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FutureLife-Now!

FutureLife-Now! Task Team
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Lesotho: Improvement of retention of learners at school post COVID-19 disruptions



Context & Background

- The emergence of COVID 19 in 2020 has affected the continuation of a typical school year tremendously.
- Shifts introduced: Grades came on alternating days from Monday to Saturday.
- The institution of a series of lockdowns since March 2020 has had an impact on the expected 180 school attendance days per annum
- This reduction implies fewer teaching hours and ultimately reduced content delivery in terms of quality and content amount.
- It also has a likely impact of kids not returning to school once schools reopen as a result of pre existing socio-economic factors (marriages and participation in economic activities)
- The effects of these will be far reaching into the future in terms of readiness of learners to engage in labour preparedness activities (Colleges, Universities, apprenticeships, Technical and vocational as well as professional training)
- The MoET therefore has the responsibility in liaison with partners to ensure continued retention of learners in the Education system.
- The return to normalcy will require efforts to sensitize the Nation on the legal and practical implications of learners dropping out of the school system.
- Creation of systems to ensure continued participation of learners through the school system in the current to post COVID era is therefore critical

Successes

- Developed a three pathways model for secondary education to open access
- Education Language Policy which main target is to accommodate all learners so that even those that Sesotho is not their mother tongue, they are taught in their mother tongue eg IsiXhosa, IsiNdebele at the early grades.
- Non Formal Education Policy which asserts that learners out of school should also be taught by qualified teachers and learners at the basic level and continuing education be accommodated under the formal management budget.
- Lesotho Education Inclusive Policy which directs schools to allow learners with special needs to attend school with their peers without discrimination.
- School Health and Nutrition Policy to create healthy educated individuals that can contribute to their nation's development
- The MOET also became a signatory in the Universal Declaration on Balanced and Inclusive Education that was signed in Djibouti in 2020 by Ministers of Education from the global South

- Trainings for teachers on Infection, Prevention and Control is on going.
- Establishment of Accelerated Teaching and Learning strategies (ATL) with the support of

the World Vision.
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- Development of worksheet and scripted lessons as well as Learner packs



Successes

- **The use of TV Lesotho and Radio Lesotho during lockdowns even though it did not reach all learners played a big role in retaining learners**
- **Training on psychosocial support to teachers and learners to prepare them for continuity of learning during the disasters and deaths brought about by the pandemic on-going**
- **With the support of the World Bank piloted School Improvement Plans in 403 identified schools.**
- **Phased out the Junior Certificate to open access and discourage uninterrupted 10 years of basic education so that learners can complete their basic education.**
- **Development of Learning Passport platform**
- **Back to school Radio and TV campaigns (Inspectorate) – To begin next week from the 19th to 23rd July 2021. the adverts shall be followed by the meetings convened by the Hon, Minister of Education and Training for: Proprietors, Teachers Formations. Principals Association, Civil society and the march around villages by learners accompanied by the trumpets to call all learners back to school. [See the next slide just to give you a flavor of our campaigns](#)**

Back-to-school (*Retention*) Video



Successes

- **Education Plus initiative** is a high profile, high level political advocacy drive to accelerate actions and investments to prevent HIV. It is centered on the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women and the achievement of gender equality in sub-Saharan Africa-with secondary education as the strategic entry point. Lesotho has been appointed as a pioneer in the region.

The key components of the Education Plus 'approach' include:

- ❖ Completion of quality secondary education
- ❖ Universal access to CSE
- ❖ Fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights
- ❖ Freedom from gender-based and sexual violence
- ❖ School-to work transitions, Economic Security and Empowerment
- **Japanese International Cooperation Agency** -is rehabilitating the four secondary schools to address the challenges facing learners with special needs with the support of user- friendly facilities and equipment.
- **UNICEF** is also constructing gender and disability friendly model toilets in 10 primary schools and 10 secondary schools for learners with special needs to compliment WASH and make schools child friendly for all learners.
- Development of Learners Pregnancy Management Policy is ongoing to direct schools management on the importance of keeping learners in schools.

Overcoming Challenges

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Welfare, the MOET will support vulnerable learners with school-fees and other related funds through the support of the GPE while the government prepares to gradually phase out school fees at secondary level
- The MOET has a Plan to hold the National Dialogue; the last held was in 2006.
- Revamping the Lesotho Distance Teaching Center broadcasting section to become the MOET Radio station is underway
- Provide learners with scientifically accurate, culturally and age-appropriate knowledge, value/attitude and skills relating to children's healthy development and study skills as well.
- Encourage community engagement in support of LBSE/CBE delivery. (this helps parents to understand appropriate approach to communicate with children, support children in SRHR services uptake)
- Strengthen the introduction of peer clubs in every school and;
- The Ministry of Finance is also supporting the Ministry of Education and Training with the Global Fund to lessen the rate of Early Unintended Pregnancies in schools



Lessons Learnt

- Learners need information on how to deal with Gender Based Violence (GBV) incidences.
- Learners need to be equipped with Study Skills, Life Skills and Resilience Skills.
- Learners need more of the Psychosocial Support and Counselling services.
- Blended learning can play a huge role in retaining learners in the education system
- Open access by strengthening both Formal and Non Formal Education.
- Provision of inclusive/appropriate teaching and learning materials eg braille
- Increase number of teachers / assistant teachers
- Provision of subsidy for school fees as some parents have lost jobs and others have lost their lives because of COVID-19
- Increase of budget or quota to cover for bursaries for vulnerable learners in secondary education
- Training of education officials, special education officers and teachers to acclimatize with the new normal in order to support teachers
- Conduct a study in special schools to assess the impact of COVID-19 on enrolment of LSEN
- Need for a strong political will in all our endeavors.



Thank You!

How to find out more

For more information about the FutureLife-Now! Programme or to contact one of our In-Country Coordinators, email bashni@miet.co.za

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