

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR EDUCATION SECTOR DURING COVID-19 IN SUDAN

PURPOSE OF GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to the Education partners in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Sudan. The document aims to provide recommendations for the preparedness and response.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION IN SUDAN

On Friday March 13th, Sudan's Federal Minister of Health announced the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Sudan, a man in his fifties who recently came from the UAE and then passed away in Sudan. Since then, the Government of Sudan has declared a national state of health emergency, closed Sudan's borders, suspended flights in and out of the country, and ordered the closure of educational institutions for an initial period of one month (now extended until the start of the new school year in September). This applies to public schools and private schools that follow the Sudanese curriculum. Private schools that follow international curricula are applying various eLearning and house teaching modalities to complete their school year.

At the time of the closing of educational institutions, the school year had ended apart from the final exams for Grades 8 and Grade 11 (grade 3 in secondary school). This has impacted the education of more than 8.1 million K-12 students, and 653,000 tertiary level students. In addition to these, are the 3.6 million children (aged 5-13 years) already out of school. While, the exams have been postponed until further notice for most states, five states had finalized their exams at the time of the announcement. As the COVID 19 situation improves, the state Ministries of Education might conduct the basic education exams before September 2020. The Federal Ministry would also organize the postponed secondary examinations, but it is too early to propose new dates at this time.

At the same time as the closing of the educational institutions the Minister of Education announced a new school year, which will start in September. This will result in students being out of a school for approximately a six-month break. The Government decree states that the school year first semester will be 6 September 2020 - 17 December 2020, followed by a break from 18 December 2020 - 2 January 2021. The second semester of the school year will be 3 January 2021 – 14 May 2021. As for the basic Education exams, these are expected to be held 3 – 10 May 2021, and the secondary exams 17-31 May 2021. This is instead of the previously adhered to calendars for schools to resume in April for Group B and June for Group A.

Given that students are currently on school break, COVID-19, at this stage, has minimal effect on the delivery of the curriculum given that there are no classes that are being missed. It is believed that there is

still time for applications to University for students finalized secondary school and have not been able to conduct their exams as university starts in August/September. However, at the same time the children in Sudan will be out of school for a period of six months with no formal learning. This is followed by previous year in which students missed up to 70 days of schooling due to the Sudan revolution.

School closures, for example, is disrupting children's daily routines, creating additional stress on families, and exposing children to new protection risks. As children start hearing more messages on COVID-19, they become worried about their own safety as well as that of their loved ones. The current messages are not fully tailored to children's specific needs and concerns. Due to lock downs and physical distancing, there is an increase of children in need of care and support including alternative forms of recreation and psychosocial support. *[Please see Child protection guidance for more related to protection concerns of children during COVID-19]*

The banning of gatherings and the lockdown is also affecting activities that are normally taking place during school breaks, including community mobilization, capacity building activities, supplies end-user distribution, and lockdowns will also delay construction activities. Furthermore, a portion of partners resources (human, financial and supplies) are now being diverted and dedicated for COVID-19 preparedness and response, as outlined, affecting the implementation of some regular programs.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION PRIORITIES

The Ministry of Education at federal level as well as Khartoum State are currently planning different responses and directives to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main concerns of the Ministry of Education are to (i) have students sit for their exams as soon as viable in a safe environment; (ii) have as much of the new school curriculum as possible in place for the new school year; (iii) prepare schools for the new year (e.g. scaled up WASH), messaging around COVID 19/healthy practices students; (iv) keep children engaged in learning and ensure their nutrition so they do not fall too far behind, and (v) try to ensure students return to school when schools reopen.

UNICEF has a continued dialogue with the Ministry of Education at federal and various state level, in particular Khartoum state due to COVID-19 situation in the state. In Khartoum state the exams were not able to take place and the State MoE are planning to wait until the COVID-19 has improved. At the same time more exam centers are planned, and review lessons and videos are being developed for TV and online. Radio lessons are being considered for children who don't have access to TV and internet, as well as hard copies and the possibility of two teachers per school being available to support students in grade 8 and 11 individually for their exams.

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACTIONS

In alignment with the Ministry of Education's priorities the focus of the education response is as following:

1. Support the delivery of grade 8 and grade 11 exams when possible as well as supporting the students to revise and prepare for the exam,

2. Promote safe learning at home where possible until schools reopen, focusing on maintaining acquired knowledge by encourage reading, writing and numeracy, and enhancement of life skills and psychosocial support, including accelerate innovative approaches to reach the most vulnerable
3. Prepare for schools to reopen safely and allow for catch-up, by coordinate with other stakeholders at the fore front of the COVID-19 respond to ensure that schools are disinfected and enhanced with adequate WASH facilities, utilize Parent and Teacher Associations, teachers and school leaders to reinforce COVID19 risk communication and infection prevention such as basic hygiene and observing physical distancing – where possible.

The Education sector are to pay specific attention to two distinct groups in Sudan: (1) Children on the move, currently not reached or reached by non-formal education programs; and (2) Vulnerable groups with limited or no access to the new modes of delivery, in particularly the rural poor, children with disabilities, younger children.

1) Grade 8 and Grade 11 exams

In preparation for the exams the following activities can be considered.

Areas	Suggested approach and activities
Preparing exam centers	If/when new exam dates are set: Preparation of exam centers through distribution of soap and water, hand sanitation, and ensuring that distance can be kept between student (extra centers or shifts).
Awareness raising on conducting exams in a safe	Messaging to prepare students and teachers for the extra measures that are put in place for the exams including handwashing and social distancing.
Revision and preparing students for the exams.	MoE is planning to prepare review lessons for G11 students of secondary school that can be broadcast on TV and assistance is needed to support that. Broadcast time of 2 hours daily has been secured with national TV corporation. Support to vulnerable students through distribution of solar powered radios, distribution of hard copies produced by the MoE and supporting teachers to keep individual contact with vulnerable students.

2) Learning at home

Children in Sudan will be on school break for up to six months, which is a long period and therefore it is important to encourage families to continue learning at home.

Areas	Suggested approach and activities
Messaging to parents and students on the importance of continuity of learning.	As part of COVID-19 messages it is important to also highlight the importance for children to stay active during this long period of school break.
Provide students, parents and teachers with ideas and options for learning at home.	<p>The activities can be off different types including revision of core subjects, non-formal education, life skills but also play!</p> <p>Free play or structured play activities does not only provide great learning opportunities but is also a time for children to have a sense of normalcy and control of their situation. It is encouraged for parents to play with their children of all ages.</p> <p>Activities and revision are being developed by the Ministry of Education, but it is encouraged for partners to share all available material to make it easier for other partners to share and distribute these.</p>
Accelerate innovative approaches and multiple pathways to learning	This would include e-learning, radio programmes, TV etc that would support children’s learning at home. Also encouraging non-formal education, play and different pathways to learning to ensure all domains of learning and skills are built.
Support to teachers	<p>Ensure continuity of payment of teacher salaries, including both volunteer and refugee teachers.</p> <p>For teacher who are present at area of their school to support them in staying in contact with their students in a safe way. But also,2 to ensure that teachers are also aware of material and activities shared with their students.</p>
Monitoring	Developing practical tips for teachers to monitor learning of children and parents.
Building capacity at Federal and state Ministry of Education and stakeholders on alternatives pathways to learning and distance learning.	While all above mentioned aspects should be done in relation to the MoE, it is also important to ensure that capacity is built within the Ministry on developing and managing distance learning and multiple pathways to learning.
Building capacity of the government, partner organizations and schools to continue delivering support on school nutrition and health through alternate modalities	Develop practical measures to use alternative modalities to deliver critical nutrition to students while schools remain closed, using schools as a platform. This includes distributing take-home rations for students to boost their ability to focus on distance learning.

3) Prepare schools to reopen in September

Even though there are no classes that are planned between March and September, there are several activities that are normally done in this period to prepare for the new school year. The below table list some of the main ones and also the preparedness that is needed for the new school year admit COVID-19.

This would be continued to be updates as the situation evolves over the next couple of months.

Areas	Suggested approach and activities
Capacity building activities for teachers planned for school break	<p>Trainings and workshops during COVID-19 restrictions should follow the rules of banned gatherings. Instead, it can be considered to conduct trainings in smaller groups (as per the advice of the government and state), provide printed material to also do “home learning”.</p> <p>It is further encouraged to support teachers in smaller groups to continue to make exchanges and prepare for the next school year.</p> <p>Handwashing should be available at all training facilities.</p>
Ongoing construction during school break	In areas of no lockdown the construction activities can continue, however it is important to share information and if needed protective equipment and soap/hand sanitizers to workers.
Supply distribution	<p>Supply distribution is encouraged to take place during the start of the school year, hence not until September. In places with proper storage is available, pre-positioning before the rain starts is recommended.</p> <p>During COVID-19 avoid gathering and celebratory events with supply distribution. Ensure soap and water, and/or hand sanitizer is available for persons responsible for distribution.</p>
Enrollment campaigns	<p>If COVID-19 restriction is still in place at the time of enrollment campaigns, these need to re-design to avoid gatherings. Options of door to door, further including PTA members, using radio or material distribution should be considered.</p> <p>The campaigns should also include COVID-19 information, see suggested messaging in the first resource below. It is also important to ensure that families feel safe to send their children to school if they have no symptoms, and counter stigma or misinformation on COVID-19.</p>

<p>Provision of additional supplies for COVID-19 measures and WASH in school.</p>	<p>Provision of supplies: soap, water, hygiene kits, sanitation supplies, printed materials for awareness raising.</p> <p>Scale-up of WASH in school activities, including access to water and hygiene promotion activities.</p> <p>Dis-infection of schools if needed (e.g. where schools make have been used for COVID-19 patients or other gatherings).</p>
<p>Guidance on COVID-19 for school management, PTA and teachers</p>	<p>Sharing guidance for safe school operations – healthy practices such as handwashing, as well as positive classroom management/parenting (to eradicate school violence). The Ministry of Education is working on guidance and please see the first resource below.</p> <p>Parent and Teacher Associations to continue with risk communication, hygienic practices messaging once schools resume.</p> <p>Guidance on conducting a Take-Home Ration Exercise</p>

RESOURCES

<p>GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN SCHOOLS</p>	<p>Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UNICEF, WHO, and IFRC) overall Guidance on COVID and Education.</p> <p>Available in English, Spanish, French and Arabic on: https://www.unicef.org/reports/key-messages-and-actions-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools</p>
<p>Technical Note on Protection of Children during the Corona Virus Pandemic</p>	<p>The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: Technical Note on Protection of Children during the Corona Virus Pandemic.pdf</p>
<p>Guidelines for Take-Home Rations during the COVID-19 Emergency</p>	<p> THR Distribution Guidelines_Final_ex</p>
<p>Framework for Reopening schools</p>	<p> Framework for Reopening Schools.</p>
<p>Sphere Minimum Standards for child Protection in Humanitarian Settings</p>	<p>Minimum standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian action</p>
<p>Communicating with talking to children</p>	<p>UNICEF’s guidance on talking to children: in English and Arabic</p>
<p>Tips and guidance to families</p>	<p>UNICEF’s platform for tips for families during COVID-19</p>
<p>Guidance on Take Home Rations</p>	<p>WFP’s Guidance on using schools as a platform to provide students with take-home rations</p>
<p>IASC MHPSS Reference Group’s Briefing Note about MHPSS Aspects of COVID-19</p>	<p>A briefing note about MHPSS aspects of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p>
<p>Guidance COVID on education and COVID</p>	<p>UNICEF’s School guidance on COVID in English and Arabic</p>
<p>Food Distributions- School feeding</p>	<p>IASC guidance COVID Readiness and Response – food Distributions</p>
<p>IASC Guidance Scale up COVID-19 Outbreak: readiness and Response in Humanitarian Situations Including Camps and Camp-Like</p>	<p> IASC Interim Guidance on COVID-1</p>

Settings (including refugee open areas)	
More available platforms for resources	<p>INEE Resources: https://inee.org/covid-19/resources</p> <p>INEE Webinar links: https://inee.org/covid-19/webinars</p> <p>Education Cluster: https://www.educationcluster.net/COVID19</p>

Additional WHO online short course on Operational Planning Guidelines:

<https://openwho.org/courses/UNCT-COVID19-preparedness-and-response-EN>.

Technical Guidance in Arabic: <https://www.who.int/ar/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>.

NOTE: For more support reach out to the Sudan Education Sector on: edusectorsudan@gmail.com
 updated information will also be regularly updated on the sector website:
<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/sudan/education>