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1. **Take-away messages from 1st TAG meeting that took place on 15 June 2020:**
   - Please consult the minutes of this inaugural meeting that were sent to you by email on 14 July by WHO.
   - The group was established and adopted the Terms of Reference – TORs.
   - As the initial TORs (i.e. “Providing advice to UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO”) were quite broad, the TAG members agreed to focus and work on the most salient issues and to address the current knowledge and research gaps. The group acknowledged in particular the need to find out more from countries and ministries of education/health where guidance is lacking and fill this gap.
   - The group proposed to include vocational schools, universities, teacher training institutions, etc. as part of what is included in the scope of educational institutions.
   - The group also suggested exploring the issue of *School Resilience* and at the #Build Back Better framework.
   - The group emphasised the need to address the specific health and educational-related needs of the most vulnerable children and adolescent learners.

2. **Teacher concerns about safety and returning to work**
   - Presented by Dr. David Edwards, General Secretary of *Education International (EI)*
   - EI is a global union federation of teachers' trade unions consisting of 401 member organisations in 172 countries and territories that represents over 30 million education personnel from pre-school through university.
   - EI has developed a response strategy to COVID-19 and has produced a series of guidance products, conducted a series of surveys among its networks and has worked in close partnership with its member teachers’ unions, school communities, governments, civil society organisations and intergovernmental organisations such as UNESCO or the OECD.
   - EI has in particular produced 1) guiding principles on the pandemic and 2) a Framework for reopening schools.

In particular, five pillars were highlighted:
- *Engage in social and policy dialogue*, by notably: Sharing information, building a collective understanding; Building trust, between and among the social partners. Argentina and Denmark are countries that have established efficient systems of dialogue with the teaching community.
- *Ensure the health and safety of education communities*. This relies on the following: Having clarity around measures (these measures should not change according to jurisdictions; staff should be trained and well informed; there should be an equitable access to equipment (e.g., teachers should have their own computer); providing additional funds and staffing (e.g. hiring new staff in charge of cleaning and disinfecting the school premises).
- *Make equity a top priority*: by acknowledging the fact that the impact of the pandemic is not equal; by supporting structures for the vulnerable (e.g. people coming from low-income settings, girls, people living in rural areas, etc.); by developing a framework for
addressing dropouts and pushed outs in order to find where these students are; by having targeted funding and infrastructure

- **Supporting physical and emotional wellbeing and recovery:** By developing Systems to support mental health and wellbeing of students and staff; by encouraging empathy and dealing with “Compassion fatigue”.

- **Trust the professionalism of educators:** By recognizing that teachers want to be back in the classroom; by acknowledging that “Quality education = learning together”; by developing tools, allowing time and encouraging trust to return into the classes. Teachers need to be part of the evaluation of the policies and of the decision-making processes.

**Recommendations to governments:**

- Recognise and designate teachers and education support personnel as frontline workers
- Invest in continuous and institutionalised dialogue with the profession, including on the design of health and safety measures
- Provide training and support for the workforce

**Questions and Answers**

- **Question 1:** Could you please elaborate a bit more on teachers' priorities and main fears about going back to school?
  
  **Answer from Dr. Edwards:** The average age of teachers worldwide is around 55 or higher. In Portugal, for example, a large majority of teachers are in this age group and have expressed concern about returning to school, given the higher morbidity and mortality rate of people in this age group. In addition, teachers coming from (highly) private schools/educational systems have been the most affected by the virus. Their contracts are not always permanent and many of them have been fired as a result of the pandemic. How can we ensure the return of these teachers when schools reopen? There has been greater resilience in state-run public schools in that sense. Teachers perceive the actual governance of school as key to rebuild in a resilient and sustainable manner. Teachers themselves have a hard time trusting the data and the authorities in knowing that is it indeed safe to return to school (e.g. many teachers from Brazil are not trusting the data provided by the current government). Teachers want to be part of the conversation. They are not a variable in the formula, but active participants who should be included in decision-making processes.

- **Question 2:** Regarding data collection by EI and the teachers themselves
  
  **Answer from Dr. Edwards:** In some countries, the teachers are collecting data. The teachers of New York City have a memory wall of thousands of teachers that they have lost. The Brazilian teachers are not trusting the governmental data, so they are pulling together some data themselves.

  One of the things EI is watching closely, in countries that have reopened, is about how the governments are going to monitor the level of infections among teachers. **This is also an open question asked to the TAG members: What tool(s) of tracking to use?**

- **Question 3:** Does EI have any policy on voluntary testing—which could help to alleviate concerns of both parents and teachers?
  
  **Answer from Dr. Edwards:** Some German Lands (states at sub-national level) have implemented such voluntary testing mechanisms. What is certain is that no teacher
would be reluctant to be tested. EI agrees that voluntary testing among teachers would provide more trust. There would be a strong support for that in the teaching community but nothing has been bargained or negotiated at national level for now. (UNESCO will inquire about this as well).

- An open question was raised as to whether TAG members are aware of any international or national data collection on the number of teachers who have died as a result of COVID19.

3. Presentation on School Resilience and Building Back Resilient

- Presented by Dr. Suzanne Grant Lewis, Director, at UNESCO’s International Institute for Education Planning (UNESCO-IIEP).

What are our main concerns?
- Resurgence or protracted pandemic leading to successive school closures (also universities) and re-opening.
- Offering advice across an even greater variation of contexts – it complicates the guidance we (as Intergovernmental organisations, experts, NGOs, academics, etc.) provide.

This momentum also offers a tremendous opportunity:
- To work together to find out solutions – there is a pressing need to adapt education systems to respond to the needs of teachers, students and school communities.
- To work towards equitable and sustainable distance learning systems
- We also need to be prepared and ready for other new crisis which might disrupt the education systems
- So there is no better opportunity to reform: It is an occasion to rethink our teaching and learning modalities

Way forward:
- Draw out lessons from initial COVID-19 response. UNESCO organised an online survey with 50 countries in early April 2020 and UNESCO IIEP ran a 6 week-long knowledge platform with many different partners. Three categories of lessons are needed:
  Identify risks: equity, learning discontinuity, protection, teacher well-being, assessing learning
  Conditions: accessibility, curricula, teacher support,
  Processes: coordination, consultation, communication, financing
- Strengthen the resilience of education systems for resurgence (and beyond)

Some recommendations to governments:
- Focus on minimizing impact on learning, by emphasising equity and inclusion
- Attend to well-being of students, including psycho-social learning
- Adapt education systems to meet new needs of learners, teachers, families and communities
- Institutionalize risk management in education systems
Some recommendations for development partners:

- Provide flexible funding for lower income countries to respond to the learning crisis caused by COVID-19
- Ensure equity and inclusion in COVID-19 responses
- Invest in long-term development of more resilient education systems

What does it take to build back resilient?

- Prepare to mitigate risks by addressing these questions: Which learners, teachers and school staff are at health risk? Which students are most at risk learning-wise from school closures? Do schools have plans for educational continuity? Do plans include equity considerations?
- Capacities to recover quickly in case of resurgence: 1) prepare conditions for safe teaching and learning: by providing infrastructure and equipment; teacher support, etc.

Questions and Answers

- Question 1: What kind of additional guidance should be produced to achieve school resilience?
  - Answer from Dr. Grant Lewis: Much of the guidance produced by international organisations is technical in nature and perhaps too high level. We have to think about the concrete implementation of our recommendations in the field, at the local level and the guidance we produced should focus more on that.

- Question 2: What are your views in terms of guidance being tailored for addressing the gaps and discrepancies between state-run and private schools in their capacity to build back resilient?
  - Answer from Dr. Grant Lewis: We are facing a financial and economic crisis, as well as a health crisis. Parents have sometimes lost their jobs and cannot pay for tuition fees anymore. Private schools are very heterogeneous around the world as we know, but it is true that teachers from private schools have been the first ones to face salary cuts or in some cases have been fired. I would put more attention into communities and a stronger focus on the respect of human rights, etc. The primary responsibility to provide basic education rests with governments.

- Question 3: Raised the concern that well-off schools are often those best able to rebuild resiliently. How can we help the least well-off schools, in the poorest contexts and in remote areas?
  - Answer from Dr. Grant Lewis: Recognized the unprecedented increase in disparities between educational systems and stressed the importance of increasing humanitarian aid to help the most in-need educational institutions across the globe. Dr. Grant Lewis also reminded TAG members that this crisis represents a tremendous opportunity to link up the sectors of Health and Education. We can see through COVID-19 the opportunities for WASH, School Health and Nutrition programmes and we should encourage such developments. Investing in WASH will also help to prevent future health crisis. Synergies are fostered by investing in such programmes.
4. Update by the research network – regular standing agenda item of the TAG Meeting

- Presented by Dr. David Ross, Medical officer within the Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health Department at WHO.

MNCAH research network focusing on COVID-19 and its Working Group on COVID-19 & Educational Institutions

- The purpose of this research network is to connect people to conduct research on COVID-19 and MNCAH to share info, harmonize definitions, questions, lab tests, etc.; to set priorities for future research; and to feed knowledge into guidance from WHO, UNESCO and other partnering organisations.

- As part of the network, a working group was established that focuses on COVID-19 & Educational Institutions. The working group is divided into two sub-groups, the first one focusing on transmission and the second one on Health and Wellbeing and social impacts of the pandemic. Approx. 90 people are registered in the mailing list and are part of one of these two active subgroups.

- The first subgroup is trying to answer the following question: How important are educational institutions for COVID19 transmission? Its members are looking into the data needs, availability and caveats along the chain of infection and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in children and young people, related to educational institutions.

- The second subgroup is currently developing a framework for key knowledge, requirements and gaps; conducting a comparative study of the health, well-being and social impacts of the pandemic across countries; conducting a rapid review of indirect mental and physical health effects of school closures.

5. Introduction of a new Working Group focusing on reviewing the work under development on children and school reopening

- Presented by Dr. Abdirahman Mahamud, Senior Health Emergency Officer within the Division of Health Security and Emergencies at WHO.

- What is its Objective? Reviewing existing guidance and epidemiology as it is developed to inform school reopening strategies and scenarios. Building on the update from the research network on COVID19 and educational institutions, the small TAG- working Group will review available evidence on role of children in SARS-COV-2 transmission and provide recommendations/considerations on school reopening. The working group will prioritize providing guidance the following questions in the coming two weeks:
  - Does reopening of primary schools hinder the efforts of suppressing community transmission?
  - What sort of school-setting modifications (physical distancing/masking) will be required for primary schools?
TAG members were invited to indicate their interest in joining the WG in the chat. They are also warmly encouraged to write directly to WHO colleagues and the TAG Secretariat by email.

6. Concluding remarks and practical information regarding the third TAG Meeting

- We need to have a clear definition of school resilience, to map the needs and gaps in this area, so that we can work together towards producing guidance on how to build back resilient.
- WHO will circulate a file via a SharePoint so that TAG members can brainstorm together in writing on school resilience definition and elements.
- WHO will circulate to TAG Members the Global Standards for Health Promoting Schools (for peer review with the lens on how well the current draft reflects the need to build resilience for future occasions when schools will have to be closed. UNESCO will circulate to TAG Members the checklist guidance for review and input.
- WHO will follow up on volunteering for the WG focusing on reopening in primary school.
- TAG members will share the available information with the TAG secretariat and TAG members on the following questions raised during the meeting: (i) COVID-19 mortality in teachers (ii) COVID-19 mortality in school health personnel (e.g. school nurses) (iii) correlation between school reopening decisions and levels of community transmission

The third TAG meeting will be held on Wednesday 19th August from 13 to 14:30 and will be chaired by UNICEF.