



# The Republic of The Gambia

## Education Sector Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Plan

### Preface

First and foremost, it is important to stress and emphasize that the COVID-19 Pandemic is a matter of Public Health and mitigating its impact depends greatly on the advice of the Ministry of Health to prevent or treat COVID-19 infections. The scale of the Pandemic is however, not just a matter of Public Health and will impact our social and economic life. Therefore, an effective public health response requires the support from other sectors and the general public. Among the Education Sector Policy 2016-2030 objective is to work in close coordination with the Ministry of Health to educate students, teachers and parents, about interventions that support the curbing of the spread of such contagious diseases. As a matter of fact, this Education Sector Response to COVID-19 is anchored on the National COVID-19 Response Plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Health.

The closure of schools is part of government's large-scale of non-pharmaceutical interventions of social distancing that include the banning of large gatherings. This social distancing restriction has affected education at all levels, as learners and teachers are unable to physically meet in schools and other learning institutions including majlis for effective learning to take place.

In addition, this closure of schools will limit opportunities for learning during this period of social distancing and research has shown that *time spent learning or learning time*, is one of the most reliable predictors of opportunities for learning hence it's imperative for this reason that my Ministry took a proactive approach to contribute to the mitigation of the impact of the Pandemic and reduce the learning loss during the period of school closure.

Given this situation, my Permanent Secretary established and chairs a multidisciplinary technical committee in charge of overseeing the Education Response Strategy to the COVID19 Pandemic for the short and medium terms. This committee is charged with the responsibility to *"develop and support the implementation of a coherent, effective and equitable educational responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic"*.

The guiding principle and objectives of the Education Response Strategy include the following;

1. To ensure that children and their families have access to relevant and timely information on COVID-19 to protect themselves from infection and to reduce the transmission rate within their communities.
2. To ensure continuity of learning during the initial 21-days school closure and progressively expand the curriculum coverage using multiple platforms in the medium

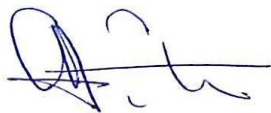
to long terms with particular attention of reaching children at risk of being excluded from the distance learning means.

3. To strengthen the capacity and resilience of the Education Sector to develop functional multiple platforms for delivering the curriculum and to guarantee continuity of learning under all circumstances and leaving no child behind.
4. To ensure that students living in underprivileged family households are supported with basic food items.

This Education Sector Response Plan to COVID-19 presents programmes that provide learning opportunities through Distance Education for children, youth and adults including underserved groups and those with special needs during the period and beyond. Administrative measures to ensure gradual recovery of the lost instructional hours will include;

- a) Extension of the school day or week, paying attention to double-shifting school where it is applicable.
- b) Intensive and extensive classes for exam classes to recover lost time with the option of rescheduling of examinations.
- c) Rescheduling the curriculum delivery plans.
- d) Strengthening the monitoring of Implementation of the Recovery Strategy through Cluster Monitors.

Finally, we are grateful to Government and to our partners for their collaboration and support in coming up with this timely response to COVID-19 plan and to those who have contributed to the accomplishment of this critical task which would have been impossible without the team spirit of the multi-stakeholder technical committee.



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**Hon. Claudiana A. Cole**  
Minister of Basic and Secondary Education



## Background

On 17 March 2020 His Excellency the President of the Republic of The Gambia address the nation on the status of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Subsequently, he declared a closure of all schools and educational institutions which is a measure to protect children and control the spread of the virus. The Education Sector under the leadership of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) initiated a COVID-19 technical level consultation to develop a national strategy aimed at providing all children and their families appropriate information on COVID-19; ensure that appropriate measures in place for minimum level of continuity of learning; and to engage in recovery and resilience building activities in view of post-COVID. The nationwide school closure will directly affect about 674,300 children from Early Childhood Development to Senior Secondary School. In addition, about 18,000 children in Majalis (Koranic) Schools, 600 students benefitting from second chance education and several thousands of adolescents and youths in non-formal, higher and tertiary education are affected.

The education sector is faced with an unprecedented challenge of delivering the curriculum using alternative and innovative modes. It is estimated that 72 hours of instructional time will be lost during the initial 21 days of school closure. More hours will be lost if the closure period covers an extended period, thus the country will be seriously challenged to meet its target of 880 hours of instruction annually. This COVID-19 Education Sector Response Plan is aimed at mitigating the loss of instructional hours and keeping school children engage and ensuring continuity of learning at home. The response plan solicits considerable support from parents, families and the general public at large. It particularly aims to reassure students and parents especially students in examination classes acquire full support of the Education Sector despite school closure.

Under the circumstances, the Education Sector recognizes the fact that thousands of school children are at the risk of loitering in the street or even selling in the street to support their families to manage the loss of income as result of restriction in movement of the population. As, it is critical to keep all learners at home for safety and continued learning, the plan seeks to engage relevant partners such as WFP to envisage alternative strategies to ensure that school meals reach students in their homes. The education sector will endeavour to mitigate this crisis so that students will not suffer from hunger and as well accorded opportunity of continuing their education. Therefore, this strategy will continue to ensure the provision of key vitamins and micronutrients they receive through school meals.

## COVID-19 Scenarios

The COVID-19 quickly and globally degenerated into a global pandemic. As a results school in The Gambia are initially closed for 21 days beginning 18 March 2020. The outlook both within the country and outside shows that the school closure could last for weeks and even months.

To this end the Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan is based on three scenarios:

*Scenarios 1:* This is the unlikely situation where the infection rates are so low, and risk are well mitigated for schools to re-open after the first 21 days. During this period a distance education programme through radio and TV will be started to keep children busy at home and safe them from infection.

*Scenarios 2:* This is based on the likelihood that the risk of COVID-19 will be moderate to high, resulting in schools being closed for up to 3 months or more. During this period the radio and TV distance learning will be scaled-up, consideration will be made to deliver printed curriculum materials to children and alternative curriculum delivery platforms will be searched and used.

*Scenarios 3:* This is when the country fully recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and schools become fully operational. This phase will be used to fix broken systems, build new ones and ensure that resilience of the education sector is at a level ready to support the delivery of the curriculum in full either through face-to-face in classrooms or distance learning means.

### Administrative Measures

During the post-COVID period and beyond administrative measures will be put in place to ensure gradual recovery of the lost instructional hours. These will include:

- Extension of the school day or week, paying attention to double-shifting where it is applicable
- Intensive and extensive classes for exam classes to recover lost time with the option of rescheduling of examinations
- Rescheduling the curriculum delivery plans
- Strengthening the monitoring of Implementation of the Recovery Strategy through Cluster Monitors

This Education Sector COVID-19 Response is anchored to the National COVID-19 Response Plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Health. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, will ensure the establishment and functioning of appropriate channels of communication and reporting to the national level. The Office of the Permanent Secretary, MoBSE will be responsible for the coordination of the Education Response Plan with support from relevant Directorates, Units and partners as indicated in the matrix below. The MoBSE Permanent Secretary has already set up a MoBSE Emergence Response Group to monitor and advise him on the implementation of this plan. The Local Education Group (LEG) will be the convener to leverage external support and funding for the effective implementation of the plan. The strategy will leverage partnership with Civil Society Organization and community-based organization to attain the desired results.

## The Objectives

The overarching objective of this Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan is to ensure that no child is left behind. It is understood that all the curriculum delivery modes (e.g. radio, TV, home-based study, online learning, etc.) during the school closure period may not work for every child, but conscious effort will be made to ensure that children at the risk of being left behind (e.g. children with disabilities, with no access to internet and TV; with poor radio signal, etc.) are served appropriately.

The specific objectives of this plan are:

1. To ensure that children and their families have access to relevant and timely information on COVID-19 to protect themselves from infection and to reduce the transmission rate within their communities.
2. To ensure continuity of learning during the initial 21-day school closure and progressively expand the curriculum coverage using multiple platforms in the medium to long terms with particular attention of reaching children at risk of being excluded from the distance learning means.
3. To strengthen the capacity and resilience of the Education Sector develop functional multiple platforms for delivering the curriculum and to guarantee continuity of learning under all circumstances and leaving no child behind.
4. To ensure that students living in underprivileged family households are supported with basic food items.

### Education Sector Coronavirus (COVID-19) Strategic Actions and Results Framework

ResKey Strategies	Expected Results	Activities	Timeline (Mar 2020 – Nov 2021)								Responsible Office
			1st Qtr. 2020	2nd Qtr. 2020	3rd Qtr. 2020	4th Qtr. 2020	1st Qtr. 2021	2nd Qtr. 2021	3rd Qtr. 2021	4th Qtr. 2021	
1. Communication	1.1 All children, teachers and parents acquire awareness of and are participating and supporting homebased learning to ensure continuity of learning during the COVID-19 schools' period and beyond	1.1.1 Create Awareness and Behavioural Change in children and their families									<b>Communication Unit</b> (OPS, UNESCO NaTCOM, LEG, WAEC, GTU, REDs)
		1.1.1.1 Development of key messages relating to prevention and protection of COVID-19 and its impact on children's education	X								
		1.1.1.2 Printing and distribution customized school exercise books with COVID-19 awareness messages, poster, flyers and stickers for schools and communities	X	X							
		1.1.1.3 Dissemination of key messages through the print and electronic media	X	X	X						
		1.1.1.4 Panel Discussions on Radio and TV to create awareness on the Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan and the roles of children are parents	X	X	X						
		1.1.1.5 Support children and adolescent group to use drama, poetry, to engage school children and communities to maintain positive hygiene practices in post COVID-19 period	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
2. Ensure Continuity of Learning	2.1 Fifteen (15) community radio moderators, 20 TV technicians and presenters, and 100 subject specialist teachers acquire adequate	2.1.1 Capacity building and re-orientation of Radio and TV presenters and subject specialists									<b>STED,</b> (INSET, communication Unit, REDs, SQAD, GTU, ICT, CREDD, LEG)
		2.1.1.1 Capacity assessment of community radios to deliver distance learning materials	X	X							
		2.1.1.2 Develop and adapt, record and edit distance learning materials for radio and TV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

	relevant skills to perform their functions in delivering distance learning programmes on radio and TV	2.1.1.3 Train/ re-orient Radio moderators, TV technicians and presenters and subject specialists	X	X											
	2.2 All learners receive adequate and continued support to ensure continuity of learning through at least one medium of transmission, (home base study, radio, TV, Online, etc.) and to ensure sustained continuity of learning through provision of school meals	2.2.1 Ensure Learning Continue at Home													
		2.2.1.1 Deliver distance learning lessons through Radio and TV to support homebased learning.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
		2.2.1.2 Update and upload existing e-Learning materials													
		2.2.1.3 Provide appropriate learning support for children with disabilities through the engagement of Itinerant Teachers (printing of braille materials, fuel for house-to house follow-up)	X	X	X				X	X	X				
		2.2.1.4 Facilitate access to adequate megabytes for both teachers and learners (Internet Closed User Group)	X	X	X										
		2.2.1.5 Sensitize FMC, the SMC, RED Staff, teachers, Mothers Clubs and School support personnel		X	X									WFP, SAFMU, REDS, NaSMC	
		2.2.1.6 Provide and distribute food items to keep children at home and school meals after COVID-19		X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
		2.2.1.7 Conduct school children's food need analysis and distribution planning		X											
		2.3 All learning environment and facilities are safe for the resumption and continuity of teaching and learning	2.3.1 Keep Learning Environment Safe for Teaching and Learning to Continue												
			2.3.1.1 Fumigate Learning Environments - school compounds and classrooms		X	X			X	X	X				
2.3.1.2 Treat water sources and toilet facilities in schools			X	X			X	X	X						
2.3.1.3 Provide sanitary facilities and supplies for schools			X	X			X	X	X						



		2.3.1.4 Refurbish and maintain existing facilities (classrooms, toilets, water points) to meet minimum hygiene standards		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
		2.3.1.5 Support child-led health and hygiene initiatives through drama, cartoon, competition, etc.	X	X	X			X	X	X	
		2.3.1.6 Provide first aid kits for all schools					X	X	X	X	
3. Partnership and Resource Mobilization	3.1 Education working group established and functional	3.1.1 Stakeholder Participation and Involvement									Office of the Permanent Secretary (LEG, WAEC, AU, PPARBD, SQAD, PCU)
		3.1.1.1 Develop and monitor the implementation of Education Response Strategy to COVID-19	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
		3.1.1.2 Provide Periodic media and public briefings, and Report to the national COVID-19 Coordination Structure		X	X	X		X		X	
	3.2 Education sector mobilized adequate resources for COVID.19 responses, recovery and resilience building	3.2.1 Resource mobilization for responses, recovery and resilience building									
		3.2.1.1 Engage the Local Education Group (LEG) partners for resource mobilization	X	X							
		3.2.1.2 Disseminate Education Sector COVID-19 Strategy to international partners such as Diaspora, the World Bank and GPE	X	X							
4. ICT supplies and ICT Infrastructure	4.1 Access to teaching and learning through all social media platforms, cost free to teachers and students provided	4.1.1 Technology based learning									PPARBD (STED, ESD, Subject Associations, LEG)
		4.1.1.1 Provide Internet connectivity to schools to facilitate learning through social broadcasting platforms: WhatsApp, SMS, Facebook, YouTube etc.			X	X	X	X	X	X	
		4.1.1.2 Provide training for teachers on the use of social media and existing platforms (Radio, TV and Online) to deliver digital learning materials		X			X	X	X	X	
		4.1.1.3 Develop a comprehensive list of Open Education Resource and Online (Massive Open Online Courses) resources		X	X						
		4.1.1.4 Provide distance learning materials and radio and TV sets to schools			X		X	X			

		4.1.1.6 Develop Apps for self-learning based on the national curriculum			X	X	X	X	X	X	
	4.2 Regional Education Radio stations established in the six (6) Educational Regions	4.2.1 Strengthening the Education ICT Infrastructure for continuing learning									
		4.2.1.1 Provide Eleven (11) Community Radio stations with basic equipment			X	X	X				
		4.2.1.2 Establish Regional Education Radio stations			X	X	X	X	X	X	
		4.2.1.3 Build capacity for the TV and Radio operators, and presenters.				X	X	X	X	X	
		4.2.1.4 Provide solar as alternative source of energy for operations of radio and TV station involve in distance learning			X	X	X	X	X	X	
5. Monitoring and Evaluation	5.1 Data on student and teacher engagement on social media interactions and distance learning available	5.1.1 Monitoring and generating Data									PPARBD (Assessment Unit, STED, ESD, Subject Associations, LEG)
		5.1.1.1 U-Report to monitor home-based study and disseminating information to children		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
		5.1.1.2 Provide 10000 mobile-radio Combo to students to facilitate access to learning resource, receiving information and giving feedback			X						
		5.1.1.3 Development of monitoring, data collection and reporting tools and mechanisms for radio and TV programme		X							
		5.1.1.4 Reporting to education sector management and the education sector partners through the LEG		X	X	X		X		X	
		5.1.1.5 End of intervention external evaluation									
		5.1.1.6 Regular programme monitoring and supervision			X	X	X	X	X	X	
		5.1.1.7 Procurement of vehicles and fuel for Communication Unit, and Data and Monitoring Unit					X	X			
<b>Total (US\$)</b>											



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DRAFT PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR TV AND RADIO

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM	English Language  LBS	Maths  LBS	Chemistry  SSS	Maths  SSS	Maths  SSS	Repeat  English Language LBS	Repeat  Maths, LBS
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	English Language  UBS	English Language  LBS	Science  UBS	Biology  SSS	Chemistry  SSS	Repeat  Maths, LBS	Repeat  English Language SSS
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	English Language  SSS	Science  UBS	Maths  LBS	English Language  UBS	Biology  SSS	Repeat  English Language UBS	Repeat  Maths, UBS
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Maths  UBS	Maths  UBS	Physics  SSS	English Language	Physics  SSS	Repeat  Maths, SSS	Repeat

				SSS			English Language SSS
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