



TEACHING AND LEARNER WELL-BEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



FIRST BRIEF

KIX Observatory on COVID-19 Responses

January 2021



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا
Association for the Development of Education in Africa
Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África



AFRICAN UNION
International Centre for Girls' and
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UNION AFRICAINE
Centre International pour l'Éducation
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International Development Research Centre
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The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) disease, declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) in January 2020, prompted a global closure of schools from mid-March 2020, affecting an estimated 1.6 billion learners worldwide [according to the United Nations](#).

In response to the negative impacts of the pandemic on educational systems in Africa, the Consortium comprised of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa ([ADEA](#)), the African Union's International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa ([AU/CIEFFA](#)), with technical support from the African Population and Health Research Centre ([APHRC](#)), and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics ([UIS](#)), has come together under the [KIX Observatory on COVID-19 Responses](#) with the goal of supporting African member states to ensure quality, equity, and well-functioning of teaching and learning; the well-being of teachers and learners at basic levels of education within African member countries, for the resilience of education systems against future crises.

The KIX COVID-19 observatory collects, synthesizes, and mobilizes evidence about COVID-19 responses in primary and secondary education in 41 African member countries of the Global Partnership for Education ([GPE](#)), pertaining to the operation of education systems and the well-being of learners. It also tracks emerging research, including the interventions being tested and evaluated, on these topics.

This brief has been developed with the intent to encourage and promote a culture of evidence sharing about policy- and practice-level education interventions in response the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as targeted recommendations.

If you have any information about COVID-19 education policy and practice responses or emerging research, please consider sharing it with us by using our "[submission form](#)" so that we can include it in our live trackers and share with educational stakeholders in 41 GPE African member countries.

For more information about the KIX Observatory, please visit its dedicated [webpage](#) and contact us at kixobservatory@adeanet.org and kixobservatory@cieffa.org.



FOCUS AREAS OF THE BRIEF

This brief focuses on two areas – Teachers and Teaching and Learner Well-being and Learning during COVID-19 – for the following key reasons:

Teachers are not well prepared to teach, more so during a time of crisis. Sub-Saharan Africa region records the lowest proportions of teachers with the minimum qualifications (e.g., only 37% had minimum qualifications in Equatorial Guinea, 27% in São Tomé and Príncipe, and 15% in Madagascar). The teachers have insufficient opportunities to build their pedagogical and content knowledge. There is a lack of them especially in rural areas. Teacher shortages are most acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where 70% and 90% of the countries face shortages at the primary and the secondary level, respectively (UNESCO-UIS, 2016).¹ Teachers' capacity to maintain education quality has been destabilized following abrupt school closures caused by the COVID-19.

Millions of learners have experienced multiple shocks from COVID-19, with important short- and long-term implications and risks to their education, protection, development, and well-being. Their dreams of a successful future are now even more at peril. The situation has brought generations of learners' pre-existing gaps, risks, and vulnerabilities to widen and new layers of exclusion to increase.

It is understood that the resulting preventive and yet prolonged closure of schools, lockdown measures, and therefore lack of access to key protective social services, including schools – which for many constitutes a place of refuge – have led to sudden interruptions of learners' daily routines, relationships and close ties within social groups.

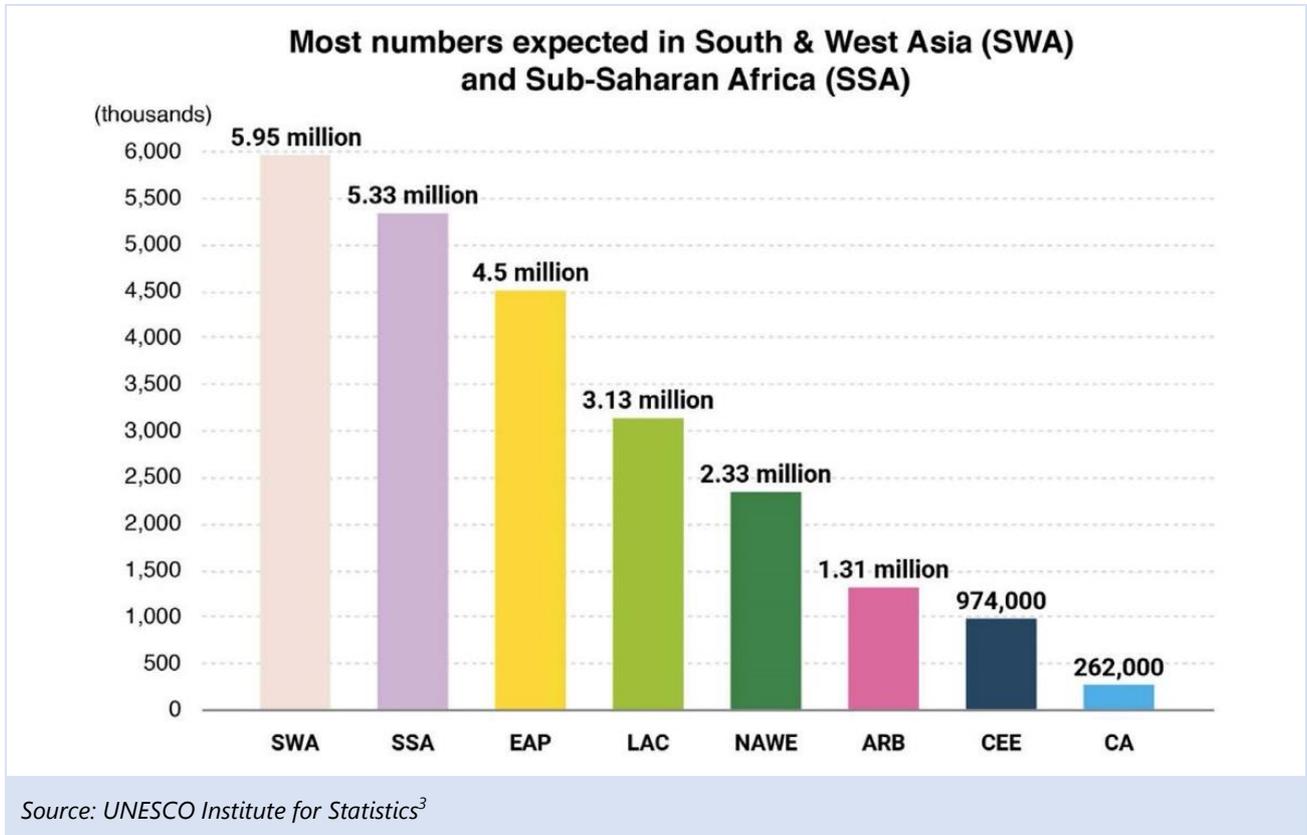
Learners, particularly girls and young women, assumed a greater burden of care and domestic chores in households where economic security has been lost; with increased psycho-emotional duress and stress, sexual harassment, exploitation on children, and sexual related violence from partners or family members, or even rape in many instances. Due to harmful traditional practices in more marginalized and remote areas and communities, learners were likely to suffer from a higher incidence of other negative impacts, such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), teenage pregnancy, and child marriage, putting many of them at risk of never returning to school.²

¹ http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/world_teachers_day_fact_sheet_2020.pdf

² <https://plan-international.org/news/2020-06-16-girls-risk-covid-19-threatens-leave-african-children-behind>



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LEARNERS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN AFRICA



Across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), UIS estimates that 5.3 million students at primary and secondary education levels are at risk of not returning to school due to COVID-19, with girls being more affected than boys.⁴

Even though school closures were seen as an appropriate measure to contain the spread of the pandemic, they have had adverse impacts on learners and learning.

- All African Union (AU) Member States provided learners with remote learning, mainly educational radio and television channels. Some countries such as Mauritania have also used take-home packages for learners as only 37% of the poorest households have access to a radio.⁵

³ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992/PDF/373992eng.pdf.multi>

⁴ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992/PDF/373992eng.pdf.multi>

⁵ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992/PDF/373992eng.pdf.multi>

- According to UNICEF, more than 75% of the population has no access to the Internet in 25 AU Member States. Learners from these households cannot access e-learning platforms.⁶
- Several countries are using various simple tools (e.g., SMS, U-Report, messaging apps) to gather quick feedback from parents and caregivers to improve remote learning.⁷
- According to UNFPA's Gender Lens report, six more months of lockdown could result in additional 31 million cases of gender-based violence across the world.⁸
- According to UN Women East and Southern Africa policy brief, it is reported that in the wake of COVID-19 with the closure of schools reported in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and other countries in East & Southern Africa Region, girls out of schools are now exposed to early/forced marriage, female genital mutilation, unwanted pregnancies, HIV and gender-based violence.⁹
- A lost education is catastrophic, especially to young mothers, their children, and their communities. If countries across Africa fail to ensure the continued education of adolescent mothers, the continent could see its economy suffer from a further loss of US\$10 billion in GDP.¹⁰

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IRB%202020-10.pdf>

⁷ The countries include amongst others, Egypt, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Somaliland, Burundi, Eswatini.

⁸ https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_A_Gender_Lens_Guidance_Note.pdf

⁹ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-covid---19-response>

¹⁰ https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Covid19%20Aftershocks_Access%20Denied_small.pdf



TEACHERS AND TEACHING DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 revealed a lack of skills among teachers and a lack of necessary infrastructure to deliver quality distance or online education. However, many teachers drew on existing skills and resources to reach students and support their learning. The pandemic also set back teachers' morale, motivation, and livelihoods. Fewer than one-third of all countries are offering psycho-social support to teachers.

Issues

- Millions across Africa neither have access to, nor the skills to use, ICT equipment needed to deliver quality remote education to learners. This affected teachers' capacity to maintain education quality. 63 million primary and secondary school teachers displaced globally by COVID-19-related school closures have managed to reach students with their existing set of skills and equipment, many have not received basic teacher training.¹¹
- Lack of a continuous and structured teacher training on the use of ICT in Sub Saharan Africa. According to UNESCO-UIS, only 64% of primary and 50% of secondary teachers have received minimum training on the use of ICT in sub-Saharan Africa (UIS Database, 2020).¹²
- A drop in teacher morale, motivation and livelihoods, which impacts teacher health and well-being.¹³

¹¹ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/blog/importance-monitoring-and-improving-ict-use-education-post-confinement>

¹² <http://uis.unesco.org/en/blog/we-must-support-our-teachers>

¹³ https://www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_covid-19_on_africas_education_final_report.pdf

- Only 40 % of low-income countries required teachers to continue teaching during the COVID-19 related school closures compared to 90% of high- and upper-middle income countries according to a UNESCO UNICEF-World Bank Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures (2020).¹⁴

Success Stories/Interventions

Ex. 1: In Eritrea, 1,530 teachers have been trained and new textbooks were provided in 80 school communities in four districts, which has resulted in the reduction of the number of out-of-school children in the country.¹⁵

Ex. 2: In Ethiopia, only 57% of urban teachers and 45% of rural teachers report providing some support to students during school closures, mainly face-to-face. Teachers who were providing support to learners during the school closures have made adaptations for disadvantaged groups, including girls, students from low-income families and low-performing learners. However, these are also the groups suggested as least likely to benefit from distance learning.¹⁶

Ex. 3: The Central African Republic has a continuous COVID-related teacher training program on psycho-social support.¹⁷

Ex. 4: Nigeria provided psycho-social support to teachers and learners and wash and hygiene supplies to schools. The government mounted a comprehensive back-to-school campaign and social-behavioral mobilization to initiate safe school reopening.¹⁸

Ex. 5: Rwanda trained 40,000 teachers on school safety, to protect their health and well-being.¹⁹

Ex. 6: Tanzania Tusome Pamoja project initiated a 10-week virtual co-creation with teachers on school safety, including teachers' social and emotional learning and well-being.²⁰

¹⁴ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/unesco-unicef-world-bank-survey-national-education-responses-covid-19-school-closures-key-0>

¹⁵ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/eritrea-building-new-foundation-its-education-system-gpe-support>

¹⁶ <https://www.cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk/cambridge-africa-updates/what-are-the-challenges-for-reopening-schools-in-ethiopia-perspectives-of-school-principals-and-teachers/>

¹⁷ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374317/PDF/374317eng.pdf.multi>

¹⁸ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/nigeria>

¹⁹ https://www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_covid-19_on_africas_education_final_report.pdf

²⁰ <https://shared.rti.org/content/co-creation-teaching-activities-during-covid-19>

Ex. 7: Congo protected teachers (and learners) during the resumption of schools through awareness-raising, the supply of masks, and hand washing devices.²¹

Ex. 8: In Kenya, the Ministry of Education instructed all school heads to compile a list of teachers and learners with pre-conditions to inform the provision of masks to this group, and the decision whether these teachers should be in school or not, or have targeted insurance cover for COVID-19.²²

²¹ <https://www.eni.com/en-IT/media/news/2020/10/eni-congo-launches-awareness-campaign-covid19.html>

²² https://www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_covid-19_on_africas_education_final_report.pdf



LEARNER WELL-BEING AND LEARNING DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the state of global education, but the hardest hit regions will be those with less robust education systems such as sub-Saharan Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic has added new layers of exclusion. Lessons from the past (i.e. Ebola) have shown that health crises can leave many behind, in particular the poorest girls, many of whom may never return to school.

Issues

- The infection rate of COVID-19 among children is reported at 8.5% of cases globally, with few instances of deaths (UNICEF).²³ However, school closures have negative impacts on child health, education and development.²⁴ Evidence – such as examples from the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone – shows that the longer children learners are out of school, the more likely they are to drop out of school altogether. When children are out of school, they face a higher risk of recruitment by armed groups, child marriage, early pregnancy and other forms of exploitation and abuse. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, violence against children increased. A survey undertaken in Burkina Faso has found that as a result of confinement at home, 32 per cent of children in conflict-affected regions perceived an increase in domestic violence against girls and boys.²⁵

²³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/82736/file/Considerations-for-school-related-public-health%20measures-in-COVID-19-2020.pdf>

²⁴ https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334294/WHO-2019-nCoV-Adjusting_PH_measures-Schools-2020.2-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

²⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/only-1-3-countries-ready-receive-children-safely-schools-west-and-central-africa>

- Lessons from the Ebola outbreak also show that health crises can leave many behind, in particular the poorest girls, many of whom may never return to school.²⁶ For instance, before the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, 8 percent of girls did not attend grade school, according to the Malala Fund report. That share nearly tripled in the aftermath. In Guinea, another hot spot, girls were 25 percent less likely than boys to re-enroll when life settled back to normal. And in Sierra Leone, teen pregnancy jumped as much as 65 percent in some areas. School attendance fell by 16 percent among 4,800 teenage girls tracked in another study.²⁷
- Existing projections raise alarming concerns about the state of girls' well-being and education due to the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - 1 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa may be blocked from returning to school once schools reopen due to policies and practices that ban pregnant girls and young mothers from school.²⁸
 - 13 million more girls could be forced into early marriages due to the impacts of COVID-19. Evidence of an increase in child marriages is already emerging from places such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi amongst others.²⁹
 - 2 million additional cases of FMG/C predicted in Africa due to COVID-19 than would otherwise have occurred over the next decade.³⁰
- A quarter of low- and lower-middle-income countries are not tracking children's learning. Mainly low- and lower-middle-income countries have missed their planned school reopening date or not yet set a date for reopening.³¹

Success Stories/Interventions

Ex. 1: Nurses and community health workers in Eritrea identify undernourished children and provide supplementary foods. The country also provides social transfers in cash and kind to vulnerable families affected by COVID-19.³²

²⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest>

²⁷ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/coronavirus-girls-education-west-africa/2020/06/12/84a23c44-a5a8-11ea-b619-3f9133bbb482_story.html

²⁸ <https://www.wvi.org/stories/view/nearly-one-million-pregnant-sub-saharan-african-girls-may-be-blocked-returning-school>

²⁹ https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Covid19%20Aftershocks_Access%20Denied_small.pdf

³⁰ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/child-marriage-unspoken-consequence-covid-19>

³¹ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/unesco-unicef-world-bank-survey-national-education-responses-covid-19-school-closures-key-0>

³² <https://reliefweb.int/report/eritrea/unicef-applies-innovative-strategies-covid-19-response-eritrea>

- Ex. 2:** Uganda has provided support to local governments in the implementation of the Reporting, Tracking, Response, and Referral Guidelines (RTRR) on violence against children and promotes WASH services focused on hygiene and menstrual health.³³
- Ex. 3:** In Rwanda, while protecting the health and wellbeing of an estimated 40,000 teachers in the short, medium, and long-term, the government distributed school health guidelines spelling out mitigation measures for the safe reopening of schools with minimum risk, and trained teachers on school safety. This strategy adopted by the government was key to support the continuation of quality teaching and learning as part of the national COVID-19 response for continued learning, recovery, and resilience in the education sector.³⁴
- Ex. 4:** Having learned from its experience during the Ebola outbreak (as well as an ECOWAS court decision ruling it discriminatory), Sierra Leone lifted its ban on pregnant schoolgirls in March 2020 and has promoted it as a measure that will help ensure girls' education after the COVID-19 crisis.³⁵
- Ex. 5:** The Government of Kenya has already begun drafting new National Re-Entry Guidelines for Learners in Basic Education. The Guidelines anticipated to provide clear step-by-step guidance for schools and teachers to follow once a student has been identified as pregnant and how to facilitate the re-entry of girls who have dropped out due to early and unintended pregnancy. This will be important guidance for teachers and head teachers to have, as a surge in pregnant students may follow COVID-19 school closures.³⁶
- Ex. 6:** In Ghana, a Rapid Risk Assessment was undertaken to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the entire education system; identify the vulnerabilities as well as the bottlenecks affecting learners to effectively benefit from distance learning; develop an evidence-based plan for improved response, monitoring/results-based management, communication and advocacy; and use evidence as resource mobilization tool to facilitate the Groundwater & Environmental Services (GES) work on COVID-19 crises and post crises response.³⁷

³³ <http://cieffa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Presentation-by-Uganda-on-Actions-taken-to-Address-Impacts-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Education.pdf>

³⁴ <https://ewsdata.rightsindevelopment.org/files/documents/46/WB-P174046.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/sierra-leone-discriminatory-ban-on-pregnant-girls/>

³⁶ <https://www.wvi.org/stories/view/nearly-one-million-pregnant-sub-saharan-african-girls-may-be-blocked-returning-school>

³⁷ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/ESPDG-results-2020.pdf>



RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 crisis provides the entire education sector with an unprecedented opportunity to take into account the gender, inclusion and equity dimensions and to re-imagine new practices and approaches to educational systems for the current and new generations of teachers and learners on the African continent. Below we provide recommendations based on the emerging issues and evidence.

Teachers and teaching-related recommendations

- Teacher professional development in the area of distance education is needed in Africa to build teacher capacities in the event of new school closures and future crises.
- African governments should establish mechanisms to provide psycho-social support to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Teachers' safety as front-line workers should be guaranteed through robust mechanisms on the prevention and control of COVID-19.

Learner well-being and learning related recommendations

- Effective building back, learning, and learner well-being must be ensured. African governments should reopen schools in a phased and safe manner, while simultaneously assessing and adapting precaution measures; a move that will preserve schools' protective role and reinstate services that were abruptly disrupted.
- Collection of disaggregated data related to the impact of COVID-19 on learners' protection risks, by age, sex, gender, disability, and other gender-related indicators should be undertaken.
- Develop gender-responsive COVID-19 education response plans reflecting lived realities of girls with disabilities, in rescue and humanitarian settings and other learners at basic levels of education.
- Provide access to modern contraception, menstrual health and hygiene management and other sexual and reproductive services, ante and postnatal care, safe delivery services and HIV treatment.
- Ensure measures related to social distancing and lockdowns sensitive to girls' vulnerability, needs, and capacity.



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