THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES)

Preparedness and Response Plan for
COVID-19

Ministry of Education and Sports Taskforce for COVID-19
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Contents

List of Abbreviations

DEO	District Education Officer
DLGs	District Local Governments
EDP	Education Development Partners
EiE WG	Education in Emergencies Working Group
IEC	Information Education and Communication
NTF	National Task Force on COVID -19 in Ministry of Health
RCCE	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
SNE	Special Needs Education
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UN	United Nations

1.0 Background

China alerted the World Health Organization (WHO) of clusters of pneumonia of unknown origin in Wuhan City in Hubei Province on 31 December 2019. On 7 January 2020, health authorities confirmed that the cases were caused by a novel coronavirus identified as COVID-19. COVID-19 which belongs to the same family of viruses that cause common cold, and had spread to 122 countries and territories, with multiple countries at risk globally. The initial animal source has not yet been confirmed. Human to human transmission has been established in multiple countries. Current evidence indicates that the outbreak has major secondary impacts globally including shortages of medical supplies and commodities putting significant strain on the health systems and disruption of social and economic activities. The epidemic has spread to Europe and USA which is now the epicentre of the pandemic. COVID-19 is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their soft parts of the face (e.g., eyes, nose & mouth). There are major concerns of the possible impact of the epidemic in countries with poor resourced and weak health systems. In Africa, more than 55 countries and territories are now affected including six (6) countries of the East African community.

1.1 Context

All the East African countries fall in the highest risk category due to direct flights and established contact with affected provinces in China, United Arab Emirates and Europe. WHO AFRO placed Uganda among the list of priority 1 countries based on number of flights to affected areas and passenger volume. In the March 2019 four countries in East Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) have all reported cases of COVID 19. In Uganda there are a total of 44 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and Ministry of Health is following up 2,661 travellers who entered Uganda from countries affected by COVID-19[1]. These high-risk travellers are distributed in

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[1]*Ministry of Health (PHEOC) COVID 19 Situation Report No. 40, 27th March 2020*

various parts of Uganda with Entebbe, Kampala and Wakiso districts having the largest numbers. Currently cases are confirmed in 6 districts [name] and incident management system has been activated to coordinate the implementation of various response activities in order to mitigate the impact of the outbreak in the country.

1.2 Impact of COVID-19 on Education

Experience from China, Europe and the other affected African countries shows that education systems have been significantly jeopardised by the impact of COVID-19. According to UNESCO at least 56 countries have closed schools globally and more than 516-million children and youth are affected. Seventeen (17) other countries[2] are implementing localized school closure. In Uganda, schools, universities and tertiary institutions have been closed for 30 days with effect from Friday 20th March 2020. Experience from countries affected by COVID-19 shows that school closures put gains made in access to education and learning at risk. The poorest and most marginalized children and youth also face broader risks linked to limited access to essential services like school information on disease prevention, water and sanitation, ICT service, etc[3]. In East Africa, all countries have closed all schools due to COVID19. It should be noted that school closures even when temporary, carry high social and economic costs to society. Studies have shown that after abrupt closure of schools, some learners ~~children~~ never returned to the classroom after schools re-opened. Others had fallen far behind in learning and development. Recent information show that the school closures in West Africa has also contributed to increased rates of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, early marriages as well as teenage pregnancies (Robert Jenkins, March 2020).The disruptions they cause touch people across communities, but their impact is particularly severe for disadvantaged boys and girls and their families[4].

In Uganda there are over 15 million learners enrolled in education system. The bulk of whom are enrolled in day schools while the others are in boarding schools where

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[2]*Including Philippines, Germany, USA, UK among others*
[3] *Mitigating the social impacts of the coronavirus: Continuity of Learning and Safety (UNICEF March 2020)*
[4]*UNESCO Internet resource (2020)*

many facilities are shared and therefore learners are in constant contact with each other, their teachers and other visitors on a daily basis. Approximately 600,000 more children are attending schools in the refugee settlement. Some of the settlements are located in high risk towns bordering countries that have reported confirmed cases of COVID-19. According to health professionals, children are considered as vector for COVID-19 and this increases the risks for the entire school system.

Table:1 showing enrolment figures in schools and institutions (public and private) by education level

	Type	No of institutions	No of learners	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
4	Tertiary (including higher education)	3,013	311,556	26,804
		73,240	**15,126,167**	**548,192**

Source: Report on the Master List of Education Institutions in Uganda (MEIU) UBOS 2019

On Wednesday 18th March 2020, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda announced the closure of all educational institutions to avoid panic and possible rapid spread of new infections if they are closed after a case of COVID-19 is confirmed in the country. This measure has resulted into closure of more than 73,200 education institutions affecting more than 15,100,000 learners and 548,000 teachers[5].

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[5]*This does not include additional 188,000 non-teaching staff employed in the schools and institutions*

This response plan recognizes the impact of COVID19 on the education system in Uganda hence the need to strengthen preparedness and response measures in order to mitigate the impact the outbreak of COVID-19 Uganda's education system.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this response plan is to ensure better preparedness and effective response by MoES, DLGs and stakeholders to COVID-19 outbreak.

Specifically, the objectives are:

1. Minimize the adverse effects COVID-19 on learners, teachers and the education system at large.

2. Promote coordination and collaboration among education stakeholders and other agencies for a more effective response

3. To enhance the capacity of, DLGs and stakeholders to promote protection of learners and teachers and ensure continuity of learning and transition to normal school programme

2.1 Response Measures

The outbreak of COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic and has now spread to many countries and territories including countries in the East African region. The confirmation of COVID-19 cases in Uganda means that there is high risk of exposure of learners and teachers at community level even when education institutions are closed. Besides, the possible spread of the COVID-19 in many districts of Uganda may result into prolonged school closure resulting into reduction in instructional time, and low syllabus coverage with significant impact on learning outcomes. These response measures are intended to enhance the capacity of the education stakeholders to respond to the emerging needs of learners, teachers, education authorities and communities during and after COVID-19 outbreak. Some of the key actions include improving coordination among stakeholders, enhancing communication, building capacities of government systems at national and sub national levels as well as providing resources to ensure that children are learning even during the time for school closure.

2.2 Possible Scenarios

This response plan proposes measures based on 3 scenarios as highlighted in the matrix below.

Scenario	Actions
Scenario 1 (The current scenario. Schools closed for 1 month) Schools have been closed as precautionary measure to minimize risk of infection and spread of COVID-9. Guidelines for movement and public gathering are issued.	1. Set up and support a Coordination Committee 2. Support MoES issue guidelines to all LGs on school closure operations 3. Collect contact details of all District Education Officers and Head teachers for follow up 4. Support mapping of stakeholders at national and district level (including refugee settlements) 5. Support Community sensitization -Risk Communication and Community engagement (RCCE) 6. Identification and development of materials for learning continuity 7. Prepare/collect distance learning materials (e.g. radio, SMS, online/offline digital content, printed material) with special measures for candidate classes) 8. Request for Emergency Fund from the government, EDPs, NGOs and other stakeholders. 9. Develop a strategy for continuity of learning for all children 10. Promote psychosocial support and referrals for case management for teachers and learners 11. Co-ordinate Cross Sector Coordination and communication (NTF, MoH, MoGLSD, MoLG, UN agencies, NGOs, EiE WG, DLGs) 12. Support Risk Analysis 13. Develop and issue guidelines for re-opening of schools and Institutions
Scenario 2 (Worst case Scenario) school closure continues	1. Validate, print and distribute self- study materials to all learners 2. Mobilise teachers as community change agents for education of masses on prevention from COVID-19 and

Scenario	Actions
for 4-24 weeks (1-6) months: When COVID-9 infection is confirmed in Uganda in one or multiple geographic areas. Strict guidelines for movement are issued and school closure extended	to support the community to reinforce guideline for school closures 3. Support teachers to prepare effectively for resumption of learning 4. Support provision of air time (telephone, radio, TV) to DEOs, DIS and Head teacher to mobilise teachers to remain in touch with learners to support continuity of learning. 5. Provide lessons through digital, TV and Radios 6. Prepare for re-opening of schools, including provision of grants to buy hand washing materials, such as bucket and soaps. 7. Prepare accelerated learning materials to run remedial classes to help children catch up with the loss time. 8. Support Local Council authorities develop village register of school going children for monitoring and follow up of learning continuity 9. Support monitoring of continuity of learning 10. Support measure for continuity of learning for needy children, children with special educational needs and others 11. Continued support to distance learning (e.g. radio, online/offline digital content, printed material) with special measures for candidate classes. 12. Support Community sensitization on Risk Communication and Community engagement (RCCE) 13. Developing recovery plan (including guidelines on resumption of learning, school time-table, exams etc.) 14. Promote psycho-social support and referrals for case management for teachers and learners. 15. Cross sector Coordination and communication (NTF MoH, MoGLSD, MoLG, UN agencies, NGOs, EiE WG, DLGs) 16. Continued Risk analysis and mitigation
Scenario 3 (Risk Reduction and Recovery to normal programming	1. Support implementation recovery plan (including dissemination of guidelines on resumption of learning, fees collection, school time-table & assessment etc.) 2. Supply of teaching-learning materials to schools for resumption of learning

Scenario	Actions
When country is announced to be free of COVID-19 and resumption of normal school programme starts	3. Support LGs in school readiness and monitoring of resumption of learning activities in schools (school attendance for boys and girls, teachers' attendance, and actual teaching and learning) 4. Prepare for school re-opening, including running radio and TV advertisements for timely re-opening and back to school campaigns to reduce school drop out 5. Support awareness to communities, parents, teachers and learners on resumption of learning 6. Developing and issuing of guidelines and SOPs for opening education institutions (ECD centres, Primary, Secondary, universities and other tertiary institutions) 7. Hygiene promotion in schools and institutions (hand wash, posters, leaflets) 8. Ensure adequate supplies of hand wash facilities, soap and detergents in schools 9. Documentation of lessons learnt and experiences of education and sports sector stakeholder's response to COVID-19 10. Continued Risk analysis and mitigation 11. Promote psychosocial support and referrals for case management for teachers and learners 12. Cross sector Coordination and communication (NTF (MoH), MoES MoGLSD, MoLG, UN agencies, NGOs, EiE WG, DLGs) 13. Ensure safety of institutions that had been used as isolation centres.

3.0 Target of the plan

This plan directly targets an estimated 15,100,000 learners and youth in primary and secondary schools, universities and tertiary institutions, teachers, school administrators, parents and other key stakeholders. Additional 600,000 refugee learners in 13 districts hosting refugees are also included in the plan. This plan will guide the response actions of Ministry of Education and Sports, Donors and Education Development Partners, Local Governments and the entire school system on common response priorities.

The plan is aligned to the Ministry of Health's National Plan for COVID-19 preparedness and response and directly contributes to two implementation pillars: (1) Coordination and Leadership and (2) Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) of the National Task Force on COVID-19. Implementation of this plans will also benefit from Uganda's extensive experience in EVD response. The plan will be implemented under the leadership of Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) with financial and technical support from GoU, donors and EDPs, UN agencies, NGOs, LGs, schools and communities.

3.1 Intervention areas

3.1.1 Mitigate the impact COVID-19 on learners, teachers and the education system at large

Key Activities

1. Mapping of stakeholders, capacities and resources

2. Capacity building of MoES, LGs, DEOs, Head teachers, and school management committees, (LC1, para-social workers in conjunction with community-based services), Boards of Governors, and Governing Councils

2. Develop and disseminate messages on COVID-19

4. Continue to support risk analysis and design mitigation measures

5. Develop a recovery plan (including guidelines on resumption of learning, time-table, exams etc.)

6. Effectively implement the recovery plan in schools

7. Enhance the capacity of stakeholders for monitoring and evaluation of education and sports sector COVID 19 response

3.1.2 Promote coordination among education stakeholders and other agencies for a more effective response

Key Activities

1. Establish an Education National Task Force for COVID-19 response

2. Establish a coordination mechanism of COVID 19 education response at district and sub-district levels

3. Provide a coordination and communication mechanism among education stakeholders (establishment of various task teams for core areas of education response)

4. Provide cross sector coordination with stakeholders (NTF (MoH), MoES, MoGLSD, MoLG, UN agencies, NGOs, EiE WG, DLGs)

5. Mobilize resources and fund-raising mechanisms

3.1.3 To enhance the capacity of Ministry of Education and Sports, LGs and stakeholders to promote protection of learners and teachers and ensure continuity of learning and transition to normal school programme

Key Activities

1. Develop COVID 19 National preparedness and response plans for education and sports sector

2. Provide support to LGs, Sub-county authorities, SMCs to promote protection and wellbeing of teachers and learners

3. Build the capacity of teachers to carry on messages to ensure that children are supported by their parents and guardians.

3.2. Awareness and communication

1. Develop key messages and distribute IEC materials

2. Monitor and support implementation of measures for school closure

3. Develop and disseminate awareness and health safeguarding messages to learners, teachers, parents and community members through various media (SMS, text, TV and radio)

4. Document lessons learnt

3.2 Protection and well-being of teachers and learners

1. Identify and report high risks children and teachers face in the community

2. Strengthen linkages to referral mechanisms to service points at community level

3. Promote psychosocial support for teachers and learners through giving messages

4. Promote hygiene and sanitation practices including supply of soap, disinfectants, hygiene kits etc.

3.3 Support Continuity of learning

1. Provide support to identify/develop materials for learning continuity
2. Validate, print and distribute self- learning materials to all learners

3. Collect and validate distance learning materials (e.g. radio, SMS, online/offline digital content, printed material) with special measures for candidate classes)

4. Mobilize teachers and community leaders to promote and monitor continuity of learning programmes

5. Provide support to the provision of air time (telephone, radio, TV) to DEOs, DIS and Head teacher to mobilize teachers to remain in touch with learners to support continuity of learning.

6. Provide lessons through digital, TV, Radios, self-learning materials etc.

3.4 Provide support to institutions that are being used as isolation centres

1. Identifying and document all education institutions where COVID 19 exposed people are quarantined.

2. Ensure that adequate supplies and materials for use are provided.

3. Collaborate with other sectors to ensure safety of both quarantined and staff.

4. Repair and fumigate institution facilities to prepare for resume of classes and training.