years in primary and 4th in secondary) were also cancelled. In Belgium, the Wallonia and Brussels regions indicated that the high stakes examinations would be conducted online. In Estonia, final defence of doctoral theses were

carried out online. Italy was also considering the option of holding examinations online if sanitary conditions did not permit students to take them on site.

In the US, the federal government announced that states would be allowed to cancel federally mandated standardised tests in K-12 schools for the 2019-2020 school year and that it would grant waivers across the board. The SAT college admissions tests, used in university admissions processes and administered in person at schools, were cancelled through May. Similarly, the International Baccalaureate examinations were cancelled, but students would be awarded a diploma or a course certificate according to their coursework. Many US universities adjusted their admissions criteria to make such tests optional rather than mandatory (UNESCO, 2020e).

Furthermore, the US announced that high school students would be able to take Advanced Placement Tests at home, with the original two or three-hour examination reduced to a 45-minute online test.

Teacher professional development

As was the case in other regions globally, in North America and Europe regular teacher professional development was already insufficient even before the COVID-19 era. Countries such as Canada, the US and the UK have created teacher-accessible platforms to ease the transition to online teaching and learning and assist in developing pedagogical skills suitable for this platform. UNESCO (2020) rightly noted that the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the reform needed by both initial and in-service teacher education: lessons learned from online training programmes in crisis contexts suggest that teachers must feel comfortable and competent with technology in order to realise the full benefits of the training. Unfortunately, even in more stable contexts with adequate infrastructure and connectivity, many educators lack even the most basic ICT skills, meaning they will struggle with their own ongoing professional development, let alone with facilitating quality distance learning (UNESCO, 2020g). This underscores a global need to evaluate the e-readiness of educators and schools, and to modernise teacher education through curricular and pedagogical innovation to meet the needs of a post-industrial, knowledge-based global society.

In Europe and North America, the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that teachers need access to relevant, quality professional development and support during and actually prior to crises to be able to continue teaching during crises and disruptions. Whilst

schools remain closed, much of this professional development and support is being delivered through distance learning in various forms, including open educational resources (OERs), massive open online courses (MOOCs), and, where internet connectivity is a problem, public television and radio.

A regional synthesis of North America and Europe suggests that states with the financial reserves to deal with disasters and crises are better equipped to address the effects thereof. Although the statistics of infected persons in this region are relatively comparable to other regions, the infrastructural capacity of the region allowed for a more effective response. Whilst school closures had a negative impact on the region, specifically for those juggling childcare and full-time employment (Miller, 2020), the majority of learners in the region were able to access educational content through online platforms or television and radio. In this region, access to learning during school closures affected the recently migrated and poorer communities adversely; firstly, parents did not have the cultural capital to assist learners with their work at home, and secondly, for parents of migrant children as well the children themselves, linguistic barriers hindered learning (Associated Press, 2020).

School closures and school reopening strategies, differing throughout the region, were guided by infection rates and feedback from various stakeholders in the communities. Similarly, there was a difference in the response to validating learning, with some states continuing with traditional high stakes testing and other states either postponing or validating learning in alternative ways. With regards to teacher professional development, although many states created online platforms for teachers to assist with learning content, navigating new technologies was problematic for many teachers due to their personal limitations and skill deficiencies relating to ICTs. This suggests, along with the results from the TALIS report (2018), that teachers must be trained – and retrained – on using alternative modalities for teaching and learning.

B. Latin America and the Caribbean

In a policy brief released in July 2020, the United Nations (2020b) noted that "COVID-19 represents massive health, social and economic shock with an immense human toll for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean [and] is expected to result in the deepest recession in living memory" (6). The pandemic appeared during a time when many countries in the region already found themselves in difficult economic

and social situations that threatened existing democracies and social cohesion. As with all nations embroiled in conflict, physical or other, in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, COVID-19 has illuminated existing fragilities and has led to disastrous consequences socially and economically.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), comprising more than thirty countries, had their first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Sao Paulo, Brazil in February 2020. Since then, countries in the region have enforced strict lockdown measures that include curfews, mandatory quarantine for citizens returning from other parts of the globe, limiting social gatherings, closing public spaces including schools and universities, as well as restrictions placed on persons coming into the country. However, despite these measures, the number of confirmed cases has been steadily increasing. As of 11 August, 2020, Brazil passed the 3 million mark of confirmed cases, making it the most affected country in the region (see Figure 12).

Country	Confirmed cases
Brazil	3 057 470
Mexico	485 836
Peru	483 133
Colombia	397 623
Chile	375 044
Argentina	253 868
Ecuador	94 701
Bolivia	91 635
Dominican Republic	81 094
Panama	75 394
Guatemala	56 987
Honduras	47 872
Venezuela	26 800
Costa Rica	23 872
El Salvador	21 269
Haiti	7 649
Paraguay	7 234
Nicaragua	3 902
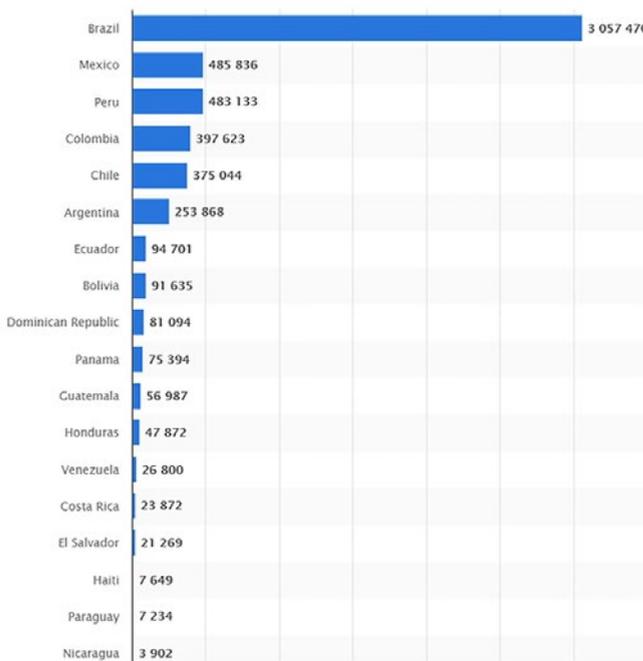
Figure 12. **COVID-19 confirmed infections in the LAC region (Statista, 2020)**

Many countries in the region have extended their lockdowns, such as Argentina and Columbia, to include delays on reopening of airports for commercial travel (WFP, 2020, p. 1). Restrictions have eased on certain border closures, but with problems such as Bolivia because of the

postponement of the Bolivian General Elections. The lack of access to basic health care characterises most of the countries in the region. The OECD (2020a) reports that "*growing numbers of patients, inadequate protective equipment for health workers and limited facilities to provide intensive care add to the fears of a contagion in the region that would be hard to control*". Apart from the problems related to general poor public health care facilities as well as a shortage of medical staff, economically the pandemic has caused commodities and currencies to fall substantially, limiting the region's responsiveness to the virus (Horwitz et al., 2020).

The pandemic "*is having asymmetrical health and socio-economic impacts based on age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and migration and refugee status, among other factors*" (United Nations, 2020b). The region has seen an increase in xenophobia, particularly against minorities, resulting from the stigmatisation of persons inflicted with the virus. Women and girls have suffered the brunt of the social effects; as primary caregivers of the sick and elderly, they are also the victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence which have surged in the region. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020), the "*calls received by emergency helplines for women in Chile and Mexico, for instance, are reported to have increased by more than 50%*" (United Nations, 2020b).

Education governance and the delivery of education response

The national lockdown enforced by governments within the region has also resulted in school closures and as of August 2020, many schools remain closed. Countries such as Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago initially announced that schools would be closed till April or May 2020. Other countries such as Antigua, Ecuador, Haiti, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela have decided to close schools till further notice (UNICEF, 2020c).

The school closures have affected 171 million students in the LAC region. Attempts to continue learning have resulted in a number of approaches under consideration, with online learning the most common education delivery response. Schools have instituted distance learning initiatives but due to the prevailing economic and social inequality, not all students are able to access this learning (United Nations, 2020b). The OECD Program for International Student Assessments (PISA) (2018) showed the disparity between the richest

and poorest income brackets in the region, demonstrating the vast inequality.

FIGURE 5: STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO DIFFERENT STUDY DEVICES IN THE POOREST AND RICHEST INCOME BRACKETS, 2018 (%)[28]

	A desk to study at	Television	A desktop computer	Internet
Brazil	26	3	14	12
Chile	19	1	14	16
Dominican Republic	32	6	25	27
Mexico	11	2	27	23
Panama	30	18	28	51

Gap
Poorest ●———● Richest
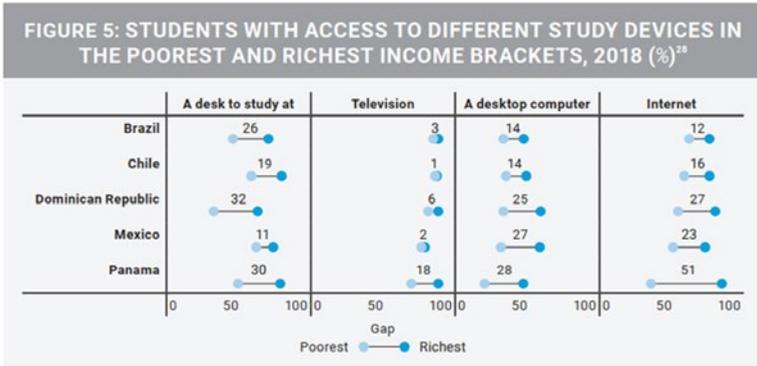
Figure 13 . **Students access to devices in poor and rich income brackets (OECD, 2020a)**

The OECD (2020a) has also reported on PISA data demonstrating that amongst the OECD countries, the Latin American region has poor access to ICT.
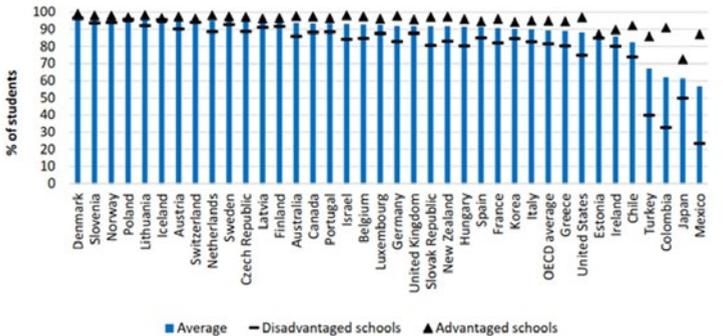
Note: socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) school is a school whose socio-economic profile (i.e. the average socio-economic status of the students in the school) is in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status amongst all schools in the relevant country/economy.
Source: OECD (2020a), "Learning remotely when schools close: How well are students and schools prepared? Insights from PISA", www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/.

Figure 14. **Percentage of students that have access to a computer (OECD, 2020a)**

More specifically, countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guyana, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay provided various educational options through ministry of education platforms. Virtual education programmes that are suitable for families with very little technological access have been used in countries such as Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Panama and Venezuela. These virtual education programmes include using WhatsApp voice notes,

social media, radio and television, with radio, television and the internet the most common approaches within this LAC region. Some Ministries of Education have distributed home learning kits (with various hard copy resources). This is particularly helpful for learners in rural areas such as migrants, refugees, returnees and indigenous people, where the remoteness of the area exacerbates the challenge of equity in education. A report compiled by UNICEF LACRO Education Section in August 2020 (pp. 1-2) noted that

Although different modalities of distance education used until now have made it possible to guarantee the continuity for many children and adolescents, there is still a large gap in the options available to achieve equity and access for all.... the availability of educational materials in local languages and in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, indigenous children, and those living in remote areas or who are migrants, for example, is still a major challenge.

The table below, replicated from research conducted by UNICEF (2020d), demonstrates the regional responses to education delivery.

Table 2. Regional response to education delivery in LAC (UNICEF, 2020d)

Country	Internet penetration (%)	Social Media penetration (%)	Mobile connections (% of total population)	MoE online platform	Online platform	Offline platform(s)
Argentina	78	76	129	Yes	Website	Radio, TV
Belize	61	51	102	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bolivia	65	65	99	N/A	N/A	N/A
Brazil	71	66	97	Yes		Podcasts, TV, Radio
Chile	82	79	138	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colombia	69	69	119	Yes	Website	
Costa Rica	74	73	178	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	63	55	51	Yes		Radio, TV
Dominican Rep.	75	59	80	Yes	Website	
Anguilla	82	74	173	N/A	N/A	N/A
Antigua & Barbuda	76	66	195	N/A	N/A	N/A
Barbados	82	66	117	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bristish Virgin Islands	83	83	178	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dominica	70	54	117	N/A	N/A	N/A

Country	Internet penetration (%)	Social Media penetration (%)	Mobile connections (% of total population)	MoE online platform	Online platform	Offline platform(s)
Grenada	63	63	114	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montserrat	60	60	183	N/A	N/A	N/A
St. Kitts and Nevis	81	72	144	N/A	N/A	N/A
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	60	60	128	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trinidad y Tobago	77	62	136	Yes	Website	
Turks and Caicos	81	81	114	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ecuador	69	69	89	Yes	Website	
El Salvador	59	59	145	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Guatemala	65	45	119	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Guyana	55	55	82	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Haiti	33	18	63	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Honduras	42	42	83	Yes		TV
Jamaica	55	44	111	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mexico	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nicaragua	47	47	151	Yes	Website	
Panama	62	56	114	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Paraguay	65	56	102	Yes	Website	
Peru	73	73	116	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Suriname	62	62	174	N/A	N/A	N/A
Uruguay	78	78	156	Yes	Website	
Venezuela	72	42	81	Yes		TV, Radio

Curriculum and assessment response

Whilst there have been no changes made to the curriculum, there have been adjustments to the school year, such as extending school breaks, as part of the prevention strategy. High stakes examinations have been addressed differently by different countries within the region. Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica have maintained their examinations. Caribbean countries have rescheduled or postponed examinations. Mexico and Venezuela have scheduled online examinations. Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela introduced alternative approaches to examinations and validation of learning (UNESCO, 2020e). Ecuador is the only country thus far to reduce the number of exit level high stakes examinations. None of the countries in the LAC region has cancelled examinations.

Teacher professional development response

Whilst there has been very little professional development offered to teachers in terms of pedagogical support in the region, there is evidence to suggest that this is being considered by policy-makers in the region. One of the key policy responses is for the ministries of education to provide "*open access virtual training to teachers at various educational levels*" (UNICEF, 2020c). However, these aims are yet to be fully realised. Some countries in the region have attempted to assist with pedagogical support. For example, in Guatemala, the MoE has made a digital magazine available to teachers; in Guyana, the MoE has established remote learning programmes that include online books for learners and educational tips for teachers; and in Uruguay, free access online initiatives are made available to teachers, giving guidelines for teaching virtually. Existing professional development efforts for teachers are aimed predominantly at strengthening pedagogical skills, with no formalised programme available providing psychosocial support to teachers.

Education governance and policy-making response

All schools within the LAC region were either closed or partially closed as a way of limiting the spread of the virus. By the end of July 2020, many of these schools remained closed with initiatives put into place to commence the reopening of schools. This is echoed in a situational report released by UNICEF (2020e) that "*As of July 21st, many countries still have their schools closed, however, some countries like Uruguay, and some countries and territories from the Eastern Caribbean Area, have started to open their schools*". To date, countries in the region have either opened schools in a staggered fashion, continued with distance learning, or have first needed to improve sanitation facilities before considering reopening. For example, in Anguilla, kindergarten to Grade 4 will continue with e-learning at home, but Grades 5 and 6 will return to school for part of the day (8.25 am to 12.00 pm) with no afternoon classes taking place. Special needs learners will remain at home. In Antigua, learners in Form 5 returned to school. As of early October, eight of Brazil's 27 states had set a return date for their public schools while in ten states, the government had no idea when schools would be allowed to open to students again. Three states did not intend to reopen schools this year, according to The Brazilian Report. In Bolivia, the MoE issued Decree 4260 which legalizes virtual education. Due to the dire situation of COVID-19 in Bolivia, education will continue virtually

until December. In Costa Rica, the MoE considered opening schools in September, but this is now uncertain due to the second wave of the pandemic underway. In Ecuador, schools are set to reopen in early 2021. Most countries in the region have made great strides to improve sanitation facilities in order to ensure protocol is followed to minimise the risk of contracting the virus. This is particularly important because "*in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1 out of 6 schools (16%) do not have water services at all and 1 out of 5 schools (19,8%) do not have any handwashing facilities*" (Uribe and Aasen, 2020).

Overall, the general education response within the LAC region has been firstly, to ensure the "*continuity of education through remote learning programs during school closures*"; secondly, "to promote learning and recreational activities, infection prevention and control, and to promote psychosocial wellbeing of students, teachers, parents/caregivers"; and thirdly, to ensure the "*flexibilization of the academic year with the purpose of planning and developing risk reduction strategies on continuous learning and safe school operations*" (UNICEF, 2020c). However, many of these objectives have not been implemented.

Policy responses to school openings and closures and other relevant educational matters in Latin America and the Caribbean were affected by the constant increase of infection rates in the region. As a consequence, different states responded differently in their management of the provision of education. The vast social inequality experienced in the region affected the manner in which each intervention manifested itself, with the poor and marginalised not reaping the full benefits of learning interventions. Learners who did not have access to technological equipment, including laptops or smartphones, and who lived in remote, rural areas, struggled the most with accessing learning materials. This meant that for many youths in the region, learning came to a halt, contributing to current and possibly higher future dropout rates. The opening of schools in some regions did not include learners with special needs, which means the learning loss for these learners is higher than for those without special needs. Whilst some states made support materials available for teachers, no formal training for teachers was provided to assist with the transition to online modalities or offer psychosocial support. Existing poor school infrastructure in the region has also prevented some schools from reopening. In this region, inequality is the biggest hindrance to the successful realisation of educational policies for mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. East Asia and the Pacific

Towards the latter part of July 2020, East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) had 347 880 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 12 085 deaths, with a tremendous surge in Indonesia (84 882) and the Philippines (65 304) (UNICEF, 2020f). Furthermore, "*Indonesia overtook China as the country with the highest number of confirmed cases in East Asia*" (Lee, 2020). During this time, "*325 million children have been affected to due pandemic-related school closures and about US $162 million is needed to mollify the repercussions of the pandemic in the region*" (UNICEF, 2020f). Poor access to health and nutrition has impacted the region, as routine immunizations have decreased in recent months, particularly in areas such as Lao, PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, and Papua New Guinea, increasing the risk of preventable diseases. Child wasting "*remains the most pressing concern for nutrition in the region with pervasive household food insecurity, particularly amongst informal sector workers*" (UNICEF, 2020f). Food insecurity has also increased in the region due to the suspension of school feeding schemes and closed school canteens.

The EAP region has also suffered socially and economically as a result of the lockdowns instituted by a number of states. Increased cases of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and school dropout is a worrying trend. Travel and tourism, the biggest source of income for many countries in the region, have been adversely affected due to travel restrictions imposed in all countries in the region. As an economic intervention to the local operators and their employees,

> *Several ASEAN countries [Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam] implemented fiscal packages to support workers in travel and tourism, while others have sought to stimulate domestic tourism to keep tourism-related businesses operating and workers employed. (OECD, 2020b)*

Education governance and the delivery of education response

As with most countries in the world, the countries within the EAP region have relied on a number of alternative teaching platforms, with online learning the most widely used. Radio has also been used as a teaching and learning tool, with some success. For example, in Nepal, a radio programme called Radio Pathshala presented "*a pilot radio lesson initiative broadcast in the Bagmati Province, with teachers*

providing educational content and live call-in support to students"
(UNESCO, 2020h).

Television is also being used as a teaching platform. Indonesia continued to use TV Edukasi, an educational television station that presents live education programmes. Rumah Belejar (Learning House) has also been used which

is another portal by the Ministry [of Indonesia] that provides on-demand learning resources as well as communication facilities to teachers and students, ranging from Early Childhood Development levels to high school level, as well as vocational education levels…. It provides a learning management system as well as digital lessons, electronic textbooks and practice assessment tools aligned to the curriculum. (World Bank, 2020b)

Curriculum and assessment response

Whilst there has been no evidence to suggest that changes will be made to curriculum content, most EAP countries have responded to how they will address high stakes examinations. Kazakhstan, New Zealand and Thailand, for example, did not make any amendments to their examination schedule. Indonesia and Japan were among eleven countries in the world that cancelled examinations. Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa province), Palau, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Uzbekistan and Vietnam rescheduled or postponed their examinations. Cambodia, Myanmar and Pakistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa) shifted their examinations onto an online platform. India, Indonesia, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Palau, Thailand, Tonga, Uzbekistan and Vietnam introduced alternative methods to validate learning and Japan and Vietnam were the only two countries in the region to reduce the number of examinations required for progression (UNESCO, 2020e).

Teacher professional development response

Not all countries in the region have the infrastructure to manage online learning, adversely affecting the education of poorer learners. New Zealand, as an exception, is better geared to teach with online methods; TALIS (2018) reported that NZ teachers receive this kind of training in their initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. Whilst there has been a number of awareness campaigns targeted at informing schools and communities in general about risk reduction strategies, such as the Safe School Campaign in China, the Key

Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools booklet in Myanmar and radio public service announcements in Cambodia, there has been no professional development for teachers specifically on strategies for blending their existing teaching practices with technology and incorporating social distancing measures (UNICEF, 2020f). Furthermore, Okajima (2020) notes that

Though the governments' claim to be encouraging and providing the necessary support and the use of digital tools to ensure that teaching and learning are not affected, in most of the countries here in the Asia-Pacific, the public education system has poor infrastructures, the teachers and students have insufficient access to online platforms, teachers have not been adequately trained in the use of technology, and students - particularly in the rural areas - do not have access to the internet in most cases and to computers to some extent... [and] another worrying trend that is being reported is that the contract teachers, teachers in private schools, and the ECE [early childhood education] sector in several countries - the Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka to name but a few - are either losing their jobs or left with unpaid salaries.

Education governance and policy-making response

Schools in the region are opening gradually and in a staggered manner after the enforced lockdown. For example, in Indonesia, only schools in low-risk areas are opening. To limit face-to-face interactions, "*many countries are also relying on blended learning after school reopening, complementing face-to-face classes with distance learning to decrease the number of students and ensure physical distancing in classrooms*" (UNICEF, 2020f). Countries such as Mongolia and Cambodia, where schools have not fully opened, have relied on online modalities, including TV and radio. COVID-19 has affected the enrolment numbers for learners starting school in 2021. This is particularly notable in the Philippines. In some cases, schools had to shut down again after reopening due to a surge in cases, such as in China and Beijing.

The East Asia and Pacific regions straddle dual economies, including upper income countries such as Australia and New Zealand and lower-to-middle income countries such as the Philippines, Cambodia, Mongolia, China and Thailand. Thus, responses to mitigate the pandemic effects, with regards to education specifically, depend largely on the country's economic climate. The EAP region recorded some of the highest infection rates of COVID-19 in the world, with

China as the origin of the pandemic. Access to basic healthcare in the poorer regions remains elusive to the majority of the population who work in informal sectors. With the closure of borders, tourism came to an abrupt end, with families suffering a greater lack of nutrition and child wasting in the region.

As with other global regions, TV, radio and online platforms have become the default alternative to face-to-face teaching. However, for learners in rural and remote areas and those with no access to technology, learning either ceased completely during lockdown or in some instances, learners essentially received no learning support. Of all the regions, the EAP region was most creative with their response to high stakes testing, with many countries moving to online platforms or using other methods to validate learning. Whilst school closures in the region occurred rapidly and in quick succession, the reopening of schools was more problematic. Only schools in areas with low infection rates and schools with proper infrastructure could continue with face-to-face learning. This meant that the learning loss for learners in the region differed within and between states. Some states in the region experience excessive poverty as a result of the extreme social and economic inequality. The effect on teachers can essentially be considered a crisis in its own right with teachers having little or no support and in some cases not receiving salaries due to the pandemic's impact on economies. The pandemic has crippled the economies of lower income countries, especially those depending on tourism and associated business; this drop in tourism will have lasting effects, not only on education, but on the entire social landscape: youth dropping out of school and increased sexual abuse, with young females bearing the brunt of this social scourge.

D. South Asia

The South Asia region, a sub-region containing nearly a quarter of the world's population, includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka: some of the world's poorest nations. As of late August, Afghanistan had 38 129 confirmed cases with 1 401 deaths; Bangladesh had 302 147 confirmed cases with 4 082 deaths; Bhutan had 173 confirmed cases with no deaths; India had 3 310 234 confirmed cases with 60 472 deaths; the Maldives had 7 225 confirmed cases with 28 deaths; Nepal had 34 418 confirmed cases with 175 deaths; Pakistan had 294 193 confirmed cases with 6 267 deaths; and Sri Lanka had 2 984 confirmed cases with 12 deaths (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020b). India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are the most seriously affected nations within the region. The

World Bank describes the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Asia as "dire" as the "*region will likely experience its worst economic performance in the last 40 years, with temporary contractions in all eight countries*" (World Bank, 2020c).

At the start of the pandemic, countries in the region instituted a national lockdown in an effort to curb the spread of the virus and save lives. However, this lockdown resulted in "*millions of people jobless, pushing them into poverty and hunger, and plunging the world economy into the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s*" (UNESCAP, 2020, p. iii). Poverty has increased exponentially in the region because the majority of people in South Asian countries are employed in the informal sector, which provides no social security to its employees. The pandemic has accentuated inequalities in the region and has likely undone all the progress made towards realising the Sustainable Development Goals.

Generally, countries in the South Asian region are not adequately capacitated to deal with the repercussions of the pandemic. The table below (Table 3) shows a low level of preparedness to deal with the effects of the crises, particularly with regards to the health systems and access to basic services and infrastructure.

Table 3. Level of preparedness in South Asia to COVID-19

Level of preparedness: High Medium Low
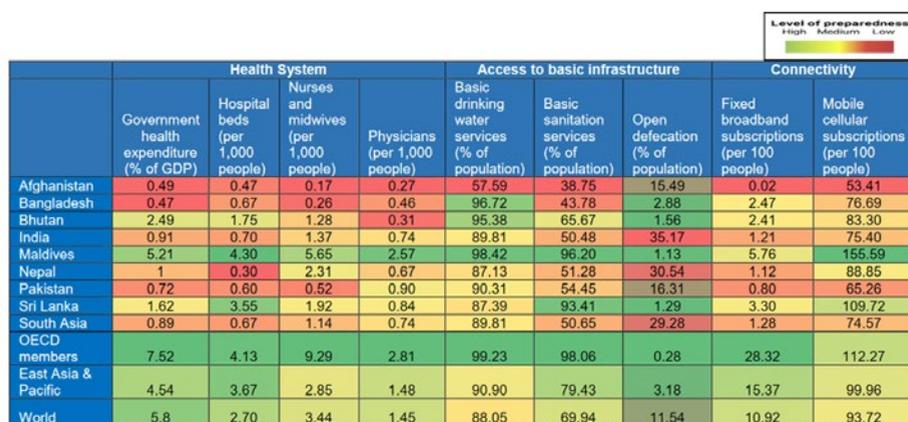
	Health System				Access to basic infrastructure			Connectivity	
	Government health expenditure (% of GDP)	Hospital beds (per 1,000 people)	Nurses and midwives (per 1,000 people)	Physicians (per 1,000 people)	Basic drinking water services (% of population)	Basic sanitation services (% of population)	Open defecation (% of population)	Fixed broadband subscriptions (per 100 people)	Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)
Afghanistan	0.49	0.47	0.17	0.27	57.59	38.75	15.49	0.02	53.41
Bangladesh	0.47	0.67	0.26	0.46	96.72	43.78	2.88	2.47	76.69
Bhutan	2.49	1.75	1.28	0.31	95.38	65.67	1.56	2.41	83.30
India	0.91	0.70	1.37	0.74	89.81	50.48	35.17	1.21	75.40
Maldives	5.21	4.30	5.65	2.57	98.42	96.20	1.13	5.76	155.59
Nepal	1	0.30	2.31	0.67	87.13	51.28	30.54	1.12	88.85
Pakistan	0.72	0.60	0.52	0.90	90.31	54.45	16.31	0.80	65.26
Sri Lanka	1.62	3.55	1.92	0.84	87.39	93.41	1.29	3.30	109.72
South Asia	0.89	0.67	1.14	0.74	89.81	50.65	29.28	1.28	74.57
OECD members	7.52	4.13	9.29	2.81	99.23	98.06	0.28	28.32	112.27
East Asia & Pacific	4.54	3.67	2.85	1.48	90.90	79.43	3.18	15.37	99.96
World	5.8	2.70	3.44	1.45	88.05	69.94	11.54	10.92	93.72

Source: UNESCAP based on World Development Indicators, accessed at https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators

Note: All the indicators under health system, basic access to infrastructure and connectivity represent average number for 2010 to 2018, For Maldives, 2009 data on beds per thousand people used. For open defecation, green colour implies lowest and red highest

South Asia spends less than 1% of its budget on health compared to the global average of about 5.8% and consequently has poor

public healthcare systems (UNESCAP, 2020). As demonstrated in Table 3 above, the region does not provide sufficient access to basic infrastructure such as sanitation facilities or reliable connectivity, negatively impacting all sectors including the provision of education. Of all the countries in the region, the Maldives is the best prepared to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

The majority of countries in the region started lockdown in March, with Pakistan the only country in the region to delay the start of its lockdown until 1 April. Strict measures were imposed, particularly in relation to border closures. Table 4 below indicates the measures taken by countries in the region during their national lockdown.

Table 4. Lockdown measures in South Asia

Country	Stringency level#	Lockdown measures (duration)	International Borders/ travel restrictions	Air Travel	Land Transport	Maritime Transport
Afghanistan	84	Complete Lockdown 22 March till 24 May	Closed, open only for immigrants	*PR	*PR	ND
Bangladesh	82	Started on 26 March to 16 May and extended further to May 30. Hotspot Lockdown imposed.	Closed	Domestic flights opened from 1st June. International flights closed till 15th June. Cargo flights only	Freight trains	**EG only
Bhutan	74	Restriction on entry of tourists from 6 March; 23 March – international borders sealed. Lockdown from April 1 to 21	Closed	Not allowed	**EG only	N/A
India	79	25 March to 31 May Lockdown extended till 30 June in containment zones. Many activities are allowed after 8 June 2020.	Closed	Domestic flights resumed but PR for international flight	*PR	ND
Maldives	N/A	Public Health Emergency was declared on 19 March. Lockdown from 1 April to 12 June in greater Male.	Closed	Permission required	N/A	A
Nepal	93	23 March to 2 June. Further extended to 14 June.	Closed	Permission required		N/A
Pakistan	80	1 April to 9 May. Lockdown lifted	Closed	International flights allowed Cargo flights only	P	A
Sri Lanka	77	Public holiday declared from 15 March. Lockdown from 20 March to 11 May.	Closed	Cargo flights	P	ND

Source: UNESCAP based on Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker, IMF Policy Responses to COVID-19 and various national sources

Note: #:   Updated as on 10 June 2020 P = Prohibited; ND = No Data; A = Allowed; N/A = Not Applicable; *PR = Passive restriction enforced by neighbour countries at border; **EG = Essential Goods

COVID-19 has disrupted supply chains. The collapsing demand has resulted in a recession. Countless small and medium enterprises have been pushed out of business, increasing unemployment rates with no alternative financial aid available. International trade and tourism, the backbone of the region, contributing about 9% of the regional GDP, has declined, particularly in the Maldives where travel and tourism has a 66.3% share of the country's GDP. International tourism has plummeted in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India by 70% (UNESCAP, 2020).

Education governance and the delivery of education response

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the South Asia region was experiencing a chronic education crisis, with 95 million children of school-going age not attending school (UNICEF, 2020g). As a result of the pandemic, "*many of the 430 million children affected by school closures in the region are now in danger of dropping out of the education system*" (UNICEF, 2020g). Countries within the region have utilised various platforms to ensure teaching and learning continues whilst schools are closed. The provision of education continues "*through a mix of radio, television and mobile technology, as well as the home delivery of printed learning materials for those who are excluded from technology for the most vulnerable students*" (UNICEF, 2020g). The availability of ICTs for teaching and learning is limited, impacting the region's already marginalised population groups. UNESCAP (2020, p. 14) notes that

> *Despite the tremendous increase in access and coverage of digital services in South Asia, significant gaps exist in access and ownership of mobile phones and internet between countries, among households, between rural and urban populations, men and women and between persons with and without disabilities. For instance, in South Asia, in 2018, 220 million people were not covered by mobile broadband networks. Besides, those living in rural areas were 45% less likely to use the mobile internet than those in urban areas.*

This means that many learners cannot benefit from online interventions, exacerbating learning losses for those who lack access. Radio has been used as a key platform for students to continue their academic development. For example, in Nepal, the Education Directorate, together with UNESCO, started a radio programme called Radio Paathshala that enables teachers to respond to problems learners may encounter with their work (India Education Diary

Bureau Admin, 2002). The programme covers thirteen districts in the Bagmati Province. Recordings of the programme are also uploaded onto Facebook so that more learners may access the material. In Bangladesh, some learners, particularly those who live in remote areas, have been given home-based learning packs that "*contain two months' worth of curriculum that provides advice to parents on how to engage children at home with meaningful learning activities*" (Tancred, 2020). About 1500 children between the ages of 3 and 5 have benefitted from these packages.

The state-owned television network in Bangladesh (BTV) has also broadcast education programmes for students from Grade 6 to Grade 10. The programme, called My School at Home, broadcasts daily from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. The Ministry of Education in Bhutan has launched the Bhutan e-learning programme as of late March 2020, giving students from Grade K – 12 access to lessons through educational television as well as YouTube. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development shared a number of free digital e-learning platforms to allow students to continue their learning (World Bank, 2020b). The DIKSHA portal contains a variety of e-learning content for students, their parents as well as teachers. The content, aligned with the curriculum, comes in the form of textbooks, worksheets, videos and assessments. The content was developed by about 250 teachers who teach in multiple languages. Other e-platforms available to Indian learners are Swayam and Swayam Prabha. The sharing of resources on WhatsApp has also worked in Pakistan (Baqi, Malik and Weibel, 2020).

Curriculum and assessment response

Whilst there has been no adjustment to the national school curriculum, adaptations have occurred with regards to high stakes exit level examinations. India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have rescheduled their examinations. Myanmar and Pakistan have adapted to online examinations and India is the only country in the region that has developed alternate methods to validate and evaluate learning (UNESCO, 2020e).

Teacher professional development response

Teacher support, both in terms of their ability to support learners remotely, as well as to receive psychosocial support themselves is lacking in the region. This weakness has been identified by the United Nations (2020c) which contends that "*teachers across the globe were*

largely unprepared to support continuity of learning and adapt to new teaching methodologies".

Education governance and policy-making response

The lockdowns instituted by all countries in the region have resulted in school closures since the early part of 2020. Whilst infection rates remain stable in some areas but are increasing in others, the debate about when schools should reopen is fraught with conflicting views. On one hand, governments are wary of a potential surge in infection rates and on the other hand, the academic and emotional well-being of learners need attention. UNESCO (2020i) contends that "*the timing of school reopening should be guided by the best interest of the child and overall public health considerations*". As of mid-August, schools in Sri Lanka have reopened to learners from all grades. Whilst other countries in the region are still considering when to reopen, "*in the coming months, it is likely that schools in South Asia will reopen and close again as COVID-19 outbreaks reoccur*" (UNESCO, 2020j).

The South Asian region is densely populated, suffering from multiple interlocking crises. From physical conflict in Afghanistan to natural disasters in Bangladesh, the region is not a stranger to disaster. Due to this population density and poor public infrastructure, particularly in education and basic healthcare, the region was hard hit by the pandemic, with the number of infections rapidly increasing. Limited financial resources hindered the region's ability to deal effectively with the pandemic; as a result, international aid to the region was scaled up. Whilst the region followed the global trend of using TV, radio and online platforms as alternatives to face-to-face learning, access for the poor and those living in remote areas is still challenging. The opening of schools also presented a challenge as schools in some areas that had already reopened needed to close again due to localised outbreaks. There are many dialects and languages spoken in the region which also presented a challenge when developing online platforms for teachers, learners and parents. A dense population, large scale social and economic inequality, weak economies, increased poverty and poor public services all weakened efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

E.   Arab States

A press release by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) noted that "*the COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc on an Arab region struggling with decades-*

long development challenges, including occupation and conflict but also a dire economic situation, which have limited States' capacity to mitigate the impact of the virus" (UNESCWA, 2020, Para 1). The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, noted that these challenges present an opportunity for the region to "*build back better*" and "*deepen efforts to address inequalities, boost economic recovery through reimagining the region's economic model, and prioritize human rights*" (UNESCWA, 2020). Since testing in the region began in February 2020, the number of confirmed cases and deaths has been steadily increasing. The World Health Organization's latest statistics reveal that in the Eastern Mediterranean regions, countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan, there have been 1 723 673 confirmed cases and 45 704 deaths (WHO, 2020c).

The economic effects of COVID-19 on the region have been disastrous. As a result of the strict lockdown implemented in most countries in the region, millions have lost their income and have been pushed further into the throes of poverty. As depicted in the figure below, the Arab stock markets have also been adversely affected.

FIGURE 1: ESIMATED IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE ARAB REGION

Loss in real GDP	Loss in jobs measured in lost working hours	Pushed into poverty	Existing recipients of humanitarian aid are at higher risk	Existing forcibly displaced are at higher risk	At higher risk of **COVID-19** due to lack of basic handwashing facilities	Loss in **Arab stock markets**
$152 billion	**17 million**	**14.3 million people**	**55 million people**	**26 million people**	**74 million people**	**23 per cent**

Source: ESCWA calculations and estimates (all figures are of July 2020 and are likely to increase as the pandemic evolves).

Figure 15. **An overview of the estimated impact of the pandemic in the Arab region**

More than 47 million people across the Arab region are affected by conflict and crises and of these, 13 million children and youths are not attending school (UNESCO, 2017). As a result of protracted conflict in the region, UNESCO has developed a strategic framework to ensure that the provision of education is prioritised, not only because it is a human right, but as a vital tool to aid peacekeeping initiatives and build social cohesion (UNESCO, 2017). The UNESCO Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies in the Arab Region has four strategic goals anchored to the three principles of access, quality and system

strengthening (UNESCO, 2017:4):

Strategic Goal 1:   *Children and youth affected by crisis access inclusive and quality learning opportunities;*

Strategic Goal 2:   *Learners affected by a crisis are empowered with values, knowledge, and skills for life and work;*

Strategic Goal 3:   *Education actors provide quality education for better learning outcomes;*

Strategic Goal 4:   *Education systems are responsive and resilient to a crisis.*

COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing volatile social, political and economic climate in the region, a situation detrimental to the realisation of the goals listed in the Strategic Framework.

Education governance and the delivery of education response

A situational analysis report released by UNESCO's Beirut office noted that "*the Arab region, where 13 million children and youth are already out-of-school [sic] due to conflict, has been additionally challenged with more than 100 million affected learners across the region*" due to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020k). The lockdown measures, which included school closures across the Arab region, have resulted in a variety of education responses. Online learning has been adopted by the majority of countries in the region. The United Arab Emirates responded swiftly, shifting to online learning in the early weeks of the national lockdown. Jordan introduced Darsak I and Darsak II, learning programmes targeting all grades. Lebanon and Qatar have used Microsoft programmes as their platform to promote learning. Egypt continued with academics using a national platform called the Egyptian Knowledge Bank that provides resources to both teachers and students. Saudi Arabia and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq have also used online platforms to ensure the continuation of schooling. Syria, Qatar, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and Palestine have utilised YouTube as a learning tool.

Television has also been a popular mechanism for education delivery. This low-tech method has been widely used in countries such as Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania and Qatar. Home-schooling and home-based learning has also been used in countries such as Lebanon and Morocco. Radio-based learning has been used in countries such as Palestine, Tunisia, Mauritania and the UAE.

Curriculum and assessment response

Generally, there have been no amendments made to the school curriculum as no country in the region has cancelled high stakes examinations, including the Grade 12 examinations, as a result of the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020e). Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Syria made no changes to their examination schedule; Algeria, Iraq (including the Kurdistan Region), Lebanon, Oman, Sudan and Tunisia postponed examinations; and Morocco developed alternative approaches to validate learning (UNESCO, 2020e).

Table 5. Overview of Arab region responses to assessment (UNESCO, 2020k)

Measures	
Exams cancelled	No
Exams waived	No
Exams postponed	Yes — Few Countries
Exams as scheduled	Yes — Most Countries
Exams online	Yes — Egypt and discussion is ongoing in other countries
Exams in schools	Yes — with sterilization measures

Teacher development response

Teacher preparedness, particularly the shift from a face-to-face format to an online format, has been acknowledged as a huge challenge for teachers in the region (UNESCO, 2020k). Most countries have made this shift for the first time, and to ensure quality teaching and learning takes place "*they had to mobilize teachers*" (UNESCO, 2020k). However, "*so far the exercise proved that most teachers are not adequately supported or trained – neither were they included in developing the COVID-19 education responses.... Contracted teachers are threatened not to receive their salaries and benefit packages*" (UNESCO, 2020k).

Education governance and policy-making response

Whilst school closures occurred rapidly across the region, the decision to open schools is shrouded with uncertainty. UNESCO's (2020i) Framework for the reopening of schools contends that "*contextualisation and continuous adaptation are necessary in order to respond to local conditions*" (2020, p. 1). Schools in the Arab region remain closed over the school holidays.

The Arab region is notorious for crises of political conflict. In the last two decades, the effects of physical warfare have ravaged the region of even basic infrastructure. This means that even before the pandemic, the region was in process of rebuilding and redevelopment due to the catastrophic effects of physical conflict. Not only is social inequality a marker of the region, weak economies and limited human rights are also indicative of the area. There are already 55 million people who depend on humanitarian aid in the region, even prior to the exacerbation of the pandemic. Furthermore, there were already many families displaced as a result of war, putting them at higher risk of contracting the virus due to their poor housing facilities. While millions of learners are out of school due to various conflicts, the pandemic has further adversely impacted 100 million youth in the region. None of the countries in the region cancelled examinations, with most countries conducting assessments as scheduled. Some countries postponed examinations. Low tech modalities, such as radio and television, were more popular in the region due to a lack of ICT infrastructure in many countries. Even though online learning has occurred in some parts, teachers struggle with the transition. It seems that in the Arab states, the COVID-19 pandemic is a continuation of crisis in the region as just another problem to deal with. The region requires large scale redevelopment to ensure that it is ready to deal successfully with any future crises, health or otherwise.

G. *Regional overview key takeaway*

Whilst the global overview noted the common trends and responses to the pandemic, the regional overview is able to demonstrate the stark differences between global regions. Although policy responses globally may have been similar, specifically with regards to closing schools and alternative teaching and learning modalities, the manner in which these manifested in particular contexts differed. For example, while the UN Framework to Reopen Schools was a guideline for countries to adopt to ensure the safe reopening of schools, many of these guidelines and suggestions were not context-sensitive. Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia as well as the Arab region have suffered with poor learning contexts since before the pandemic, making it impossible for these schools to fully abide by these guidelines. The regional findings also suggest that whilst access to technology is the norm is regions such as Europe and North America, for other regions, particularly in the East, these are scarce commodities. Existing crises such as political turmoil in Venezuela and other parts of the LAC region,

war and post-war effects in the Arab regions, limited access to a clean, running water supply and stable access to electricity in the poorer areas of East Asia and the Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa, and other areas where crises interlock, has weakened the responses to the pandemic. To put this in perspective, as a result of the pandemic, existing frailties and their effects have been re-exposed and much of the progress made towards global equity and equality has been undone.

H. Economic responses to and effects of the pandemic

Regions worldwide have responded to the pandemic with two main income streams, either contingency funds for emergencies, or international aid. A few of these state responses are mapped per region below. They are not exhaustive and only provide an overview of some of the primary financial responses to the pandemic. The policy responses suggest that developed nations, with healthier financial budgets and disaster relief funds, are better able to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, whilst poorer nations, with limited funds available, must funnel these funds to urgent humanitarian responses such as food, health and financial assistance, leaving little to address the broader aspects such as improving hospital capacity.

North America and Europe

In the United Kingdom, additional funds totalling about £48.5 billion were directed to the National Health Service, public services, and charities. Furthermore, measures were put in place to support small businesses (£29 billion), including a property tax holiday, compensation for sick pay and £8 billion for strengthening the social safety net for low income households and vulnerable people. The UK government also instituted measures such as funds for furloughed workers; improved job creation; temporary reductions of VAT rate for hospitality, accommodation and attractions, and the real estate transactions tax; and increased public spending on infrastructure (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The United Kingdom also continued to contribute aid to poor countries and

has made available £150 million to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust and provided a new £2.2 billion loan to the IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT) to help low income countries respond to COVID-19. (International Monetary Fund, 2020)

The United States responded to the pandemic using USD 44 billion from the Disaster Relief Fund. A number of issues were tackled with this fund, including extra unemployment benefits, student loan payment relief, deferring collection of social security tax, and assisting renters and home owners to avoid evictions and foreclosures. In addition, three key responses were instituted. First, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act estimated at USD 483 billion to assist small business and increase testing capacity at hospitals. Second, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economy Security Act (CARES Act), estimated at USD 293 billion (around 11% of GDP), provides tax rebates to individuals, expands unemployment benefits, provides food and nutrition for the poor, limits bankruptcies and assists state and local governments. The CARES Act also directed "*US$ 49.9 billion for international assistance (including SDR 28 billion for the IMF's New Arrangement to Borrow)*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Third, the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, estimated at USD 8.3 billion, and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, estimated at USD 192 billion, which is 1% of GDP combined, provides assistance to hospitals and the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), expands loans for small businesses, and suspends student loans. These Acts also funnel funds for international aid to the value of USD 1.25 billion (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

Latin America and Caribbean

In Brazil, a financial plan to the value of 11.5% of the total GDP was instituted. In March, the government declared a "public calamity" in the country which "*lift[s] the government's obligation to comply with the primary balance target in 2020*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The Brazilian government has also instituted the escape clause of the constitutional expenditure ceiling to accommodate unusual and exceptional spending. Some of the relief mechanisms instituted by the Brazilian government include temporary income support to vulnerable households via cash transfers, employment support, lower taxes, lower import levies on essential medical supplies and a temporary stay of debt from municipalities. Public banks have also expanded credit lines for households and businesses (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

In Ecuador, individuals and businesses were given USD 120 cash, food baskets and a financing of USD 50 million in credit lines for small- and medium-size businesses. In April, the president passed two urgent economic laws. First was the Organic Law of Humanitarian

Support to Combat the Health Crisis of COVID-19, which "seeks to collect tax revenues from two main sources, an additional tax of 5% percent on the profits of the companies that have earned more than USD 1 million in 2019, and a progressive income tax for people whose monthly salary is greater than USD 500" (International Monetary Fund, 2020). And secondly, the Organic Law for the Regulation of Public Finances "seeks to establish fiscal rules for the expenses of the non-financial public sector institutions and improve the use, control and evaluation of public resources" (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

Arab States

In Lebanon, as of August 2020, the Lebanese parliament has approved an additional PP 1200 billion for social safety nets. The criteria to qualify for assistance will be established by the parliament. The government has also started a solidarity fund that allows for the donation of financial contributions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The Ministry of Finance made allowance for the extension of taxes and fees and the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministries of Industry, Agriculture, Defence, Interior, Labour, Finance, Economy and Information, together with municipalities and the army, initiated a plan to "*to distribute cash assistance to families hit economically and financially as a result of COVID-19*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

In Yemen, the Yemeni government created a commission to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The Ministry of Health provided certain areas with medical equipment. Much of this equipment, such as respirators and medical safety tools, was received from the World Bank through the World Health Organization. Yemen has also received outside assistance: USD 500 million from the UN for the humanitarian response, USD 25 million to fight the spread of the coronavirus from the Saudi government, and USD 225 million in emergency aid through the UN World Food Program from the US (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

South Asia

In Bangladesh, the government has instituted a number of measures to assist with the effects of the pandemic. First, the Ministry of Finance revised the budget for the 2020 financial year, redirecting funds to address the running costs of the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan and expanding existing

transfer programmes that benefit the poor. Second, an increase has been made to the Open Market Sale programme for rice to be purchased at a third of the normal price. Third, the Ministry of Disaster Relief is distributing food parcels at district level. Fourth, in April 2020, the government, announced an allocation of Tk. 21.3 billion under a housing scheme for the homeless: "*Tk. 7.6 billion for poor people having lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic, Tk. 7.5 billion to provide health insurance for government employees most at risk, and a Tk. 1 billion bonus payment for government doctors and health workers treating COVID-19 patients*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Fifth, the National Board of Revenue has suspended duties and taxes on imports of medical supplies, including protective equipment and test kits. Lastly, the government has noted that "*funds from the budget for low-priority development projects will not be released... it has approached international financial institutions and bilateral development partners seeking budget support*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

In India, the economic policy response was divided into direct spending and deferred revenue as well as "below-the-line measures designed to support businesses and shore up credit provision to several sectors" (International Monetary Fund, 2020, p. 33). The direct spending measures included interventions of food, cooking gas and cash for poorer households, insurance coverage for workers in the healthcare sector, and wage support and employment provision for low wage workers. Funds have also been directed towards health infrastructure. Measures that do not have an immediate bearing on the government's deficit position are mostly directed at providing credit for businesses, poor households and migrants, electricity distribution companies in financial distress and support for the agricultural sector.

East and South Pacific

In Nepal, the majority of the economic responses were in the form of humanitarian aid, financial incentives and improvements to the healthcare system. In the health sector, additional insurance was provided to medical personnel fighting the virus; the government imported additional medical supplies and set up quarantine centres and temporary hospitals. Daily food rations were provided to the poor and a subsidy for utility bills was provided to low usage customers. In April 2020, the government announced that it would provide further support to informal sector workers (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

In New Zealand, as of September 2020, the changes made to 2020-2024 financial year total NZ$ 62.1 billion (21.3% of GDP). The total amount includes the NZ$ 50 billion COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, of which NZ$ 14 billion has been set aside as contingency for a possible second wave. The fund has supported the following endeavours (International Monetary Fund, 2020):

- healthcare-related spending to reinforce capacity ;
- a permanent increase in social spending to protect vulnerable people;
- a wage subsidy to support employers severely affected by the impact of COVID-19;
- income relief payments to support people who lost their jobs;
- a permanent change in business taxes to help cash flow;
- infrastructure investment;
- transport projects;
- a temporary tax loss carry-back scheme;
- support for the aviation sector;
- a tourism recovery package;
- a government housing programme;
- school infrastructure upgrades.

The government has also approved a debt funding agreement with Air New Zealand to mitigate the economic impact on the airline. Tariffs for the import of hygiene products to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic have also been removed.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Globally, the economic response to the pandemic demonstrates that the Global North and Global West have provided substantial aid to the Global South and Global East to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. This aid was primarily to assist with humanitarian needs, not to address large scale reform in areas such as industry, education and health. Although the aid provided is in some cases the main reason that poorer nations are able to mitigate the effects of the pandemic to a limited extent, it addresses the challenges cosmetically and does not in any way capacitate these poorer countries to deal with future crises or other natural and manmade disasters. Many

low-income countries started a COVID-19 Relief Fund for donations to alleviate the financial burden the pandemic has rendered. However, in South Africa for example, corruption and misuse of funds has reduced the number of interventions as well as longevity of interventions that could potentially mitigate the pandemic effects.

However, In Botswana, the government established a COVID-19 Relief Fund to the value of 2 billion pula, translating to 1% of the GDP. The fund will pay salaries for businesses affected by the pandemic, build up fuel and grain reserves and fund a government loan guarantee scheme for businesses which are tax compliant.

Further, in Zambia, export duties on precious metals as well as import duties on mineral concentrates were suspended to provide relief for the mining sector. Tax penalties and fees on outstanding tax penalties resulting from the pandemic have been waived. Furthermore, the "*government has also issued an 8-billion-kwacha [sic] bond (2.4% of GDP) to finance COVID-19 related expenses, including health spending, arrears clearance, and grain purchases, as well as a recapitalization of the development bank (NATSAVE)*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

5. Other effects of COVID 19

A. *Impact of crises and disruptions on gender equality*

Whilst there has been much progress in realising gender equality globally as advocated by the Sustainable Development Goal 5, COVID 19 has demonstrated that crises and disruptions are never gender neutral in their effects. In 2020, the United Nations reported that poor and marginalised women were at higher risk of contracting the virus, of losing their livelihoods and at an increased risk of violence, including sexual violence (UNWOMEN, 2020). The economic effects of the COVID 19 pandemic has been felt the most in industries where women are the majority, such as domestic workers, factory workers and the hospitality industry. These uneven effects result from policy responses to mitigate the spread of the virus that called for school closures, isolation and social distancing. Whilst the effects of school closures, as discussed elsewhere in this report, demonstrates the negative effects on learners, particularly in low income regions and within poor communities, women were also adversely affected as they bore the brunt of childcare responsibilities impacting on their earning potential as juggling home

and work priorities became challenging. Alon et al (2021a) refers to the COVID 19 pandemic as a 'shecession' as it demonstrates the decline in women employment and earnings globally. Furthermore, these authors argue that the effects of this crises and it effect on women will outlast the crises itself. Earning losses will decrease their average earnings and increase the gender pay gap which has been a point of contention in many regions (Alon et al, 2020b).

In the education context, UNESCO (2021) has estimated that about eleven million girls may not return to school after the pandemic. This is over and above the concerns relating to increased child marriage, early pregnancy and (girl) child exploitation (Diallo et al, 2021).

The effect of the COVID 19 on women has resulted in three major effects:
- Effect 1: Prolonged unemployment spells lead to erosion of skills and talents, loss of social connections and networks, fewer employment prospects, and greater job insecurity (e.g., CRS 2020; Manzoni and Mooi-Reci 2020).
- Effect 2: The pandemic has managed to undo much of the progress towards realizing gender equality as actioned through the SDG's (Goal 5 – Gender Equality)
- Effect 3: The pandemic has put women and girls at higher risk of dropping out of school, vulnerable to domestic violence, child marriage, teen pregnancy and being exploited through child labour (Diallo et al, 2021)

Some suggestions to minimize these negative effect on women and girls include:
- Strengthening distance learning so that women and girls may access education
- Initiating more programmes such as the Keeping Girls in School Programmes in Zambia, that provides financial support to households that are considered high risk in this context, particularly households with teenage girls.
- Improve support of basic needs such as clean water, food and hygiene products to vulnerable communities (Diallo et al, 2021)

Reversing the effects of the prevailing pandemic on gender equality requires robust and immediate responses from governments. It also requires a critique of cultural norms and logics and how prevailing policies and associated practices either dismantles or reinforces these beliefs.

B. Crises as an opportunity: The growth of EdTech

Whilst crises and disruptions is often associated with and accompanied by several negative effects, in some instances it can serve as a platform for opportunities. This is more effectively demonstrated by the increase in EdTech interventions that has emerged directly as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Li and Lalani (2020) note that global school closures that was enforced directly as a result of the pandemic, leaving at least 1.2 billion learners out of school has catapulted the rise of e-learning through various EdTech interventions. The financial gains in this industry has catapulted as Li and Lalani (2020, para 3) argue:

"Even before COVID-19, there was already high growth and adoption in education technology, with global edtech investments reaching US$18.66 billion in 2019 and the overall market for online education projected to reach $350 Billion by 2025. Whether it is language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, or online learning software, there has been a significant surge in usage since COVID-19."

Continuity of education across all education sectors became a priority in most regions, and this is reflected in the increase of funding allocated to EdTech and online learning programmes. As demonstrated in the figure below, funding of EdTech has increased substantially in developed and developing contexts.

EDTECH FUNDING IN US$ - TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Source: Withum data analysis through Crunchbase   ■ 2019 ■ 2020
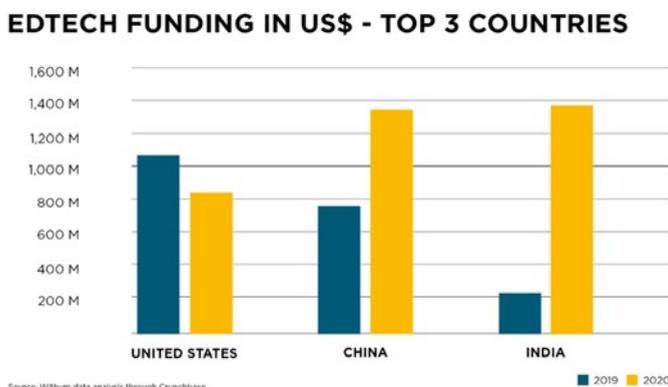
Figure 16. Funding on EdTech in top three global consumers of online learning programmes between 2019 and 2020

DeMayo (2020) argues that "*when looking at funding by continent, North America and Europe remained fairly consistent from 2019 to 2020, with the majority of the increase directly related to Asia.... the*

increase in funding appears to be a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic as virtual learning has become a commonality" (para, 6)

Whilst the move to online learning has been heralded in many contexts as the 'solution' to ensure teaching and learning continues such as having a wider reach in audience that is not limited by geographical boundaries, there have been many who have criticized the haste at which EdTech approaches have been cemented within traditional schooling systems. For example, Hodges et al (2020) argue that online learning approaches do not always use suitable pedagogical approaches that maximise how learning takes place; concerns about privacy and surveillance and the impact on student human dignity has also been echoed by Harwell (2020); new forms of power and control associated with this technology may also produce new forms of inequity and inequalities, including other unforeseen negative effects (Selwyn, 2020); the movement to out of school can exacerbate weak education management systems, it can slow down students formal progression against formal curriculums, teachers have varying abilities in facilitating teaching through technology which may impact on the quality of teaching and learning and learners home environment may not be conducive to teaching and learning (David et al, 2020). However, what is more worrying is that "*there is no evidence yet that teachers and students would have benefitted from using computers in terms of 'student participation*" over traditional teaching and learning techniques (Cuban and Jandrić 2015: 432). In addition, with data being declared as the new oil (Arthur, 2013), the ethical implications of this rapid transition should be heavily scrutinized.

What has improved as a result of increased use of EdTech is the innovative mechanisms to alleviate learning losses in less developed contexts. This is evident in how some online programmes has taken away data costs by developing zero rated sites where all learners with the necessary infrastructure can access learning content. These attempt aims to address the prevailing digital divide and increase access to learning technologies. Whilst EdTech does have its benefits, it is only part of the solution and cannot be seen as a complete solution to dealing with the delivery of education during times of crises and disruptions.

C. COVID 19 as a gateway to increasing privatisation in education

In recent years, governments have increasingly been held accountable for the performance of learners across various stages of education. The focus of governments to be accountable to local and international laws and treaties, have added an extra financial burden on already struggling economies, particularly on the African continent. Skelton (2020) had noted that when education is in crises, there is a habit of turning to the private sector for solutions demonstrating little faith in governments to develop innovative strategies to address social and educational concerns. She continues to add that the COVID 19 pandemic has served as a catalyst for advancing the commercialising of education through privatisation and public private partnerships.

Whilst Africa has always been at risk of having its public education privatised due to the mammoth task of providing free quality education to all its citizens, there is a huge risk of education being instrumentalised and 'hollowed out' leading to poor(er) quality education (Skelton, 2021). Evidence of how commercialisation in education has advanced during the COVID 19 pandemic can be seen in the following:

- Firstly, as previously mentioned there has been an increase in the use and purchasing of EdTech technologies, as it has been advocated as both a short and long term solution to addressing educational inefficiencies.

- Secondly, long term contracts between public schools and private companies that provide resources to under resourced schools, "*which if unchecked, will see …. companies becoming permanently embedded in the education system – and public-private partnerships in education policy being enhanced*" (Skelton, 2021: para 4).

- Thirdly, there has been an increase in the number of philanthropists moving into the education space as donors, such as the Gates Foundation and the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation who has teamed up with reputable global entities such as the World Bank and OECD and used "*COVID-19 [as] an opportunity to expand edu-business*" (Skelton, 2021: para4).

Advocating against the commercialisation of education, Education International (2021) has noted that:

"Education is a human right and a public good that can be fully realised only through the provision of free, equitable, inclusive, quality public education. The growing commercialisation and privatisation in and of the sector is the greatest threat to the universal right to education..." [this is of great concern because] "unaccountable corporations have undue influence on education policies and institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend which risks transforming education into a commodity, favouring profit over quality education" (Para:1 -3).

II. Country Analysis

The eight countries that the research focused on as part of the review are all located in sub-Saharan Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, and Ivory Coast representing the Francophone countries; Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda representing the Anglophone countries; and Cape Verde and Mozambique representing the Lusophone countries.

Figure 17. **Sub-Saharan Africa**

In sub-Saharan Africa, the pandemic has once again illuminated inefficiencies in the public sector. This includes the challenges relating to public health, social services, and education provision. According to UNESCO (2020l),

Education is one of the biggest casualties in the fight against the pandemic in Africa. The mass closure of schools, universities, technical vocational training centres and other centres of learning across the continent, has deprived many learners of both their right and access to education. While many parts of the world have resorted to distance learning, leveraging the use of information and communications technologies, unfortunately in most parts of Africa, this is not a very viable option. A further challenge arising from the closure of schools and educational institutions and facilities is the social impact this will eventually have especially on girls who no longer have access to school, and are likely to be

exposed to increased harm in their communities, including teenage pregnancies. The immediate and long-term consequences of school closures will inevitably further exacerbate inequalities and disparities in the education sector.

This section discusses the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the eight countries.

1. Cape Verde

A. *Description of country context*

As an island state located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of West Africa, Cape Verde is an archipelago of ten volcanic islands with an area of 4 033 km2 (ITUC-Africa, 2020a). The country is currently at a crossroads and faces the challenge to develop a more sustainable growth model mainly because tourism, which accounts for 20% of GDP, is among the sectors that have severely suffered from travel restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic (ITUC-Africa, 2020a). Cape Verde's current population is estimated at 556 943 as of 29 August 2020 (Worldometer, 2020a). The latest education statistics in Cape Verde indicate that there are 12 000 pupils in pre-primary schools, 83 499 pupils in compulsory primary schools, and 30 096 in secondary schools (Lusa Agency, 2020).

Cape Verde confirmed the first case of the coronavirus infection on 19 March 2020 after a 62-year-old English tourist was diagnosed with the disease on the island of Boa Vista (Lusa Agency, 2020). As of 13 October 2020, Cape Verde had 7 155 confirmed cases and 75 deaths, which although seemingly low, it is significantly higher than Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Mali in West Africa (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020c). Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cape Verde and in an attempt to contain its spread in the country, the government declared a state of emergency, calling for the closure of all educational institutions on 20 March 2020. Nevertheless, as an alternative to the closure of schools, Cape Verde resumed school classes through distance and home-based learning to keep students in touch with the subject content which would normally have been taught before the lockdown (InforPress, 2020).

B. *Educational governance*

Educational policy-making response

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, governance matters continue to be crucial both to recovery and to building a new normal once the COVID-19 crisis has passed. This subsection covers two aspects of policy-making response:

First, involving all key stakeholders in policy formulation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary, not only to ensure that policies the government undertakes receive enough grassroots support, but also to contribute to their possible success. In the case of Cape Verde, we found that the involvement of teachers' unions and other educational stakeholders, particularly in the initial stages of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, was minimal in some ways. This was evident in our personal interview with a teachers' union official in Cape Verde.

Initially, when the COVID-19 broke out in our country, the government had no communication with teachers' unions and other local partners on how to run education in Cape Verde. The government just announced that they have decided to have classes online, on TVs, and radios. After this announcement, the unions put together an open letter informing the government that they did not agree with that decision and the way things were moving forward. And they proved that online courses usually don't work for everyone for many reasons. (Teachers' union official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

The quotation above supports the desk-based review data, which indicated that the Teachers' Union of Santiago Island [SIPROFIS] was vocal in criticising the government's approaches to distance and home-based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as time went on, the government of Cape Verde changed their approach and began engaging teachers' unions and their leaders in various interventions.

After developing a programme called Study and Learn at Home, the Ministry of Education started calling meetings with the unions over phones and video conferencing. The government now started taking serious considerations on teachers' unions experience in teaching and learning taking place in real environment. (Teachers' union official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

This observation was also reflected in our interview with the government official who stressed that "*overall, there has been the participation of teachers' unions in terms of decision-making with regard to education for the country during the COVID-19 pandemic*". As such, the participants stressed the need for a frank dialogue between union leaders and the Ministry of Education so the government could listen to them and make informed decisions

regarding the operation of the education sector during the lockdown. According to this official,

> *The most important factor would be the ongoing conversations between the government and the unions to make sure that they are involved in decision-making process because teachers have a very big role with regard to the development of the country. (Teachers' union official, Cape Verde, October 2020)*

Second, regarding the organisation of COVID-19 response, the government of Cape Verde developed the National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in an effort to contain the spread of the pandemic. The Preparedness Plan focused on scaling up and strengthening all aspects of prevention, preparedness and response initiatives. Financed by the World Bank under a COVID Emergency Response Project, the plan defines not only priorities for central and decentralised levels but also identifies roles and responsibilities for a rapid intervention technical team, the *Equipa Técnica de Intervenção Rápida*.

Further, the government of Cape Verde created various technical commissions, associations and teams which have been responsible for providing scientific advice to the government with regards to the COVID-19 crisis. According to a government official,

> *We created a risk management group and national health commission/association, which provide[s] updates with regard to COVID-19 contamination, spreading, and its situation in the country. In consultation with teachers' unions, these scientific advisory bodies were responsible for advising the government during the school closure and providing technical advice on measures to be taken when reopening schools across the country. (Government official, Cape Verde, October 2020)*

As highlighted above, various policy responses undertaken by the government in Cape Verde are based on technical advice and assistance of the risk management group and the national health commission, which have been supporting the country to cope with the health, economic and educational impacts of the pandemic in the archipelago. Moreover, the government uses evidence from the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as the Risk Management Group and Technical Commission of the Ministry of Health to comply with all rules related to school closures, social distance and hygiene issues.

Delivery of education

Various distance learning modalities have been employed to ensure the continuity of learning during the lockdown. These include the following modalities:

First, in efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 crisis in the country, the Ministry of Education used television and radio to run a programme called the 'Learn and Study at Home programme', which started on 27 April and ended on 26 June 2020. As an alternative model of distance learning, the programme was aired via television broadcasters like TCV and Green Estúdio as well as radio platforms such as Rádio Cabo Verde, Rádio Educativa, and community radio stations. This was also confirmed by the government official in our interview.

For the third quarter of the year, we applied home schooling using television and radio classes. Teachers would prepare the content, the materials, and deliver them to the school or community so that parents or guardians [could] go and collect the materials for their children. (Government official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

This distance-based education programme serviced all classes from Grades 1 to 12 of primary and secondary levels. Moreover, pre-recorded and live lessons on both TV and radio lasted at least 20 to 30 minutes each, with a total of five to six hours of broadcasts a day (UNESCO, 2020d).

Second, the Ministry of Education broadcast all pre-recorded and live presentations of the Learn and Study at Home programme via online learning platforms like YouTube, through which teachers and students with smartphones and robust internet connectivity could access the lessons any time at their convenience.

Despite the government's efforts, teachers' unions like SIPROFIS in Cape Verde opposed the Learn and Study at Home distance education programme as impractical in the context of the country. In addition to the lack of devices such as TV, radio and mobile phones, the union leaders held that there are still structural problems related to media (such as radio, television and the internet) across the country, which has poor connectivity, and in some places is entirely devoid of signal (InforPress, 2020). The teachers' unions therefore wrote an open letter to the Ministry of Education informing them that "*in order to provide online classes, the government should provide at least minimum conditions that would ensure that every child learns*

in… equitable way[s], including students based [in] remote areas"
(Teacher union official, Cape Verde, October 2020).

Our desk-based review and interview data therefore suggest that teachers' unions were not receptive to the Ministry of Education's proposal to resume classes with the distance-based learning system and considered such automatic switching as an unreasonable alternative. As a result, when schools reopened on 1 October in Cape Verde, it is our view that many learners were unlikely to be on par with other children in terms of syllabus coverage since most of them, particularly vulnerable children, could not access remote and distance-based online lessons.

C.   Educational content

Education response to curriculum and assessment

The first aspect of curriculum that many governments have to grapple with during the COVID-19 pandemic was the change in the school calendar and timetable. In the case of Cape Verde, the government adopted a total closure strategy in which all educational institutions were closed from 20 March 2020 in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the archipelago. This closure was also reported by the government official during our interviews.

> *The first case of COVID-19 appeared in Cape Verde on the 18th of March 2020. In order to reduce the contamination risks, all schools and universities were closed immediately since then and the government prepared a Response Plan so that students could have access to distance and home-based schooling. (Government official, Cape Verde, October 2020)*

Following this closure, the government anticipated that the school year would be extended from 20 March to 31 July 2020. However, on 1 August, the Ministry of Education announced that the date of the new academic year, scheduled to begin on 1 October 2020, was subject to change depending on the progress in the COVID-19 situation in the country (Lusa Agency, 2020). Despite the rise of COVID-19 cases, the government of Cape Verde reopened schools on 1 October as planned, so that students could have access to both distance-based and face-to-face classes.

Regarding curriculum content, both the desk-based review and interview data show no modification in content coverage. The

desk-based review, for example, shows that the distance learning programme in basic education was introduced in phases focusing mainly on the core subjects of Portuguese, Science and Mathematics (Lusa Agency, 20 April 2020). This observation echoes the remarks provided by the government official, albeit with some discrepancies, as can be seen below.

During the pandemic, we provided essential content and the curriculum focused on [a] few subjects rather than all subjects. And these subjects were languages, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Science. After the pandemic, we expect to teach essential content for all disciplines. This means all subjects will be taught but with a focus on essential content. (Government official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

Plans for reopening schools

Although there was no entry of a new cohort, the government applied a complete reopening approach in which all classes began the new academic year on 1 October 2020. According to the government official interviewed, necessary preparations for the reopening of schools as advised by the World Health Organization and local health experts were done to ensure the safety of teachers and students in schools.

We plan to go back to school on 1st October and it will be the new school year. Again, training materials will be provided to make sure that everything is clean. Various equipment and kits for measuring students and teachers' temperature will be provided. Also, there will be soaps [sic] and water throughout the schools so that teachers and students can be washing their hands as much as possible. (Government official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

Likewise, before reopening of schools, teachers' unions in Cape Verde requested the government to ensure that ten main issues were observed:

i. There should be hygiene procedures and protective equipment in place e.g. face masks, soap and water.

ii. COVID-19 tracing tests should be conducted for all.

iii. Giving attention to areas and streets where contamination levels are rising and taking these into consideration when reopening schools.

iv. Increasing the number of staff to provide a guarantee of safety to both students and teachers in schools.

v. Mixing online classes with face-to-face classes to provide equitable education for all and to ensure that all learners have the resources they need to follow classes appropriately.

vi. Taking into consideration all possible scenarios with regard to online classes for students who live in remote areas who have no access to electricity, TV, radio, and the internet, to ensure that no one is left behind.

vii. Reducing the number of students in classes to ensure physical and social distancing as advised by health experts.

viii. Providing all teachers with tablets and laptops.

ix. Increasing the number of new teachers to face the pandemic i.e. through open competition.

x. Making sure that the government resolves all outstanding payment issues with teachers, because for many years no teachers in the country have been paid their promotion arrears.

Assessment and high stakes examinations

While the Ministry of National Education in Cape Verde has not specified the exact date when high stakes examinations may take place in the country, it has stressed that national assessment tests for the Grade 12 students across the country will be carried out in person through "*the strict application of rules of physical and social distance, as well as individual protection as prescribed by the National Civil Protection Service*". As such, "*special attention*" is given for the Grade 12 students to "guarantee the teaching of the subject contents necessary for the continuation to university studies" (Lusa Agency, 2020, p. 1).

For other students without national assessments, there have been no terminal or end of the year assessments. Assessments of the third term for all students was based on the assessments of the two previous terms (Lusa Agency, 2020). A similar observation was echoed by the government official who emphasised during our interview that "*there was no disparity within the students mainly because the examinations were based on the first two quarters of the year i.e. before the lockdown when classes were given through [radio and TV] or manually*".

Overall, while there have been cancellations of formative assessments and postponements of high stakes examinations in Cape Verde, the desk-based results suggest the possibility of students' progression from one class level to the next for non-candidate classes in the new academic year scheduled for 1 October 2020. This is because the Ministry of National Education has decided to allow all students to progress to the next level based on examinations carried out during the previous term. However, for exit level classes, it remains undetermined when students will write national examinations and hence be able to progress to tertiary level after graduation. In essence, the failure to announce the date for the administration of the high stakes examinations for Grade 12 classes increased the pressure on students and their families with regard to the future.

Psychosocial support for teachers and learners

According to the government official, health systems in Cape Verde are universal, which means everyone, including teachers, have access to psychosocial support needed during the coronavirus pandemic. Teachers could therefore seek support for health and psychological issues arising from the COVID-19 crisis. However, while the desk-based review and interview data from a teachers' union official is silent on the matter, the interview data obtained from the government official suggests that no psychosocial support services were offered to address the specific needs of teachers and learners during the COVID-19 lockdown in Cape Verde. This was particularly the case because the so-called psychosocial support for teachers and learners during the lockdown seems to have been subsumed under the broad category of universal access to health care and treatment issues, which are not necessarily tailored to their specific psychosocial needs.

Education response to teacher professional development

In an attempt to increase the knowledge and skills base of teachers, the government of Cape Verde has undertaken various initiatives.

Firstly, in partnership with Cape Verde Education Ministry, the Regional Communication for Development team conducted training of trainers for over 60 teachers, aiming to strengthen their knowledge around COVID-19 and their role in addressing rumours and engaging students and parents regarding the return to schools on 1 October 2020 (UNICEF, 2020h). According to the government official, this training was crucial given that

*For teachers who are about to face new reality and make
themselves familiar with new technology as opposed to face-to-
face classes, it is important to be aware [of] the new process and
given the fact that not all teachers were familiar with this new
system, they are to be given training to ensure that they can be able
to deliver classes at the highest standards as much as possible.
(Government official, Cape Verde, October 2020)*

Secondly, the Ministry of Education in Cape Verde designated the
period between 24 August and 30 September 2020 as a period for
planning and preparing various academic activities. One of these
academic activities involved organising continuous training for
teachers in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to
prepare them for the 2020/2021 academic year. According to the
minister responsible for education, Maritza Rosaball, teachers in
both primary and lower secondary schools needed training so that
they could work on new education design and delivery modalities, in
which distance education is complementary to face-to-face education
(i.e. blended learning) (Deutsche Welle [DW] News, 2020). The same
information was provided by the teachers' union official.

*There should be continuous preparations for the development
of teachers with regards to access and knowledge on the new
technologies. This means making sure that teachers keep on
learning to know how to use the new technologies for them to be
able to deliver online classes in times of crises. (Teachers' union
official, Cape Verde)*

Despite the government's pledge, professional development for
teachers during the COVID-19 crisis in Cape Verde did not take place,
and hence it was hard to ascertain whether many teachers in the
country have the necessary skills to apply distance-based teaching
methodologies. Despite the important role teachers needed to play
in providing distance-based education, they were not adequately
trained for this, given that the government only planned to organise
ICT training to prepare for the reopening of schools on 1 October
2020. The government therefore needs to ensure that teachers not
only receive adequate and continuous professional training, but
also have the morale and motivation to continue teaching during
the crisis. Once teachers are motivated by timely payment of their
incentives and by promotion, they will be better able to minimise the
problems arising from the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

D. Country summary and synthesis

The COVID-19 crisis in Cape Verde has had some negative effects on education.

First, the government Study and Learn at Home distance education programme has widened the divide between the rich and poor children in the country in terms of access to distance learning technology. This was reflected in conversations with the teachers' union official:

I'm telling you, there exists a place that the TV cannot, it's not possible in that same part of island and exists that a family doesn't have TV, doesn't have radio, doesn't have computer, does not have computers and there are not equality, I'm saying. (Teachers' union official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

Second, the longer schools are closed, the greater the loss of learning time and the greater the chances that children, particularly the poor and girls, will not return to the classroom when schools reopen (InforPress, 2020). In this way, the transition to distance and home-based learning in Cape Verde is likely to be challenging for lower-income children, children with special needs, and girls who are exposed to vulnerabilities such as early marriages and pregnancies.

E. Key themes and takeaways

1. There is a need for strengthening collaboration between the government and other educational stakeholders e.g. teachers' unions, parents and teachers during the pandemic. This is necessary to ensure that all initiatives and programmes adopted by the government during the crisis are successful as all stakeholders get involved.

2. Not all students in Cape Verde have been reached through distance and home-based learning due to inequities and inequalities in terms of access to digital devices, socio-economic status, home backgrounds and regional differentiation between urban and rural areas. This stems from the fact that there seem to be no clear policies supporting digital learning and broadcast learning during the crisis in Cape Verde.

3. Professional training for teachers did not take place during the pandemic, except for partial training planned for one month to prepare teachers for the reopening of schools. This suggests that

there is no continuous, sustainable and systematic professional development that can equip teachers with the necessary skills and competencies needed to teach through the emergency.

4. Curriculum and assessment systems need to be reviewed and necessary adjustments be made to cater to the changing needs of all learners arising during and after COVID-19.

5. There appears to be a sharp digital divide and socio-economic vulnerabilities among learners, but there is no clear mitigation plan for these inequities and inequalities exposed or caused by COVID-19. Despite reopening schools on 1 October, the government of Cape Verde still needs to mitigate the inequities and inequalities caused by COVID-19, particularly among disadvantaged children such as the poor, girls and children with disabilities.

2. Mozambique

A. Description of country context

Located in south-eastern Africa, Mozambique covers an area of 799 380 km2; its current population is estimated at 31 394 007 as of 1 September 2020 (Worldometer, 2020b). Since it attained political independence from Portugal in 1975, Mozambique has experienced frequent violence and civil wars causing massive loss of life. A combination of natural disasters, ongoing insurgent attacks and frequent political conflicts make Mozambique the world's sixth-most deteriorated country over the past decade and the second-most deteriorated country on the 2020 Fragile States Index (FSI).

The education system in Mozambique involves seven years of primary education, four years of secondary education (two years for junior level and two years for senior level), and three to five years of higher education. The country has a total of 13 337 primary schools with 101 000 pre-primary school pupils and 6.9 million primary level pupils, as well as 677 secondary schools with 1.25 million students (UN-RC Mozambique, 2020; Jornal de Angola, 2020).

The first case of COVID-19 in Mozambique was announced on 22 March, after a 75-year-old male entered the country when returning from the United Kingdom on 20 March 2020 (WHO, 2020d). As of 13 October, Mozambique had 10 088 confirmed cases and 75 deaths (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020d).

B. Educational governance

Educational policy-making response

Regarding stakeholders' involvement in policy-making, the desk-based review and interview data show that teachers' unions in Mozambique have been involved in different ways in education policy-making and planning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers' union leaders, for example, were involved by the government in setting out strategies regarding the COVID-19 and school reopening plans. As a response to this, a teachers' union official noted that

The National Teachers Union of Mozambique (ONP/SNPM) was invited to participate in meetings led by the Minister of Education

*and Human Development (MINEDH) in order to outline the
strategies for the reopening of schools. ONP/SNPM has also been
been informed of MINEDH's plans on the matter (Teachers' union
official, Mozambique, March 2021).*

Moreover, the Teachers' Union (ONP/SNPM) and other key
stakeholders such as local educational authorities and school
councils were engaged in other programmes such as the prevention
of violence against children and gender-based violence, as well as
Inclusive Education through simple messaging by distance (e.g.
SMS, WhatsApp, radio spots) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Likewise, other stakeholders such as UNICEF, UNESCO and UNHCR
in cooperation with the government have played a key role in
formulating, planning and financing various education policies and
preparedness response plans during the COVID-19 crisis (UN-OCHA,
2020a).

Regarding the organisation of COVID-19 response, the government
created the Emergency Commission within the Ministry of Health
(MoH) to ensure an effective coordination of COVID-19 prevention
and response through the efforts of nine technical working groups
co-led by MoH staff and development partners. In guiding its
COVID-19 pandemic response, the government uses the evidence
from the Emergency Commission and technical working groups
established within the Ministry of Health. Internally, the Commission
meets twice weekly in a broader group with the participation of
key departments of the ministry, line ministries (e.g. Ministry of
Education), and development partners. In addition, the Humanitarian
Country Team, led by the Resident Coordinator and composed of UN
agencies, NGOs, Red Cross and donor representatives, was involved
in developing a response plan to COVID-19, focusing on sector
specific impacts. This has led to a Response and Preparedness Plan
which has been instrumental in ensuring that various socio-economic
sectors such as education, health, and the country's economy
continue running during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (UN-
OCHA, 2020a).

Delivery of education

As schools are shut or operating intermittently during the pandemic,
there has been a concerted effort to explore a range of alternative
education delivery models. This section will cover some of the main
modes.

The delivery mode involves television and radio, through which Radio Moçambique and Televisão de Moçambique have been broadcasting pre-recorded and live lessons for various subjects at both primary and secondary levels (UNICEF, 2020i). Yet it is difficult to guarantee equity in terms of coverage and access since most areas and families, particularly in the rural and conflict-affected areas such as Cabo Delgado, have neither access to electricity nor TV. It is reported, for example, that only 35% of the population have access to radio broadcasts throughout the country (Asim, Carvalho and Gera, 2020). This suggests that many learners in the rural and conflict-affected areas of Mozambique do not have access to radio and TV broadcasts.

While the government decided to deliver education through distance-based learning due to COVID-19, some constraints are challenging this model of delivery. First, the home-based methodology has not yet been developed and many children and teachers do not have adequate ICT facilities to continuously charge and maintain their cell phones, which affects the quality of learning and achievement of standard literacy and numeracy levels. Second, teachers lack resources to manage teaching from home and collecting tasks done at home by children, while many children in the country are not in environments conducive to learning at home (UN-OCHA, 2020a).

C. Education content

Education response to curriculum and assessment

Regarding the change in the school timetable and calendar, Mozambique adopted a total closure strategy whereby all schools were closed on 23 March 2020 as part of the country's initial response to the COVID-19 crisis (UN Mozambique, June 2020). Until October 2020, all schools remained closed, even though in mid-May 2020, the government had announced that it would start a phased approach to school reopening on 27 July, with priority given to examination classes, namely Grade 7 in primary schools and Grades 10 and 12 in secondary schools (Jornal de Angola, 2020). Yet, this plan was later cancelled by the government due to the worsening conditions of the pandemic.

With regard to curriculum content, there seems to be no change in the content covered during the pandemic in Mozambique, but the government has made various attempts to ensure that distance and

remote learning cover different subject areas for both primary and secondary levels (UNICEF, 2020i). The government also intends to provide catch-up and remedial classes to cover the missed content by targeting vulnerable students who have fallen behind during the school closure, including learners with special needs and those living in areas affected by conflict (UN-OCHA, 2020b).

Plans for reopening schools

Recently, the government of Mozambique reiterated its initial plan to reopen schools using a phased reopening approach in which students who were preparing for final examinations were expected to commence their classes on 1 October 2020 (UN-RC Mozambique, 2020). However, before reopening schools, the government through the Ministry of National Education and Human Development (MINEDH) prepared the Training and COVID-19 Monitoring Plan that provided health protocols and safety guidelines, which were to be adhered to by all educational role players. This is also captured by the teachers' union official in our interview:

During the middle of the State of Emergency, the ONP/SNPM, with the help of Educational International and in collaboration with the Education for All Movement, and other members of the Steering Committee, met in the city of Beira with all 11 Provincial Secretaries, where the minister presented his Training and Monitoring Plan, aiming to ensure that the reopening of schools occurs safely (Teachers' union official, Mozambique, March 2021).

Our interview with the teachers' union official further showed that the same meetings were replicated at the provincial and district levels, in which the teacher's union (ONP/SNPM) participated and cooperated with the government and other stakeholders to encourage schools to comply with the health protocols of the Ministries of Health and Education during the pandemic. As has been highlighted before, on 1 October 2010, the government reopened secondary schools for Grade 12 students, who needed to prepare for and write their final exams. This was followed by the reopening of primary schools in which only Grade 7 students who were to prepare for and write their final exams resumed their classes on 2 November 2020.

However, all schools that resumed their classes for students writing their final examinations were required to comply with health guidelines and protocols such as reducing the number of students in the classrooms and hygiene measures, including handwashing

with soaps and sanitising, which were imposed by the health and education authorities (Journal de Angola, 2020).

In the case of non-examination classes, at the time of writing this report, there was still no exact date set by the government authorities responsible for the reopening of schools. Nevertheless, this phased reopening approach applied only to public schools, and not private schools. Both desk-based review and interview data indicated that private schools were able to open schools for grades not facing examinations on 19 October 2020. Unlike public schools, private schools were able to reopen schools for non-examination classes because they are likely to have fewer students, which made it possible to observe all health protocols and other preventive measures as directed by the Ministries of Health and Education.

Assessment during COVID-19 in Mozambique

Following the reopening of both secondary and primary schools for examination classes on 1 October and 2 November 2020 respectively, students were given almost four months to prepare for and write their final examinations. According to the teachers' union official, final examinations took place on 1 February 2021 for Grade 12 students in secondary schools and on 25 January 2021 for Grade 7 students in primary schools. However, because of COVID-19, it has been observed that many students in both primary and secondary schools have not performed well in their final exams. According to the teachers' union official,

Many students, mainly in primary education have failed their exams. We have also recorded many failures in secondary education in which approximately 50% students have failed. These failures were registered also in big cities like Maputo and Beira, something which shows that the ICT constraints are not only limited to rural areas but also in urban areas. In cities too, many families face economic problems, which act as obstacles for buying [data] and even having compatible devices... for learning during the lockdown. (Teachers' union official, Mozambique, March 2021).

For other non-exam classes, all forms of assessment tests and examinations have been cancelled for an unspecified period. However, all students were assured progression into next levels of classes subject to diagnostic evaluation. Additionally, students were urged to do home assignments, which were to be collected by teachers for marking and grading (UN-CT Mozambique, 2020).

Psychosocial support for teachers and learners during the lockdown

During the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure, teachers in Mozambique have undergone various orientation courses and training in mental health and psychosocial support for themselves and their students to enable them to manage stress and anxiety caused by the disease (UN-OCHA, 2020a). For students, the Ministry of Education has put in place various strategies, including a continuous sensitisation on COVID-19 prevention, access to comprehensive sexual education for girls, sexual and reproductive health rights information for boys and girls, as well as providing referrals and GBV services while schools are closed. These psychosocial support measures also involve students who experience different forms of stress, anxiety and trauma caused by school closures across the country (UN-CT Mozambique, 2020).

Education response to teacher professional development

As the backbone of any education system, teachers are vital to realising learning objectives, regardless of the situation. With the COVID-19 pandemic in Mozambique, teachers have been on the frontline to ensure continuity of learning during the school closure. Some teachers, for example, have prepared pre-recorded and live lessons for presentations on TV and radio across the country. Furthermore, teachers had to continue teaching online and collecting tasks and assignments done by their students from home. Despite this, teaching during the COVID-19 crisis has been hampered by insufficient teacher training and resources for managing and implementing remote teaching.

Recognising the above limitation, the National Teacher Training Department under the Ministry of Education with other partners such as UNESCO and UNICEF developed a framework to provide orientation, assistance and training for teachers on how to carry out distance education in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These programmes, among others, involved training teachers to monitor the learning process for learners during the lockdown (UN-OCHA, 2020a).

D. *Country summary and synthesis*

With the lockdown and its resultant school closure in Mozambique, COVID-19 has affected people in different ways.

First, COVID-19 arrived in Mozambique at a time when humanitarian needs were already rising due to climatic shocks in multiple parts of the country and growing insecurity in Cabo Delgado. Drought, cyclones, floods and violence over the past years have left at least 2.5 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance across the country. Also, before the COVID-19, an estimated 2 million people were projected to be severely food insecure across Mozambique (UN-OCHA, 2020b). This suggests that the destruction caused by back-to-back disasters and now COVID-19 is escalating an already alarming food security situation, and exhausting the resilience of families.

Second, following the country-wide closure of schools on 23 March, 235 000 children no longer access critical school feeding programmes; malnutrition is expected to be exacerbated in the period ahead. As a consequence, an estimated 67 500 children will require treatment for malnutrition in the next nine months across the country. This highlights a deep divide in terms of food security between children from poor families and those from rich families, aggravated by the pandemic.

Third, while the closure of schools will lessen the spread of the disease, it immediately affects full access to education and quality of learning among learners. The most at risk are the children whose families are displaced as a result of natural disasters and the violence in Cabo Delgado, as well as vulnerable groups in society such as the poor, disabled children and girls (UN-OCHA, 2020b). The COVID-19 crisis, for example, has put more than 8 million children at risk of not acquiring basic skills due to the closure of all schools since 23 March, but it has led to the introduction of distance-based education as an alternative to face-to-face classes (UN-CT Mozambique, June 2020).

The timing of the pandemic in Mozambique is worrying since it has been interlocked with multiple crises such as climate and conflict, thereby leading to far-reaching consequences for the population. In April 2019 for example, the country was hit by cyclones Idai and Kenneth, affecting 2.2 million people, with many homes, schools and crops severely ravaged (Mwangi, 2020). Moreover, an ongoing insurgency in northern Mozambique, frequent terrorist attacks, insecurity and violence, as well as consecutive climatic shocks in Cabo Delgado province contributed to major displacements, disruption of livelihoods, and lack of access to basic services, including education. Lastly, attacks by non-state armed groups have destroyed more than 107 schools (including a teacher training centre), affecting more than 56 000 children and almost 1 100 teachers (UN-OCHA, 2020b). The COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in northern Mozambique, has therefore aggravated the already existing challenges caused by other crises.

E. Key themes and takeaways

1. While stakeholders such as local educational authorities, teachers' unions, school councils and families have been engaged in other programmes such as the prevention of violence against children, gender-based violence and Inclusive Education through simple messaging by distance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the extent to which teachers' unions in Mozambique have effectively influenced the education policy-making and planning during the COVID-19 pandemic remain minimal and limited.

2. While the government of Mozambique explored a myriad of education delivery methods and decided to deliver education through distance and home-based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were several constraints associated with implementating the said delivery modality due to limited infrastructural facilities such as electricity and the lack of funds for buying digital devices such as laptops and smartphones for both teachers and students.

3. The transition to digital learning has been especially challenging, while exposing the country's deep digital divides between public and private schools, within lower-income families and communities, and amongst refugees and internally displaced children.

4. The overall quality control of teaching and learning from home is limited as educational institutions in Mozambique do not have the tools and sufficient training on how to do so.

F. Macro-themes for the Lusophone countries

- Multimedia approach to learning: As we have seen in the desk-based review, the frameworks for the continuity of learning for all children during the pandemic in Cape Verde and Mozambique have involved a variety of learning resources and technologies, including radio, TV and online platforms. Also, although the two countries have adopted distance learning approaches, due to the abrupt and unexpected change in the modes of education delivery, both have prioritised providing distance-based learning for learners in examination classes, at least initially.

- A sharp digital divide in access to modern learning technologies: there is a sharp digital divide in access to various learning technologies between urban and rural areas, as well as

between children of different socio-economic status and home backgrounds. In Mozambique, for example, 74% of children live without electricity; only 7% to 2% have access to the internet, and 35% to radio and 22% to television (UN-RC Mozambique, 2020). The same applies to Cape Verde where most children are reported to live without digital devices such as radios, TVs and mobile phones. There are also problems of weak internet connectivity in both urban and rural areas, and most places, particularly in rural areas, have no connectivity at all (Lusa Agency, 20 April 2020). These statistics for both countries suggest that despite government efforts to ensure the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, most children have not been learning due to gaps in terms of access to digital devices for distance learning, and geographical differences in the form of radio and TV coverage.

- No deliberate initiatives to mitigate inequity and exclusion in both countries: beyond the use of radio and television for providing distance-based lessons in both countries, there is little evidence of deliberate initiatives to address the thorny issues of inequity and exclusion. In Mozambique, for instance, children and families displaced by natural disasters and violence in Cabo Delgado province, as well as vulnerable groups such as the poor and disabled children, have been excluded in planning for continuity for learning. Home and distance-based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in these two countries benefit families and children who have access to digital devices as opposed to the marginalised groups noted above. When schools reopen in both countries, these learners will therefore probably not be on par with better-resourced children.

- No specific policies and adequate preparation for supporting teacher professional development (TPD): Although both Cape Verde and Mozambique have put in place some strategies for TPD during the COVID-19 crisis, there are no specific policies to address this, and there has been no time for adequate preparation of teachers for online lesson delivery. For this reason, while the preparation frameworks seek to ensure the continuity of learning during school closure, teachers in both countries have not been trained to work from home, and hence their participation in distance learning remains minimal since this requires a different pedagogical approach. In both countries, for example, home-based teaching methodologies have not yet been developed and many teachers do not

have adequate ICT facilities and sufficient resources to manage their teaching from home. In essence, this affects not only the quality of learning and achievement of basic literacy skills, but also their ability to deliver online lessons and collect assignments completed at home by children.

- Limited quality control of distance-based learning, teaching and assessment: quality control for home and distance-based teaching or learning in Cape Verde and Mozambique is limited, and most schools do not have the tools, equipment and training to implement it. There are also no adequate guiding principles or guidelines on how to ensure quality and assess learning other than by means of home assignments.

3. Ethiopia

A. Description of country context

Formerly known as Abyssinia, Ethiopia is a landlocked country on the Horn of Africa. Covering an area of 1 126 829 km², the current population is estimated at 115 489 150 (Worldometer, 2020c), which makes it the second-most populous nation in Africa after Nigeria. Ethiopia is the oldest independent country, and has never been colonised. It has more than 80 ethnic groups and many local languages (Nations Online, 2020). However, for the past four decades, Ethiopia has been a highly unstable nation, suffering from political violence, civil wars and radical political changes.

Educationally, the Ethiopian basic education system involves eight years of elementary education, divided into two cycles of four years, and four years of secondary education, divided into two stages of two years (World Education Services, 2018). As shown in Table 6, the latest enrolment figures indicate that there are 3.2 million pupils at pre-primary level, 20 million pupils at primary level, and 2.8 million students at the secondary level, in over 47 000 schools across the country (Federal Ministry of Education [FEMOE], 2020; UNICEF, 2020j).

Table 6. Student enrolment figures for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools

Level	Male	Female	Total
Pre-primary	1 676 156	1 546 097	3 222 252
Primary	10 654 351	9 392 006	20 046 357
Secondary	1 526 653	1 293 482	2 820 135
Total			26 088 744

Source: Ministry of Education [MOE], April 2020

The first COVID-19 case in Ethiopia was confirmed on 13 March, while the first fatality was reported on 5 April 2020 (MOE, 2020; UNICEF, 2020k). As of 3 September, the country had 54 409 confirmed cases and 846 fatalities (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020e). Unlike most African countries, Ethiopia did not introduce national lockdown but undertook moderate to strong strategic measures, which means taking moderate measures early and scaling them up gradually. A national response was declared on 13 March, with tighter measures including compulsory quarantine for those infected with and those who have come in contact with those infected

with the virus, an increased public awareness campaign, and a state of emergency declared on 8 April (Oqubay, 2020). Following the confirmation of the coronavirus infection in Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered the closure of all schools from 16 March across the country. This closure affected over 26 million students from over 47 000 schools (MOE, 2020). As a response to the nationwide school closure, the Ministry of Education developed the Education COVID-19 Response Plan, which supported continued learning of children at home during the lockdown (MOE, 2020).

B. Educational governance

Educational policy-making response

Education governance and policy-making in Ethiopia has involved various action measures and approaches. On the whole, the Ministry of Education has been engaging teachers, school leaders, counsellors, medical personnel and members of education forums and associations in policy-making during the COVID-19 crisis. The leaders of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association and the Ethiopian Parents' Association have also been involved in planning sessions, from the initial establishment of a command post at the federal level. The same has been applied to regions which have established their own command posts down to school level (MOE, 2020).

Using evidence from WHO and the Ministry of Health, the Federal Ministry of Education makes informed decisions based on the best available data. In turn, evidence-based data from WHO and the Ministry of Health makes FEMOE proactive in crisis management. FEMOE developed A COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan that guides the operation and development of the education sector. The ministry has also been working with the Ministry of Health to provide clear and actionable guidance for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools and other educational facilities (FEMOE, 2020).

Delivery of education

First, the government used radio and television to provide distance and home-based education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the majority of students in Ethiopia lack computers and internet access, FEMOE advised learners in basic and secondary education to follow the radio or satellite television lessons (Tiruneh, 2020). Since

May 2020, for example, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and regional stations aired the award-winning children's education programme Tsehai Loves Learning on TV and radio under the USAID READ II project to help children continue learning while out of school.

These national and regional weekly broadcasts have helped millions of children to practise reading and literacy skills at home. Also, this TV programme includes sign language so that individuals with hearing impairments can benefit as well (MOE, 2020). Volunteer teachers and university professors are employed by the ministry of education to record audio and video lessons and develop worksheets, exercises and tests and answer keys (MOE, 2020).

Second, the distance-based education delivery modalities in Ethiopia involved the provision of both online and offline learning packages for students during the lockdown. Considering that the largest percentage of households in Ethiopia lack access to radio and TV, the government has responded to this problem by providing e-textbooks, textbooks and printed learning packages. These learning packages for each grade and subject are developed at the central level, adapted, and distributed via the postal service through teachers and school leaders or via markets and community health workers (MOE, 2020).

Thirdly, there has been widespread use of online platforms to provide distance-based education, particularly in most private schools. Unlike their counterpart public schools, most private schools in urban localities in Ethiopia have found solutions to distance teaching by uploading reading materials and assignments via Google Classroom and e-mail, and by using social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Many private schools in major urban cities of Ethiopia such as Addis Ababa, Adama, Bahir Dar, Hawasa and Mekelle have sent learning materials directly to parents via WhatsApp or Telegram, and the parents help their children to access the learning materials from their phones (Tiruneh, 2020).

Despite these various efforts made by the government to ensure the continuity of learning in Ethiopia, some constraints remain in place. Although radio and television lessons may work for some children in urban areas, there is no clear evidence of how many parents in rural areas have access to radio and satellite television. Also, given that more than 80% of the Ethiopian population lives in rural areas with limited or no access to electricity, it is highly unlikely that radio and television lessons would reach all primary and secondary level children in these areas. Additionally, even when radio and television

lessons reach some of the rural children, it is unlikely that they receive sufficient support from their parents at home because most parents have never been to school (Tiruneh, 2020). This suggests that relying on online, radio, and television modalities risks exacerbating already wide education divides between rural and urban areas since more than 40% of households in three of Ethiopia's regions lack access to any form of technology. This occurs mainly because there are limited mechanisms in place to ensure that all children from different family backgrounds can continue to learn from home since, as noted above, not many parents have themselves been to school. Furthermore, there is a lack of the necessary infrastructure to support remote learning in Ethiopia (Tiruneh, 2020).

C   Education content

Education response to curriculum and assessment

Timetabling

Regarding timetabling as an aspect of school curriculum, Ethiopia's Federal Ministry of Education acknowledges that the timing of school reopening should be guided by the best interest of the child and overall public health considerations, based on an assessment of the associated benefits and risks and informed by cross-sectoral and context-specific evidence, including education, public health and socio-economic factors (FEMOE, 2020). Like other countries, Ethiopia adopted a full closure strategy in which all schools in the country were closed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of writing, schools in Ethiopia remain closed as part of the government's effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Currently, the MOE has initiated a promotion campaign to motivate students to return to school when they reopen (MOE, 2020).

Plans for reopening schools

At the time of writing, the mode which Ethiopia would employ when reopening schools was unknown but it would depend on the outcome of a task team study. For this reason, on 16 May 2016, the MOE formed a representative task team with clear roles at the school, district, zone and regional levels. Apart from providing detailed plans for reopening schools in Ethiopia, the task team also investigated safe ways to restart schools across the nation once COVID-19 has been contained.

However, as a way of preparing for the reopening of schools, the federal government of Ethiopia has proposed various key issues to be addressed at federal, regional, district, and school levels before reopening schools across the country, such as conducting rapid assessment to identify the needs of local context, developing a feasible plan based on the findings of the assessment, and mobilising resources at all levels. Other measures to be taken into account are ensuring all schools have access to safe learning environments and facilities, training of administrative staff and teachers on safe distancing measures, preparing safe school feeding practices, and engaging parents, teachers, and entire communities on the back-to-school campaigns (see *Guidance on Opening Schools Safely during COVID-19* (FEMOE, 2020) for further details).

Content coverage

As a strategy to ensure the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 crisis, the Ethiopian MoE developed curricular content at the central level to be adapted where required for regional specificities, including minority languages. For that reason, technical support is given to Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) to convert the existing curricula into audio and video lessons for the remainder of the current school year, across grades from pre-primary through to upper secondary level, and to adapt the subject content to the regional needs as appropriate. In addition to pedagogical content, the REBs are supported to provide content involving the psychosocial needs of students during the pandemic (MOE, 2020).

Additional learning support when schools reopen

Once schools reopen in Ethiopia, the MOE plans to provide accelerated instruction to mitigate the loss of learning from prolonged school closures. The government also plans to conduct make-up classes on weekends and after school hours during weekdays to compensate for missed classes once schools reopen. Additionally, Ethiopia plans to support the provision of remedial classes targeting students with low performance during the accelerated learning phase (FEMOE, 2020).

Therefore, for both accelerated learning and remedial classes, lesson plans and guidelines will be developed at the central level, adapted and disseminated by REBs to all public primary and secondary schools across the country (FEMOE, 2020). This observation was further echoed by an Ethiopian teachers' association official:

> *We are aware of the current gaps that have come about due to COVID-19. Our experts are currently working towards compressing*

*the curriculum so that teachers should focus on main content of the
curriculum. In particular, they are working towards compressing
the curriculum so that teachers should only focus on critical areas
and curriculum content that students may have missed. (Teachers'
association official, Ethiopia, September 2020)*

Assessment response

The COVID-19 crisis has brought a significant challenge to managing
high-stakes examinations and assessments which were expected
to take place when the academic year ends in May and June 2020
respectively in many countries. In Ethiopia, with a September to June
academic calendar, learners have not written examinations since
closures occurred in mid-April 2020 (Kassahun et al., 2020).

The MoE has also cancelled end-of-year examinations for promotion
to the next grade; regional examinations for completion of primary
school in Grade 8 and national examinations for entrance into
higher education in Grade 12 will be administered when schools
reopen and learners are provided with weeks of catch-up classes.
Education authorities will need to communicate with local education
officials to understand how examinations were affected by different
learners in different regions. According to MOE, curriculum experts
have adapted academic schedules, curricula, teaching and learning
materials, and instructional supports have been provided to help
learners catch up effectively. Some examinations will continue to
be required, but other examinations may be eliminated or used for
formative purposes only.

National and district education leaders are also expected to engage
educators to explore if/how examinations can be modified to test
only what has been taught. Policymakers at MoE and REBs will need
to revise the policy to reflect examination approaches, including
promotion. It is expected that adaptations to examination practices
should continue to be valid, reliable and equitable, and should
adhere to infection prevention and control measures (Kassahun et
al., 2020). However, many students and their parents are affected
by the lack of clarity from the government on issues like how the
national examination will be prepared and when it will take place
(Mengistie, 2020).

Psychosocial support for teachers and learners during the lockdown

As in many countries, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia provides
psychosocial support to learners using two strategies.

First, it works with partners to reach children and families with key prevention and psychosocial support messages through TV, radio, and social media outlets at all levels, including community and school levels. Second, it provides sensitisation messages through publicised information campaigns on TV and radio about gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, juvenile pregnancy, unequal social norms and protection of children with special needs during the pandemic and school closure (MOE, 2020). Similarly, the Ethiopian teachers' association official asserted that psychosocial support has been part of the curriculum during the school closures in Ethiopia, though the extent to which the curriculum has accommodated this is yet to be confirmed.

Learners' access to technologies and learning resources

The Ethiopian government through the MoE has put in place a strategy for the continuity of learning at all levels and which provides various learning technologies and resources while schools are closed. Learners in Ethiopia have access to a wide range of learning technologies and resources, including e-learning for secondary education; multi-media channels for primary schools; printed learning packages; and e-textbooks (MOE, 2020).

According to the MoE, the provision of various offline learning materials for each grade and subjects in both primary and secondary levels of education gives priority to the undeveloped regions of Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, and Somali that have no access to TV and radio channels or mobile phone networks (MOE, 2020).

Education response to teacher professional development

The Ethiopian MOE has planned the following measures before the reopening of schools and during the academic period.

Before the opening of schools

The following measures were put in place:

1. Training in the development of a condensed curriculum for the Accelerated Learning Program. This focuses on employing a cascade model to reach all schools and equip selected teachers with the capacities and skills to provide accelerated and remedial classes when the schools reopen; foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy for first-level primary education and key competency areas for the rest of the grades;

individual rather than peer learning and self-assessment to reduce COVID-19 transmission; individual exercises, taking responsibility for one's learning and summative evaluation.

2. Training in building teachers' skills to effectively carry out adaptations. This includes strategies for teachers to identify learners who have fallen further behind or who are struggling to keep up with the adapted curriculum, to deliver relevant learner-centred remediation; and re-engaging learners, identifying those at risk of dropping out and assessing learning loss and formulating plans for remediation.

3. Training in implementing a catch-up curriculum.

4. Training in meeting learners' social-emotional learning (SEL) and protection needs.

5. Orientation regarding the need for sufficient qualified number of teachers in each grade. This implies motivating teachers to work longer hours and weekends since the number of qualified teachers is limited. It also includes convincing teachers that their free service is critical during this difficult time and valued by providing a letter of appreciation, since paying compensation may not be practical.

6. Orientation with regard to having clearly defined conditions of work and compensation (if any) by articulating the extra time spent by teachers. Cash compensation may be difficult but if possible, it should be clarified after discussion with the Minister for Federal Education.

7. Receiving periodic, relevant and structured training for teachers according to needs and circumstances related to any change needed in the methodology and assessment. This includes supporting individual learning and home learning, shaping a vision of academic success for all students, using technology in the classroom and maintaining the safety of students.

8. Equipping teachers with basic information about COVID-19 including its symptoms, complications, transmission and prevention. This includes providing current and timely awareness training to teachers based on the latest scientific developments on the nature of the virus and the overall situation of the pandemic. Teachers should transfer this awareness training to students and follow up their practice in self-protection.

9. Supplying teachers with the necessary prevention

materials such as face masks, sanitizer and gloves.

10. Teachers should receive training on the techniques to be applied in communication campaigns to parents for re-enrolment of all students, on a community-specific basis. This includes training in engaging the community and building trust by reducing the perception of risk. Teachers should receive training in supporting parents and children on their way to and from school. Special training should also be given to teachers to address the needs of girls, children with disabilities and marginalised children during this COVID situation (MOE, 2020).

During the academic period

1. Teachers must ensure that instruction is learner-centred, participatory and inclusive and places students at the centre of their learning. This includes lessons that direct students to discover, practice, check and master their knowledge and skills on their own; discourage group work; facilitate and encourage student individual activities; focus on challenging lessons; employ activity-based learning, which includes a large and varied group of methods that engage students with their lessons in active ways; employ assessment for learning with limited physical interaction between teacher and student; and prepare and use integrated and/or condensed lesson plans.

2. Give regular assignments (worksheets and extra work) for students to exercise what they learn in the class at home. This includes ensuring that appropriate methods are used to evaluate and validate learning outcomes as well as correct worksheets, and to provide timely feedback.

3. Implement social distancing practices. This may include staggering the beginning and end of the school day; cancelling assemblies, sports games and other events that create crowded conditions; when possible, creating space for children's desks to be at least two meters apart; and teaching and modelling while avoiding touching.

4. Implement targeted health education integrating disease prevention and control in daily activities and lessons. This includes implementing appropriate content which is responsive to age, gender, ethnicity and disability; implementing activities built into existing subjects; reinforcing frequent hand washing and sanitation; and procuring needed supplies.

5. Work with school leaders in implementing safe school operations. This involves working with school leaders in developing and updating school emergency and contingency plans as well as working with officials to guarantee schools are not used as shelters or treatment units.

6. Implement COVID-response procedures if students or staff become unwell. This includes ensuring a procedure for separating sick students and staff from those who are well, without creating stigma. It also includes putting in place a process for informing parents/caregivers based on the culture of the society and consulting health care providers/health authorities wherever possible. Students and staff may need to be referred directly to a health facility, depending on the situation, or sent home.

(Source: FEMOE, 2020).

D. Country summary and synthesis

Our desk research has shown that the lockdown has exacerbated inequity and inequality among disadvantaged children as it appears that the less wealthy families are, the further their children lag behind. Our analysis also suggests that COVID-19 school closures could further increase the inequalities in access to quality education between children in urban and rural localities, and children of parents with higher and lower socio-economic status. School closures negatively impact children's nutritional status as many cannot access school feeding programmes, especially in humanitarian emergencies. For example, it is estimated that in Addis Ababa, approximately 560 000 primary school students no longer receive their meals due to school closure. The lowered nutritional status weakens immune systems, resulting in frequent episodes of ill health and cascading negative effects on children's learning (UNICEF, 2020j).

While the world has focused on the COVID-19 crisis, other crises such as political and environmental crises have been plaguing Ethiopia before the pandemic. The current movement restriction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, is said to have hit 8.5 million people who are already vulnerable and severely food-insecure in the Afar region of Ethiopia because of adverse climatic conditions and poverty (SIANI, 29 June 2020). Equally, these interlocking and multiple crises have further exacerbated inequalities and inequities in access to learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic among children

(about 30%) from the already vulnerable communities due to the effects of drought and conflicts in some areas of the country (see DTM-Ethiopia Report, 6 May 2020, for further details).

E. Key themes and takeaways

1. Collaboration and partnerships which have existed in some way between the government and other educational stakeholders (e.g. teachers' unions during the COVID-19 pandemic) should be used as levers to improve their future engagement with stakeholders in times of crises;

2. There are limited learning opportunities for distance and home-based learning among learners due to geographical differences, socio-economic status, and gaps in terms of access to digital devices (radio, TV and internet);

3. Strategies for curriculum and assessment adjustments as evidenced from COVID-19 experience in Ethiopia require looking less at examinations as a means of determining authentic demonstration of knowledge, skills and competencies;

4. Teacher professional development and support during COVID-19 in Ethiopia has been too narrow and limited, suggesting the need to develop a comprehensive professional development policy in times of crises;

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how the current education dispensation has further deepened inequalities and how the prevailing socio-economic status is a target constantly in motion.

4. Uganda

A. Description of country context

As a landlocked country in East Africa, Uganda covers a surface area of 241 037 km² and its total population is currently estimated at 41 583 600 million people as of June 2020 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Since attaining independence on 9 October 1962 from Great Britain, Uganda has been characterised by political conflicts, which have largely inhibited sound social development, including education (Odoi-Tanga, 2009). As such, the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda has greatly undermined the already fragile education system, particularly in northern Uganda, characterised by a political crisis with a large number of refugees. Regarding the education system, Uganda follows a structure of seven years of primary education, six years of secondary education (4 years of lower secondary level and 2 years of upper secondary level), and three to five years of post-secondary education (Tumwesige, 2020). The latest statistics for schools, students, and teachers in basic education in Uganda are indicated in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Number of schools, students and teachers in Uganda as of 2019

S/N	Level	No of schools	No of students	No of teachers
1	Pre-primary	28 208	2 050 403	90 742
2	Primary	36 314	10 777 846	315 787
3	Secondary	5 705	1 986 362	114 859
Total		**70 227**	**14 814 611**	**521 859**

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), 2020

Uganda registered its first case of COVID-19 on 21 March 2020, after a 36-year-old Ugandan male who travelled from Dubai by Ethiopian Airlines entered the country (Ministry of Health, 2 April 2020). As of 20 September, Uganda had 6 287 confirmed cases and 63 deaths, which have been recorded across the country (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 3 September 2020f). Even before the confirmation of any COVID-19 case in the country, the government responded swiftly by closing all educational institutions, with effect of 20 March 2020 for an unspecified period. This measure resulted in the closure of more than 73 200 educational institutions, including schools, tertiary and higher learning institutions, thereby affecting over 15 million learners, 600 000 refugee children and 548 000 teachers (MoES, 2020a).

B. Educational governance

Educational policy-making response

Stakeholder involvement in policy-making

The desk-based review has shown that the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) worked with a consortium of different stakeholders, including UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNESCO to develop a Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 under the guidance of the National Curriculum Development Centre. This plan for COVID-19 has guided the operation of the education sector during the school closure in the country. The literature review and interview data indicate during the initial stages there was no effective involvement of teachers' unions in policy-making about COVID-19 response in Uganda. However, as time went on, the relationship later changed, as a Ugandan teachers' union official described below:

The relationship between the government and teachers' unions didn't start well but now we are involved. At the beginning, it was entirely the Minister of Education and Sports. It was a new dimension altogether. It is until when we started being brought on board, challenging them that they cannot [sic] do things without involving us and the excuse was whatever we were doing was new. We were then requested to make an observation, and we were part of developing the guidelines. So we came in, halfway. And we started participating in meetings and giving our side of the coin. Omissions and errors were likely to happen. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

The Ugandan government official admitted that it was difficult to engage stakeholders such as teachers at first, citing COVID-19 protocol, including social distancing and the limiting of social gatherings to mitigate the spread of the virus, as the main obstacle. However, as stated by the union official, the working relation improved along the way. According to a government official,

We tried it to engage a few teachers. Unfortunately, most people were already panicking with COVID-19. Already the social distancing issues of contacts had been discouraged. So, it was difficult to get them on board but for the few that we talked to and those that could come around that time, we involved them in the preparation of this Preparedness and Response Plan. In Uganda, we have a national teachers union which has a very strong network.

Actually, they reach out to the very last teacher with their networks. So, we also used their networks to distribute the learning material so that was another way through which we included those teachers. Now as we begin preparation for reopening, we have consulted them throughout this development process of the standard operating procedures for reopening of the guidelines for reopening of schools. They have been part and parcel of the process, and they are actively involved now in mobilizing the teachers and children to get back to school in about two weeks' time. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

The interview with the government official further suggested that the stakeholders also included parents and local authorities, and the district officials on the ground distributing materials and identifying the children's homes and challenges they were facing.

On the whole, in relation to evidence drawn upon by the government's COVID-19 response plan, Uganda draws its evidence for COVID-19 response from the WHO and the Ministry of Health guidelines, which update the government on new developments and pandemic situations and measures to be taken. The MoE's Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 seeks to ensure better preparedness and effective response by MoES and other stakeholders. It also seeks to enhance the capacity of the education stakeholders to respond to the emerging needs of learners, teachers, education authorities and communities during and after this COVID-19 outbreak. It is aimed at improving coordination among stakeholders, enhancing communication, building capacities of government systems at national and sub-national levels, and providing resources for learning during the school closure.

Delivery of education

Since schools remain unopened for a long time, the MoES in Uganda has developed a framework to enable the continuity of learning during the lockdown. The framework proposes various modes of delivering lessons depending on the context of different learners across the country, as indicated below.

Self-study print materials and home packages

These materials allow learners to continue learning during the lockdown at their own pace, and at different times depending on the contexts in which they live. The self-study materials, covering a wider range of topics than the TV and radio lessons, have also been

adapted into large print and braille for learners with special needs. The focus is on empowering learners to take charge of their own learning in acquiring the necessary skills for a specific level while being monitored and supported by their parents or guardians (MoES, 2020b). However, logistical challenges hampered the successful delivery of materials, as they were not easily accessed by every learner.

We delivered print materials, yes, but these print materials were very few. You would reach a village, and you have one copy or a particular class. And the stationery shops are closed. You cannot get anywhere to photocopy. Therefore, it would not also help, although it was an intervention in good faith, in the positive direction, but the dynamics of resources could not allow to reach out to each and every intended beneficiary. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

The Ugandan government official interviewed concurred, revealing that only about 25% of the materials were printed and distributed to the learners. This was fodder for more inequalities and disparities, especially between learners in the rural and urban areas.

There were so many difficulties, especially with distribution of the materials. We had planned that when we finished developing the material, we would redistribute them to homes, but it was difficult to reach the homes and also expensive because when this thing [COVID-19] came, there was no money at the time, nobody was prepared for it. There was a lockdown so everything was difficult. However, we were able to through the local government systems through the district headquarters up to the home states. But I can assure you, most of the home states were not even able to get the materials. Some of the materials remained at the districts. Others were able to reach but you would find sometimes it is one copy for a day or something like that, and yet at the time there was nothing like photocopying. The other big thing was that we were not able to print materials enough for each and every learner after we just printed about 25% of the materials required for the learners. We tried initially to say let's first take these materials to the rural population, because it is more difficult for them to get anything on radio, TV, since they don't have access to that, but at least they can have access to the materials but even that became very difficult. So, it's the children in town who were able to access them easily. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

Radio and television

According to the framework for the continuity of learning during the lockdown, learning that takes place on TV and radio channels such as Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) TV, CBS Radio, and Star FM, caters to learners in primary and secondary schools. These radio and TV lessons are presented by model teachers selected from districts across the country, and parents and guardians are encouraged to support learners to listen and watch. Likewise, two hours per day are allocated to TV or radio, translating into 12 hours per week for all classes for all levels of basic education six days a week. To cater for learners with special needs education, all pre-recorded lessons and live presentations are placed on SD cards and memory cards. Moreover, all TV lesson presentations make use of interpreters for hearing-impaired learners (MoES, 2020b).

Online learning platforms

In Uganda, the National Information Technology Authority partnered with UNICEF to introduce Kolibri countrywide, a free e-learning platform to assist children during the school shutdown. The platform is available online and offline, with education content approved by the MoES through the National Curriculum Development Centre (UNESCO, 2020d).

Despite the fact that radio and TV broadcasts, as well as online platforms can be an effective way to support distance learning, only 87% of Ugandan households have a working radio compared to 35% with a TV, and 10% with internet access (Tumwesige, 2020). These percentages suggest that the current state of technological infrastructure for distance learning in Uganda does not achieve equity in terms of learners' geographical areas, home backgrounds and socio-economic status, since access to electronic devices such as TVs, radios, and smartphones is possible only for the few children of rich families in urban and rural areas. This has further exacerbated already existing inequalities, as observed by the teachers' union official.

We have been firefighting throughout. The privileged will be privileged because they [have] access. Some of them have access to television. Others have access to radios. Others have access to smartphones. So, in terms of equity we cannot say that there was equity in what took place during the lockdown. It is only those from well-to-do and average families where they have a radio, television sets and smartphones. Those are the ones who benefited, but the underprivileged obviously remain in the blackout. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

This was a view shared by the government official who bemoaned how the unequal distribution of resources meant that the learners from the rural areas hardly accessed the materials, as quoted above.

Thus, much effort is necessary by the government to support vulnerable learners such as poor children, refugees, the disabled, and children in rural areas where access to distance learning technology is limited.

C. Educational content

Education response to curriculum and assessment

The response to curriculum and assessment for Uganda comprises various curricular aspects.

Timetabling

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Uganda adopted a total closure strategy in which all educational institutions were closed initially for 30 days from 20 March 2020 as a way of containing a possible spread of new infections among teachers and students. A tentative date for the reopening of both primary and secondary schools at the time was scheduled for 27 April 2020 (MoES, 2020b). Yet according to the minister responsible for education, the previously released timetable is no longer tenable under the changing circumstances (Republic of Uganda, 2020).

Modes of reopening schools

At the time of writing, the Ugandan government had not specified when schools would be reopened since the new dates were reliant on the lifting of the lockdown, which had not occurred yet. While the mode which Uganda will undertake when reopening schools is still unknown, during his address to the nation on Tuesday, 21 July 2020, President Museveni signalled two possibilities his government might take: either reopening some schools for exit-level classes, or declaring a dead year (President Museveni's Address to the Nation, 21 July 2020).

As the teachers' union member stated, a phased approach to reopening schools would help with containing the situation and allowing all students to return to school at the same time.

The candidate classes going back to school add up to around 1.2 million learners. The logic behind [this] is that since the numbers are not very many compared to the total enrolment of around 15

million learners, it is very easy to physical distance and follow other standard operating procedures. As of when the others will open, he [the President] mentioned that a solution [will be] found around January 2021. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

On the whole, a prolonged closure of schools in Uganda due to COVID-19 has affected not only the previous school calendar, which was expected to be completed in late November and early December but also both non-candidate and candidate classes that were supposed to write their terminal and final year national examinations. In a practical sense, if the reopening of schools is to follow a phased approach by allowing candidate classes to resume their studies, as has been signalled by the President of Uganda, there would likely be high pressure on both teachers and students since extra time and resources will be needed to prepare for the final examinations. Candidate students, particularly vulnerable ones who have missed months of face-to-face learning and perhaps not benefitting well from distance-based learning, will require additional support so that the new timetable does not affect their performance in final year examinations. However, as a teachers' union official highlighted, schools are expected to continue from where they stopped.

When they come back, they're going to write the exams yes again they will they will just continue from where they stopped to the examination classes, write the exams before moving to that class to either secondary or university. You see, the schools cannot be at the same level in terms of syllabus coverage so when they go back, each school, each institution is going to begin from where they had stopped because we don't have information on who was studying, and who was not studying during the lockdown. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

Moreover, as revealed by the government official, the examinations have only been delayed and students are expected to write them at the beginning of 2021.

We're just going to open the schools on the 15th of next month (i.e. October). And then we have revised the timetable so that they will go slightly into the next year with the learning processes. Then in March and April, we'll do the examinations. So, the children will do the examinations, only that they will be delayed. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

Our desk-based review, however, has demonstrated that despite having developed an education response framework for COVID-19, the Uganda government has not disclosed which plans will be taken to mitigate the likely impacts caused by the changes in school calendar for both non-candidate and candidate classes in the East African nation. "*Ensuring that PPEs and other COVID-19 prevention measures are in place is the road we intend to take because not much has happened. We are hoping that between now and the 15th of October, the Minister of Education and Sports under the guidance of [the] Minister [of] Health is going to see [sic] how these things are going to move,*" reported the teachers' union official.

The interview with the government official revealed that it is not known when they will reopen schools to the rest of the learners. The government intends the phased reopening of candidate classes only as a trial and to use the lessons learned for the general reopening of schools.

> *The problem is facilities at institutions. Also, we are looking at these candidate classes to see what will happen – it is like a trial. We still have COVID cases going up so we don't know what the situation will be as we move on. So why should [we be] quick to say the rest of the students will come back this time? No, we have just to say, let's prepare reading materials for them. It is okay if we see that during this one month or so when they finally get back to school, we can then begin to slowly open for the others as well. So, in other words, up to date we don't have any date set for the rest of the learners. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)*

Content coverage

To ensure the continuity of learning during the lockdown in Uganda, the materials developed by the MoES have been repackaged to focus more on basic concepts, learning competencies and skills to be acquired rather than on content coverage.

At the lower primary level (grade one, two, and three), the curriculum content focuses on the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Basic literacy skills include speaking, reading, writing, listening and numeracy, taking into account Literacy I, Literacy II, English, and Mathematics strands for term one curriculum work.

At the upper primary and secondary levels (Grades 4 to 7), the focus is on innovation, problem-solving and the core competencies that students are expected to acquire from each topic rather than

syllabus coverage. The subjects to be covered include English, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Social Studies, Creative Performing Arts and Physical Education.

At the lower secondary level, a total of eight subjects, namely English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History and Political Education, Geography, and Entrepreneurship, are covered (MoES, 2020b).

However, as revealed by the teachers' union official, there have not been significant changes to the curriculum so far, although there is a good chance that some of the content may be compressed given the remaining period between the time of writing and whenever schools would reopen.

The curriculum has remained as it was, right now we don't have the revised one which has been condensed. However, there is a feeling that now that they are reopening schools, the time factor may force the National Curriculum Development Centre to condense some of the content of the syllabus, so that they can fit within the available time between now and possibly early next year when the candidates can do examinations. But as of now as we talk now, we don't have a fine-tuned document that has been condensed to fit within the new normal. (Teachers' union official, UgandaSeptember)

This was reiterated by the government official who explained the need to condense the curriculum.

The whole of the past term curriculum was condensed into some material that would be provided online for a certain number of lessons. So, if a topic, for example, was supposed to be a 45-minute lesson, it would be condensed to something like five minutes to accommodate the additional time that we have because we provided some of the lessons on TV and also on radio. And we had two hours every day for all the lessons and all the classes at all the levels, so it was quite a challenge. We have very limited time and yet the curriculum to cover was large, so we had to condense that curricula left to pick the important concepts that each child must learn by the end of the first term. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

Assessments and high stake examinations

Regarding education response to assessments, for many students across the world, the end of the school year is usually associated

with high stakes examinations, which are used to certify or select them as they move from one educational level to the next. In the case of Uganda, all national examinations have been suspended for an unspecified period. According to the press release of 26 April 2020 by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), the online registration of candidates for 2020 examinations, which was due to start on 1 April 2020, would be put on hold until schools resume (UNEB, 2020). For that matter, the cancellation of both internal and external examinations due to COVID-19 and ongoing school closure in Uganda implies that there will be unnecessary delays and interruptions concerning students' progression, graduation and certification for both non-candidate and candidate classes. This is mainly because non-candidate classes will not be able to progress from one class level to another, whereas the candidate classes will not be able to progress from one level of education to the next without graduating from their current levels of education.

This is further compounded by the fact that there is no continuous assessment system in place in both primary and secondary schools, as confirmed by the teachers' union official.

The challenge of assessment we have in Uganda is that we don't have continuous assessment in place... as of now. Therefore, we are only waiting for the end of cycle examinations, and that is why they have brought on board candidate classes so that they can study for the remaining part of this year, and come early next year, they are able to do examinations as end of cycle examinations. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

The Ugandan government must take into account all these possible consequences for any decision it will undertake regarding the formative assessments and high-stake examinations.

For other classes without high stakes examinations, the MoES stresses self-assessments for all students who are currently at home. This is done based on class levels. At the lower primary level, for example, each lesson comprises a variety of activities which reflect actual environmental and real-life experiences to broaden learners' thinking levels and self-confidence. For the upper primary and lower secondary, each lesson contains a variety of activities in the form of scenarios reflecting real-life experiences to broaden learner creativity, innovation and critical thinking skills.

With the support of their parents/guardians, every Ugandan learner is expected to produce a craft or an innovation from the local

environment. The craft/innovation, together with a short narrative explaining how it was made, will have to be submitted to the teacher for marking when school resumes (MoES, 2020b). While MoES (2020b) stresses the importance of involving parents or guardians at home in terms of creating time for children to learn and supporting them in carrying out self-assessments, the success of this initiative depends largely on their levels of literacy. The available evidence in Uganda indicates that most parents from rural areas and poor backgrounds are digitally illiterate and hence have no necessary resources to support home-based learning and self-assessment for their children (Tumwesige, 2020).

Psychosocial support for learners and teachers during the lockdown

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, school children may feel psychological distress, including anger, anxiety, sadness and hyperactivity due to interruptions and disruptions to their learning and future educational opportunities. As a way of mitigating this problem, the MoES in Uganda has been using various psychosocial support measures including giving educational messages on radio and TV about the likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, ways to cope, and providing referrals to service centres for some learners who are reportedly in high-risk environments (MoES, 2020a).

An interview with the Ugandan government official revealed that the government was aware of the psychological challenges closure create for both parents and learners and they prepared materials to cushion such uncertainties.

> *We prepared the response plan for three things: before the closure, during closure and preparing for reopening of schools. So, for the closure we were saying now that we are closing, what should the people go home and do? In our plan we said let's get these institutions involved. Let's get them to know. Let's psychological[ly] prepare them, let's prepare the parents because they're going to receive the children back home. Let's prepare how the learners go and prepare themselves at home. So, we requested institutions to at least prepare some reading materials, so that when children go back home they go with some materials that could occupy them during that time when they are weak [sic]. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)*

In recognition of the importance of learning technologies and resources during the lockdown, on 24 April 2020, the MoES

developed self-study materials to help students in basic education to continue learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Among others, during the ongoing lockdown, all learners, particularly from places not covered by UBC radio and television, have access to home-based print materials. Other learners have access to the UBC radio and television lesson broadcasts.

As highlighted above, learning technologies and resources such as print materials, radio and TV seem to offer an answer not only for learning to continue where education has been disrupted but also to offer opportunities for overcoming the rigidities of conventional education (Tumwesige, 2020). However, access to a variety of these various learning technologies is uneven among learners, particularly those in rural areas, refugees, the poor, and students with disabilities. This was also echoed by the teachers' union official.

Of course, the intent was for everyone but you know the coverage does not reach every home. Even within the city centre, you find the areas where you cannot pick the signal of the TV. The intention was to continue teaching learning process but of course because these are the factors, they could actually not reach out to each and every one. Therefore, out of the estimated 16 million learners in Uganda, we cannot ably [sic] tell that possibly 10 or 8 or 2 million were studying. That is where the dilemma is. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

In terms of psychosocial support for teachers, the MoES has strengthened linkages to referral mechanisms at various service points and provided encouraging messages through TV and radio to promote psychosocial support for teachers. The government has continued to pay teachers' salaries during the lockdown and school closures to enable them to cover the rising cost of living (MoES, 2020a).

Although the Ugandan Framework for Continuity of Learning provides some strategies for psychosocial support for learners and teachers during the COVID-19 crisis, we have observed that such measures are narrow in focus and scope. It is not clear, for example, how the victims of COVID-19 might be identified in their homes or communities, and who might be responsible for providing referrals to them. Also, there appears to be a mismatch between what the Preparedness and Response Plan suggests and what has actually happened on the ground, as noted by the teachers' union official.

First of all, the teachers themselves need psychosocial support and that has not been provided so this has been a gap. I think within this time, we need to concentrate because there is the fear among the teachers, amongst the learners, among the parents. We need to see how best we can move to support them to appreciate that they are going to live with COVID, stay with COVID, but to do a lot of prevention and move on with their work. They need the support before they can give it to the learners because you cannot give what you don't have. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

The MoES and other educational stakeholders must ascertain identification measures and follow-up mechanisms for both teachers and learners who might have been affected by COVID-19. Correspondingly, while the government has stressed the need to continue paying teachers' salaries during the lockdown, this measure covers only teachers in public schools, and not those in private schools. Teachers in private schools whose salaries have been suspended by school management, are likely to suffer from various psychological stresses, trauma, depression, as well as the lack of income.

While some strategies have been put in place by the government to ensure that access to various learning resources and technologies during the school closure becomes inclusive for all learners, there are no follow-up mechanisms. The vast majority of learners are unlikely to have access to a wide range of learning resources and technologies during the COVID-19 lockdown, and hence, they are not learning at the same pace as others with access.

Education response to teacher professional development

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, teachers have been under high pressure and stress as they continue to grapple with their own fears, uncertainties, and the novelty of distance teaching and learning due to ongoing lockdowns and school closures around the world. Despite this, the MoES plan encourages Ugandan teachers to continue working and to remain in touch with students by supporting their home learning activities, keeping contact with their communities, and sending advice through mobile phones and social media outlets.

Peer and professional support for teachers

In efforts to increase the knowledge and skills base of teachers during the lockdown, peer and professional support for teachers have been carried out in two ways. First, Ugandan teachers have

been using various social media and online platforms such as WhatsApp groups to provide peer support and share resources remotely. Second, Uganda's educational training institutes have been offering capacity-building workshops to strengthen teachers' ICT skills with distance learning technologies and platforms during lockdown and when schools reopen (UNESCO, 2020m).

However, our desk-based review has revealed that professional development for teachers in Uganda is narrow and limited. In most cases, teacher professional development has relied heavily on past in-service training, which involved a limited number of teachers who were trained in ICT skills between 2016 and 2018. This suggests the vast majority of teachers in Uganda lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies to deliver distance-based education using new pedagogical skills and innovative teaching approaches. This is particularly important because professional training during the crisis is essential to assist in-service teachers to work with new teaching modalities, since most of them are unfamiliar with distance learning technologies, and hence require support in adjusting their pedagogy and curricula (UNESCO, 2020n). This was indeed a gap also highlighted by the Uganda teachers' union official:

Teachers need that capacity building to handle the new normal. You know the time they have spent at home has affected them in many ways. I need to see deliberate effort to prepare the teachers for the teaching [and] learning process. Heads of education institutions should be given a capacity building on how to handle the new normal. Even with the learners who are coming after all this time, the approach cannot be normal. There is a need for sensitization and capacity building so that we start to get back to the real teaching [and] learning process. (Teachers' union official, Uganda September)

D. Country summary and synthesis

As has been highlighted earlier, the struggle for continued learning brought with it some inequities and inequalities, especially regarding access to various modes and channels of learning such as radio, TV and online learning. What is clear in Uganda and other countries is that many families are unable to provide the support and conditions needed. Only the most educated parents are able to supervise their children's work. Learning in a classroom allows for a certain level of equity in access to knowledge, which is no longer the case

for students working on their own at home, or with the help of a parent or tutor. Not all students have favourable living conditions, which means that distance education, as it exists today, amplifies educational inequalities. The mechanisms proposed by various countries have in fact indirectly widened the gap for vulnerable populations (UNESCO, 2020o).

It is also clear that in Uganda, as in many other countries, the prolonged closure of schools will have a devastating impact on the education of the next generation, but also on their protection, health and well-being. For many vulnerable children, schools act as their main protection from violence and abuse, as well as a major source of safe water, nutrition and mental health support. It is clear that if children, along with the disabled, are not provided with a routine of learning at home to replace school, they will face increased risks such as physical and sexual abuse, hazardous and exploitative work, child marriage and early pregnancy. Yet there are already existing inequalities which, if the situation remains unchecked, may lead to more school dropouts, especially amongst the needy and most vulnerable groups. With some parents having lost jobs and with their financial situations worsening, it is also feared that some parents may not be able to raise enough funds for registration, a fear expressed by the teachers' union member.

We expect to have a serious discussion about how we will help the disadvantaged, including the disabled and other poor people. Our worry is that… children may fail to raise the registration fees for the examinations, because the registration has not started. We will request the government to think of helping and supporting the parents. Some who were already struggling have had their businesses closed and their children are at risk. You can't be sure if parents are going to raise enough money for the candidates to be able to do examinations. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

The observation by the union official resonates with the comments by the government official who remarked that the Ugandan education sector has a long way to go to achieve equity and COVID-19 has further highlighted existing disparities.

There was no provision of equitable learning. I told you that when we developed the reading materials for example, we only developed 25% of the material so not everyone got the materials and that's the first part of it. Secondly, for those who went online, not all

of them have access so that also actually widened the inequity in the provision of planning. So, no, we are not close to equity. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

The official insisted government is planning to close this inequality gap although it may take time for this to be fully actualised.

The government plan is to make sure that everybody gets the learning materials and we still hope to do that. That's why we are saying that even when they have shortages, whatever methodology we use, we should be able to say okay, those who live in urban areas are able to access e-learning so let them go that way, but for those who cannot access e-learning let's make sure that the printed materials are available, so that at least they can access. We are thinking about using phones, for example, but not everybody has a phone. So, even that is a challenge and we are now saying in the circumstances, whatever methodology can be used should be used, but try to reach everybody with everything. So, it has been a challenge and still remains a challenge. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

This further suggests that there will be an additional burden on girls, who often absorb extra work of caring for other children at home and face greater exposure to domestic violence. Without a learning routine, children are also more likely to play and gather in groups, putting them at further risk of spreading the virus (Tumwesige, 2020).

Uganda hosts refugees from various neighbouring countries. However, remarks by the government official below regarding how learners in refugee camps have been affected by COVID-19 contradicted those of the union official. While the government official explained that everybody has been affected by the pandemic in the same way and learners in refugee camps may have been at an advantage because of the support they are receiving from development partners such as UNHCR, the union official said the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated access to education for such groups.

Everybody is facing same kind of situations. Even in the refugee camps they are also facing the same challenges. Actually children in refugee camps may have advantage over others because to an extent they had a lot of support from various development partners, and over this period when we were locked down, they actually had more support...I remember they were given tablets to continue

e-learning so they had quite a bit of support. But as a country, generally, whether a refugee or not, refugees are subjected to the same condition. (Government official, Uganda, September 2020)

Uganda is one of the countries hosting refugees. We are having a bigger community in the refugee camps. The situation has always been bad already during normal times. So, when do you come to this situation where we now have issues of COVID-19? This situation is alarming because these learners who do not have access to TVs, they don't have access to the radios. Although it can be said a refugee is a refugee, yet, they also have rights, and therefore their life is hard. (Teachers' union official, Uganda, September 2020)

This echoes the UNESCO (2020) study that displaced populations, already facing difficult circumstances, have been marginalised in this period of crisis. In some areas, efforts have been made by international organizations – notably the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – to invest in equitable and inclusive schooling for refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons in remote areas. As argued by UNESCO (2020), location is an aggravating factor, as the most remote areas are typically the most impoverished. Such populations do not have the socio-economic capacity to benefit from alternative lifelong learning systems online, or via radio or television. Refugees and other displaced populations therefore run a higher risk of being left behind when strategies are implemented to ensure learning continues. This suggests the need for countries such as Uganda to draw plans and enact mechanisms to ensure that no one is left behind.

E. Key themes and takeaways

1. While the collaboration and partnership between the MoES and stakeholders such as the teachers' union started slowly and the latter were hardly involved in policy development, the working relationship improved gradually, with a collaborative approach to tackling the pandemic and ensuring that learning continues. This must be built upon to ensure better policy involvement of stakeholders in the future.

2. Uganda only announced the phased reopening of schools, starting with candidate classes, towards the end of September 2020. However, the country appears to have taken an ad hoc approach as there is no robust plan for when the rest of the learners will return to school, and there was a lack of concrete

planning in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 through provision of preventive measures such as personal protective equipment.

3. Although there were plans to ensure learning continues, COVID-19 has further exposed education inequalities and unequal distribution of resources in Uganda. Students and learners from urban areas have easy access to learning materials while those in the rural areas have difficulty accessing learning materials.

4. Professional development for teachers in Uganda appears narrow and limited and most of the teachers have not received any psychosocial support during the lockdown. This suggests the vast majority of teachers in Uganda lack necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to enable them to deliver distance-based education using new pedagogical skills and innovative teaching approaches. This further suggests the need for the MoES to ascertain identification measures and follow-up mechanisms for teachers who might have been affected by COVID-19.

5. South Africa

A. Country context

South Africa has a population of about 57 million and is located on the southernmost tip of Africa, covering an area of 1 221 037 square kilometres. The country has a rich ethnic diversity and has eleven official languages. It has a long political history, having first been colonized by the Dutch, then the British, followed by the gruesome years of apartheid that ended in April, 1994 with the first democratic elections. South Africa has three capital cities: Cape Town is the legislative capital, Bloemfontein the judicial capital and Pretoria the executive capital. Johannesburg, in the Gauteng Province, is the largest city. According to the latest midyear estimates, about 80% of the population self-identify as Black African, 8.8% self-identify as Coloured, 7.9% self-identify as White and 2.6% self-identify as Asian (StatsSA, 2019). These racial categories have been inherited from the apartheid regime as per the Population Registrations Act of 1950, and are notorious for their problematic nature in terms of belonging and identity in the country. Christianity is the most widely practised religion (78%) followed by indigenous religions, Islam and Hinduism. The World Bank (2019) contends that "*South Africa remains a dual economy with one of the highest inequality rates in the world, with a consumption expenditure Gini coefficient of 0.63 in 2015*". In 2019, South Africa was currently listed as the most unequal country in the world followed by Namibia, Suriname and Zambia. The current president and deputy president are Cyril Ramaphosa and David Mabuza respectively. A substantial part of the country's revenue comes from tourism and export of various commodities, including fruit, vegetables, wine, and precious and industrial minerals.

Whilst it made its transition to democracy more than twenty-five years ago, the country has many interlocking crises including crises of health, such as HIV and tuberculosis; crises of environment, such as intermittent drought; crises of consumer goods, such as power outages and intermittent water shortages; as well as crises of politics such as gross social and economic inequality, unemployment and corruption. All these crises have weakened the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By September 2020, South Africa, despite having ceased testing for COVID-19 at many public hospitals, was noted as having amongst the highest infection rates in the world. As of 11 September 2020, 644 438 cases been confirmed with 15 265 deaths in the country

(Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020g). The President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, announced that South Africa would be instituting a countrywide lockdown commencing on 18 March 2020, as with most countries around the world. This lockdown included a stay-at-home order for the entire population, with restrictions placed on movement except for essential goods and services only. The economy came to an almost complete halt, leading to the demise of many small to medium business enterprises and adding about 3 million more people to the already high unemployment rate.

Whilst COVID-19 is predominantly a crisis of health, it has thrown almost every aspect of the country's social and economic sectors into disarray. The pandemic has also had a revolutionary effect on teaching and learning, exposing the cracks of an already burdened, struggling and unequal education system. The latest School Realities Report (DBE, 2019) released by the Department of Basic Education suggests that by the end of 2019:

- There were 13 041 198 learners in ordinary schools (including public and independent schools);
- There were 24 998 schools;
- There were 444 857 teachers in the country;
- The highest proportion of learners were in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3) and the lowest in the Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10-12); and
- There were more males that females in the schooling system, with males being the highest in Grade 1 and females being the highest in Grades 11 and 12.

Furthermore, of the more than 13 million learners in the South African schooling system, 9 million of these depend on school feeding schemes to source their daily nutrition (Broughton, 2020).

B. Educational governance

Educational policy-making response

The first most notable policy response of the South African government in relation to education was the nationwide closure of schools. After the closures in March, schools reopened in a staggered approach in June 2020 with learners at the terminal ends of their education returning first. This means that in the primary schools,

Grade 7 was the first to return and in the high schools, Grade 12 was the first to return. Furthermore, learners could only return to school if it had the resources and capacity to ensure that the effects of the virus were mitigated: clean running water, sufficient PPE for learners and teachers, sufficient stock of hand sanitiser, and sufficient class space for social distancing of learners.

Another response of the government was the adjustment of the school calendar due to 'learning days lost'. The amendment was published on 11 August, by which point learners would have lost up to 57% of their normal school days. The adjustment maintained the four terms, but the number of days per term was adapted. Term one (13 January to 18 March) consisted of ten weeks; term two (1 June to 24 July) consisted of eight weeks; term three (24 August to 23 October) consisted of nine weeks; and term four (2 November to 15 December) would consist of seven weeks (Department of Basic Education, 2020). However, this may change if schools are mandated to close again.

However, these initial policy responses made by Department did not necessarily include input from all education stakeholders, as admitted by a South African teachers' union official:

> *There is a very limited role that we play[ed] in the beginning] because the government was using the Disaster Management Act to close areas of consultation. We had to force to be consulted… It is a mandatory issue but the government was not doing that and we had to force the government to ensure that on any other policy we are consulted. (Teachers' union official, South Africa, September 2020).*

Delivery of education

As with many other countries on the continent, and globally, during the lockdown as well as during the staggered start to schooling, alternative methods of teaching and learning occurred. These methods included the use of online platforms, television broadcasts and radio programmes. In some cases, hard copy resources were made available to learners. However, despite the available platforms, not all learners were able to access information and in some instances, no learning took place. Blended learning, i.e. a mixture of online and face-to-face learning, was also common practice. Learners attended classes at school two to three days a week and alternated face-to-face learning with online learning on the other days. This

blended approach ensured social distancing measures were instituted in classes.

Online platforms

Many schools whose teachers had the necessary infrastructure switched to online platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and even WhatsApp to relay information to students. However, as a result of existing socio-economic inequalities, not all teachers and not all learners could benefit from teaching and learning through these modalities. Jantjies (2020) contends that "*South Africa's education system is complex, with historical inequalities dating back to apartheid... most of the country's pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds.... language is an issue; most pupils do not speak English as a mother tongue, yet English dominates in many classrooms... And, as the COVID-19 crisis has showed, there's a huge digital divide at play*". The lack of access to digital technology for teaching and learning has illuminated the extent of South Africa's digital divide.

Television and radio

Television is another way government has tried to ensure teaching and learning continues. However, due to financial costs and poor planning, the airing of programmes was not confined to school hours. Instead, some educational programmes were aired after midnight and at 5:00 am in the morning so learners were not able to benefit from this. The same challenge occurred with airing of educational programmes via radio. In an interview with a government official based in the Department of Basic Education of South Africa, the alternative methods of education delivery were confirmed:

> *But the Department has made available various resources to cater for the different levels where teachers and learners may be within the pandemic to facilitate teaching and learning. So, it moves from availability of paper-based resources to resources that are available through radio and television and then at the top end, the availability of digital devices, connectivity and data, and then the skills to be able to navigate through the different platforms. So, we've tried to have that broad-based intervention with our teachers to, as far as possible, provide them the strategies and opportunities to carry on with the work that they are doing. (Government official, South Africa, September 2020)*

However, the responses from the teachers' union suggest that these modalities were not effective due to the high levels of inequality in

the country, particularly with access to technology, connectivity, data and poor facilitation of broadcasted programmes.

And whilst most teachers embraced the view that they needed to stay in contact, we know that more than 70% – 80% of them couldn't because of lack of instruments, lack of data, connectivity and the like. So, we found ridiculous things. We – on SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation] for example – we had lessons for your Grade 5s at midnight because that was when they could give us this free time, etc. But there were other glitches and this is where professionalism really was given a knock. Where the Department of Education thought it would be a great idea to draw in celebrities into these lessons, and we [unions] objected very strongly saying no, no, teaching is not about simply talking or reading off a script. There are other things to teaching that you must be professionally trained for... (Union official, September 2020)

C. Education response to curriculum and assessment

South Africa is one of the very few countries that have made adaptations to the curriculum. This change allowed for teachers to teach only basic concepts within various learning areas and in high schools. At the discretion of the school management teams, learners were allowed to drop subjects and to pick them up again in 2021, when the gap will also be addressed. This response to curriculum may have lasting negative consequences, particularly for learners who are already struggling with literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, the dropping of certain learning areas in high school may disadvantage learners who have already chosen their specialisation subjects as they may not be able to attend these classes if the school they attend no longer offers this in 2021. A union official in South Africa noted with regard to curriculum trimming and dropping subjects that this policy might have unintended consequences:

The government started saying, look, you can also cut the number of subjects okay... Then we [the unions] had to come in and say no, no, but that means another debate, because what about the career of this particular learner?... So that is not curriculum trimming. It is something else because you are changing the policy altogether so we [the unions] said be careful, please tread very careful because it has got unintended consequences for our economy and for our social concern. (Union official, South Africa, September 2020)

No changes have been made to the Grade 12 examinations as learners have to complete the full curriculum. Grade 12 learners will commence their examinations in November with only the date of the release of the results being affected. This was confirmed by a union official who noted,

Except the Grade 12 curriculum was not adjusted, so the annual teaching plans for the Grade 12 were not adjusted. That's why the Grade 12 have to complete their work because they are writing external. But the rest from Grade 1 to Grade 11 have to a certain extent been revised in terms of allowing autonomy of the schools and the professional autonomy of the teachers to determine how much [sic] they can do. (Union official, South Africa, September 2020)

Learners in the lower grades will also be assessed only on the work they have completed during the year in order to be promoted to the next grade. The continuation of teaching and learning 'as normal' might have a negative impact on learners' psychosocial health that has already been dampened by the pandemic and social isolation. Research conducted in a number of developing contexts suggest that learners are at higher risk of anxiety and depression as a result of the pandemic (Radesky, 2020). Very little psychosocial support has been made available to learners to deal with the consequences of the pandemic and the pressures of high stakes testing. Furthermore, learner support is more prevalent in affluent schools, disadvantaging already marginalised learners who are more susceptible to contracting the virus due to their socio-economic conditions.

D. Education response to teacher professional development

The lack of structured, ongoing and meaningful teacher professional development (TPD) in all schools is a worrying trend in South Africa. Even before COVID-19, there was a paucity of TPD, particularly in the country's most marginalised schools. Many teachers were expected to switch to alternate teaching methods, including assessing learners, without the necessary training and support. The interview conducted with a teachers' union official noted that the problem with providing psychosocial support to teachers resulted from poor resourcing:

Well that is where the biggest problem lies. There has been very, very little done [in terms of professional development]. And it will go to resourcing, and you may be shocked to learn that for example

the Free State when we questioned about the psychosocial support, the Free State said yes, we are ready. We said what does that mean? So no, no, we have one school psychologist appointed in the province – one – and we have two social workers. That is the Free State – that is what they have in the Department only. So how do they service the almost 3,000 schools in the Free State? – that's near impossible. Okay, subtract from that the schools that have councillors which are the smallest minority. Then they agree that they will contract people from Social Development – that I can tell you was a disaster – it never happened. (Union official, South Africa, September 2020)

He noted further that this lack of support not only negatively affects teachers but also learners:

It has been pathetic to say the very least. For both learners and teachers. We are worried particularly – not exclusively – but particularly about our matric learners who are under huge pressure to catch up three months' of work where they could not do work. Not because they didn't want to but because there just wasn't any teaching. Now they must catch up that work, matric is a generally pressurised environment for both teachers, learners and parents, and the less resilient child, mentally resilient child, is going to crumble. We know that for sure, and unfortunately very little is being done about that. Lip service has been paid but tangible impact, hardly any. (Union official, South Africa, September 2020)

E. Effect of COVID-19 in relation to the lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all aspects of social and economic life in South Africa. In some instances, the pandemic has led to marginal improvements, particularly in education. Schools that had a lack of basic sanitation including clean running water, have been capacitated to ensure that they are COVID-19 compliant. However, in other instances, the pandemic has increased existing social challenges such as unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, violence and abuse. The pandemic has also reconfirmed the bifurcated education system that is prevalent in the country, with the majority of poor schools not geared up for the 4IR. Overall, the pandemic has been a distressing period for all, but particularly for the poor who bear the brunt of the negative effects. The inequality between the provision of education in public schools is noted as a pressing issue by a teachers' union official:

But the reality is the impact has been disproportionate between the wealthier schools and the poor schools. And there is very little that has been done to address that permanently. For example, your overcrowded schools... little has been done to address the overpopulation of schools and I think this is going to come back to bite us because we are still going to sit with the problem of social distancing come next year. When it comes to the supply of staff to schools – now I'm talking about assistant staff – cleaning staff, secretarial staff, etc., to schools that have traditionally not had it. After 26 years there are still thousands of schools that don't have cleaners. How do you expect those facilities to be hygienic, to be sanitary if you are not going to supply, not only the product but also the human resources to ensure that it is done? (Union official, South Africa, September 2020)

In South Africa, "*following a request from the government, on July 27 the IMF approved emergency assistance under the Rapid Financing Instrument equivalent to USD 4.3 billion*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The government assisted workers and businesses in distress through the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Additional funds were made available for health workers earning below a certain threshold, for vulnerable families to receive a higher social grant; a six-month COVID-19 grant was made available for those who did not qualify for the social grant, and funds were made available for small to medium enterprises, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Furthermore, "*allocations are also being made to a solidarity fund to help combat the spread of the virus, with the assistance of private contributions, and support municipal provision of emergency water supply, increased sanitation in public transport, and food and shelter for the homeless*" (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Tax credits and tax holidays are also being implemented.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the cracks of an already fragile public sector in South Africa. It has showcased inefficiencies in the education system, reminded the citizens of unfulfilled promises and demonstrated the struggle of the marginalised to improve their lives.

F. Key themes and takeaways

1. Education stakeholders played a limited role in the education policy response to the pandemic

2. Emergency policy dictated that teachers needed to switch to using online modalities to continue teaching and learning, despite the contextual factors such as lack of access by the majority of the poorer learners (and teachers) in the country.

3. Curriculum trimming has resulted in a decline in breadth of learning opportunities and will have adverse consequences on learner's career trajectories.

4. Teachers received limited and decontextualized professional development.

5. Teachers were provided with limited and/or ineffective psychosocial support to help manage their own anxieties and that of their learners.

G. Country summary and synthesis

COVID 19 has plummeted the South African public school system further into disarray. The policy responses to education in the country has further impacted the already high levels of inequality in the country, by reducing access to education for poor learners. Whilst digital technology may have been a suitable alternative to continue teaching and learning during the pandemic, infrastructural improvements were not sufficient to ensure all learners could access learning. Teachers, who should be considered frontline workers in this context, were also not supported professionally or psychosocially, to manage their work. South Africa has been noted as having one of the most draconian responses to the pandemic and this has impacted the provision of education in the country. The effects of the pandemic, that has interlocked with existing crises in the country, will require effective postpandemic planning that addresses inefficiencies in the education system to ensure preparedness and resilience for furture crises.

H. Macro-themes for Anglophone countries

- Multimedia approach to learning: research in Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda has highlighted that these countries use a combination of learning resources and technologies (a multimedia approach), including radio, television, offline home packages and online platforms to ensure the continuity of learning for students during the COVID-19 crisis. In Uganda, for example, the framework for the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 crisis intends to ensure not only that both teachers and parents participate in distance learning but that all learners are reached regardless of their geographical location and socio-economic status.

- Access to radio, TV, and online and offline learning platforms is limited and still benefits a comparatively smaller number

of learners: while radio and TV broadcasts, as well as online platforms, can be used to support distance learning during the crisis, the available data, in the case of Uganda, for example, shows that only 87% of Ugandans have a working radio compared to 35% with a TV, and 10% with internet access (Tumwesige, 2020). The same situation applies to Ethiopia where the national average for radio ownership in both urban and rural areas is at 28%, while only 10% of households own TVs, primarily in urban areas (Kim and Rose, 2020). In South Africa, online learning is the most commonly used platform, despite the majority of learners, who attend poor schools, not having access to these modalities. Although these statistics portray a general picture of some access to radio, TV, and internet in all three countries, they obscure the obvious disparities between different geographical locations, urban versus rural areas, as well as among families with different socio-economic status. This division has a bearing on whether the ongoing radio and TV lessons in Uganda, Ethiopia and South Africa have been an effective means of delivering education content and reaching many learners during the COVID-19 lockdown.

- There is uneven distribution of modern learning resources and technologies, demonstrating that learning resources and technologies are not evenly distributed across geographical locations and families with different socio-economic status in all three countries. Further, the statistics for digital device ownership in the country bear an important implication for the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. One of the notable implications observed, for example, is that the current state of technological infrastructure for distance-based learning in all three countries does not observe learners' geographical areas, home backgrounds, and socio-economic status. In all countries, access to electronic devices is reserved only for a minority of children from middle class and rich families, with a sharp divide between urban and rural areas. In South Africa, although many portals and materials have been made available for teachers and learners online, access to technological equipment, connectivity, and to data remains one of the biggest challenges.

- A sharp digital divide highlights deeply rooted inequities and inequalities in the education system: the use of TV and radio was poorly facilitated, affecting the efficacy of the modality to continue teaching and learning. The high levels of inequality between public schools in South Africa, for instance, has

adversely impacted the efficacy of interventions instituted by the state. Yet, in Ethiopia, this division goes further as there seems to be a sharp digital divide between public and private schools, in which the latter continue teaching their students using Google Classroom and e-mail, as well as WhatsApp and Telegram social media platforms. This is contrary to the public schools where no such efforts are made by the government to keep students learning from home in either urban or rural areas (Tiruneh, 2020). The digital divide in the three countries, therefore, highlights the enormous inequity and inequality gap in access to learning resources and technologies between not only the privileged and the deprived groups but also between rural and urban areas and between public and private schools.

- Emphasis on engaging teachers and parents/guardians in supporting learners during the lockdown: the frameworks for the continuity of learning during the lockdown in all three Anglophone countries emphasise the importance of involving teachers and parents/guardians at home in terms of creating time for children to learn and supporting them in assignments and other related tasks. While this initiative is ideally useful, practically its success depends largely on the level of digital literacy of parents/guardians and teachers which allows them to support their children using a variety of learning technologies. However, in the case of parents/guardians, their ability to support their children's learning through the current intended media channels is limited based on whether they are themselves literate in digital technologies or have had any experience with formal schooling. In Uganda, Ethiopia and South Africa, parents from poorer households lack the cultural capital to assist their children with academic tasks. This is also because the available evidence indicates that most parents from rural areas and poor backgrounds are digitally illiterate, and hence, are devoid of the necessary resources to support home-based learning for their children (Tiruneh, 2020; Tumwesige, 2020).

- Limited training for teachers in managing distance-based teaching in times of crisis: teachers in public schools across the three countries do not only have limited training in digital technologies but also lack the necessary preparedness to work in unprecedented circumstances. Given this situation, teachers need to be provided with intensive training in how to support home and distance-based learning using a variety of digital resources/technologies. However, teacher training in a multimedia

approach to distance learning during the crisis needs to take into account the multiple constraints that face people from different geographical locations and their socio-economic status, by establishing innovative solutions to enrich home-based learning for all areas and learners with diverse home backgrounds.

6. Burkina Faso

A. Country context

As a landlocked country located in the middle of West Africa, Burkina Faso covers an area of 274 222 km², with a population of 19 million as of 2016 (Nations Online, 2020a). As a former French colony, it gained independence as Upper Volta in 1960 (BBC, 2018). Burkina Faso's economy is primarily based on agriculture, which employs close to 80% of the working population, although gold exports have increased in recent years (World Bank, 2020a).

The government approved the revised 2020 budget on 9 July 2020. The budget takes into account several measures to address the socio-economic effects of COVID-19. The initial emergency response plan for the health sector expired in June. For the post-June period, a COVID-19 response plan was prepared. This plan includes health-related measures and measures to support social and economic recovery (IMF, 2020). Despite the progress made in the past two decades, Burkina Faso faces many development challenges, particularly in terms of health and education. Furthermore, insecurity linked to frequent terrorist attacks since 2016 has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis (World Bank, 2020a). Burkina Faso has known terrorist attacks linked to al-Qaeda and groups affiliated with the Islamic State since 2015/16. According to the Fragile State Index(The Fund for Peace, 2020a), the security situation in Burkina has significantly worsened recently, exemplified by 3,000 casualties between 2016 and 2019. The country is ranked 37 among 120 countries in the high warning category (1 is the most fragile country). This humanitarian crisis resulted in over 600 000 displacements and 2 000 school closures preceding COVID. The worsened security situation in Burkina can be considered a spillover effect of spreading terrorism in its neighbouring country Mali, and the wider region. Besides terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda, the weak capacities of the sub-units of government contribute to persisting tensions between communities, degrading cohesion and resulting in violence.

Further endogenous factors intersect with exogenous factors. Inequality remains a particular issue, resulting from poverty, unemployment and a high cost of living (The Fund for Peace, 2020b). Human Rights Watch has recorded more than 120 attacks and threats against teachers, students and schools from 2017-2020 in what the organisation has described as a "war against education" by

Islamist groups which oppose Burkina Faso's secular curriculum and government institutions (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

In Burkina Faso, the COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared by the government on 10 March 2020, in an already deteriorated security context. The first case in Burkina Faso was reported on 9 March 2020, in the capital city Ouagadougou. By 23 June, nine regions out of 13 were affected (Centre, Hauts-Bassins, Centre-Nord, Boucle du Mouhoun, Plateau-Central, Cascades, Centre-Sud, Sud-Ouest and Sahel). However, the hotspot remains Ouagadougou (UNICEF, 2020l). As of 13 October Burkina Faso had 2,294 confirmed cases and 63 deaths caused by the pandemic (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020h).

A nationwide shutdown of more than 20 000 schools, introduced in March as a response to the coronavirus pandemic and continuing through September, compounded the risks. This observation suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic is worsening an already critical situation regarding the education of children. School closures due to violence and COVID-19 have impacted more than five million children in total, according to UNICEF (2020l). In contrast, recent attacks have led to a tenfold increase in the number of children needing protection this year, from 35 800 to 368 000. Due to their experience in managing instability, the government instituted a Technical Secretariat of Education in Emergencies, a schooling strategy for students in areas with high-security challenges, and a specific curriculum in these regions. The government reacted quickly to the current coronavirus crisis; already in April 2020, they published a response plan detailing how the education system would deal with school closure and distance teaching and learning to reduce the further spread of COVID. In the context of the current pandemic, the initial closure was a short-term measure, but has been gradually extended: March 16 to 31 2020, followed by a suspension of classes until April 13 2020, and extended to April 27 2020 (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 5).

B. Education governance[4]

Educational policy-making

The National Education Ministry is leading the process towards implementing the Response Plan in collaboration with partner

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4   The following analysis is based on the 'Response Plan for Educational Continuity in the Context of Covid-19' of the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of Local Languages (*Ministère de l'Education nationale, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues nationales*, MENAPLN).

ministries, local authorities, educational communities and technical and financial partners (donors). Development actors, local authorities, NGOs and associations working in the field of education were mobilised through advocacy and resource mobilisation actions (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, pp. 10, 12). Besides, the government submitted a funding request to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The main partners are the Canadian government and the French Development Agency (Agence Francaise de Développement, AFD). The estimated budget for managing education in the COVID context is about 10M USD for the period from May 2020 to December 2021 (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 1) for which the successful funding call to GPE covers 7M USD (GPE, 2020).

While the Response Plan mentions consultations with education partners (parents, teachers' unions and donors) (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, p. 9), the COVID-19 Fast-Track Funding Request considers a lack of agreement between the government and teachers' unions as a potential risk for the successful implementation of the plan (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 34). This concern is also mirrored in the interview data as teachers' unions did not seem to be heavily involved in the elaboration of the Response Plan of the Education Ministry towards managing the education system during COVID-19. They were invited, however, to be informed and listened to, as the following quote affirms.

[To the question of the involvement of the unions in the development of the Response Plan], I cannot be very sure since I did not attend [the consultations]. I will only rely on media accounts. The consultation of the social partners [teachers' unions], for example, their involvement was not direct. We simply gave them arguments about what to put in place- without the unions being invited to sit on the committee. [The Government] regularly invited the unions without actively involving them]. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)

The teachers' union representative argued even further that their union had not been involved at all. Therefore, the government had to modify its decision, particularly regarding the reopening of schools.

We could not [resume classes], simply because the government sat alone to take these decisions. Unions have not been involved in shaping the policy for the response plan to the pandemic. Suddenly, they had difficulty moving forward. This is to say that the government will need to communicate even more with teachers'

unions so that we are at the start of all major decisions related to education. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

Education International (2020) confirms that not all stakeholders, such as teachers' unions, were involved in the process. The interviewee acknowledged, however, that the social dialogue between the government and teachers' unions has been improved, providing the example of establishing the Technical Office of Emergency Education.

[However,] the government has become aware this year when it comes to issues of education policy in the current context... I still think that we manage to pass our points of view. [For example,] creating the Technical Secretariat for Education in Emergency Situations resulted from the fact that the unions called on the government to protect the teachers - because the teachers in Burkina were the targets of terrorists. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

Delivery of education

During the COVID-19 school closure, Burkina Faso has been using various technologies and learning resources for remote learning (UNESCO, 2020d). The use of media covered radio, television, print media, Android apps, downloadable files and memory sticks as well as an e-learning platform (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, p. 6-7). The Ministry of Education, with other partners, provided distance education through various television and radio channels for students preparing to take national examinations. TV channels such as Burkina Info, and radio stations such as RNB, Ouaga FM, Savane FM, Watt FM, Oméga FM and national radio broadcasted educational programmes four times a day with particular emphasis on core subjects (UNESCO, 2020d).

For students aged 6 to 10, the lessons were mainly given remotely through the radio. About fifty national and community radio stations offered the possibility for students to follow distance learning courses. The programme *Apprendre Plus*[5] covers classes at all levels of education, starting with examination classes. Programme support complements and strengthens existing programmes, in particular, the "radio education program" which targets children aged 10 to 17.

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5   Cf. http://www.mena.gov.bf/informations/actualites/articles?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_news_
     pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=226&cHash=e5224b5f6674b096689376973a3e6b05
     (27 09 2020)

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with their partners such as UNICEF, developed an online platform called Faso e-Educ@tion[6] that provides various learning resources across the country for both teachers and students in grades ahead of examinations (UNESCO, 2020d).

Selected teachers and educational supervisors – but no teacher unions – were part of the education committees producing and distributing digital educational resources. More specifically, the educational teams, made up of teachers and educational supervisors, produced the radio broadcasts under the guidance of the General Directorate of Educational Research and Educational Innovation (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 19). Teachers were selected according to predefined criteria (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, p. 7). A government official confirms that the Ministry called on individual teachers to record their teaching for distance education programmes. The heads of the local school authority chose these teachers based on the following criteria: teachers are qualified, they show diligence and have the will to deliver the curriculum remotely.

> *Now, for the teachers who have participated in the distance learning program, there has been a selection. One had to be retained by his constituency leader, being a qualified teacher, a diligent teacher, and a teacher who has the will to do so. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)*

Teachers were not directly trained but closely followed by pedagogical advisors, as explained in section 13.4, Education response to teacher professional development.

C. *Education content*

Education response to curriculum and assessment

In efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Burkina Faso closed all educational institutions, including pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools, as well as tertiary and higher learning institutions on March 16 2020 (UNICEF, 2020l). Initially, the Ministry of National Education, Literacy, and National Languages Promotion (MENAPLN) planned schools to reopen April 28 and end the academic year 31 July (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, p. 9). On 27 May, 2020, the Education Ministry announced

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6   https://fasoeducation.net/

that schools would remain closed until the end of the school year, except for 779 542 students who had national examinations. For that matter, on Monday, June 1, schools reopened for students to write the national examinations (Certificat d'études primaires (CEP), brevet et baccalauréat) at the end of the school year, i.e. in July and August respectively. Confirmed by interview data, the new school year started 1 October 2020 (rentrée pédagogique).

For the reopening of schools, the Response Plan for Educational Continuity mandated the introduction of COVID-19 preventive measures. More specifically, the awareness of head teachers, teachers and parents, among others, had to be raised to support students in inducing necessary behaviour changes to prevent the spread of COVID, such as wearing masks and washing hands regularly (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, pp. 7, 9–10). Based on this understanding, the government decided to apply a partial reopening of schools (also called 'selective grade entry approach') in which only students in examination classes were allowed to return to school on June 1, 2020. The government also established mechanisms ensuring the security of the examination class learners, particularly from areas affected by conflicts, moved them to more secure localities, and organised remedial lessons for them (ADEA, 2020).

The continuity of teaching and learning during the lockdown for examination classes covered a wide range of topics via public and private TV channels. For primary school classes, lessons took place in the fundamental disciplines of reading and arithmetic in approximately six national languages. For post-primary education, program support complemented the existing programme offer for the 3rd year examination class for preparing the secondary education degree (first cycle) in the core subjects Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, French and Philosophy (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 19). The distance learning programme was first conceptualised for students in examination classes. Once the students completed their assessments, the distance programme was extended to all other students, as a teachers' union representative explains.

In the beginning, it was [the distance learning program] designed mainly for students in examination classes. The developed distance education programme only concerned examination classes. After the examinations, the government continued... to integrate the intermediate levels gradually. So, this led to the creation of a distance education programme which is already functional in Burkina Faso. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

Even though all students could return to schools at the beginning of the new academic year, the distance learning programme via the television channel, created by the Education Ministry, continued to function. The interviewee explained that the latter did not replace the former, but was instead considered an additional support mechanism.

[Currently,] there is face-to-face teaching, but also lifelong distance learning. In addition to what students do in school with the educators, there is also this [TV] channel that allows [students] to improve their learning habits…. This is to accompany the process. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

While the syllabus has been entirely taught to students in examination classes, all other students were supposed to catch up the missed programme from the period of school closure at the beginning of the new school year, as a government official explained. The school calendar has not been modified, implying a higher workload for these students in the academic year 2020/21. The teachers' union assumed that the syllabus did not undergo significant modifications, whereas the government official acknowledged that the curriculum was already overloaded in the past and therefore likely to be revised to allow catching up of the syllabus from the previous year while ensuring enough time for teaching the syllabus of the new school year.

We were already in a reform… which had already opted to reduce all the superfluous from the syllabus. Indeed, I think that directives addressed to teachers are not excluded asking them to stick to the essentials… I recognise that our programs are somewhat dense and by wanting to unfold everything, I actually wonder if the overload of the students will not take a hit. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)

Concerning examinations, high stake examinations were prioritised over other examinations. Following the documentary review, the government organised examinations for primary school (Cours moyen niveau 2, CM2) and secondary (Troisième). For all other classes, the school year was validated without taking examinations (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, p. 9). Instead, it was evaluated based on the assessments from the first term, allowing all students to join higher classes.

For example, all 5th-grade students have to go to 6th grade because, with the advent of COVID, there is no repetition. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

He also explained that an internal evaluation stated that teachers taught more than 70% of the syllabus to students from intermediary classes. Therefore, the learners could proceed to the next level without taking further examinations.

Emerging from the interview data, the curriculum was taught for examination classes via distance and, from June onwards, on-site learning for 45 days. The syllabus was taught in its entirety, and the criteria for certification remained the same as for other years. Interestingly, the results of the examinations were significantly better compared to previous years. The reasons can be found in the better teacher-student ratio, among others, as the following quotation explains:

> *For the examinations, the assessment was somewhat fair in that the success rates at all levels – whether CEP, BEPC or BAC – are well above the previous year... [First], those in the examination situation had more time to study the parts of the curriculum already taught... [Second], we mobilised the rest of the teachers... to teach the final class of each level (CM2, Third and Final). So, there was a pooling of teachers' experience.... [In conclusion], this diversity of intervention had a positive impact on the results that we were able to obtain. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)*

As this quotation makes explicit, the Education Ministry called teachers from all levels to teach students of examination classes. The teachers' union representative confirmed this, explaining that a final year class comprising 80 students from a school was redistributed into, for example, six classrooms. As such, students benefitted from a better teacher-student ratio and more study time.

Psychosocial support for teachers and learners

The COVID-19 Fast-Track Funding Request planned a toll-free number to advise and inform parents and children about COVID-19 and distance teaching/learning, the reopening of schools, 'barrier gestures' and hygiene rules in schools. As is evident, the plan does not mention psychosocial support explicitly, but could potentially cover this dimension. Teams of senior teachers, educational advisers and inspectors from primary and post-primary levels took turns to provide a daily hotline during a period that would depend on the evolution of the epidemic (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 20).

According to UNICEF (2020), they have continued to provide mental health and psychosocial support services, together with other

partners. In doing so, they reached 8 929 new caseloads of school children (4 612 girls) using a mobile service approach with groups of less than 50 children, while respecting hygiene and physical distancing, as per the national guidelines on mitigating COVID-19. So far, 107 139 children (38 157 girls) have been reached by psychosocial services (UNICEF, 2020m).

D. Education response to teacher professional development

The professional development of teachers seems to be limited to awareness-raising. The documentary review suggests that teachers were informed of health risks in areas affected by COVID-19, and were, together with students and members of the School Management Committee (Comité de gestion des établissements scolaires, COGES), made aware of measures to prevent COVID. The Education Ministry planned to provide community school support and remedial courses, with the help of teachers and NGOs/associations, to compensate for the learning deficits of students. This measure involved organising rehearsal lessons outside of school hours to reinforce the lessons received in class. Tutors provided the tasks, while teachers and school management committees followed up (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 22).

A government official affirmed that teachers were not directly trained but closely followed by pedagogical advisors for teaching in front of the camera.

> *The courses were prepared under the watchful eye of the educational supervisors. So, the teacher could not stand alone like that to deliver the lesson. He does his preparation, he submits it to an academic supervisor, who evaluates the class, and then the teacher is allowed to provide the course. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)*

This observation was echoed by the voice of a teachers' union representative.

> *This [lack of commitment to continuing education] is what we regret at the government level because there is not enough emphasis on continuing education. So, with regard to distance education, we chose experienced teachers and gave them the theme. They prepared their lessons, and educational advisers accompanied them before proceeding to recording and broadcasting [of the class]. Now, for the other teachers, I was going to say that there was*

no specific training as such to accompany teachers for classroom practice. And this is what we continuously denounce that the government is therefore working on training teachers, to motivate teachers. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

Even before the emergence of the pandemic, the government did not sufficiently provide CPD.

Even before the pandemic, continuing education was not at all sufficient. We are having this debate with the government. We are currently considering what format to give to this continuing training because, you know, teachers are almost half of the officials in our public service. So, for more efficiency, we are in the process of finding ways for continuing training to be effective. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

Moreover, he highlighted the challenge for teachers appointed to insecure areas and the importance of motivating and compensating them accordingly.

I said we had over 2 500 schools closed [because of the insecurity]. Today, there was the reopening of 120 schools. So, these schools were closed and then we have reopened [them]. Naturally, we will assign teachers to these schools even though these are schools with a strong security challenge. The teacher who officiates in these schools, he will work with fear in his stomach. So, the state must, in any case, secure these places, and motivate teachers. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

In this context, psychosocial support would be particularly valuable, but unfortunately was non existent, according to interview data.

Indeed, we are fighting for it [psychosocial support]; otherwise, it doesn't exist. Today we called on the government for these teachers traumatised by the insecurity to have a follow-up. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

In summary, it can be stated that teachers did not benefit from solid professional training. Still, presumably, a few selected teachers participated in awareness-raising sessions and were closely followed by pedagogical advisors for digital class delivery.

E. Country summary and synthesis

The COVID-19 pandemic, in an already insecure context, exacerbated equity and inequality concerns in various ways. For example, school closures have pushed many children – unaccompanied or otherwise – into menial work. Parents used to bringing food and money to their children studying in other towns can no longer visit due to the threat of violence along the roads. This circumstance has forced many to work for under a dollar a day, washing clothes, selling goods or toiling in small-scale artisanal mines (Mednick, 2020).

The government aimed to ensure accessibility, equity and inclusion of the educational offering during school closure using various dissemination channels and strategies to reach the maximum number of students, both in rural and urban areas, as detailed in the Response Plan For Educational Continuity (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020b, p. 7).

The teachers' union representative acknowledged the challenges emerging from distance education for children from more impoverished families and in rural and distant areas, and how the government dealt with this challenge.

Distance education is quite tricky because not all students have the same opportunities. That is one. Also, media coverage is not effective in all areas. So this is one of the shortcomings of distance education here as well. But I believe that the government is setting out to equip the children of low-income families with radios to facilitate their capture... to allow these students to benefit from this distance education... In terms of percentage, it would be difficult for me to quantify. But when you take all the big cities in Burkina, anyway, I was going to say that... The problem arises in the rural, very remote areas that don't get media coverage. I would say the percentage is pretty decent, but to be sure I will further research and get back to you (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020).

The COVID-19 Fast-Track Funding Request details that rural schools would be considered first when schools gradually opened. This decision was made in response to the agricultural obligations of most rural populations. The plan states: "Priority will be given to... rural schools where a significant shift in the school year would conflict with the agricultural season and increase the risk of mass dropouts" (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 21).

As propagated in the national education sector strategy (*Plan sectoriel de l'éducation et de la formation, PSEF*) (2017-2030), the national education policy prioritises the education of girls. Even though the parity index between boys and girls has been improved in the last couple of years, some regions (Boucle du Mouhoun and du Sahel) remain below the average. Moreover, girls are more likely not to return to school, executing household tasks instead. Therefore, the COVID-19 Fast-Track Funding Request prioritises the education of girls in the budgeting of activities (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020a, p. 24).

Burkina is facing a double crisis: insecurity linked to terrorism and the pandemic. According to the teachers' union representative, the insecurity weighs more heavily than the pandemic, which is comprehensible in light of modest contamination and death figures related to COVID, but with frequent casualties linked to terrorism.

> *In Burkina, we are faced with a double crisis because we have insecurity due to the attacks... in almost all of our regions and we also have the Corona pandemic which has been added to this crisis. This resulted in the closure of many schools. And suddenly, many teachers find themselves... in difficulty because the schools where they officiated were closed and we have to redeploy these colleagues. And professionally, that has a lot to do with their careers because, you know, the progress of teachers is due to the performance they achieve in the performance of their duties. Suddenly, these teachers find themselves unemployed and at the same time, their careers are blocked. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)*

A positive highlight is Burkina Faso's experience in managing its education system in a deteriorating security situation since 2016. Instead of relying on distance education programmes, the government organised classes in administrative centres in insecure regions in which schools were closed before the COVID-19 school closure. The lessons can be considered intensive courses to prepare students for examinations. Military support helped to secure classes in these administrative centres, requiring substantial expenditure to manage the education system.

> *I confirm that the country has already an experience in managing an emergency or a crisis since 2016, as terrorists have attacked the entire Sahel area and challenged to provide classes. So there were two sessions – this year will be the third session where these students have been supervised otherwise. The students were taught*

in groups under capitals with security guards to allow them to take intensive courses before their examination [to the question of their experience of managing their education system in a situation of insecurity]. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)

This procedure helps all children to access education, the interviewee explained, which would not be the case for distance education programmes.

We had to find strategies... to allow the implementation of these innovations, which made it possible to complete the school year with the results that we know... This is ineffective because the whole country is not fully covered by, e.g. television – and even if the land was covered by television, not all households could acquire television sets. That would always pose a problem, hence the need to regroup all these students, who were outside the system, in the federal cities at a given time providing them intensive courses. (Government official, Burkina Faso, September 2020)

Interestingly, these students performed even better than students who were not affected by conflict, and hence did not benefit from the additional pedagogical support, as a teachers' union member explained.

Yes, this year, the students who were affected by the terrorist attacks in the capitals of the regions which are less affected. And paradoxically, when you look at the results, they are much better in these areas than elsewhere... because they benefited from special supervision and follow-up with the teachers who were in particular conditions. All the children from insecure zones were able to write the examinations this year. And this is also due to the creation of this new Technical Secretariat which deals with education in emergencies. (Teachers' union official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

The common assumption that children who are already vulnerable because they are affected by other perturbations are more affected by the pandemic is not confirmed in the case of Burkina Faso.

F. Key takeaways

- The documentary and interview data point to a lack of social dialogue with teachers' unions in the elaboration of the response plan. Although teachers and students are the most concerned target group by the COVID-19 response to the education

system, the Education Ministry presented the project to them without giving them an active role in shaping the content.

- As in other countries, UNICEF provides psychosocial support to students, while teachers have to deal with challenges induced by COVID-19 to a large extent by themselves.

- Teachers did not benefit from solid professional training, but they presumably participated in awareness-raising sessions and were closely followed by pedagogical advisors for digital class delivery.

- Burkina has been using various technologies and learning resources for remote learning. However, not all children were able to benefit from the education programme.

- The COVID-19 pandemic in an already insecure context exacerbated equity and inequality concerns in Burkina Faso, e.g. pushing children, particularly girls, into menial work. The response plan aimed to mitigate the adverse effects on girls and rural communities. The latter are dependent on the agricultural calendar.

- Burkina Faso is experienced in managing its education system in a deteriorating security situation. Their approach in grouping children from insecure areas into secured administrative centres is challenged, however, faced with the requirements of social distancing in COVID-19 times. Students of insecure regions were not able to complete examinations simultaneously with other students, but they could complete them later. This situation suggests that providing education to children in politically unstable situations presents an even more difficult challenge in the context of COVID-19.

7. Ivory Coast

A. *Country context*

As a country located along the intertropical zone of West Africa, Ivory Coast has a total surface area of 322 462 Km². The country's population is currently estimated at 27 481 086 million people as of June 2020 (Institut National de la Statistique, 2020). The country's economy heavily relies on agriculture, and it is one of the world's leading exporters of cocoa beans. The government adopted an emergency health response plan of 96 billion CFAF (or 0.3% of GDP), announcing a package of economic measures on 31 March 2020. This plan aims to alleviate the burden on the most vulnerable segments of the population through agricultural input support and expanded cash transfers. It also aims to provide relief to hard-hit sectors and firms, and support public entities in the transport and port sectors (IMF, 2020).

While Ivory Coast was regarded as the most fragile country in 2005, its political and economic situation has significantly improved since then. In 2020, the Fragile States Index ranked Ivory Coast 32 of 120 countries. Ivory Coast looks back to two civil conflicts, marked by political instability, economic slowdown and insecurity. The civil wars had their origin in the country's weak institutional and governance systems and its weak capacity to manage resources and land. This led to divisive politicisation of identity based on national origin and the well-known competition between the presidential candidates Laurent Gbagbo of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) and Alassane Ouattara of the Rally of the Republicans (RDR). Recently, a rise in communal strife led to a worsening of the Group Grievance indicator for the first time since 2012, resulting in clashes over land and access to resources (Fragile States Index, 2020). Moreover, the presidential elections on 31 October 2020 presented a further test for the young democracy. The previous president Ouattara was re-elected for a third term, although the constitution only allows two. The opposition and vast parts of civil society are questioning his way of proceeding, leading to serious tensions and violence (Aljazeera, 2020).

Educationally, the formal education-training system has 6 727 896 pupils from preschool (244 357), primary (4 101 430 including 580 572 in the CM2 class), general secondary (2 264 969 including 446 396 in 3rd year) and 220 129 in the final year (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020). For TVET, 52 579 students are enrolled in the first cycle and

55 805 in the second cycle[7]. TVET attendance is marginal compared to general education, as it accounts for only 2.1% of total enrolment, and 6.7% of secondary school enrolment.(Lavigne et al., 2019). Overall, the country has 3 475 public pre-primary schools, 18 258 primary schools, 2 331 general secondary schools, while private schools include 957 for pre-primary, 2 806 primary level, and 1 782 general secondary schools. Teachers in public schools include 10 236 for pre-primary level, 101 085 for primary level, and 71 247 for general secondary level (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020).

Ivory Coast confirmed the first case of the novel coronavirus on 11 Marc, 2020, after a 45-year-old Ivorian man was diagnosed with the disease (Reuters, 2020). As of 13 October 2020, Ivory Coast had 20 155 confirmed cases and 120 deaths caused by the pandemic (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020i). The Ivory Coast reacted quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Security Council (Conseil National de Sécurité, CNS) in Ivory Coast decided to close all educational institutions, initially for 30 days, from 16 March at midnight. It was later extended until 17 May 2020, by the Council of Ministers in its session of 15 April 2020. In total, 7 million pupils of preschool, primary, general secondary, technical and vocational training were affected, especially those from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 6).

Faced with this crisis, the government drew up and implemented a Health Response Plan and developed a second economic, social and humanitarian support plan to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and prepare for a rapid resumption of activities. The latter project included the objective of providing distance education, starting with examination classes (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020). Moreover, they published a Response Plan (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020)[8] detailing how the education system should deal with school closure and distance teaching and learning to reduce the further spread of COVID. This plan is a joint programme of the National Education Ministry (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Technique et de la Formation Professionnelle, MENETFP*) and the local Global Partnership for Education (GPE) group.[9]

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7   Statistics for TVET are from 2015

8   République de Côte d'Ivoire. 2020. "PLAN DE REPONSE DU SECTEUR EDUCATION-FORMATION CONTRE LE COVID-19 Avril 2020." Abidjan

9   The following analysis is based on this plan and interview data

B. Education governance

Educational policy-making

The financial plan indicates the involvement of donors in relation to the government of Ivory Coast. The government provided USD 93 693, while donors were supposed to contribute USD 20 907 420. As of April 2020, the government lacked 73.8% of the resources required for the implementation of the Response Plan (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 36-37), which raises questions about the feasibility of implementing this plan. The funding request to GPE in May 2020 indicates that the government estimated the necessary budget to be USD 15 million. In contrast, GPE under the lead of UNICEF contributed USD 11 million (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 1). As of 14 October, UNICEF's multi-sectoral response plan for COVID-19 of USD 14.8 million has been fully funded. The programmatic budget is a combination of reprogrammed funds (15.6%) and new funding (82.6%) from governments and private donors (UNICEF, 2020n).

The involvement of various stakeholders in the education system during the pandemic was vital for the success and effectiveness of the distance education strategy. In recognition of this importance, the Ministry of National Education involved all relevant actors in its national interventions. These include (ADEA, 2020):

- Bilateral, multilateral technical, and financial partners such as GPE, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and AFD;
- Private sector companies such as ENEZA and Star-Times, the Chinese television channel;
- School management committees and parents (COGES);
- Teachers' unions;
- Administrative, customary and traditional authorities;
- Religious leaders;
- Private sector companies; and
- National and international NGOs.

The COVID-19 Education Response Framework and its components have been presented to these actors, specifying their respective roles (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020), but their exact involvement remains unclear from the documentary review. As for the interview data, all relevant departments in the National Education Ministry

as well as some regional school authorities have participated in the elaboration of the plan.

> *I have to tell you that practically all the directorates participated – all the central directorates. And now, we had also integrated some regional directors to prevent an Abidjan-Abidjan affair… And [this plan] has gone to the Task Force… which has synthesised this document and submitted to the regional directors again, in particular to the General Inspectorate. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)*

The extent to which teachers' unions were involved cannot be ascertained as the interview data remains contradictory on this issue.

> *[On the question of the involvement of teachers' unions], there are unions in the Task Force. They usually call the unions for the reception. They typically call unions – they are teachers. And I must tell you when it is submitted to the central management, e.g. the training direction, all those who supervise the teachers, e.g. the disciplinary officials, they also participated in the development… Yes, for the final elaboration, it is [the Task Force] who was in charge, together with the general management, so that we can consider them as technicians. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)*

While this government official believes that teachers' unions are part of the task force, in charge of elaborating the response plan, a representative of a teachers' union contradicts him in saying that they were not involved at all.

> *On the issue of policy development [the Education and Training Sector Response Plan against COVID], no, I am not familiar with this plan, no, we [the union] were not associated. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)*

It seems that the communication between the government and teachers' unions remains unilateral.

Delivery of education

Ivory Coast used a range of alternative education delivery models, covering television and radio, online learning platforms as well as mobile phones. The Ministry of National Education has its own online TV channels that were instrumental in delivering lessons and presentations during school closure. Public service channels (three

television and three radio channels) occupy a prominent place in the audio-visual landscape in terms of national coverage and audience. The available evidence, for example, shows that 49% of households (53% in urban areas and 45% in rural areas) have a radio set and 52% a television set (78% in urban areas and 26% in rural areas). During school closure, public television and radio channels broadcast various lessons on national television and radio (RTI) from Monday to Friday. For television, these broadcasts were aired on RTI 1 from 3:00–3.30pm, and RTI 2 from 9-11 am, while they were aired on Radio Côte d´Ivoire from 8:00–8:30 am and on the Frequency 2 radio channel from 3:00–4:00 pm (ADEA, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

The Education Ministry provided distance education, starting with examination classes. Hence, it elaborated digital educational resources for dissemination via media (national and local) and self-learning platforms first for students in examination status (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 23). A teachers' union representative explains how the Education Ministry cooperated with the Ivorian radio and television, as follows:

The [Education Ministry] signed the courses in partnership with the RTI. Here, the RTI is the Ivorian radio and television. The MNETVT signed a partnership with the RTI – the public media, radio and television. So, this channel was used to give lessons. They also went through social media – e.g. Facebook, they used that, but they used radio and television a lot [more]. In a programme, in a given period of the day, lessons are taught, classes are broadcast. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

The Ministry of National Education created one of the online platforms for pedagogical resources for preschool, elementary, middle and high school students known as *Ecole Numérique*.[10] In addition to the media mentioned above, mobile phones were used to offer a digital tutoring service for learning, available by text message from any mobile phone, without the need for an internet connection. In total, 9 110 audio-visual capsules, including 6 030 videos and 3 080 audios, were produced (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 22). The materials initially aimed at students in examination classes (CM2, Third, and Final), and were later expected to include all levels and subjects in different cycles of primary and secondary schools (ADEA, 2020; République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020).

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10   https://ecole-ci.online/ and http://maformationenligne.cpntic.ci/moodle30/

The development and production of materials comprised the following stages (cf. République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, for further details):

- Harmonised outlines for presenting lesson content are sent to APFCs (local branch of Pedagogy and Continuing Education), secondary schools and IEPPs (Inspectorate of Preschool and Primary Education).

- Teachers were requested by APFCs via heads of institutions and IEPPs to produce content and materials according to harmonised frameworks.

- Content and materials produced by teachers were to be analysed and corrected in the first instance by the APFCs, and IEPPs then transmitted them to the DPFC (Department of Pedagogy and Continuing Education).

- The second level of proofreading was provided by the Regional Disciplinary Co-ordinations (CRD) of the four APFCs in Abidjan.

- The content and educational materials revised by the CRDs were validated by a commission comprising the DPFC and IGEN (General Inspectorate of National Education).

The capacities of teachers and educational supervisors were strengthened to produce the educational resources adapted to self-learning (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 22). As the report details: "The process of developing educational resources and supports mobilises the entire educational chain of command, from the teacher to the general inspector, including regional educational supervisors and national educational supervisors" (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 23).

To what extent teachers have been effectively involved in producing the materials remains unclear from the response plan, while interview data points to different perspectives. According to a government official, teachers have been involved in producing digital resources to the extent that they delivered the curriculum in front of cameras. Similarly, a teachers' union representative explains that the Ministry called individual teachers to record their teachings for distance education programmes; the criteria of selection were not transparent, however.

The state called on the volunteer teacher to teach the lessons, to offer programmes, to run courses. (And) the teachers played their part in facilitating the lessons... At the request of the state, the volunteer teachers led the courses, and they offered these courses

in relation to the classes. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

Interestingly, some teachers recorded and uploaded their own classes without being called by the government to do so, as a teachers' union representative explains. This is evidence of the motivation of teachers to help their students during school closure, although it may involve the risk of lower quality or non-standardisation.

There were even teachers who taught lessons themselves and who even without state intervention, through the media, e.g. Facebook, helped the children – in isolation. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

While teachers' unions have not been involved in the production of the digital resources, teachers were trained to deliver the content in front of video cameras, he confirms. When his teachers' union complained about the lack of involvement, the government justified the omission in terms of the urgency of the situation.

C. Education content

Education response to curriculum and assessment

Ivory Coast adopted a partial reopening of school approach in which all children from examination classes were allowed to return to schools first. On Monday, 26 May 2020, all primary and secondary schools were reopened for students in examination classes after a two month coronavirus shutdown. The timetable was adjusted to allow for social distancing, implying that no more than 20 students were in a classroom (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 31). Moreover, the plan covered the following aspects for preparing the reopening of schools pedagogically (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 31):

- programming the recovery by level/by zone and the revision of the modes of school organisation according to the sanitary measures in force;
- restructuring the school calendar following the scenarios envisaged and the certification procedures for the various study cycles; and
- reorganising educational and training programmes, the pace of assessments and/or national progressions.

The preparations for the reopening of schools were focused on cleaning up the physical environment of schools, disinfecting school

buildings and environments, supplying face masks to teachers and students, as well as providing free transport for students in big cities, e.g. Abidjan. These action measures were aimed at ensuring that teachers and students could work and learn in safe, protective and conducive learning environments (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020).

The learning resources covered all the school subjects, which were taught through distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Ministry of Education, the development of learning resources started with the subjects which were to be taught in the third trimester for both primary and general secondary education levels. Face-to-face teaching covered not only the entire content of the third term but also aimed at a systematic revision of the content of the distance learning period. However, students in final examination classes were given priority, followed by students in the non-final examination classes (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 32). Recently, the Education Ministry organised a working session to prepare for the relaunch of the My School at Home programme. According to UNICEF, the platform is being revised to make it more interactive including all levels of education (UNICEF, 2020n).

Students in examination classes (at the end of primary school, secondary school, first and second cycle) benefitted from the reopening of schools first, whereas students in the other classes continued with distance teaching and learning (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 31-32). Following the reopening of schools in May 2020, written tests for the Lower Secondary School Certificate in Ivory Coast started on 13 July 2020, involving a total of 503 472 candidates in 799 centres across the country. Written tests for the baccalaureate were held from 27 to 30 July 2020, involving a total of 318 995 registered candidates in 506 examination centres across the country (UNICEF, 2020o).

For all other classes, the Education Ministry validated the school year with evaluations from the first two terms, implying that no assessments took place in the third term. Assessment of learning outcomes for non-examination classes was planned at the start of the 2020-2021 school year (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 32). According to the interview data, the new school year started on September 14, 2020, for administrative purposes and the classes resumed from the beginning of October. A teachers' union representative explains that the content from the second semester will be caught up during the first two months of the new school year. The likelihood of successfully catching up on the missed content remains unclear.

At the start of the school year on September 14, they will catch up [the missing syllabus] during two-months. The school programme includes remedial sessions for the first two months. A student moving from 3rd to 4th they will make up for what they didn't do in the first half of the first semester. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

For the future, the National Education Ministry plans to develop a national strategy for distance education and training which allows for defining the legal framework, identifying conditions of access, and formalising the intervention methods, actors, learning assessment mechanisms and information management system (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 35). A government official confirms and clarifies this vision further:

But we are also changing things for the future. It allowed us to do something that we thought we wouldn't be able to do and I think we succeeded, e.g. a remote programme through satellites. I have to acknowledge that we have already thought about distance education before COVID. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

Strikingly, the government envisions digitalising education in the future to be prepared for further crises.

Psychosocial support for teacher and learners

To mitigate the psychological and social implications of the coronavirus, the Ministry of National Education in Ivory Coast decided to put in place various measures to provide psychosocial support for learners, together with the Ministry of Solidarity, local elected officials, local political and administrative authorities, and community leaders. The documentary data and the interview data diverge regarding the availability of psychosocial support for teachers and students. According to the documentary review, teachers supported students in

(i) visiting them and their families, providing advice for preventing COVID;

(ii) donating sanitary and hygiene materials;

(iii) satisfying primary needs (food, water, medicine) and

(iv) organising children's confidence-building sessions by school principals, social workers and supervisory staff when schools reopen again (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 28-29).

Critical examination suggests that only point iv can be considered as psychosocial support. In contrast, points ii and iii refer to material needs and point i deals with preventing the contamination/spread of the virus (a health requirement). According to UNICEF (2020n), social workers provided psychosocial support to 351 children (196 girls and 155 boys). In addition, 25 000 people were reached through awareness campaigns on violence against children. The support helpline received 4 479 calls, including 22 calls for information.

Psychosocial support during school closure seems to be donor-driven. As the following section Education response to teacher professional development explains, teachers are trained to provide psychological and pedagogical support.

In contrast to the documentary data, a teachers' union representative argues that teachers have not benefitted so far from psychosocial or technological support during the pandemic.

[To the question of psychosocial support], I don't think so, I don't think so. There was no psychosocial support... neither for the teachers nor for the pupils. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

His statement contrasts with the view of a government official suggesting that the Directorate for School Health and Mutuality (DEMOS) supported teachers, e.g. at the sanitary level.

We plan to produce videos where we talk to parents – that's the psychosocial side: teachers, talking to them about certain things; to children, how to take care of themselves; how to organise themselves at home. Here we have what is called COGES -- the school management committee that manages this psychosocial aspect with parents and students. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

Moreover, school management committees played a role in providing psychosocial support of teachers and students, according to this interviewee. While the exact nature of psychosocial support remains unclear, it seems to be medical and sanitary rather than psychological.

We also have another department..., which is called DEMOS - the Directorate of Mutual Funds and School Health. [They] manage the teachers on the psychosocial, medical, etc. plan. They are the ones who have helped to supervise the reopening of schools better. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

D. Education response to teacher professional development

While the documentary and interview data are not consistent regarding the availability of psychosocial support and training for teachers, they are regarding the general professional training of teachers. Following the documentary review, teachers benefit from distance tutoring. However, the frequency and duration are not detailed. They are advised how to support pre-primary and primary education students, particularly those with learning difficulties, via mobile phone or internet (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 26). Capacity building of teachers was conducted using training modules distributed through various communication channels before reopening schools. These modules were also available on hard copies distributed to teachers at the reopening (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 30). For example, various forms of training were carried out to strengthen the capacities of staff involved in the educational supervision chain for producing the educational resources and exercising pedagogical skills adapted to distance and self-learning. More specifically, the Sector Response Plan stipulates the capacity building of teachers on time management in implementing the curriculum through instructions by order/level of education (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 31).

The government official, like the teachers' union representative, confirms that teachers benefitted from professional development. The government official suggests that teachers were involved in teaching examination classes and in producing digital materials. It remains unclear, however, how they were supported pedagogically. The teachers' union representative provides some further details in saying that the Ministry called individual teachers to record their teachings for distance education programmes. They were trained to deliver the content in front of video cameras, as the following quote explains.

Regarding the [digital] courses, the state has signalled to volunteer teachers to offer modules, to run lessons. The teachers played a role in facilitating the classes.... I think the teachers were trained, especially the ones, the government called, were trained to use social media, to speak in front of the cameras – they were more or less prepared.... Their training was to teach in front of the camera; it does not concern the content of the course. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

Summing up this section, teachers benefitted from awareness-raising, capacity-building in providing psychological and pedagogical support, and receiving financial aid, e.g. paying for mobile phone

communication, among others. Teachers from private schools were particularly concerned as they were not paid during the school closure, and thus did not benefit from financial aid by the government (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 26).

E. Country summary and synthesis

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated equity and inequality concerns in various ways. Not all families have equal access to the distribution channels for educational resources due to the lack of essential equipment (power supply, internet connection, telephone, radio, television set). Also, different channels for disseminating lessons do not always offer the same type of service, meaning that students who have access to an online platform have the option of downloading a video capsule and viewing it as many times as necessary, unlike those who cannot. For some children, school is the only opportunity to access health, food and nutrition services. For others, the risk that they will not return to school after a longer or shorter period of closure is high. The school closure, therefore, deprived the former of life-saving aid and exposed the latter to dangers, such as forced labour or other forms of exploitation. As soon as school reopens, the former will regain these essential services, while the latter, by dropping out of school, especially young girls, could be permanently lost to school (cf. République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020 for further details).

Even though the Sector Response Plan acknowledges that all inequalities in access and appropriation of educational content cannot be eliminated (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 32), one primary concern is to offer inclusive and equitable distance education and training services (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 22). To guarantee equity and inclusion for 7 744 students with visual and hearing impairments in primary education, the Ministry transcribed the content of distance education into Braille, made Braille materials available to visually impaired pupils, and provided a sign language interpretation service for deaf children when lessons were aired on TV (cf. République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020 for further details). The integration of children with special needs is also explained by a government official hereafter.

Equity is not an easy thing to achieve. But we told ourselves [that] we are in a constraint. We must reduce inequalities. Therefore, if you look at our video material... At first, we didn't think about it, but afterwards, we asked ourselves the question of fairness. Wait, where do we leave those who cannot hear? Where do we leave

those who cannot see? So we had to incorporate signs into our educational films. You see, there are 'signers' while the teacher is doing his lesson.... At the same time, we wrote the classes, and we put them in the formula of the blind, the visually impaired..., so we transcribed it in Braille.... And that also allowed the visually impaired to work. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

Furthermore, the plan also details how children from marginalised/poor communities are catered for. It says, "*To guarantee inclusion and equity in the deployment of the system, positive discrimination measures will be taken in favour of students from disadvantaged and vulnerable families*" (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 27). These measures include, among others, the supply of radios, televisions, mobile phones, and communication credits to households that do not have any of this equipment; the distribution of school books to primary level students who do not have any; and the provision of dry food rations to food-insecure students due to the closure of school canteens. Likewise, disadvantaged and vulnerable families benefitted from cash transfers as specified in the economic, social and humanitarian support plan. The financial feasibility remains to be clarified.

One obvious drawback is the responsibility given to parents for home-schooling their children. Parents are called to account for the learning of their children at home. The Sector Response Plan proposes raising awareness through the media and opinion leaders among parents, literate or not, getting them involved in the home care of their children (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020, p. 29). As implied in the statement, literate, educated parents are in a better position to support their children in home-schooling than non-literate/non-educated parents. Raising awareness among parents is not enough to ensure inclusive and equitable learning at home.

The interview data diverge regarding the ambition of offering equitable and inclusive education. A government official, while acknowledging the aim, believes that they covered at least 70% of students, whereas a teachers' union representative is less optimistic.

I still think that almost 70% [of the students] were able to access the content in various ways.... There were also local radios which broadcast [the classes]. So, it still brought some things to the children. (Government official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

[To the question of the coverage of the students], no, no, no, we could not reach everyone, the percentage was low because television, not everyone has access to television. For example, in the

villages, there is not even an electricity current; there is no electricity. So you see, not all of the students had access to the radio and television. (Teachers' union official, Ivory Coast, September 2020).

F. Key themes and takeaways

- The curriculum was compressed into shorter timeframes of delivery, potentially compromising the quality of education provided to learners.

- The data is contradictory about the involvement of teachers' unions in the elaboration of the response plan. The participation of all relevant departments from the Education Ministry and its sub-units as well as teachers' unions contrasts with the statement that teachers' unions were not involved at all. It can be assumed that the government realised the need to include parents, teachers and counsellors to some extent but not sufficiently to the satisfaction of teacher unions.

- Like Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast used a wide range of media to provide their distance education programme to a as many students as possible, covering television and radio, online learning platforms as well as mobile phones. Questions of access for more impoverished and rural communities remain, however.

- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated equity and inequality concerns in various ways. Not all families have equal access to the distribution channels for educational resources due to the lack of essential equipment, and different dissemination channels did not always offer the same type of service. The school closure deprived some students of life-saving aid (e.g. lunch) and exposed others to dangers such as forced labour or other forms of exploitation.

- The response plan aimed to offer inclusive and equitable education, e.g. in providing the distance education programme to children with special needs and children from marginalised and poor communities. An internal evaluation of the Education Ministry estimates that 70% of students had access to the distance education programme, although this is questioned by other educational actors/unions.

- For the future, the National Education Ministry plans to develop a national strategy for distance education and training, based on satellite technology, to be ready for coping with other crises, such as conflict or health.

8. Mali

A. Country context

As a landlocked country in the interior of Western Africa, Mali covers an area of 1 241 238 km², with a climate ranging from subtropical in the south to arid, hot and dry in the north (Nations Online, 2020b). The country's latest population is estimated at 20 250 833 people at mid-year according to UN data (Worldometer, 2020d). Mali's economy relies on natural resources such as precious metals and agriculture products; industries are food processing, construction and mining (Nations Online, 2020b). According to the World Bank (2020e), the COVID-19 pandemic has not significantly affected the Malian economy as an oil importer and gold exporter. In fact, contrary to most countries, the crisis is expected to lead to an improvement in its terms of trade.

Mali is the most fragile country among the three countries in this section. It is ranked 16th among 120 countries by the Fragile State Index in 2020. Like Burkina Faso, it belongs to the countries in which the security situation worsened most significantly with a trend of further deterioration for the future (The Fund for Peace, 2020b). The government experienced a coup d'état on August 18, 2020, following mass protests over corruption, electoral probity and a jihadist insurgency. While the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condemned the coup d'état, West African leaders have demanded the appointment of an interim president to oversee a planned 18-month-long transition to elections. The military council named former army officer Bah Ndaw as Interim President of Mali (BBC, 2020).[11]

The first two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Mali were reported on 25 March 2020. By 7 April Mali had 56 confirmed cases which were recorded in the district of Bamako as well as in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Mopti, including six deaths. More than a thousand contact persons had been identified and were being followed up (UNICEF, 2020p). As of 13 October 2020, Mali had 3 296 confirmed cases and 132 deaths due to the coronavirus disease (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2020j). Despite the rather moderate outbreak, there was a risk of resurgence of cases due to public meetings and gatherings with the beginning of the presidential campaign on 15 October (UNICEF, 2020n). The government has

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11   The political situation needs further observation as it can change rapidly

updated its medical response plan to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In cooperation with the World Health Organization and the World Bank, the government also strengthened its medical care capacity (0.6% of GDP) (IMF, 2020).

The education statistics in Mali show 142 523 pupils in pre-primary school, 3 297 418 pupils in primary schools, and 391 410 in secondary schools (Maguiraga, 2020). Faced with the health situation, the Malian government closed all schools for three weeks as of 19 March 2020. The school closure was extended three times until 2 June, the date of planned reopening of lessons for students who need to complete examinations. In total, 3,8 million children in schools, 2,5 million children out of school, and 700 000 displaced children from insecure regions, usually attending community learning centres, were affected by the school closure and the pandemic more broadly (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 2).

B. Education governance

Educational policy-making

The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research are the main stakeholders in combatting COVID in the area of education, each with its own response plan. In addition to its COVID-19 strategy, it submitted a funding request to the GPE. The main partners are the World Bank and UNICEF. Furthermore, UNESCO and UNICEF contributed to developing the content of the distance education programme. The government submitted a funding request to GPE for about USD 7 million over a period of 18 months under the leadership of the World Bank and committed itself to invest USD 10 million USD in combating the effects of COVID-19 on education (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 1, 3). As of September 2020, UNICEF required USD 24,2 million to respond to the pandemics in Mali. A larger portion (87%) of this requirement has been mobilized both from internal resources and generous contributions. However, a funding gap of USD 5 831 566 remains (UNICEF, 2020q).

According to the response plan(République du Mali, 2020a), teachers' unions have been actively involved in conducting awareness campaigns among their members to secure compliance with hygienic and preventive measures taken by the authorities against the COVID-19 pandemic. The four national trade union centres in Mali – National Union of Workers of Mali (UNTM), Trade Union

Confederation of Workers of Mali (CSTM), Democratic Union of Workers of Mali (CDTM), and Malian Confederation of Labour (CMT) – have been represented in a special tripartite commission set up by the Ministry of Social Dialogue, Labour and the Public Service within the framework of the national response against COVID-19. These workers' unions raise critical matters so that more significant efforts can be made to provide support to workers whose livelihoods are threatened (ITUC-Africa, 2020b). In reality, however, respondents, as noted in the quote below, object to the active involvement in the policy-making process, as indicated in the following statement:

It should be noted that the unions in the education sector were not involved in any awareness campaign against the pandemic. The departments closed the schools without consultation. It should be pointed out that initiatives to raise awareness among activists are specific to certain unions, or at least SNEC's is specific to it, and we have kept denouncing this situation to the authorities … (Teachers' union official, Mali, March 2021)

Delivery of education

To ensure the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mali, the government, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, prepared distance education programmes using radio, television and the internet. These programmes prioritised students in classes taking examinations in the current year, followed by a plan for non-examination grades after June 2 until the end of the academic year or the reopening of schools (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 5). The national television broadcaster (ORTM) and *Union des Radio diffusions et télévisions libres du Mali* (URTEL), for example, started broadcasting live and recorded lessons beginning on 14 April 2020 for both primary and secondary levels. To ensure equity and inclusion of all students, those without radio or television are provided with solar radios to facilitate access to continued learning during the pandemic. The radio programmes, which started later, helped to provide coverage across the country (UNICEF, 2020r).

The Ministry of National Education, in partnership with UNICEF and UNESCO, provided various educational materials suitable for primary and secondary school learners during the pandemic in Mali, through digital content such as WeShare (UNICEF, 2020r). However, only a few students have access to the internet (11% in rural areas and 34% in urban areas). Several resources exist and are organised for primary, secondary and higher education (such as the digital library in higher

education). These resources, revolving around school curricula, are available electronically and are posted on the platforms of the Education Ministry (République du Mali, 2020a:7). The Response Plan argues for a combination of all technologies (radio and television) to mitigate the adverse effects on disadvantaged groups[12]; radio support is privileged as widely as possible (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 6-7).

According to the response plan, teachers were mobilised and involved in producing digital content and in interacting with students to answer comprehension questions. Capacity building enabled teachers to perform these tasks properly (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 10). Teacher union representatives confirm that the Ministry of National Education invited all teacher unions to attend the introduction of the distance programme, but that most unions refused because they were on strike at that time. The Teacher Union for National Education and Culture (*Syndicat Nationale de l'Education et de la Culture*, SNEC) was the only non-state stakeholder participating in the process from the beginning to the end, according to their own statements.

It should be noted that in the framework of the initiation of distance learning courses, the departments approached all the unions for this initiative, but unfortunately all the unions refused because they were on strike, they say, except SNEC, which already has a pool of teacher trainers in this field. [SNEC participated in the whole process from conception to implementation, and even received a letter of congratulations from the department.] (Teachers' union official, Mali, March 2021).

C. Education content

Education response to curriculum and assessment

In an attempt to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on teachers and students, the Ministry of National Education closed all educational institutions on 26 March 2020, thereby affecting the previous school timetable. The Strategy to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic in Schools planned to rearrange class schedules and revise the school calendar (including end-of-year examinations) (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 5).

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12   78.7% of the population is living in rural areas, of which only 17% have electricity; 87% have access to the radio; 39.5% have a television.

The government in Mali decided to use a partial reopening of schools (also called selective-grade entry approach). The schools were opened on 14 September 2020 with the DEF (*Diplome d'Etude Fondamentale*) and the BAC (*Bacalauréat*) examinations scheduled for 12 October 2020 and 19 October 2020 respectively (UNICEF, 2020q). According to the GPE funding request, the government had to prepare for the reopening of schools, taking into account the following principles: the specificity of the types and levels of education (preschool, primary 1 and 2, general secondary, technical and vocational, higher, non-formal); the sequencing between examination classes and other classes as well as the status of schools (public, community, denominational and private), and the cumulative impact of security and social crises (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 6).

To guarantee a safe and healthy environment, the Ministry of National Education planned three sub-strategies. The first pillar consisted of developing and disseminating school safety guidelines and COVID-19 prevention and control protocol; the second was about its implementation, including the preparation of hygienic and safe school classes; and the third one covered activities as various as revising the school calendar and timetable, organising remedial courses and psychosocial support as well as a school feeding programme and awareness and community mobilisation sessions (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 4-5). Barrier measures to COVID-19 for academic and pedagogical institutions were implemented, particularly for meetings and workshops in some regions. The National Department of Basic Education, together with UNICEF support, translated the COVID-19 protocol into Arabic and the training of 110 academic and pedagogical personnel in charge of the *medersas*[13] (UNICEF, 2020q).

A schedule covered all core subjects at both primary and secondary levels, but with priority given to classes which take examinations at the end of the cycle. The Ministry decided that students in the final year for both primary and secondary levels would write their national examinations. However, the actual date for the final year examinations had not yet been announced by the relevant authorities at the time of writing. Students who are not in their final years were to take their self-assessment at home with the assistance of their parents and guardians (UNICEF, 2020r). For the start of the 2020 school year, the Education Ministry planned to refocus the

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13   The word *medersa*, a Malian/West African variation of the Arabic word madrasa (school), is used in Mali to indicate a school's status as an Islamic religious school that offers secular subjects (Boyle, 2019).

syllabus on the entire content in reading, writing and mathematics (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 5).

Psychosocial support for teacher and learners

The government of Mali, in cooperation with UNICEF, has been providing psychosocial support by reorganising activities that are sensitive to COVID-19 prevention and aligned with social distancing measures. They also carry out activities related to the prevention of COVID-19 and provide adequate psychosocial support for children affected by COVID-19 or those at protection risk (UNICEF, 2020r). To set up psychosocial support programmes adapted to the context, the education strategy plans to train teachers in psychosocial support for themselves and students (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 4–5). According to UNICEF (2020q), a total of 395 children and 120 adults (parents and primarily caregivers) received psychosocial assistance services to overcome psychosocial distress. This statement contrasts again with the perspective and experience of a teachers' union member who argues that he is not aware of psychosocial support although he experienced COVID quite severely, as stated below:

> *We are not aware of any psychological support. Although I was tested positive myself, unfortunately, I had no psychosocial support. I nearly lost my life and my hospitalization made me realise that the health system in place was very inadequate. Many of my acquaintances lost their lives in front of my eyes. (I had a lot of discussions with the doctors, which allowed me to conclude that I had miraculously escaped.) This gave me the strength to increase awareness at the level of my union, the national centre and my direct collaborators. (Teachers' union official, Mali, March, 2021) .*

The contrasting data suggests that psychosocial support seems to be limited to students rather than teachers and it remains unclear how many students actually benefitted from this support.

D. Education response to teacher professional development

The education strategy plans to strengthen the capacities of teachers for providing support to students during the school closure and for teaching when schools reopen again. To ensure the continuity of educational activities during school closure, the Education Ministry organised awareness-raising and community mobilisation sessions for teachers, among others (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 4–5). In understanding the importance of teachers in supporting the continuity

of learning during the school closure, the government partnered with UNICEF and others to provide training for teachers on distance education. Moreover, UNICEF supported the development of a virtual library that could be used by teachers in preparing their lessons and presentations on TV and radio (UNICEF, 2020r).

The GPE funding request specified the content of the teacher training, covering training in the use of alternative learning techniques and advice on managing learning in times of crisis and areas of resilience, including preparation for prevention and risk reduction of conflicts and disasters (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 6). Later, it stated that support would be provided to build the capacity of trainers and train teachers in the use of the distance learning platform (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 10). For the reopening of schools, it was planned to inform and sensitise teachers and students, among others, on COVID-19 and hygiene measures as well as to train teachers in psychosocial support for themselves and students (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 4-5).

E. Country summary and synthesis

This section covers how the pandemic impacts existing challenges and frailties. In particular, attention is drawn to how the pandemic intersects with conflict:

- increases in rural exodus and emigration;
- risks of enrolment in armed movements;
- school dropout among learners for various reasons;
- an upsurge in early marriages of schoolgirls;
- the heightened risk of abuse, exploitation and violence; and
- a lack of access to child protection services (République du Mali, 2020b, p. 2).

In Mali, the risk of being out of the school system does not vary much between girls and boys, but it is more marked according to the place of residence, by region, and according to the level of poverty. However, in secondary, technical and vocational education and higher education, the enrolled rate of female students decreases significantly. The vulnerability of girls may have its causes in sexual and domestic violence, and the increased risk of early marriage and pregnancy (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 7).

Moreover, as children from families/households in the lowest quintile risk being excluded from distance education, the GPE funding

request planned a collaboration between educational authorities and community radio services and the donation of solar radios to the most vulnerable families (République du Mali, 2020a, p. 5).

Like Burkina Faso, Mali has been affected by terrorist attacks for several years. A heightened risk exists that children will be enrolled in armed movements during school closure and will not return to school. Teachers were well trained to prevent and reduce risks, conflicts and disasters.

F. Key themes and takeaways

- In Mali, the inequities of the pandemic were exacerbated by the coup d'état and the resulting embargo imposed on the country by ECOWAS.

- As for the two other countries, the data is contradictory about the involvement of teachers' unions in the policy-making process and the education delivery. However, at least one teachers' union was actively involved in conducting awareness campaigns among their members and in the production of digital content.[14]

- As in other countries, the pandemic influenced disadvantaged children even more, e.g. the increase in rural exodus and emigration; school dropout among learners for various reasons; the upsurge in early marriages of schoolgirls; the heightened risk of abuse, exploitation and violence; and a lack of access to child protection services.

G. Macro-themes for the Francophone countries

- Donor-driven response plans and financial dependence: in all three countries, donors play an essential role in the elaboration and the funding of the response plan. In Burkina Faso, the budget for mitigating the COVID-19 impact on the education system is estimated at USD 10 million for the period from May 2020 to December 2021, whereby GPE contributed USD 7 million under the lead of the French development agency. In Ivory Coast, the government estimated the necessary budget at USD 15 million, whereas GPE under the leadership of UNICEF contributed USD 11 million. In Mali, the government committed to investing USD 10 million while GPE contributed USD 7 million under the

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14   However, the authors lack data to confirm their involvement in the formulation of the response plan.

leadership of the World Bank. In all three cases, external funding was higher than internal resources. This fact, together with the observation that all response plans were similarly formulated, suggests that the national governments were dependent on the agenda and the funding of donors to some extent.

- Teachers' unions were informed but not involved in the elaboration of the response plans. In two of the three countries, teachers' unions felt inadequately involved in the elaboration of response plans. Although the documentary and interview data diverge, they suggest that teachers' unions were informed but not actively engaged in the development of the programmes. For example, in Burkina Faso, the Education Ministry presented the plan to teachers' unions, allowing them to provide feedback. In Ivory Coast, the teachers' union representative was not aware of the response plan. Hence, their active involvement in the policy process seemed to have been limited or non-existent. Emerging from the seminar sessions, government officials and teachers' union representatives agreed to foster open, candid and ongoing collaboration between government and teachers' unions (social dialogue); more specifically, to involve teachers' unions in decision-making processes on education issues in times of crisis.

- Distance education delivery tends to discriminate against disadvantaged students, e.g. children with special needs, children in rural areas and children from the lowest quintile. It has to be acknowledged, however, that governments are aware of the challenges related to equity and inclusion. The Education Ministry in Ivory Coast prepared distance education programme for children with special needs (deaf or blind). In contrast, in Mali, they offered solar radios to children from the most disadvantaged communities. Official evaluation results do not exist yet, but an internal evaluation of the Education Ministry in Ivory Coast indicates that 70% of students accessed the distance education programme. This situation raises a concern about how the remaining 30% of students were taken into account.

- The digitilisation of education programmes created a market benefitting a few: while COVID-19 affected most industries negatively, a few, such as recording studios, benefitted greatly from the crisis in producing the distance education programmes (cf. interview with government official, Ivory Coast). In Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, teachers whom the government engaged were exempted from teaching in front of

the camera. While the selection criteria of teachers in the case of Burkina were clear, this was less the case for Ivory Coast.

- Psychosocial support is mainly provided by multilateral agencies and, in these regions, are understood as medical rather than psychological support: national education ministries, together with multilateral agencies such as UNICEF provide psychosocial support (e.g. Burkina Faso). The psychosocial support mainly targets students and not teachers, except in Mali. In this case, teachers were trained in psychosocial support for themselves and students. Moreover, psychosocial support seems to remain limited to medical rather than psychological issues. In Ivory Coast, for example, the teachers' union representative argued that psychosocial support did not exist, whereas the government official understood psychosocial support as medical/sanitary support related to COVID.

- COVID-19 arising in conflict-affected areas exacerbates existing inequalities: two of the three sample countries in West Africa are historically and currently affected by conflict. For example, in Burkina Faso, the data has shown how COVID-19 arising in conflict-affected areas exacerbated existing inequalities. The approach to regroup students from insecure areas into training centres in the administrative centres was not compatible with the COVID-19 preventive measures of social distancing, thus it did not allow students of these areas to complete their examinations. Like Burkina Faso, Mali has been affected by terrorist attacks for several years. A heightened risk exists that children were enrolled in armed movements during school closure and will not return to school.

- Teacher professional development in times of crisis: emerging from the seminar sessions, government officials and teachers' union representatives agreed to revise the curriculum and to integrate Information and Communications Technology into their Initial Teacher Education and continuous professional development programmes as a response to disasters.

III. Summary and synthesis of the report

Drawing on information from a desk-based review, documentation, including policy analysis and semi-structured interviews, this report synthesizes the education policy responses of various global regions during the time of COVID-19, focusing subsequently on the African continent. This section summarises the overall key findings and reflects on how several of the challenges reported can be mitigated or improved.

Sensitivity to context is always acknowledged. Moreover, it needs to be acknowledged at the outset that one of the most important effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has generalised the education experience of the marginalised and the impoverished to all, with the already marginalised bearing the brunt of these negative effects. Refugees have always experienced education disruption; children living in conflict and fragile contexts have limited and irregular access to equitable and quality education; and natural disasters have adversely impacted education. What the report highlights is that even though the already marginalised are more affected, the wealthy were not unscathed. It is a telling reminder of how inequality, conflict, natural disaster and fragility impact the learning experiences of children, youth and adults.

We synthesise the findings across three areas. First we deal with the macro effects, how policies are made and who is involved. Secondly, we consider several specific education choices during the pandemic, including curriculum, assessment and teacher professional development. We conclude by arguing that the crisis must result in building back a better and more 'just normal' rather than a 'new normal' which simply entrenches existing education inequities. In particular, we advocate for the idea of education as a public good underpinned by a social justice, radical, humanist education agenda.

1. Education policy-making

The effects of COVID-19 – socially, politically and economically – have been felt around the world as the global economy is "*estimated to contract by 2.8% in 2020*" (Buheji et al., 2020, p. 213). Not only has the pandemic wrought closures of institutions and lockdowns of

entire countries, but more subtly it has exacerbated inequalities between different groups within countries and between countries. The short-term effects of the pandemic on the impoverished have been significant, resulting in, for example, an increase in hunger, in extreme poverty, and in adverse social effects including the rise of gender-based violence (Mbunge 2020, p. 1). The Gates Foundation Report (2020) notes that the pandemic has pushed almost 37 million people below the USD 1.90 a day extreme poverty line. The poverty line for lower-middle income countries is USD 3.20 a day, with 68 million people falling below that line since last year. The low threshold of extreme poverty in monetary terms belies the extreme deprivation the poor face, and will continue to face, as a result of the pandemic.

The pandemic has intensified inequities in society at large and education in particular. As discussed in this report, those who have coped best educationally with the pandemic have been the wealthy and those with the necessary home background and cultural capital for whom education, whilst disrupted, has continued. This points to the salience of wealth and cultural capital as a determinant of education progress. This report has shone a spotlight on how the pandemic has exacerbated inequities for those who were already marginalised before the crisis, for example, those in conflict-affected contexts and refugees, as they have borne the greatest COVID-19 education burden.

In throwing into sharp relief the fault lines of inequalities and the unlocking nature of inequities, the pandemic has foregrounded the purpose of education and who benefits. Whilst there have been many adverse effects of the education crises as noted above, education orthodoxies have been upended, such as the resolute hold on high stakes examination. Moments of crisis make evident that which is regarded as valid and allow for the questioning of the approach to determining education progress. The present pandemic provides the education community the opportunity to rethink the values and purposes of education. And it highlights that for the impoverished, schooling and education institutions are important spaces for learning as a socially constituted activity but also as a space for tackling inequities in education wealth and resources. In this respect, the report suggests the need for a (re)visioning of the purposes of education, with equity as core to quality education. This is also echoed in a recent report published by Education International on the importance of educational equity,. The Report notes that a "*lack of equity is one of the most pernicious barriers to achieving the universal human right to quality education*", thus addressing inequities is critical in the pursuit of quality education (Education International, 2020:3).

Whilst the pandemic has brought to the fore more the fundamental question about the purpose of education, and who benefits, who provides the answer has been a key concern as well. In this report we identify that education decisions and policy-making have not been included on policymaking, and that key stakeholders, teachers and their representatives have had to fight to get their voices heard. Further, it is argued that teachers and parents from disadvantaged schools and communities have less say in the policy-making process, with particular policy elites being privileged. Thus, it is not surprising that the consequences of these policy choices, as we discuss below, have had adverse effects on notions of equity and equality, with the most vulnerable populations suffering irreparably as a direct result of these policy responses and policy development processes.

In reflection on these choices, it is outlined in the consensus document that an appropriate education response to the pandemic should pay attention to the following:

i.   **Mitigating inequities:** In processes of policy-making, it is imperative that attention be paid to the equity effect of policy choice. Ideally, there should be a strong commitment to gauging the efficacy of the policy choices made, such as online learning for example, and what the equity effects are likely to be and how inequities may be mitigated. This suggests the need for a modality of policy-making which has equity as its core education concern and an approach which focuses on the most marginalised and impoverished.

ii. **Meaningful and robust participation:** A policy-making process that foregrounds equity requires an extensive, consultative and democratic process of education policy which crucially involves teachers and their representatives as they are front-line implementers and street-level bureaucrats responsible for enacting the choices made. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that their voice and the voices of other stakeholders reflect the views and needs of the impoverished and marginalised. Only then can it be possible for policy choice to foreground equity.

iii. **Re-envisioning education:** The pandemic affords national government the opportunity to develop education policies which involve key stakeholders in rethinking the vision and purpose of education. And in rethinking and re-envisioning education, the pandemic affords policy-makers, national government and stakeholders an opportunity to see crisis and uncertainty as key aspects of the current global context, thereby necessitating education systems that are prepared for

difficult events to be resilient under disaster. This will, as we argue below, require (re)thinking about the education context.

2. Unpacking education policy choice about the education content and delivery modes

The report has identified several education policy choices made in response to the pandemic. Generally, it is argued that education choices reflected an emergency response modality characterised by hasty decision-making processes and actions which have not been carefully considered for their feasibility or, more importantly, their equity effects. A prime example has been the vacillation between choices of closing and reopening of schools which has often betrayed a narrow focus on education as learning content and a concern with high stakes examinations.

There are two particular outcomes of this emergency mode of education choice-making as response to the pandemic. The first is that teacher professional development has been an afterthought. It was assumed that in moving learning online, teachers were in possession of the necessary skill, knowledge, and disposition to do so. This was indeed not the case and the response has been marked by a dearth of carefully considered professional development support programmes for teachers. More importantly, whilst understandably much of the focus was on learners and education systems, there was little attention paid to the well-being of teachers. There has been a remarkable absence of structured professional and holistic support and care to cater for the physical, emotional and mental well-being of teachers. Even more, there was little focus on equipping teachers with the competence to support learners who were, and still are, experiencing the pandemic as a traumatic moment. The absence of structured professional development support for teachers to provide psychosocial support to learners suffering from trauma reveals a remarkable blind spot in education policy response to the pandemic.

Secondly, the education choices reviewed in this report suggest a narrow focus on education as content and with an overriding concern for high-stakes assessment. Sayed and Singh (2020, p. 7) note that:

A remarkable feature of the debate about the impact of Covid-19 and education responses is the strong focus on educational content. Rearranging school timetabling, extending the school year and increasing teaching hours for each learning area

focuses education policy attention on the loss of learning content, measured by the amount of time children are expected to spend on learning. Underpinning this understanding of education in times of crises is the notion of learning as curriculum coverage. In other words, school closure as a response to the pandemic is understood as the loss of learning content due to insufficient time for covering the content specified in the curriculum. A narrow focus on the curriculum and content of learning (cognitive learning) is the current concern globally, with much talk about the 'learning crisis' and 'learning poverty' (see Saavedra, 2020).... This obsession with curriculum coverage suggests a narrow understanding of the purpose of schooling. While the concern with learning content is understandable, a narrow focus on the loss of learning and a learning gap approach limits the vision and purposes of education given that learning is much more than the learning of content.

A narrow focus on learning and content resulted in a glaring failure to pay attention to what Sayed and Singh (2020) refer to as 'affective learning' and others refer to as 'social-emotional learning'. Whilst these are different in intent and practice, they both signal a need for an education system to pay attention to developing relationships and enabling learners to develop social and civic skills for navigating life in a democratic, post-pandemic context. It speaks to the need to assist learners to manage and navigate complex crises and uncertainties and speaks to UNESCO's ideal of a holistic notion of education in which education is not only about learning to do but learning to be, become, believe and live with others in an increasingly fragmented, conflicted and uncertain world.

This review makes evident that greater attention should be paid, as the consensus document does, to supporting government, teachers and their representatives, and other stakeholders in these ways:

i. Empowering teachers through appropriate professional development: A key gap in responding to crises such as COVID-19 is ensuring that there are well-targeted, widely-available, appropriate and relevant professional development programmes to support teachers in responding to the education choices made. The absence of such programmes hinders the realisation of quality teaching and learning.

ii. Protecting a holistic approach to education curriculum: Content-focused curriculum, on which much online learning relies, tends to instrumentalise education and learning,

reducing the expansive notion of education quality to content mastery. Greater attention must be paid to developing responses to crises that promote a comprehensive and holistic view of education which focuses not only on the cognitive but also on the affective dimension of learning.

iii. Teacher well-being: In whatever education choices are made, it is important that national governments, working in partnership with teacher unions, develop an appropriate suite of support for teachers which promotes their well-being as they, like other front-line staff, are most directly impacted by the pandemic. The well-being of teachers during crisis means ensuring that they have the necessary tools, techniques and infrastructure to teach meaningfully and effectively.

3. An equity focused review of education crisis, uncertainty and unpredictability

The absence of systematic research, data collection and monitoring of education choices and causes and consequences is a key gap this report has identified. This gap hinders the efforts of national governments and other stakeholders to learn lessons for future crises and to develop appropriate responses to the current pandemic. In commissioning this report, the development organisation and partners have made an important choice to encourage collaboration between national governments and teachers and their representatives. This includes support for national governments and teacher unions to document response and effect in times of crisis, such as this present pandemic, in order to support equitable and quality teaching and learning for all, particularly the marginalised.

4. Developing a progressive, transformational post-COVID agenda: building back a better and more just normal

This pandemic, as one of many crises which impacts equitable and quality learning, requires a robust and public policy education solution which sustains the nature and protects the ideal of education as a public and common good. The current and forthcoming choices and solutions, including the rapid rise of online learning, should not result in the privatisation of public education by creeping and stealth. Nor should solutions encourage the wealthy to abandon public education.

Sayed et al. (forthcoming) note that:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder that "between social reforms and [transformation] there exists an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is the means; social [transformation] its aim" (Luxemburg, 1970:8). As education choices and choices in all other sectors are made during and post-pandemic, it is crucial to ensure a comprehensive policy reform package committed to social justice and redistribution of privilege and wealth.

In developing such a progressive agenda, we must build back a better and just normal with resilent education systems.

5. Lessons learnt from global policy responses to education during COVID 19

This report illuminates the policy responses to education during the COVID 19 pandemic. It highlights these responses globally with a more detailed emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa, using eight countries to demonstrate trends in the region. Despite differing policy responses globally, particularly regarding the choice to open or close schools, infection rates have increased steadily resulting in a second and in some regions a third wave of infections. A synthesis of global policy responses in education during COVID 19 reveal that:

- There has been no consistent pattern between school status and infection rates;
- Nearly all countries (89%) in a second COVID-19 wave have kept schools open to students, which is the case despite higher infection rates in the second wave;
- In regions where schools remain closed or partially closed, particularly in lower income countries, they seem to be experiencing an extended first wave of infection.

(Crowder et al, 2020)

What this suggests is that policy responses were made on the basis of assumptions and in the absence "of concrete and cumulative information" (Crowder et al., 2020:11). The negative effects of these policy responses have unfortunately been felt the most by the already marginalised populations in the world. Crowder et al. (2020:11) note that:

Learners from high- and upper-middle income countries account for nearly half of all enrolments globally, yet will account for only

16 per cent of lost school days. In sharp contrast, the other half of global learners, from lower-income countries, will have accrued a 'learning deficit' of 84 per cent of the 300 billion projected days of in-person learning lost due to COVID-19 in 2020.

These responses also demonstrate that the evidence used to develop policies were limiting, incomplete and was not anchored in logical reasoning and based on the experiences of past pandemics. Apart from the extreme learning deficit experienced by less affluent populations, the psychological impact, including emotional stress that resulted from these policy choices, may further hinder educational success of the poor. What the report further reveals is that whilst the effects of the pandemic were felt by all, both rich and poor, the nature of the effect differs substantially, with the poor being worse off.

In conclusion, what the report notes is that if we are to 'build back better', we need to develop resilient systems and to be prepared for future crises and disruptions. One way of improving levels of preparedness and resilience is to address the aspects that have led to fractured societies: such as inequality, exclusion, discrimination and the lack of social cohesion.

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Crises and the COVID-19 pandemic: education responses and choices during times of disruptions

A global synthesis and Sub-Saharan African country analysis: Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda

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