

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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Venue: Virtual - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

FORUM ON CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND SAFE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

The Human Resources, Science and Technology Department (HRST) of the African Union, in collaboration with CDC Africa and UNICEF, held a workshop for AU member states on lifelong learning and the safe reopening of schools. This event responds to the recommendation by Ministers to the Commission to facilitate inter-country learning and the scaling up of good practices among Member States in the education sector.

The workshop had in attendance, participants from, the African Union Commission (AUC – HRST), UNICEF, CDC Africa, and AU Member States.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- ❖ To take stock of recent evidence and practices on continuous learning and safe school reopening in Africa and elsewhere,
- ❖ To provide a platform for education experts in Ministries of Education of AU Member States to share lessons on continuous learning and safe reopening of schools,
- ❖ To agree on frameworks, principles and processes for continuous learning and safe reopening of schools in Africa in different contexts.

H.E. Professor Sarah Anyang Agbor, Commissioner for HRST, stressed the need for unity, integration and linkages between safety, peace, and education in Africa, in a bid to achieve the 2020 Theme of the African Union – Silencing The Guns. H.E the Commissioner further mentioned key considerations to be made with regards to the African CDC's recommendations and some of these include; the need for planning to reopen schools without jeopardising lives, the need for the development of flexible school policies, the need for AU Member States to invest more in digital devices to ensure safety and continuous learning.

Ms. Prudence Ngwenya, the Ag. Head of Education Division presented on the issues and concerns for reopening based on literature review and findings of a survey carried out by the AU which revealed that;

- The prolonged closure of learning institutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented risk to the education system on the continent and has affected over 400 million learners on the continent.
- Schools do not only provide a space for learners to acquire knowledge and skills, they also provide them with nutrition, health and hygiene services; mental health and psychosocial support; and dramatically reduce the risk of violence, early pregnancy and more.
- As a way to assess the impact of COVID-19 on education in Africa and determine the counter-actions undertaken by Member States to reduce the effects of the pandemic, the African Union through the Education Division administered a questionnaire to all Member States on the continent to that inquiry.

In her closing remarks H.E Prof. Sarah, Anyang Agbor stated that issues such as continuous learning and safe schools are crucial to human development in Africa. Therefore education must continue as the future of the African child cannot be compromised.

The AU's Education Response to Covid-19 is informed by the DOTSS framework which highlights the importance of Digital Connectivity of schools, Online learning, Teachers as facilitators and motivators for learning, Safety in schools and online and Skills focused learning.

For further information please contact:

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