

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
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Keeping the Doors Open for Learning:

Response Plan of Ministry of Education to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Kigali, April 2020

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBC	Competency-based Curriculum
CHW	Community Health Worker
COVID-19	Coronavirus, 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEO	District Education Officer
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
FM	Financial Management
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender-based Violence
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDSR	Integrated Disease Surveillance and Reponse
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
IHR	International Health Regulations
IPC	Infection, Prevention, and Control
IPRC	Integrated Polytechnic Regional College
LARS	Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINESANTE	Ministry of Health
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
NISR	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSA	Public Service Announcement
RBA	Rwanda Broadcasting Agency
REB	Rwanda Education Board
RWF	Rwandan Francs
SEO	Sector Education Officer
SMS	Short Message Service
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
TA	Technical Assistance
TTC	Teacher Training College
TV	Television
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

USD	United States Dollars
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

On 31 December 2019, the Government of China reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, Hubei Province. A new coronavirus was eventually identified. On 30 January 2020, the Director-General of World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005. On 11 March WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

As of 24 March 2020, cases have been reported in 195 countries. On 14 March 2020, the first confirmed case of coronavirus was declared in Rwanda.

Subsequently, the Government demonstrated high-level leadership and swift action to tackle the risks associated with the ongoing pandemic and implemented school closures effective 16 March 2020. Day scholars immediately remained at home and boarding school students were facilitated to return to their respective homes. As of 18 March 2020, the process of returning boarding school students was completed.

As of 21 March 2020, the Government further implemented measures to minimise risk of transmission including border closings and stringent social distancing policies including closing schools, colleges, churches, and bars; mandating home-based work except for critical services; and banning motorcycle drivers from carrying passengers. This is to be in effect until April 19, 2020 when the situation is evaluated to inform future decisions.

In Rwanda an estimated 3,574,070¹ (EMIS, 2018) students are out of school due to the lockdown. If this situation is permitted to continue unabated, it could have profound long-term negative impacts on the country's development.

Following the WHO recommendations to stop the human-to-human transmission of COVID-19, the Republic of Rwanda developed a national COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. The Government, supported by the donor community, has put together an *Education Sector COVID 19 Response Plan*, which aligns with the National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan.

The Education Sector COVID-19 Response plan was developed by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with its agencies and other Ministries and in support of Development Partners.

2. Rationale

The Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan works to elaborate upon the Government of Rwanda National Preparedness and Response COVID-19 Plan, with specifics for the Education Sector.

This Education Sector COVID Response Plan also aligns with the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (2018/19–2023/24) to work towards ensuring Rwanda's aspirations for transformation from a predominantly agrarian-based, low-income economy to an industrial, knowledge-based middle-income nation by 2020.

¹ Please note that the total school age population in Rwanda is 5,552,385 (NISR, 2018) while a smaller number are currently enrolled in schools.

This plan is premised on the ability of Rwanda’s education system to respond and adapt to the COVID-19 situation. The impact of this response plan is to ensure that the goal of the ESSP is realised: ***to ensure Rwandan citizens have sufficient and appropriate skills, competences, knowledge and attitudes to drive the continued social and economic transformation of the country and to be competitive in the global market.***

The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) assumes the lead responsibility for policy formulation, educational planning, coordination and M&E at the national level, and is the lead Ministry for the education sector, with responsibility for policy formulation, coordination and regulation through setting norms and standards for the education sector.

MINEDUC’s mission is *to transform Rwandan citizens into skilled human capital for the socio-economic development of the country by ensuring equitable access to quality education, focusing on combating illiteracy, promotion of science and technology, critical thinking, and positive values.*

MINEDUC works closely with other Ministries, for a cross-sectoral approach, and oversees the work of the semi-autonomous Government agencies at central and decentralised levels, including the Rwanda Education Board (REB), the Workforce Development Authority (WDA), the Rwanda Polytechnic (RP), the Higher Education Council (HEC), the University of Rwanda (UR) and the National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU).

This Education COVID-19 Response Plan provides the overarching framework for a holistic sector-wide approach to the development and delivery of education services in Rwanda. It also serves as a guiding framework for the elaboration of sub-sector educational plans. It also works to build cross-sectoral integration and will work alongside other Government Ministries, civil society, and development partners for its realisation.

The Education COVID-19 Response Plan provides the overarching and guiding framework, budget, and monitoring and evaluation framework.

3. Education COVID Response Plan

3.1 Goal

To support continuation of quality learning while protecting the health and well-being of approximately 3.6 million students and an estimated 96,000 teachers targeted under the parent project in the short, medium, and long term.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Education COVID-19 Response Plan align with the objectives of the National Preparedness and Response Plan of the Government of Rwanda:

- Facilitate coordination of preparedness and response efforts for COVID-19 impact on the education sector in Rwanda, ensuring inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral coordination, engagement, and partner participation,

- Mobilise internal and external resources for an effective implementation of the Education Sector COVID-19 Plan, based on potential risks,
- Enhance national capacities for planning, implementation, and monitoring of education activities throughout the situation,
- Create and raise public awareness for engagement on COVID-19 education activities, ensuring other stakeholder engagement, including parents,
- Ensure and facilitate the health and well-being of students, teachers, and education stakeholders,

And, they are:

Objective 1: Ensure continuity of learning for all students in Rwanda

Objective 2: Ensure that schools reopen with appropriate services and measures in place and that students re-enter the formal education system

Objective 3: Ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, and other education personnel

Objective 4: Protect and provide for vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, girls, and children from lower wealth-quintiles

Objective 5: Prepare the resilience of the education system against future shocks

3.3 Part 1: Short-Term Response

The short-term response plan covers the period of the school closures. At the time of the development of the plan this date is estimated at 20 April 2020, but may be extended, upon the decision of the Government of Rwanda based on the COVID-19 situation within Rwanda, at that time.

Objective 1: Ensure continuity of learning for all students in Rwanda

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented school closures and is disrupting learning for millions of children and young people in Rwanda.

To ensure continuity of learning during school closures, the Government of Rwanda, along with its partners, will engage several remote learning programmes.

The remote learning opportunities will span three broad initiatives:

- i) Radio lessons
- ii) Audio-visual lessons, primarily through television broadcasting
- iii) E-learning

Table 1: Household access to basic technology and devices in Rwanda

Basic technology/device utility	Percentage of HH in 2014 EICV4	Percentage of HH in 2018 EICV5
Radio	59.8	73.8
Mobile phone	63.7	66.9
Internet	9.3	17.2
Television	9.9	10.4

i) Radio lessons

Radio coverage in Rwanda is over 90% with almost 80% of the households having access to a radio and is a comparative, low-budget option to reach the largest number of children. Radio-based education is relevant across the life cycle. It is feasible to develop and take to scale a core radio package that supports continuity of learning coupled with the development and dissemination of critical health promotion messages for children and young people at different stages (early years, primary, secondary levels).

To that end, radio lessons will be scripted with technical support from various Government agencies and leverage partnerships for the production and broadcasting throughout Rwanda. The medium of instruction in the radio lessons will follow the national system, whereby Kinyarwanda will be the medium of instruction for Nursery and Lower Primary levels, while English will be the medium of instruction for all other grade levels (except, of course, in specific language courses).

ii) Audio-Visual Lessons

TV-based education has the potential to improve learning outcomes at all levels due to the ability to visually and audibly demonstrate learning activities.

Notably there are additional challenges in audio-visual lessons in that it is relatively more expensive with comparatively less reach.

But it is envisioned that audio-visual material will complement and enhance other remote learning opportunities. And, priority for lessons on television will be for subjects in which it is more desirable to have visual content, for example, science experiments.

iii) E-learning

The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) will work alongside the Ministry of ICT (MINICT) and various service providers to enable free access to education content on e-learning portals of REB (elearning.reb.rw), University of Rwanda (elearning.ur.ac.rw), and Rwanda Polytechnic (elearning.rp.ac.rw), amongst others to support remote learning by basic education students, tertiary, and TVET students.

Rwanda Education Board (REB) has a functional e-learning platform that is being used for sharing learning resources and materials for teachers and students. It is already in the plans of the Government and development partners to strengthen the platform.

To that effect, this plan will align with Rwanda’s ICT in Education policy that promotes ICT to increase access to education, ensuring not only the hardware, but also the digital content that is aligned to the

curriculum is required to support teaching and learning that brings in 21st century skills, namely communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

Box 1: Subjects for Remote Learning

Pre-Primary Level:

- N1 – N3: Numeracy, Discovery of World, Kinyarwanda, Creative Art and Culture, Language and Literacy, Social and Emotional Development.

Primary level: All examinable/core subjects

- P1-P6: Social and Religious Studies, Kinyarwanda, Science and Elementary Technology, and English and Mathematics

Lower Secondary level (S1-S3): All examinable/core subjects in national examinations

- Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History Entrepreneurship, English, French, Kinyarwanda, ICT, Literature, Swahili and Computer Science.

Upper Secondary Level: All examinable/core subjects

- **Humanities:** Geography, History, General studies, Economics, Entrepreneurship
- **Languages:** French, Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, Literature in English
- **Sciences:** Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Computer Science
- **TTCs:** Foundations of Education, SST, Integrated Science, Languages

All radio and other multi-media material developed during the school closure period to support remote learning will be owned by the Ministry of Education and/or its agencies for future usage.

To support learning and to monitor update, a helpline will be created for parents, students, and community members to support their queries related to remote learning options, as well as to generate feedback on the efficacy of resources. The use of SMS services will be used to communicate important messages and reminders for parents on learning schedules of children.

Objective 2: Ensure that schools reopen with appropriate services and measures in place and that students re-enter the formal education system

This objective aims to ensure that schools reopen smoothly, mitigating impact of the closure on student retention, dropout, and general health and well-being of students.

Within the period of school closure, the Government and its partners will lay the groundwork to ensure that when schools reopen the system is prepared accordingly.

It is expected, and from previous experience in other emergencies within Rwanda, that the generalised lockdown of the country will have an economic toll on the household, sub-national, and national levels. It is expected that those in the lower wealth quintiles will be most negatively impacted by the lockdown.

To that end, provisions will be factored into the planning of school reopening to ensure appropriate

nutritional support, targeted to the most marginalised and most in need. Efforts will be made to provide guidance to schools on appropriate dietary considerations for the students and complement efforts such as the World Food Programmes (WFP) school-feeding initiative. Where possible, food will be sourced locally and where kitchens are not available in schools, it will be encouraged that food that need little or no preparation (eggs, milk, fruits and vegetables) be sourced and provided to students.

Moreover, provisions will be provided for scholastic materials and other school materials, for example uniforms, that are typically borne by the household as informal costs to education to mitigate the burden on families while reducing the chances of dropout.

These efforts will be coupled with community mobilisation campaigns that will work towards re-enrolling children upon school reopening, again, with the intent to mitigate potential dropout.

Other efforts in the school reopening plan will include enhancing the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) capabilities within and around schools to mitigate any secondary impact of the COVID-19. This will include both procurement of basic supplies (handwashing facilities, for example) as well as integrating low-cost and locally resourced materials, such as locally made soap.

And, to complement the remote learning, but noting some of the measures for continuity of learning may not have been realised at the student-level, remedial education programmes will be implemented upon school reopening, providing targeted support to the most marginalised and underachieving students.

In terms of efficiency, it is expected that complementing efforts of partners who will implement some of the abovementioned programmes directly, school capitation grants will be an additional modality for swift implementation.

The school capitation grants will be modified to include COVID-19 response measures, with earmarked funds to address the specific activities. Schools will be encouraged, inasmuch as possible, to source locally and swiftly.

Objective 3: Ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, and other education personnel

Given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that the Education Sector COVID-19 plan take into consideration the health and safety of its students, teachers, and other education stakeholders.

In the short-term, measures will be taken to incorporate audio and visual content into the remote learning (in radio messaging, television spots, and on the e-learning platforms).

All risk communication will follow the international guidelines and recommendations based on World Health Organisation (WHO) and others.

The psychosocial support for the most marginalised and at-risk students will be catered for through the provision of airtime to teachers and other education stakeholders, at school and community-level, to reach out to provide support and encouragement.

Given global evidence that school closures have resulted in some spikes in teenage pregnancy and other

gender-related concerns, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) messaging will be developed and disseminated through various channels, including the e-learning platform.

Objective 4: Protect and provide for vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, girls, and children from lower wealth-quintiles

Ensuring learning for all students, including those who are most vulnerable is a critical objective of the Education Sector COVID-19 plan, aligning with key priorities in the ESSP 2018/19 – 2023/24.

Noting some of the disparities amongst students in Rwanda, including by gender, disability, and wealth, consideration will be made in the planning and delivery of all activities to target interventions and minimise the gap.

Due to a lack of access to devices for the most vulnerable and poor families, it is assumed that they may experience difficulties in accessing remote learning opportunities. This plan envisions working with various Ministries to procure and allocate radios and other devices to the poorest families.

Moreover, to ensure learning for children with disabilities, remote learning opportunities will be given consideration within the broad spectrum of various difficulties that may be encountered. This will include, but not be limited to, sign language interpretation in television learning.

The digital platforms that will be developed and/or enhanced will also ensure accessibility features, including text to speech and other formatting to reach a broader spectrum of students. And, children with disabilities will be facilitated with accessible, digital formats of communication such as translating the REB scripts into Braille, close-caption and Sign Language.

Teachers will also be supported through mobile credit to be able to call to the most vulnerable students and provide remote support and tutoring.

Objective 5: Prepare the resilience of the education system against future shocks

It is essential that all work within this plan build towards a more systemic approach to emergency resilience and response within the Education Sector.

To that end, this plan incorporates the objective to ensure learning, capacity development, institutional memory, and resilience building.

To ensure this, the plan will be overseen by the Ministry of Education. Where the Ministry of Education and its agencies do not have the necessary expertise, they will engage with other Government Officials, Development Partners, and/or third-party suppliers.

But, in all work, Ministry of Education will maintain the technical oversight and will work to develop capacity as and where needed. Capacity development will be integrated into all programming to ensure sustainability of results and business continuity for any future disruptions to the education system.

3.4 Part 2: Medium-Term and Long-Term Response

Objective 1: Ensure continuity of learning for all students in Rwanda

Beyond school closure, the remote learning opportunities build by the Ministry of Education, its Agencies, and its partners, will be sustained through various systems.

In the short-term, radio lessons and scripts will be developed by the concerned Education Agency, with the support of development partners. While it is envisioned that partner support for drafting scripted lessons will continue, the agencies will work towards to strengthen its own production capacity to reduce costs and sustain airing of educational content for longer hours and for longer term.

With the support of Rwanda Polytechnic faculty and students specializing in radio production and broadcasting and utilizing the experience of University of Rwanda that is already running its own radio channel, REB will establish a non-commercial educational radio in order to provide medium to long term support for multi-media learning.

E-learning platforms will be continued to be enhanced and strengthened, featuring alternative methods for learning. This will include but not be limited to demonstration of science experiments, understanding that some schools are not equipped with science laboratories. And, in the enhancement of e-learning platforms, adult digital literacy will be a focus, ensuring all levels of the population have the ability to access and promote self- and life-long learning, especially in the aim to meet the goals of Rwanda as a knowledge-based and digital society.

Objective 2: Ensure that schools reopen with appropriate services and measures in place and that students re-enter the formal education system

The School Reopening Plan will guide all measures in the medium-term, with the overall aim to ensure that all students re-enter the education system, with the appropriate educational, health and wellbeing measures in place to meet their needs.

The school grant revision will complement efforts made by Ministry of Education and its agencies, alongside the development partners, who will implement certain measures on the ground directly.

The revisions of the school grant allocations, undertaken in the short-term, will be implemented upon school reopening to support the learning and well-being of teachers and students.

Objective 3: Ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, and other education personnel

The radio and television messaging around WHO global guidelines to mitigate infection and disease control will be complemented in the medium and long term with a variety of different measures. This will include the development of COVID-19 specific posters and other communication messaging that will be developed and distributed to schools and other educational facilities.

In addition, in the long-term it is envisioned that each school be equipped with nursing room facilities for the short-term care for children who are ill. This would ensure the basic provisions in first aid treatment and capacity development of school matrons and/or teachers to respond to health-related care issues.

And, the psychosocial wellbeing of students and education stakeholders will be taken into consideration through programmatic provisions. This will include monitoring, by teachers and matrons, where applicable, as well as strengthening linkages to the health and social sectors for referrals for further assessment and/or treatment, where applicable.

Upon school reopening, consideration will be given to monitoring the health of students and education personnel to avoid any resurgence of COVID-19 and potential spread through the school community. To that end, training will be undertaken of key stakeholders at school, sector, and district-level on the detection of COVID-19 symptoms and appropriate protocol where individuals present symptoms.

Objective 4: Protect and provide for vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, girls, and children from lower wealth-quintiles

A Gender sensitization campaign to mobilize community support for protection of vulnerable girls and boys from various forms of violence will be undertaken once the lockdown measures are lifted. This aims to mitigate the expected rise in teenage pregnancy and other gender-related issues and make provisions for ensuring that teenage mothers/pregnant teenagers are re-integrated into the national education system.

Provisions for other vulnerable groups, including those from the lower wealth quintiles will continue through targeted support for nutrition, provision of scholastic materials and uniforms, complementing the Ubudehe system.

And, consideration for children with disabilities will continue, aligning with the National Policy on Special Needs Education, under the Ministry of Education.

Objective 5: Prepare the resilience of the education system against future shocks

All work will be undertaken with the vision for sustainability and usage beyond the COVID-19 pandemic in Rwanda.

The remote learning developed to providing opportunities during the school closures will be integrated into broader systems. For one, the radio lessons and capacity development by the Ministry of Education and its agencies in production and broadcasting will be transmitted into the development and establishment of a multi-media studio at the Rwanda Education Board.

Audio-visual material, particularly the video lessons produced for television, will be uploaded on various e-learning platforms, and disseminated to schools, with particular focus on schools without science laboratories for alternative opportunities of learning at school-level.

All learning from this situation will be documented for future usage and also feed into the development of an Education Sector Emergency Preparedness Plan that will put into place various measures for future implementation, as and if needed.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The monitoring and evaluation aim to measure the abovementioned activities in response to the Education Sector Response to COVID-19.

It will measure both activity and input-level activities, as well as aim to measure long-term impact.

Remote learning will be measured both in terms of uptake by students, engagement of parents and community members, as well as measuring the learning outcomes through sample-based assessments.

The following are the indicators aimed to be measured against the Education Sector COVID-19 Plan.

Table 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Results Table

Objective	Baseline	Target
Objective 1: Ensure continuity of learning for all students in Rwanda		
% of students (disaggregated by grade, sex) reached by remote learning, by type	0	60%
# of e-learning platforms enhanced	0	5
# of assessment tools developed to measure remote learning	0	10
Objective 2: Ensure that schools reopen with appropriate services and measures in place and that students re-enter the formal education system		
# of schools receiving enhanced school capitation grants	0	4,637
# of students receiving school feeding in the first 3 months after school reopening	0	3,315,799
% of students who return to school	0	95%
Objective 3: Ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, and other education personnel		
# of communication messages delivered to students and teachers	0	10
# of students and teachers who have engaged in risk communication messaging	0	3,000,000
Objective 4: Protect and provide for vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, girls, and children from lower wealth quintiles		
# of radios provided to students from households from lower wealth quintiles	0	50,000
# of remote learning programmes developed for children with disabilities	0	10
# of children with disabilities accessing remote learning activities	0	5,000
Objective 5: Prepare the resilience of the education system against future shocks		
Lessons learnt mapping completed	No	Yes
Education Sector Emergency Plan developed	No	Yes
Radio and multimedia studio established in REB	No	Yes

5. Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risks emanate from the system's compromised capacity to resume normal school functions, the emotional trauma experienced by students and teachers, deteriorated economic conditions, and increased poverty levels in the country.

The Education Sector COVID-19 has several activities designed to address the COVID-19 crisis comprehensively.

Given the school closure, there are inherent risks in developing programming, delivery, and monitoring. To mitigate, the Ministry of Education will liaise, as necessary, with the appropriate authorities to gain exceptional permission for movement.

Some of the activities outlined within the plan are not within the technical expertise of the Ministry of Education or its Agencies, for example the development of audio-visual material. To mitigate this risk, the Ministry of Education and its Agencies will rely on other Government Institutions, including the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA) and/or development partners to complement. Capacity development, though, will be integrated to work towards longer term development of skills.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation of the plan, there are several challenges in gathering timely data, given the situation. To mitigate this risk, the project will place emphasis on the development of a comprehensive Assessment Plan, design of rapid assessment tools that can monitor during the lockdown period and complement by monitoring and evaluation measures upon school reopening.

And, there is some financial risk, inherent especially in the school grant transfers, to ensure that the activities outlined are implemented accordingly. To mitigate, the plan will draw upon significant financial oversight measures that are in place within the Government of Rwanda, including auditing of funds, spot checks and field visits to schools.

6. Budget

The following is the indicative budget for the Education Sector COVID-19 Plan, based on estimates and noting there may be implications and changes due to the timing of the school reopening. And, supply chain disruptions, due to COVID-19, may also influence final pricing.

Table 3: Budget for Education COVID-19 Response

Objective	Budget
Objective 1: Ensure continuity of learning for all students in Rwanda	
Production and airing of radio content	\$3,000,000
Production and airing of television content	\$7,000,000
Enhancement of the e-learning platforms	\$4,000,000
Development and application of assessment tools	\$2,000,000
Objective 2: Ensure that schools reopen with appropriate services and measures in place and that students re-enter the formal education system	
Amendment of school capitation grants for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional WASH in school measures - Enhanced school feeding/school nutrition support - Salaries for pre-primary and voluntary teachers - Scholastic Materials - Remedial education support - Community mobilisation to mitigate dropout and promote re-entry 	\$15,000,000
Objective 3: Ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, and other education personnel	
Mass broadcasting of health and safety messaging for students and teachers	\$500,000
Posters and other risk communication materials promoting prevention of COVID-19	\$1,500,000
Objective 4: Protect and provide for vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, girls, and children from lower wealth quintiles	
Development of remote learning content for children with disabilities	\$3,000,000
Provision of radios to household with students in lower-wealth quintiles	\$1,000,000
Objective 5: Prepare the resilience of the education system against future shocks	
Capacity development of education stakeholders	\$250,000
Mapping of lessons learnt	\$100,000
Development of an Education Sector Emergency Response Plan	\$100,000
Development of in-house radio and multimedia platforms for continuity of learning	\$2,000,000
TOTAL	\$39,450,000