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

Triennale
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ADEA 2022 Triennale

SUB-THEME CONCEPT NOTE

Sub-Theme 1 Impact of COVID-19 on Africa's Educational Systems

A. Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on education at every level all over the world. In many African countries, the experience of the pandemic has been traumatic but not perhaps as apocalyptic as some observers and experts had predicted. African governments have implemented urgent and restrictive nationwide measures, including the closure of public and private schools and learning institutions as part of the global response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The KIX Observatory project was then launched to measure the impact of the pandemic on African educational systems and assess government efforts to change policy and practice to sustain learning. Researchers commissioned by ADEA and APHRC worked to collect and synthesize policy and practice responses of 40 partner countries of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in Africa. And the following topics were explored: education financing, the psychosocial wellbeing of school children, school re-openings, teacher training and support, and learning assessment.

According to one of these KIX Observatory reports, we learn that more than 60% of the 40 GPE partner countries in Africa faced prolonged and recurring school closures beyond 200 days, and close to 30% of the 40 GPE countries added more teaching staff to allow for smaller class sizes and greater physical distancing. ADEA also undertook two rapid mapping assessments between March and June 2020, to gauge the status of learning in African countries amid the COVID-19 pandemic to provide better support to Ministries of Education and facilitate peer learning between countries. Research results indicate that at least 40% of African nations are unable to support learning for vulnerable children and half of the secondary school teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa have received training on basic digital literacy. The teachers had insufficient opportunities to build their pedagogical and content knowledge. And there is a lack of them, especially in rural areas.

In general, there are important lessons for all, in how African countries dealt with the pandemic and are working to mitigate its effect on their educational systems. ADEA KIX Observatory reports revealed that most African countries deployed a multi-sectoral approach strategy, including the use of the media and digital tools to ensure that learning continues with minimum disruption despite the lockdowns, training of teachers in the use of these tools, focusing the financing of education in the most critical areas with the pandemic's mitigation as the driving force, looking at effective changes in policy and practice with regard to the schools' re-openings, learner wellbeing and assessment of learning.

Despite these encouraging signs from African governments, businesses and citizens, recovery plans have so far mostly fallen short and there is a critical need for creative innovation, flexibility, and agility in all the learning recovery initiatives implemented in the educational sector across the continent. And ADEA believes that a central dimension of building back better is the need for a people-centered recovery that focuses on well-being, improves inclusiveness and reduces inequality.

As part of accelerating progress toward SDG 4 - and CESA 16-25 for Africa, the UN Secretary-General is convening a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in New York in September 2022. The

aim is to rally education actors to commit to "mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions". This is critical in transforming education in the remaining period, and beyond, for SDG4 and CESA 16-15. The outcomes of TES (renewed commitments, greater public engagement, and summary and call to action) will be disseminated and further discussed at the ADEA 2022 Triennale in Mauritius in October.

B. About the Sub-Theme

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to education in African countries. The pandemic showed us that education systems simply were not ready for such a crisis. Hence the need of strengthening contingency planning to better respond to future education disruptions. There should be more resources invested in training teachers, as frontline workers, to enhance pandemic coping mechanisms and reverse learning losses. Even though the impact of the pandemic was devasting in many ways, it helped decision-makers in the education sector to realize the critical need of mobilizing domestic resources for emergency responses in education to create sustainability. A portion of such resources should be allocated to promoting equity and inclusion to help ensure vulnerable children, including girls and children with special needs, can access education services. African Education systems should also reinvigorate monitoring systems for sexual and gender-based violence, mental health and food security among vulnerable children. This is best done at the community level.

Given the evolving situation and considering that countries have begun reopening schools and learning institutions, ADEA will use the 2022 Triennale to share the latest efforts, solutions and strategies adopted by African Ministries of Education and areas that have not been addressed adequately. The Triennale will also provide an opportunity for key education stakeholders to share their views and experiences in paving the way to the "new normal".

Specific objectives:

1. Present the innovative policy solutions and indigenous strategies that African countries, businesses and citizens have developed to overcome COVID-19 impact on education delivery.
2. Explore concrete and realistic ways of moving from policies to practices as reflected in country-level priorities and plans.
3. Agree on sustainable and effective measures and partnerships to build back better education systems post-COVID-19, in line with the objectives of the Transforming Education Summit.

Expected outcomes:

1. Increased understanding of the best practices and African-led solutions to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational systems.
2. Increased partnerships and stronger networks to address COVID-19 impact on learning recovery in Africa
3. A practical plan to build back better with key priority areas for African Ministries of Education and development partners, aligned with the outcomes of the Transforming Education Summit.

C. Storyline

COVID-19 interventions that are likely to be impactful are those that are anchored on sound policies and strategies and backed by evidence. The interventions also need to be well-planned and resourced, efficiently executed, and effectively monitored and evaluated. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the fore an inadequate level of preparedness, especially for the education sector. The policy and practice responses by African countries aimed at delivering education at home during the initial stages of the pandemic were largely reactionary. Forward planning with crisis situations such as COVID-19 in mind is, therefore, imperative.

ADEA's engagement with African countries at the policy and implementation levels on strategies for continuous learning, reopening of learning institutions, and the future's "new normal" based on the COVID-19 pandemic experience revealed valuable lessons. Among the key recommendations for the new education delivery model is a review of the overall policy and regulatory guidelines to mainstream digital technology, strengthening teacher professional development, exploring alternative funding models, and revisiting existing norms and standards. Among the ongoing initiatives is the development of toolkits that enable countries to benchmark their remote education systems and institute necessary mitigation measures for effective and inclusive provision of education during crises. Equipped with a gender, equity, and inclusion lens, the KIX Observatory on COVID-19 Responses in Educational Systems in Africa provides evidence from 40 GPE partner countries in Africa, on how governments quickly responded by changing policies and practices to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in terms of the continued operations of education and the well-being of learners beyond education.

In their responses, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as UNESCO encouraged collaboration and partnerships, within and across countries and consulted with key education and other concerned stakeholders (Save the Children, Care International, Plan, etc.) to promote multi-sectoral collaboration, for example among sectors such as education and health, as well as the social sector, private sector, and community. The World Bank facilitated several peer-learning events, sharing of experience, information, challenges, lessons learned, but also solutions and ideas. The World Bank, UNESCO etc. continue to monitor the evolving nature of the situation constantly, using crowd-based monitoring, cloud-based data and information sharing. Like ADEA, we must learn from past experience but also accept that sometimes learning by doing might be the only option.

D. Guiding Questions

1. What can COVID-19 teach us about the ability of education systems to absorb the shock of a crisis? What are most urgent challenges faced by African countries, in addressing learning losses and re-examining learning assessments, and reconsidering teacher training? And how can we turn the learning losses suffered by students into valuable lessons for the future? 2. What have been the most effective solutions and technologies that contributed/sustained learning continuity (both with teachers and learners) at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels? 3. How has COVID-19 impacted access, relevance and quality education delivery across the continent?
4. What do education systems in Africa need to do to be more resilient next time and how can we build back better? How can research help assess government efforts to change policy and practice to sustain learning? How can indigenous knowledge and African driven innovations and solutions help to build more robust and resilient educational systems in the continent?
5. The COVID-19 pandemic learning recovery: What type of policies, programs, and partnerships are needed to build back better? How can we build back better with women and youth-led innovations? What lessons from the implementation of remote education programs and policies, can be learned to improve education quality and develop a resilient recovery post-Covid-19?

E. Structure

- Each break-out session will discuss a specific sub-theme, or cross-cutting theme, with a moderator and rapporteur.
- The moderator will introduce the session and its structure. There will be a short lead presentation followed by a policymaker response (Minister).
- The moderator will then introduce the 4-person panel and engage the panel based on the questions above.

- This will be followed by an engagement between the audience and the panelists, after which the moderator will wrap up the session highlighting the ley messages/takeaways, in liaison with the rapporteur, to be presented in plenary during the report-back session.