



JOINING FORCES ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN IN KENYA

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED ON 22ND MAY 2020

TO THE NATIONAL COVID-19 EDUCATION RESPONSE COMMITTEE

Who we are

The Joining Forces Alliance for children in Kenya (JFA-Kenya) is a coalition of six child focused Non-Governmental organizations whose members are Child Fund Kenya, Plan International Kenya, Save the Children Kenya, SOS Children's Villages Kenya, Terre des Hommes and World Vision Kenya. The Six agencies are working together, in the best interest of the child, while strengthening collaboration with Government of Kenya Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and other partners in ensuring that children rights are secured and that the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are upheld.

JFA-Kenya presents this Memorandum in the best interest of children.

Likely Scenario

Whereas the Country remains hopeful that the spread of COVID-19 may be controlled in the long run, it is important to take into consideration a potential Scenario where the **“Schools are reopened and shortly thereafter, a major COVID-19 Outbreak is confirmed in schools in Kenya”**.

The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census Report estimates that 3.4 million people are in Secondary schools, 10 million in Primary schools and 3.3 million in Pre-primary schools. A Situation where schools are opened, and a major COVID-19 Outbreak is reported in schools (and this large population of children are infected) is a highly likely scenario should the Country fail to put in place adequate effective COVID-19 preventive measures in all public and private Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Schools in Kenya.

All the response strategies and options being explored by the National COVID-19 Education Response Committee should be in the **Best Interest of Children**.



Fundamental Questions

Whereas there is a Terms of Reference that guide the National COVID-19 Education Response Committee, the committee should explore the following fundamental questions.

1. How can the National COVID-19 Education Response Committee effectively engage directly and meaningfully with children (who are the consumers of basic education services), in the process of exploring the best possible response strategies for the basic education sub-sector?
2. What proportion of children (girls and boys) in the Country should directly be involved in the process of exploring possible COVID-19 Education response strategies?
3. What measures should be in place to ensure a sustained enjoyment of the rights of children as provided for under Article 53 of the Constitution of Kenya, as they continue to stay at home?
4. What is the problem with the continued stay of children at home, without going to school, until such a time that the Government of the Republic of Kenya shall have declared an end to COVID-19 Pandemic?
5. What are the bare minimum conditions that should prevail in the Country before a determination is made on the possibility of reopening schools?
6. What are the specific COVID-19 preventive measures that should put in place in every Public and Private Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Schools, before schools reopen?
7. What specific measures should be in place to ensure that all Public and Private Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary schools adhere to COVID-19 Prevention and Response measures upon the opening of schools?
8. With the continued stay of children at home, what proportion of the FY2019/2020 Budget for the Education Sector remains unspent?
9. Aware that the Budget Estimates for the FY2020/2021 should be approved by Parliament any time before 30th June 2020, do the said Budget estimates provide for adequate budget allocations for use in putting in place COVID-19 preventive measures in all Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Schools in Kenya?
10. Does the Legislature (National Assembly and the Senate) have a role on the question of reopening of schools in view of the current effects of COVID-19 in the Country?

Our Recommendations

Aware that the first task of the National COVID-19 Education Response Committee is to advise the Cabinet Secretary on the reopening of Basic Education Institutions;

Aware that that COVID-19 pandemic may not end anytime soon;

We propose that the National COVID-19 Education Response Committee's immediate priority focus should be on

- (1) What should be done before schools are reopened
- (2) What should be done after the Schools reopen

We submit our recommendations on focus area (1), i.e. what should be done, and that must be confirmed to have been done, before schools are reopened

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATIONS
1.	Schools Situation Analysis Report	<p>a) A National Schools Situation Analysis Report should be developed and tabled in the National Assembly for debate and approval before the schools are reopened.</p> <p>b) A Rapid Assessment of all Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Schools should be conducted and used as part of the basis for developing the Schools Situation Analysis Report.</p> <p>c) This can be done in collaboration with Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, which has since been able to conduct a survey to establish the Socio Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Households; whose report was released to the public on 15th May 2020.</p>
2.	Budget Estimates for COVID-19 Response Schools Improvement Programme	<p>a) Take into consideration the population of all school going children in Kenya, the number of Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Schools; and the specific needs of each of the schools (to be able to prevent COVID-19) and use that as the basis for computing the Budget estimates for improving the conditions of schools.</p> <p>b) Present such Budget estimates to the National Treasury for timely resource allocation for improving the conditions of schools.</p> <p>c) Notify the National Assembly of the high likely possibility that a Supplementary budget approval will be required for the COVID-19 Response School Improvement Programme.</p>
3.	Involvement of Children in decision making, Pursuant to Section 4 (o) and 4 (q) of the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013	<p>a) Children in all parts of the Country must be reached and their views on the reopening of schools documented. Children have a constitutionally protected right to participation and to be involved in decision-making. Different forms of media for involving children can be explored such as Radio, TV and Social Media among others. One of the options that can be explored immediately is to run a one week Radio Programme where children can be encouraged to use their Parents phone's to call the Radio stations and submit their views; upon which the radio stations should compile and submit such views to the COVID-19 Education Response Committee.</p>
4.	Involvement of Parents and Guardians in decision making, Pursuant to Section 4 (l) of the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013	<p>a) Parents and Guardians in all parts of the Country must be reached and their views on the reopening of schools documented. All Schools have a database of phone numbers of most of the parents and guardians. Design a digital mechanism for getting the views of parents through phones, analyze and utilize such views in making decision on the question of the conditions that should prevail before a determination is made on the opening of schools.</p>

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5.	Access to clean and Safe Water in Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All public and private pre-primary, primary and secondary schools must have adequate regular, readily and equitably accessible clean and safe piped water; and the supply of such water should take into consideration the population of all children in every school. b) Schools that are closer to existing piped water supply systems should be connected to such water systems. c) Boreholes should be drilled and equipped in schools that are not closer to existing piped water supply systems.
6.	Access to quality sanitation and hygiene services in Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Handwashing facilities, with constant running water supply must be installed at the entrance of all classrooms, staff rooms, offices, dining halls, libraries, laboratories and dormitories in all public and private pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. Consideration should be made on the needs of children with special needs when putting in place the handwashing facilities. b) Adequate soap must be made available at the entrance of all classrooms, staff rooms, offices, dining halls, libraries, laboratories and dormitories and adjacently placed next to the Handwashing facilities. c) The toilet to pupil ratio in all pre-primary, primary and secondary schools must meet the approved standards for both boys and girls.
7.	Social Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The sitting arrangement in all classrooms in all Public and Private Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Schools should be organized in such a manner that the distance between every two children is between 1-2 meters. b) In all public and private primary and secondary boarding schools, the beds in the Dormitories, should be arranged in a manner that allows the 1-2 meters between every two beds; and at no time should a child be in a situation where she/he is forced to share a bed. c) In all other shared spaces in schools (Libraries, laboratories, dining halls and sports facilities) in both private and public primary and secondary schools, measures should be in place to ensure the 1-2 meters distance between learners and other school community personnel.
8.	Psychosocial Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A National Children's Psychosocial Support programme should be designed, rolled out with immediate effect and all children in all households, in all villages and estates in Kenya, reached with psychosocial support services while at home; before schools reopen, and a status report published on the extent to which all children shall have benefited from such Psychosocial Support services.
9.	Teacher Capacity Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Design and roll out a training programme for all teachers on Emergency Response, with a specific focus on Prevention, Detection and Response to COVID-19, and ensure that all teachers are duly trained through a cost effective virtual platform, and a status report published on the extent to which all teachers shall have benefited from such a training.

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10	Should all children, in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools report back to school in the same period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Schools Situation Analysis report (under recommendation 1) should answer the question as to whether all schools can accommodate all children, all at the same time, or there will be need to have children to learn in shifts. b) In case the Situation Analysis report reveals that not all children can get back to schools, during the same period, in the current condition of schools, then learning in shifts (staggered schedule) during the same school day for different age groups of children should be considered, to avoid crowding in schools and classrooms. c) The decisions as to whether all children should report to school during the same period should further be guided by the Provisions of Section 4 (e) of the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013, which provides for the protection of every child against discrimination within or by an education department or education or institution on any ground whatsoever.
11	Guidelines for implementation of Schools Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) In view of the fact that COVID-19 may not end anytime soon, a specific working group of experts should be put in place to develop specific emergency response guidelines to be observed when implementing school programmes. b) The process of developing such guidelines should be participatory with inclusion of parents, teachers and children representatives. Such guidelines, upon being drafted should be subjected to a public validation process before adoption.
12	Child Protection Standards of Operating Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide guidance to the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of Government and The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Ministry Responsible for Children Matters) in developing specific COVID-19 Child Protection Standards of Operation Procedures that would guide all actors involved in child protection services in the Country during this emergency period. Such standards of operation should provide clarity on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The specific child protection roles of various government departments and agencies during the current emergency, at all levels of governance ii) Gender Responsive Mechanism for identification, reporting and referral of specific child protection cases from various households and communities iii) The framework and tool for use in the villages and estates in monitoring and reporting on the Situation of Children, as they continue to stay at home

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13	Schools Calendar	<p>a) Examine the background that informed the Government of Kenya's current schools calendar, and provide answers that demonstrates whether the Country requires 3 Terms for Schools in a year, or less or more? Establish what informs the Universities calendar to be 2 semesters for one Academic year and why one academic year in the University is not synonymous to one Calendar year?</p> <p>b) Take into consideration the progress made by learners in covering the curriculum and achieving the related learning outcomes for the current year and establish how much time would be required for the learners to cover the remain content areas for the current year.</p> <p>c) In a scenario where schools may not be reopened until January 2021, take into consideration the syllabus related content that shall have not been covered by learners in the current year, and the implications of including such content to what is planned to be covered next year, across all grades in Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary schools.</p>
14	School Fees	<p>a) Aware that despite the Government's Policy on Free Education, Parents and Guardians still pay school fees, and taking into consideration the economic effects of COVID-19 that has pushed majority of households in Kenya to very low levels of income and to zero levels of income in some cases, abolish school fees completely, and provide adequate resources for all school attendance needs, including ensuring that all learners enjoy free adequate food of nutritious value while in schools, and that no Parent or Guardian will be required to pay any money to schools whatsoever in any Public Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary School in Kenya.</p>
15	Education Sector COVID-19 Response Communication Plan	<p>a) Develop Education Sector specific COVID-19 Response Communication Plan and roll it out with immediate effect, with clearly well spelt out specific Child Friendly Key Messages.</p> <p>b) Translate the Key Messages in various local languages and use vernacular radio stations and community radio stations a part of the Media for sharing such messages, in addition to the use of English and Kiswahili through the Radios and TVs that have National coverage</p>