



GLOBAL EDUCATION COALITION

June 2021



RiccardoMayer/Shutterstock.com

Dear Friends,

Last month, we celebrated Africa Day, and this year's theme, "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want", is at heart the All-Africa Students Union's (AASU) mission.



COVID-19 posed a significant threat to Africa's strong cultural identity, testing our resolve to remain united in the face of unprecedented and simultaneous national crises. The impact of the pandemic in each country varied in severity, but none have emerged unscathed; some economies declined while others stalled; democracies were tested with diverse results; healthcare systems became strained or neared collapse, and in some countries, schools closed without any comprehensive plans to reopen.

Throughout the pandemic, Africa's determination has been demonstrated by its youth, who initiated countless projects to help minimise the effects of the pandemic: from food banks in Ghana to 50% fees reduction campaign in Cape Verde.

But, now is the time to look beyond the chaos and accelerate our joint efforts to build back better. As African young people, we are ready to lead the way, but our futures depend on your solidarity and partnership.

Quality education remains the greatest tool at our disposal to build resilient societies that not only guarantee the freedom and safety of all African citizens but strengthen our art, culture and heritage. Yet, according to UNESCO, more than 11 million girls are expected to remain out of school post-COVID-19. We refuse to accept this injustice and are partnering with UNESCO, as a member of the Global Education Coalition and the 100 Million campaign on the Girls-Back-To-School Initiative, supporting young people across the Continent to take action at the local and national levels to ensure girls are not left behind as schools reopen.

In solidarity and friendship,
Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Secretary-General of the All-Africa Students Union (AASU)

Celebrating Africa Day



Global Education Coalition in Action - Africa

Coalition activities in Africa

39 Countries

Number of projects in Africa

66 Projects

Number of additional projects in discussion in Africa

38 projects

Global Education Coalition Africa Day brochure:

Recovery, resilience and reimagining education in Africa - The Global Education Coalition in action [[English](#) / [French](#)]

UNESCO Paper on COVID-19 Education Response in Africa: A snapshot of educational challenges and opportunities for recovery in Africa [[English](#)]

UNESCO Summary report from Global Education Coalition (GEC) Forum: 'The Digital Learning Turn in Africa: The Role of Local Eco-Systems.' [[English](#)]

Global Education Coalition explores the digital learning turn in Africa

GEC Virtual Forum 'The Digital Learning Turn in Africa: The Role of Local Eco-Systems.'



RichTPhoto/Shutterstock.com

On 25 May 2021, on the occasion of Africa Day, UNESCO brought together ministers from the African continent, education stakeholders and private sector representatives to the online Global Education Coalition (GEC) Forum with over 200 participants.

The increased interest in leveraging technology to strengthen education systems offers the opportunity to reimagine, through diverse cross-sectoral partnerships, a new future of education for the African continent, building on the goals of Africa 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and the Sustainable Development Goal on Education.

The Forum was an occasion to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to help explore opportunities for investment in technology, including open education resources, and to ensure continuous and equitable learning in Africa. Read the [summary report from the virtual Forum](#).

Microsoft's education solutions

Supporting the transition to remote learning in Africa

Through Microsoft's engagement in the Global Education Coalition, they have supported more than 30 countries across the world. Microsoft's engagement brings together their stack of education solutions, including free Office 365 for Education, Teams, Windows devices and education data solutions along with our Global Training Partners to improve teacher skills. In Africa, Microsoft has supported:

- **In Gambia** - plan to provide O365, connectivity, and teacher devices, funded locally by UNICEF. A free deployment of Office365 for education is complete and Microsoft is now working on the rollout to students and teachers based upon connectivity.
- **In Senegal** ramped up O365 for teachers and students. 200 teachers are becoming 'master trainers' together with the UNESCO team to train colleagues across the country in the use of Microsoft Teams for remote learning. 1 million learners are being set up to use Microsoft Teams for remote learning, with the plan that all learners will be on-boarded.
- **In Comoros** - more than 300,000 students at all levels of education now have access to remote learning, through Microsoft 365 integration with a Microsoft partner Learning Management System (LMS), workers within the Ministry of Education, school staff and parents also have access. Teachers, administrators and deans were trained using the 'train the trainers' (TOT) program.

- **In Sudan** - providing 350,000 students access to education, the Microsoft partner delivered the first free learning transformation initiative in Sudan, the Learning Management System (LMS) integrated with Microsoft 365, provided training to 600 teachers and helped establish a new educational format that allowed students to continue learning.

Moving forward, systems can make a complete transition to digital using Microsoft Azure data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions. While institutions can leverage Microsoft's skill-development offering to create personalized learning experiences and certification opportunities for students.

A new phase of Microsoft's engagement in Africa is now taking place through the Coalition's [Global Skills Academy](#) (GSA). Through the GSA, Microsoft is offering professional development for faculty and trainers in the TVET institutions, as well as curriculum content for students on a range of key digital topics from the Microsoft Learn platform. The countries involved are Morocco, Liberia and Tunisia.

On 18-20 June, Microsoft in partnership with UNESCO, and as a contribution to the Coalition's [Gender Flagship](#), will hold a 3-day Virtual AI Hackathon for high school students in Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Guided by mentors and Microsoft tutors, they will learn the processes and methods behind AI development, and build skills that allow them to take ethical control of its development and use. The event will culminate in a design challenge, where small teams of students will design the outline of a product that applies AI to a sustainability issue and pitch their idea to a group of 'investors'.

Transforming Education in West Africa: (Re)ImaginEcole

Improving the quality of distance education for 6.6 million students and 200,000 teachers

The French-speaking African regional online learning platform [Imaginecole.africa](#) was launched on 21 December 2020 as a key component of a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funded project to improve the quality of distance education in ten countries: Benin, Burkina, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Togo. Imaginecole offers a large-scale learning platform for distance education for 6.6 million students and professional development support for 200,000 teachers with over 600 educational resources.

Imaginecole will be enriched in the coming months with locally produced content by teams working with UNESCO and GEC partners to improve their skills. Resources range from high-quality educational videos and interactive lessons to downloadable printouts. It covers a comprehensive emergency response for learning both in connected and disconnected locations.

Currently all countries have completed the first round of training of trainers sessions at national level and teachers are also being trained at sub-national level.

ImaginEcole is much more than just a platform, it is an initiative that aims at strengthening national and regional distance education ecosystems and re-imagining the way quality education is delivered, making national education systems more resilient to shocks and crisis.

Curriculum Digitization in Ghana

Aligning national curriculum to Wikidata and Wikibase

In 2020, the absence of curriculum documentation in digitally usable formats hindered education systems quick response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on face-to-face learning.

As part of the Global Education Coalition, Wikimedia is seeking to launch a proof of concept and pilot project in Ghana as part of broader efforts to align national curricula to content on Wikimedia projects and other Open Educational Resources (OERs).

The [Wikidata for Education](#) project endeavors to extract and structure curriculum data within [Wikidata](#) to enable the easy aligning of national curricula to OERs while making them more discoverable for learners and educators. It will also enable developers to easily innovate education products and applications in alignment with national curricula.

The Wikimedia Foundation has completed consultations with the Wikidata community, UNESCO, and education stakeholders resulting in an initial data model for the pilot project. The next step is to work with an experienced Wikidata community member to support project partners to add the Ghana national curriculum to Wikidata.

Once data about the national curriculum is added to Wikidata, in-country implementing partners will train 100 teachers on how to use Wikipedia in the classroom, how to use Wikidata to find curriculum-aligned content, and how to coordinate with the larger Wikimedia community to identify and close curriculum-aligned knowledge gaps on Wikimedia projects.

Providing live education and health support for all teachers in South Africa

A real-time chat-based learning and mentorship platform for education, available 24/7

The onset of COVID-19 exposed, more than ever, the gaps in access to information and communication technology in South Africa. In September 2020, the Minister of Basic Education (the Honourable Mrs Angie Motshekga) launched [TeacherConnect](#) to bridge this digital divide with WhatsApp-based digital support for Educators, Parents and Learners.

TeacherConnect offers an ever-growing wealth of resources, including professional development, learning materials and training and teaching resources such as workbooks, planners, notes, annual teaching plans, reading materials and curriculum recovery. TeacherConnect provides personalised chat support, both human and menu-driven (and soon AI-supported) and gathers real-time feedback for government decision-makers.

While the initial focus has been on expanding the reach and usage of the TeacherConnect WhatsApp channel with a 150,000 user base, the programme has also grown to better cater for Educators where they are. TeacherConnect has become a powerful gateway to online platforms free to access (zero data charges) from all South Africa's mobile operators.

TeacherConnect also offers HealthCheck – a COVID-19 digital risk assessment and mapping tool that enables the Department of Health to track and monitor potential COVID-19 cases, with a 'receipt' being issued to the user giving a Low, Medium or High risk response.

Notably, the platform has been used as part of President Cyril Ramaphosa's Presidential Youth Employment Initiative to reach and employ 320,000 youths. TeacherConnect provided registration information, access to FAQs and a live helpdesk for user queries and escalations.

Curious Learning's open-source learning content

Localizing the app across Africa and scaling up for even greater impact

Curious Learning is a non-profit that curates, localizes, optimizes and distributes open-source learning content that provides a path to literacy in 50+ languages, with a strong focus on African languages. Harnessing the natural curiosity of a child, together with the neuroscience of how the brain learns to read, a child can learn to read using low-cost technology, regardless of proximity to schools or even access to literate adults. Curious Learning works with multiple partners, including multilateral institutions and governments, to bring localized apps directly to children.

With a proven track record of high impact content and close to 2 million downloads, the opportunity for scalability is now Curious Learning's focus.

As part of the Global Education Coalition, Curious Learning, with support from UNESCO has informed 22 African countries' MoEs of the available apps which each country can use to tailor their own implementation strategy. Apps have been localised into 24 Africa specific languages such as Amharic, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Luganda, Shona, Igbo, Somali, Hausa, Oromo, Wolof, Yoruba and 11 official South African languages. These localized translations are in addition to world languages spoken in Africa such as English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. Currently there are downloads across 38 African countries.

Experiments using SMS communication and social media to inform parents of the available content have proven to be highly cost effective (between USD 0.2 to USD 1) to achieve a download, and supplement learning in even some of the most impoverished neighborhoods and communities.

Community Systems Foundation's open source education management information system

Quality tools for the management and monitoring of national COVID-19 emergency and recovery plans

To support the early and safe return to in-person and hybrid education during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, under the auspices of the Global Education Coalition and in partnership with UNESCO, Community Systems Foundation has recently released a vaccination application, [OpenEMIS Vaccinations and Health module](#). This module is designed to collect data on tests and vaccinations, supporting vaccination campaigns and safe school reopenings. The OpenEMIS Vaccinations and Health module can be implemented as a stand alone solution or introduced to strengthen systems in countries already using OpenEMIS.

Community Systems Foundation's contribution follows over six years' engagement with national education authorities in the deployment of [OpenEMIS](#), an open source Education Management Information System. Responding to the diversity of contexts and challenges across the region, OpenEMIS has been implemented in a variety of ways to improve education delivery to students, for staff, and policymakers within Ministries of Education.

In Lesotho, OpenEMIS has been deployed to collect annual school census data, now more efficiently than ever. Through mobile technology, school census can reach remote areas with limited or no connectivity. In Namibia, the OpenEMIS team is providing technical assistance towards the development and deployment of Examinations data system, capturing critical marks nationwide. In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education is planning to take a hands-on approach to enhancing the OpenEMIS software, contributing to the global initiative and benefiting from it, aiming to strengthen the resilience of education and learning systems.

Smart Classrooms

CreateView's industry-education integration and higher education in Africa

CreateView is a member of the Global Education Coalition in order to contribute to the efforts of the international community to help ensure continuity of learning and foster innovative solutions for education. In this context, CreateView has come into agreement to provide Smart Classroom for universities in four African countries: Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria and Senegal.

This initiative builds on CreateView's pursuit to support smart education for more than 10 years and past collaboration with UNESCO and other partners. CreateView introduced China's experience of cooperation in production, teaching and research, and promoted the ecological construction of educational informatization industry. In 2018, CreateView forged partnership with UNESCO-ICHEI to build demonstration smart classrooms in six countries in Africa, including Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and Gambia.

In 2019, CreateView entered into cooperation agreement with Mombasa County, Kenya, to participate in the construction of East Africa's largest port of smart education equipment industrial park, collaborated with the University of Nairobi (Kenya) and Makerere University (Uganda) to jointly formulate and implement national education informatization standards of Nairobi and Uganda. In 2020, CreateView reached an agreement with the Global Education Foundation, and obtained the approval of the Supreme Council of Universities to establish a modern Chinese-Egyptian university with smart education solution.

CreateView is committed to cooperating with other members of GEC to contribute to reimagining education and learning in the future, especially in support of industry-education integration and higher education in Africa.

A call for research/ contributions



Thanakorn.P/Shutterstock.com

Call for research: *Digital Inclusion as key to rights-based education recovery*

In support of new research UNESCO is conducting on digital inclusion, we are calling on GEC members help provide data, insights, examples and/or research in answer of the following:

- **Digital Divide/Wellbeing:** How do digital technologies foster inclusion or exacerbate inequalities, both academic and social, among young people?

- **Data Privacy and protection:** How do we safeguard a child's right to privacy in rapidly expanding online learning environments (increasing classroom recording, automation, proprietary platform use, and online assessment practice), and ensure that the use of technologies is ethical and appropriate for educational purposes and does not expose children to violence or misuse of their personal data?
- **Vulnerable Groups/Disability:** How does digital technology have the potential to bridge the divide, in particular between the disabled and non-disabled? How have educational services for students with special needs been adapted to the digital environment?
- **Digital Skills and Citizenship:** How can digital technologies be leveraged to expand access to high-quality educational opportunities that support learners and children's critical, civic, creative and cultural engagement?

If you would like further clarification on this call to research, please contact righttoeducation@unesco.org.

Call for contributions: *Learning solutions to catch up for lost learning*

UNESCO is calling for contributions and support from partners to provide learning solutions that help children, students and youth, who are most affected by COVID-19 to catch up for lost learning. We are facilitating the matching process between volunteer educators, providers of learning solutions and learners within and across countries.

If you have resources, connection, networks or ideas that can be matched with the following needs for the deployment of technology and level appropriate catch-up learning programmes at scale and with speed, we would be delighted to hear from you:

- Donation of hardware (tablets, computers, etc.)
- Financing
- Connection to the most disadvantaged and/or vulnerable children and students
- Networks of teaching volunteers (e.g. tutors, educators, caregivers, etc.)
- Delivery of learning programmes at the local level (online, offline, hybrid)

For expression of interest or enquiries, please send them to globallearninghouse@unesco.org, preferably before 20 June 2021.

Call for contributions: *A conversation to broaden the scope of the right to education*

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention against Discrimination in Education on 10 December 2020, [UNESCO launched a conversation](#) examining the changing dimensions of the right to education, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to build back better in the educational recovery.

This Conversation aims to encourage a reflection on broadening the scope of the right to education and is open to all. It poses three key questions:

1. What are the new dimensions that the right to education should embrace?
2. What are the conditions needed for realizing the new dimensions such as connectivity, lifelong learning entitlements and others?
3. How responsibilities can be shared between the state and other stakeholders?

You are invited to share your ideas on the issues at stake, emerging trends and elements to be considered in relation to these three questions. Join the conversation [here](#).

Call for contributions: *Share your photos of the impact of school closures on girls and boys*

The Gender Flagship is calling on Global Education Coalition members and supporters to submit photographs illustrating the impact of the COVID-19 school closures on girls and boys worldwide. Selected photographs will be included in the global study on the gender dimensions of the school closures to be published in September 2021.

Photos may depict children and adolescents engaging in various types of distance learning, or coping with the effects of the school closures on their daily lives. They could also show the actions undertaken by students, teachers, parents or others to support continuity of learning, and safeguard health, nutrition, and protection from violence during the COVID-19 school closures.

Photographs must be submitted by 30 June 2021 to gender.ed@unesco.org as .jpg files, with an image resolution of 300dpi or more (original or highest resolution), together with the grant of rights form and information for the copyright (agency, photographer).



Call for contributions: *Expand the reach of your educational resources. Upload them into UNESCO distance-learning platforms!*

We would be happy to promote your Open Educational Resources into UNESCO-driven distance learning platforms under development for Africa and Asia-Pacific (Francophone and Anglophone).

The two main target users of the platforms are students from primary and secondary levels; and teachers wanting to learn how to improve their remote education skills - fully digital, hybrid learning, no/low tech, and all related subjects that are useful in the new context of education. Learn more [here](#).

Events

10th Africa Students and Youth Summit: Act, Inspire and Scale-Up – Giving a Fair Share to End Child Labour – 22-23 July 2021

Africa is also currently home to the largest number of child labourers in the world, over 70 million, and these numbers are expected to rise in the wake of the pandemic. Every child should be learning in school, not working to survive, and only through our combined efforts will this be realised.

The All Africa Students Union is inviting all GEC members to join them for the 10th Africa Students and Youth Summit that will be building continental and intergenerational partnerships under the theme, “Act, Inspire and Scale-Up – Giving a Fair Share to End Child Labour”. Please register for the summit at asys2021.aasuonline.org

Welcome to a new member

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following member that recently joined the Global Education Coalition. A full listing of all Coalition members is also [available online](#).



Contact

For more information - or should you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please reach out via email to [the Global Education Coalition team](#). For additional news, you may also refer to the [Global Education Coalition website](#).