

## SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee urges protection of education, now and post-crisis

Virtual meeting on COVID-19 education response

6 April 2020, Virtual



**Steering Committee members focused their recommendations on the urgency of equity measures, supporting teachers and averting the fallout from a financial crisis.**

*“We come together in a time of crisis, when our role to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda has never been greater,”* said Assistant Director-General for UNESCO, Stefania Giannini, opening the emergency virtual meeting of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.

In the face of school closures affecting 1.5 billion students in 187 countries, Steering Committee members focused their recommendations on the urgency of equity measures, supporting teachers and averting the fallout from a financial crisis that could exacerbate learning inequalities and deepen the education crisis.

Describing the pandemic as both a human and health crisis, Stefania Giannini stressed that solidarity and partnerships must guide the global education community’s response, drawing attention to the launch of the [Covid-19 Global Education Coalition](#) that brings together over 80 public and private partners. She urged the Steering Committee to take on the role of ensuring that education systems come out of the crisis stronger than before to protect the right to education of all learners – especially the most vulnerable.

### Make inclusion and equity the guiding principle of all COVID-19 education responses

The message of global solidarity was reiterated by co-Chair, Professor Kazuhiro Yoshida of Japan, who declared *“this is a moment that our humanity is tested.”* He further emphasised that *“the weakest should not be the losers,”* and that *“equity and inclusion should be our primary concerns.”*

The Minister of National Education of Colombia, Maria Victoria Angulo Gonzalez, shared the experience of Colombia as well as how Latin America has worked together as a region through the active sharing of best practices. The key tenets of Colombia’s education response strategy are the strengthening of family and teacher relationships. The Minister also emphasised the need for different approaches to learning for different contexts, spanning digital, radio, and television. Socio-emotional skills and attention to mental health provision is also part of the support given. Colombia is also guaranteeing the continuation of the School-Food-Programme at home for students who rely on it for their daily nutrition.



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Echoing the need for different approaches to ensure learning continuity, UNICEF’s Chief of Education, Robert Jenkins, shared lessons learnt from the Ebola crisis, which exacerbated inequalities, particularly

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those related to gender. He recalled the increase in sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, and high dropout rates because of school closures. Robert Jenkins also stressed the importance of disaggregated data to reach the most disadvantaged and called for proactive measures to enable children to get back to their formal learning systems as soon as the crisis abates.

Recognise and support the critical roles that teachers play in the COVID-19 response and recovery

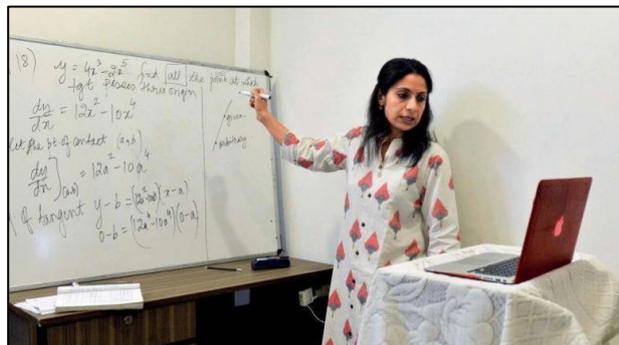
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adequate training to use them, said Dennis Sinyolo of Education International (EI), drawing on first results from a recent country survey. He referred to [EI's 12 principles](#) to protect learning and teachers as well as the recent [six-point call by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030](#), urging "all governments, education providers and funders – public and private – to recognize the critical roles that teachers play in the educational COVID-19 response and recovery".

Nelly Marete from the Kenyan Ministry of Education also placed emphasis on the teacher's role, describing the country's strategy to target 15 million learners, including refugee and nomadic learners. This includes uploading of a digital curriculum and enhanced TV programming. Teachers are being supported to handle digital content as well as to monitor learning effectively. She explained that connectivity is a huge challenge and acknowledged that the adaptation of digital content to learners with special needs remains essential.

Ensure adequate political commitment and investment in education in the recovery phase

Coming together to increase political commitment to education will be more than ever important in the face of a global economic recession that could severely impact education and aid spending, recalling the 2008-09 financial crisis.



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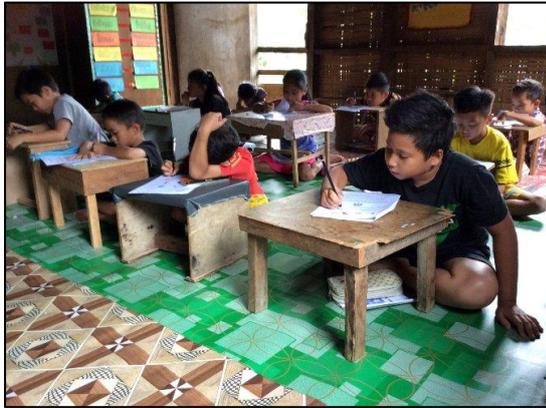
Representatives of Norway, the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), as well as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) urged all stakeholders to join forces and strengthen political leadership, support debt relief, protect social sector spending, warning that the implications of budget cuts could be dramatic. The World Bank's Jaime Saavedra urged partners to make the "silent education crisis visible", while Andreas

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Schleicher of the OECD called upon members to help countries prioritize the allocation of scarce resources in favour of equity and to capitalize on the current momentum to secure public commitment to education now but also beyond the crisis.

Closing the meeting, co-Chair Stefania Giannini urged the Steering Committee *“to relaunch a set of key policy messages”* to support countries now and after the crisis, protect investment in education and seize the momentum to shape the education of the future

*This write-up draws from the meeting report of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.*

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