





KAP Survey Report

Prolonged schools closure and home-based learning.
Lokwilili Residential Area, Rejaf Payam, Juba City
August 2020

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All the local stakeholders including learners, teachers, parents and local leaders who spared their time and contributed immensely as respondents and cannot be named individually here because of their big number. Of special mention is Mr. Mathias Juma Manasse, Lokwilili Community leader and the Rejaf payam Education Director who approved this survey. A big thank you to all the 14 Enumerators who tirelessly combed the whole of Lokwilili residential area in search of respondents, facilitating the interview and contributing to the write up of this report. Special thanks to the team that helped analyze data and report writing including Ms. Sake Brenda Bennett, Ms. Seida Hellen Johnson, Mr. David Makumbi led by Mr. Mark Simiyu. Lastly, thanks to the board of directors of Inspire Children and CIDI for their generous financial support and strategic guidance throughout the survey.

Executive summary

Lokwilili residential area is served with 2 nursery schools (both up to top class grade), 2 primary schools (1 up to Primary six -P6 and the other up to P8) and 1 Secondary school up to senior three-S3 level. As of March 2020, the estimated enrollment was 232 (130 female) in the nursery schools, 720 (336 female) in the primary schools and 40 (7 female) in secondary school. Since mid-March 2020, and four months on and counting, schools are closed and children remain home, innocently uncertain about their education.

As part of a comprehensive mitigation measure to keep children engaged in learning activities, the government, through the ministry of general education and instruction and education partners, UNICEF has developed radio lessons that are aired daily through Miraya radio and South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC). However, these home-based learning radio programs are new approaches and they come with peculiar challenges to the learners, their parents and even teachers including accessibility, uptake and coordination at individual and family levels. Home-based learning is a short-term intervention to help control and prevent 'wastage' of children unfortunately happening right in their homes. The primary purpose of this survey was to assess community knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding available home-based learning activities and opportunities to inform appropriate interventions Lokwilili residential area, Juba City.

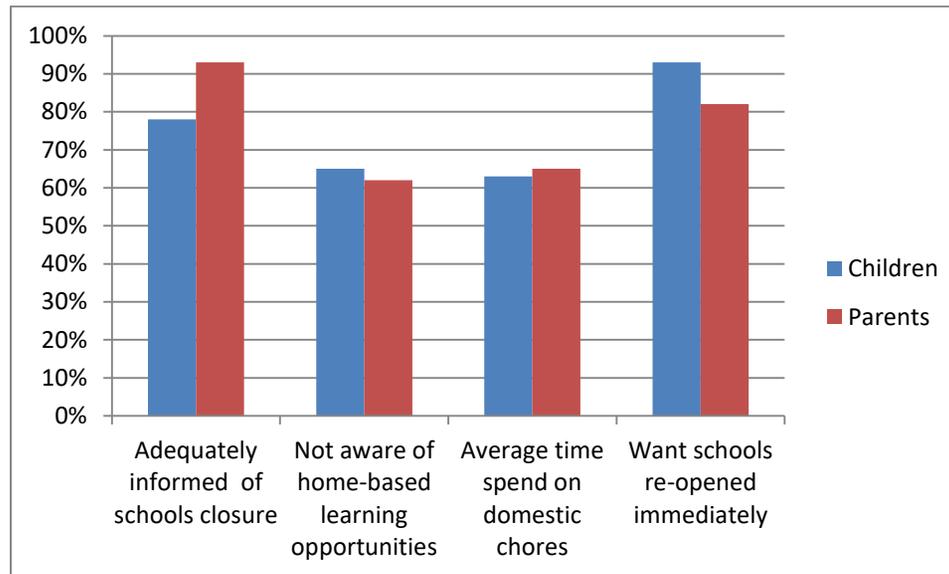
Key findings

From parents, teachers and local administrators

- 93% were adequately informed why schools closed
- 62% were not aware of any home-based learning opportunities for children
- 65% of the children's time is spend on participating in domestic chores, 22% in playing, and only 5% in learning related activities
- 32% allow their children to use radio as support and only 7% exempted them from chores to attend to learning activities
- 73% wish their children are organized in small groups in the neighborhoods and be taught
- 82% of the stakeholders want schools re-opened immediately.

From learners/children

- 78% were adequately informed why schools closed
- 63% are not regularly updated when schools will re-open
- 63% of the children are mainly engaged in domestic chores every day, while only 10% say they are engaged in learning related activities
- 65% are not aware of any home-based learning opportunities
- 83% of those aware of learning opportunities know of radio broadcast lessons
- 49% of learners have access to radio and 83% of them share a radio
- 93% of them want schools re-opened immediately



Introduction

Due to COVID-19, there is an education crisis affecting the learning of children globally and locally. Like many other countries, the government of South Sudan closed schools indefinitely in March 2020 as one measure to prevent transmission of the virus. According to UNICEF, South Sudan's education indicators remain among the worst in the world. About 2.2 million children are out of school and 1.7 million in school now faced with indefinite school closures. Mr. Kuyok Abol, the undersecretary in the ministry of education, says the government will not re-open schools anytime soon. "We expect a spike in cases of the disease in the coming weeks. In such a situation we cannot re-open schools. Secondly, there is no country in the region that is now re-opening (schools)", says the undersecretary.

For some children, the impact of COVID-19 will be temporary, but for others, this pandemic will alter the course of their lives forever. At home, there is generally lack of or inadequate alternative learning options and opportunities; children, teachers and their families face psychosocial stress, anxiety and stigma². Drop-out rates are likely to rise especially for girls and particularly the adolescents. Evidence gathered in Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis shows that prolonged school closure can also result in increased sexual exploitation and abuse and teenage pregnancies. There is a real risk for children being deprived of their right to education, exposed to health and social risks during this COVID-19 emergency. The risks of keeping schools closed far outweigh the benefits³. Even with re-opening of schools, children will not return to the same 'school environment' they left in March 2020, they will again face new challenges; they will be staggering from one challenge to another.

Objective

With schools closed indefinitely, children, their parents, teachers and other stakeholders are affected differently. To further understand how stakeholders are affected and how they mitigating and coping with prolonged schools closure, a KAP survey targeting learners, their parents, teachers and other local stakeholders as respondents in Lokwilili residential area, a suburb of Juba city in Rejaf payam was conducted. The specific objectives of the survey were;

1. To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding home-based learning opportunities
2. To generate baseline levels and set appropriate intervention priorities and implementation strategies

¹ The East African Newspaper, 2nd August 2020

² Somalia Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan

³ The Economist.com, 18th July 2020.

Methodology

In compliance with WHO's and Ministry of health guidelines in prevention and spread of COVID-19, social distancing and wearing of facemasks was adhered to during the one-on-one face interviews. For Children under 18 years, their participation was sought from their parents/guardians. The interviews were mainly conducted in Juba arabic, some in english and local languages or a mix of them. The data collection process, analysis and report compilation was between the 27th July and 7th August 2020.

Enumerators are a critical interface with the respondents and are crucial to the success of this survey. 14 Enumerators (8 female) from the survey location with good knowledge of the local area and population were adequately trained for 1 day on data collection tools, interviewing techniques, procedures and ethics before being engaged to collect data. A pre-test interview using the questionnaires was undertaken by each Enumerator. Out of the 14, 2 were further trained and supervised 6 Enumerators each (2 per Block). A summary of the findings was also conducted by the Enumerators immediately they finished the interviews each day.

The survey adopted a consultative and participatory approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods of enquiry to facilitate collection, analysis and triangulation of data. The survey was conducted with consideration and inclusion of gender and youth and the sampling statistically resulting into representative of the target population. The survey included secondary data review and primary data collection using semi-structured interviews (SSIs), key informant interviews (KIIs) with core stakeholders and observations. SSIs were carried out with randomly selected individuals (male and female) from all stakeholders spread across the 6 Blocks that make Lokwilili residential area using a semi-structured and open-ended paper questionnaire to guide the interview but allowing for new questions to arise as a result of the discussion and targeted learners, parents and local leaders. KIIs approach is similar to the SSIs above but target different audience. KIIs captured the views and professional opinions of people with abundant knowledge about education and included teachers, PTAs and local administrators. Careful and systematic direct observations through transect walks were conducted in the location to ascertain children's utilization of time, and especially participation in learning activities. Findings from the survey were disseminated to stakeholders in a consultative meeting.

Limitations

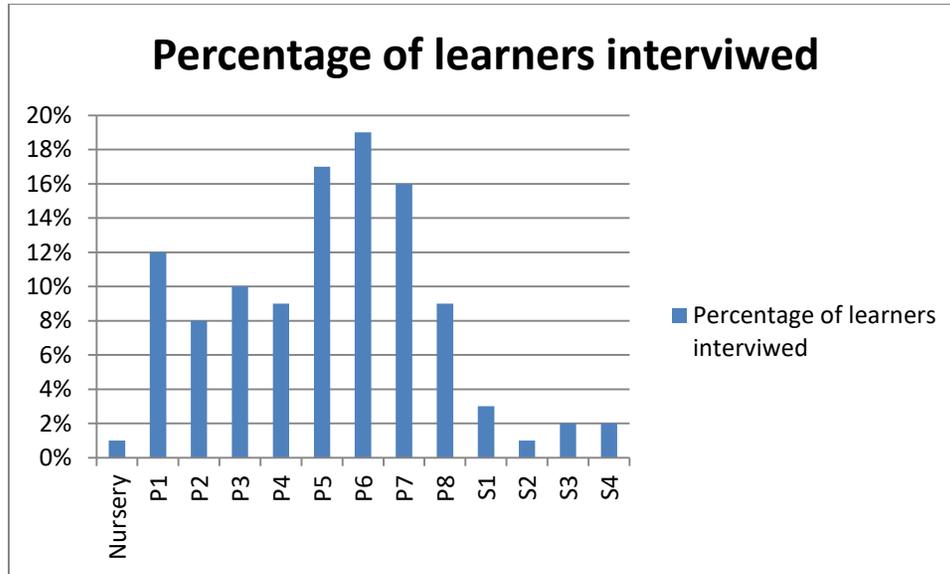
First, small sample size methodologically limits broader applicability of the findings and conclusions: The proposed sample sizes were further be limited by availability of participants males ostensibly occasioned by economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Limited participation of males at a meagre 36% majority being parents limits inclusivity and rendering findings gender biased. Although unverified, gathered information generally indicates participants' perceived fatigue towards interviews and especially without any incentive to compensate for their time. Second, the short period of time spent collecting data limited the team's ability to comprehensively validate the data. However, utilization of secondary data to triangulate and contextualize findings mitigates the necessarily incomplete nature of the primary data collected.

Sampling and Coverage

Purposeful sampling was applied in KIIs and random sampling applied in SSIs. Blocks (sub-divisions of Lokwilili residential area) were used as sampling units with each allocated an equal number of respondents. A total sample size of 185 (119 female) were respondents. 120 (69 female) learners among them 9 were non-residents and had come to stay with relatives participated in the survey. 65 (50 female) stakeholders that included teachers, parents, PTAs/SMCs and local administrators also were also interviewed. Majority of the respondents, 92% were primary school learners, 7% secondary school and 1% nursery school as shown in the table below;

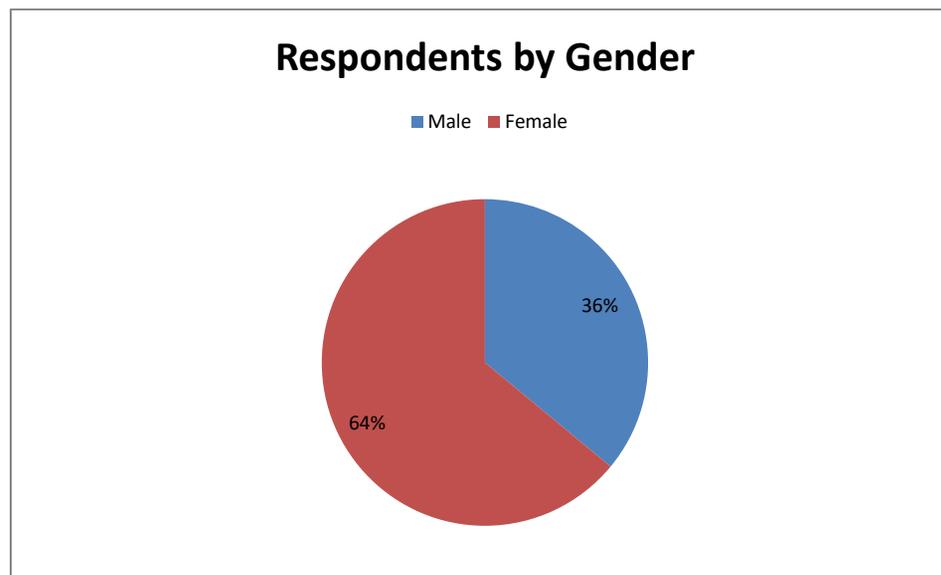
Actual distribution of Respondents (Learners) per grade

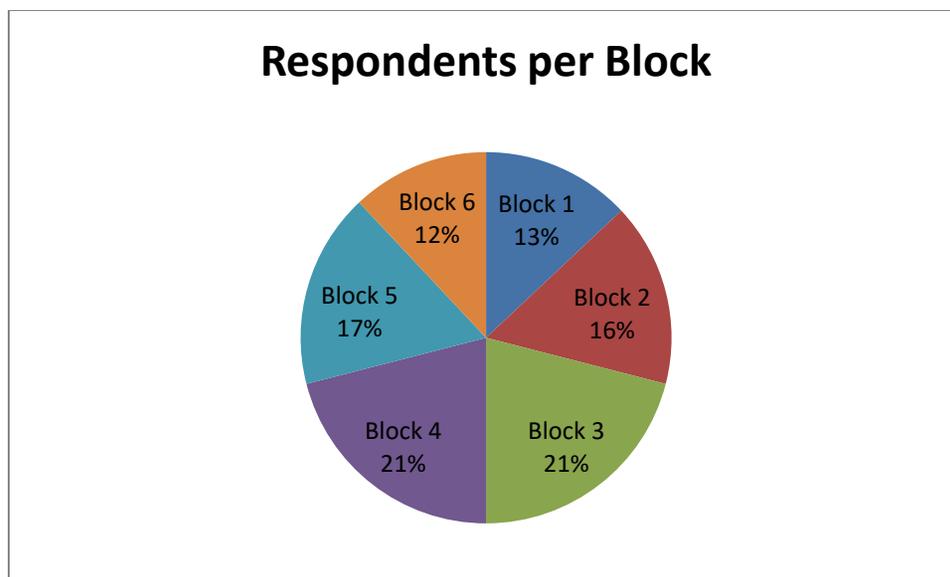
School Category	Nursery	Primary								Secondary			
School grade/level		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	S1	S2	S3	S4
# interviewed	2	14	9	12	11	20	19	16	9	3	1	2	2
Percentage of respondents	1%	12%	8%	10%	9%	17%	16%	13%	8%	3%	1%	1%	1%
	1%	92%								7%			



Actual distribution of respondents per Block

	Respondents	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4		Block 5		Block 6 (Tilimat)		TOTAL
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
1	Children (Learners)	3	8	12	9	15	12	13	12	17	6	9	4	120
2	Local administrators	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
3	Teachers	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3
4	Parents	11	1	8	1	7	2	7	1	8	1	8	2	57
5	PTAs/SMCs	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	4
	TOTAL Respondents	14	10	20	10	23	15	20	18	25	7	17	6	185
	Percentage of Respondents	8%	5%	10%	5%	12%	11%	10%	9%	14%	4%	9%	3%	100%
		13%		16%		21%		21%		17%		12%		100%





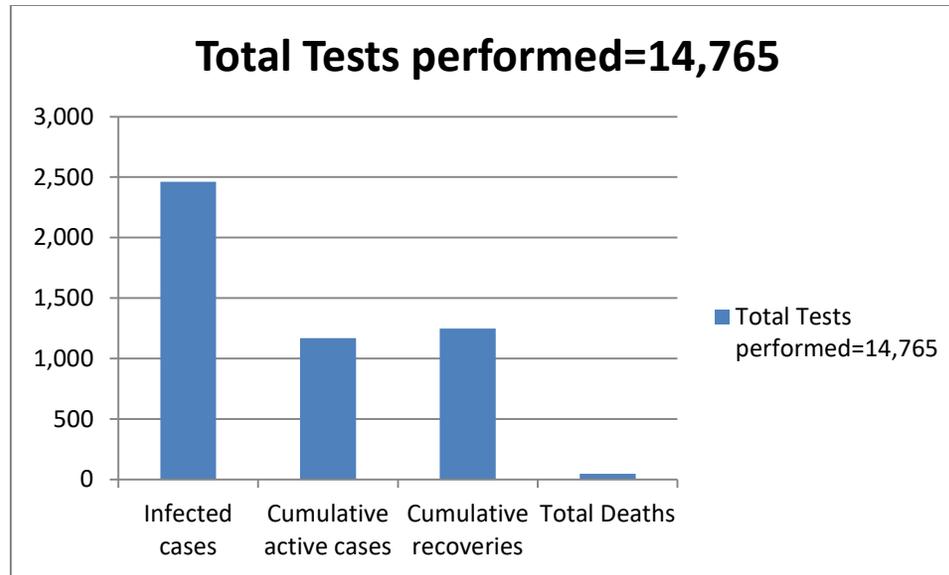
COVID-19 South Sudan outlook

At the time of filing this report, 8th August 2020, COVID-19 caseload⁴ was as in the table below

Total Tests performed	Infected/positive cases	Cumulative active cases	Cumulative recoveries	Total Deaths
14,765	2,463	1,016	1,247	47
	Infection rate=17%		Recovery Rate=51%	

Although, data is not disaggregated by county and gender, majority of the cases (estimated at over 80%) are in Juba city.

⁴ <http://moh.gov.ss/index.php>



At the outset in March 2020, people in South Sudan were generally serious in observing and practicing the anti-spread measures. However, following the easing of some the measures in May, there is generally blatant disregard for COVID-19 prevention measures. Despite monumental and sustained efforts by various stakeholders on very basic COVID-19 prevention measures such as properly wearing facemask, hand-washing using soap, physical and social distancing etc. four months on and counting, these prevention measures are now hardly observed and practiced; the initial fear has eroded over time and perceptions changed. People seem relaxed and fatigued with anything COVID-19. Vigilance and momentum is lost and is all back to the old normal. Unless this trend is quickly reversed, it will continue contributing to prolonged schools closure further disadvantaging children.

Findings and Analysis

Low participation of males

Asked why their husbands were not available during the survey, most women said with relaxed movement restrictions, majority of the men had gone out to other locations of Juba for menial jobs to earn money to meet the 'extra' burden of household needs given that all the children are at home now. This means mothers are the ones spending more time with the children further increasing their daily workload.

Level of information on schools closure and re-opening

Both learners and parents were adequately informed why schools closed but decry the lack of updates from the government as when the schools will re-open. 92% children and 82% parents want schools re-opened immediately. While parents consider schools re-opening will save children from further ruin of idling that has made some of them acquire criminal habits like smoking, stealing etc. children complain of being consumed in domestic chores, missing their friends and teachers. Some of the respondents, especially mothers decried that mature girls are likely to be married off or get pregnant. Parents generally complained of the extra burden of having children 'permanently' at home has increased household needs including food. To keep stakeholders and especially learners timely and regularly updated on plans and preparations for schools re-opening assures hope. More importantly, information from neighboring countries should also be shared as a demonstration of how COVID-19 forced schools to close not just in South Sudan but other countries. Some learners are studying in the neighboring countries and such information would be important and solacing.

Typical day for the learners

Of the 120 children interviewed, 111 (93%) were staying with their parents and on a typical day, averagely 64% of them spent most of their time helping in domestic chores than engaged in learning activities (8%). However, girls were more engaged (74%) in the domestic chores than boys (42%). Boys were more engaged in playing (35%) than girls (13%). Some 24% of children were engaged in small businesses majority (69%) being girls. This information is a clear indicator of how children are gradually being 'driven away' from their education journey. Even for the candidates, a similar pattern of daily engagement confirms that children are losing the learning habits.

Access to learning opportunities and uptake

That most children (65%) mainly in lower classes (Nursery to P3) and parents (62%) are not aware of available home-based learning opportunities is a worrying trend. Lack of awareness and necessary tools (radio, phone etc.) are some of the reasons given. The most common learning opportunity reported was radio lessons. However, generally there is low accessibility (43%) to the radio lessons due to lack of radios. Those children who have access to radio are further challenged with sharing with between 2-5 other children who normally are of different grades. Level of participation in the radio lessons varies but skewed to 'just listening' (38%) compared to listening and asking questions (26%). Overall, 75% of the children think radio lessons are helpful compared to 42% of parents.

Support to learning

Parent's support to children's learning is a bare minimal and varied. This is attributed to increased immediate household needs like food that demand parents doing menial jobs for a wage and literacy levels of most parents. 26% of parents allow children to use their radios, 21% provide relevant supplies, 19% spare time to listen to the lessons together with their children and thereafter revise what was taught, only 5% parents exempt children from chores to attend lessons while less than 5% just inform them of the time of the lessons. 95% Learners who were to sit for their national examinations this year (P8 and S4) requested for urgent support more support than their counterparts in non-candidate classes. Of special mention is that no teacher has supported the children in learning activities while at home. The respondents also decried the total lack of support from humanitarian actors.

Neighborhood groups/networks

As a mitigation measure to physical classroom learning, 73% children and 75% parents proposed small organized neighborhood classes. Through this organized groups, parents think children will be better engaged and inter-connected than the radio lessons. Although, teachers are few (some have moved to other locations) and not paid, parents suggest the few available could be engaged and could contribute to their upkeep. Need to establish such groups are encouraging but again challenges related to prevention of COVID-19 abound. A critical analysis to inform a sound decision is necessary including considerations of the level of awareness and practicability of observing and practicing social distancing in such groups.

Daily challenges and risks

The fear of repeating classes was expressed by all the learners particularly the candidates. Dropping out school was more empathized by adolescent girls and mothers. Generally, girls and boys are affected differently with schools closure but girls are more affected due to unequal distribution of domestic work. Boys, especially the adolescent are less engaged in domestic work compared to adolescent girls. Most of the challenges reported by parents and the boys revolve around idleness in the neighborhoods and with time graduating into criminal gangs. On the other hand, adolescent girls are often confined in homes doing 'extra' domestic work and this is likely to encourage parents to marry them off fearing out of wedlock pregnancies, a taboo in most South Sudanese communities.

Tools to facilitate home-based learning

To scale up and further enhance access to home-based learning for meaningful participation, apart from availability of radios, other supplies like ordinary and smartphones, solar light were indicated. Ordinary phones are useful to enable learners ask questions during live broadcast of the radio lessons. While e-learning will require data bundles for internet connectivity, smartphones are not a priority and are not child friendly as this could further expose children to risks of online bullying and pornography materials. However, smartphones could be useful with community-based information teams in searching for and receiving information related to schools closure/re-opening, home-based learning and COVID-19.

Conclusion

In a lowly resourced country that South Sudan is, there is a high likelihood that the country will struggle to contain COVID-19 and consequently schools re-opening. With nearly all children interviewed wanting schools re-opened immediately is a strong message that they are real missing school life. However, children are 'wasting away' in their homes and many may not return. Children are learning less or nothing and are losing the habit of learning. Any attempt to help them remain relevantly focused on their learning journey is critical and urgent. They need to be kept positively busy so as not to slide into social and community misfits. In such unprecedented crisis and in a 'world of uncertainty,' children need empathy, solidarity and assurance of hope as they navigate through the challenges posed by COVID-19. Home-based learning uptake is generally low and faced with a lot of challenges. It is a new approach that requires sustained support before children, parents, teachers and other stakeholders can embrace it. Radio broadcast lessons are the most known and accessed. A deliberate attempt to build up on radio lessons and gradually role out other models is feasible viable. Even at home, physical classroom 'environment and interaction' shouldn't be avoided altogether but integrated into radio lessons through small manageable neighborhood groups. Since COVID-19 occasioned schools closure, it is now a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed in all humanitarian interventions.

Recommendations

1. The response plan to strengthen home-based learning is aimed at keeping children productively engaged and to remain in a steady 'learning mode' to reduce 'wastage' of learners and must be grounded on availability of community-based instructors to coordinate and monitor learning activities. In the unfortunate scenario of the lack of instructors, through small organized neighborhood groups, peer to peer facilitation, where learners in upper grades facilitate lower grade learners and even vice versa should be a workable solution.
2. Prioritize urgent support for the candidates (P8 and S4); often these are adolescents with special needs and vulnerable especially the girls. These categories of children are now suffering from extreme anxiety as they stare at missed national examinations. Due to constrained and shrunk household incomes, prioritize distribution free sanitary pads to adolescent girls. Systematic revision of examinable subjects using outsourced materials is encouraged.
3. Since schools do much more than teach children how to read, write and count but also provide nutrition, hygiene services, mental health and psycho-social support. A part from school curriculum subjects, inclusion of the 'out of need' subjects/lessons like moral values, counseling should considered mitigating the negative social impact of schools closure.
4. Bearing in mind that there may be a lot of dropouts, inclusion of children who were previously not going to school but are interested in the home-based learning activities is highly encouraged given that more children are out of school. Home-based learning activities should further serve as catalysts to attract more children, who by time of re-opening schools may make up their minds to go to school. Discrimination will only widen the already existing high illiteracy rates.
5. Radio lessons are more common and accessible than other learning opportunities. To further enhance learning using radio, consider prioritizing distribution of mechanically powered radios to households of learners without radios. An urgent solution could be amplifying sound through loudspeakers to reach a big number of learners in neighborhoods.
6. In an emergency like this one, community information systems provide timely in local languages. Community-based information systems are the evitable local mass media usually concentrating on local issues and content tailored to the needs of the local community hence serving communities better than the conventional mass media. Interventions incorporating these information systems to enhance local information sharing is advantageous.
7. COVID-19 prevention campaigns must be sustained probably with new strategies since previous ones have not yielded much success. Behavior change and communication strategies suffice. Consideration could include ramping up and winning community support and participation with in-kind or cash rewards. The use of COVID-19 survivors and role models etc. in the awareness campaigns could also be tried out. This 'out-of-school' is a watershed moment and presents a good opportunity to utilize and adequately prepare the helpless learners for the 'new school environment' that will come with re-opening of schools. Enough COVID-19 prevention supplies and materials should be distributed with a more improved monitoring plan of their utilization. However, deliberate attempt could be made to empower the local community to produce COVID-19 prevention materials like facemasks and soap instead of relying on free distributions.

8. Considerations should be made to increase reach and access to timely and reliable information on schools closures and plans for their re-opening and COVID-19 including expanded messaging to capture, disseminate and share caseloads of neighboring countries to promote a sense of 'oh, so we are not alone in this'. This approach will enhance lessons learnt from what other countries are doing to enhance prevention practices and control spread of the disease.
9. Prioritize sustained building of community capacities to cope with school closures and COVID-19 including creating support linkages through referral pathways and mapping of nearby social services providers.