## Sixth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of Experts on Educational Institutions and COVID-19
### November 17th, 2020 13:00-14:30
### DRAFT AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Purpose/notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>13:00 – 13:15</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Reminder and Update on Action points agreed from 5th TAG – UNICEF on behalf of the co-chairs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adoption of agenda</td>
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<td>TAG web page - WHO</td>
<td>via the Chat Function</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:20- 13:40</td>
<td>Presentation of the UNICEF led paper with input from the TAG working group: Is keeping schools open during the covid-19 pandemic safe? A review of the evidence.</td>
<td>UNICEF presentation</td>
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<td>UNESCO Chair</td>
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<td>moderating chat</td>
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<td>13:40 – 14:15</td>
<td>Update from the Research Network on COVID-19 and Educational Institution: A systematic review to assess the indirect effects of school closures</td>
<td>TAG presentation</td>
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<td>UNESCO Chair</td>
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<td>moderating chat</td>
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<td>14:15 – 14:25</td>
<td>Subjective Well Being of adolescents in Luxembourg, Germany and Brazil</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>UNESCO Chair</td>
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<td>moderating chat</td>
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<td>14:25 – 14:30</td>
<td>Wrap up and closing</td>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
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<td>Date of next meeting</td>
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Note for the Record
Sixth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of Experts on Educational Institutions and COVID-19
Tuesday 17 November 2020 13:00-14:30 (CET)


Participants: Martin Weber, Susanne Carai, Franziska Glogay, Minye Park, Lisa Deters, Pascale Engel, Silvia Minozzi

Secretariat: Anshu Banerjee, Valentina Baltag, Chris Castle, Joanna Herat, Rosamund Lewis, Robert Jenkins, Linda Jones, Abdi Mahamud, Gersende Moyse, Maya Prince, Sarah Karmin, Sylvain Séguy

Please consult the minutes of the fifth meeting that were sent to you by email by WHO for the action points from the last meeting. No comments recorded – most have been completed by now.

1. Action points from the 5th TAG meeting that took place on 22 October 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action point</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAG Members to express their interest in joining the UNICEF-led subgroup</td>
<td>TAG members expressed interest. 5 members who have discussed the draft paper with UNICEF.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF to share TORs for the document</td>
<td>The TORs were incorporated in the NFR of the first meeting of the working group</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO to set up the webpage about TAG</td>
<td>In process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO to share the Power Points from the previous meeting if available for sharing</td>
<td>The Power Points were not made available to us</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAG members to disseminate the information about the public consultation on Global Standards for Health Promoting Schools, and to provide inputs themselves as relevant to their expertise</td>
<td>Sent to TAG members to disseminate further</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO will circulate the final version of the Build Back resilient document</td>
<td>The paper is now in production and likely to be released later in November. The document includes an acknowledgement of TAG inputs and review.</td>
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2. Approval of the agenda

- Agenda approved.
3. Presentation of the UNICEF led paper with input from the TAG working group: Is keeping schools open during the covid-19 pandemic safe? A review of the evidence.

Presentation by Robert Jenkins Chief, Education and Associate Director, Programme Division, UNICEF Headquarters

- Purpose of the paper: As governments continue to grapple with school openings and closures, the paper is meant to inform the discussion with the relationship between in-school instruction and transmission.

- Looking at schools, relationship between in-school learning and community transmission. Conclusions:
  - No consistent relationship found between status of school opening and covid infection rates at the community level.
  - The paper does not make reference to cause and effect, it is stating that there is no evidence between in-school instruction and community transmission.

- Are students and teachers getting infected in schools?
  - In-school instruction does not seem to lead to transmission of covid to students. Hedged/modest conclusion from the evidence.
    - Subpoints: comparison of children as proportion of infections rates vis a vis community as whole. Limited number of children being infection and where not explained by another source of transmission / contact. Classroom is not conducive to contracting covid.
  - In-school instruction leads to covid in teachers. There is a lack of evidence of transmission to school staff when preventative measures are put in place. Evidence indicates that there is not an increased risk to teachers by practicing in school instruction/coming to school.

- The document is a living document and will be revised based on new evidence. It will be a 3 agency document (barring ability to provide logos) and will state that it was reviewed by the TAG.

Comments from the TAG:

- Message on first slide is very strong. There is evidence of increasing infectious prevalence in children. What is driving this is unknown and in-person instruction in schools cannot be ruled out.
- Be careful using case data – infections in kids are hidden.
- The distinction between cases and infections needs to be made.
- Adapt the title and language within the document: Avoid bias in the way the title and content is presented. Lay out the pros and cons of in-person learning during the covid pandemic to present more balanced view so that the conclusion is more persuasive.
- Schools mirror the community. School administration needs to see what’s happening in the community and schools need to link to surveillance in the community.
- Frame the paper around necessary conditions to keep schools open. The paper cannot say there is no correlation and the messages are too simplistic.
- Avoid terms like ‘association’ and ‘correlation’. Present evidence without being judgmental.
- Concern about the strength of the statements with causal terminology—like open schools “does not lead to” increased transmission. I note that especially the caveat
“when community transmission is low,” is a concern, given that in an increasing number of places, community transmission is not low.

- Avoid phrase that there is no evidence in case there is later and acknowledge potential concerns.
- Everyone is supportive of school opening because of evidence it’s not super spreaders and the negative impacts of closures. A lot of the available data was based on summer and now we have seen in the UK, France, Germany increased cases in children.
- Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and saying “there is no evidence” can be a risky statement at this point.
- Cases in England have increased week on week for every student year group from pre-school to secondary school since they reopened in September. Greater increase with increasing age
- The paper concludes that there is limited evidence to suggest that there is in-school instruction transmission. Have you looked specifically at the role of preventive measures in this? I wonder whether your conclusion would also apply if no or very limited protective measures are taken?
- The question is: is closing schools more useful to control infection, given all the harm it does?
- Public health England publishes weekly rates of infection by academic year group and positivity rates nationally and regionally. This is available on the gov.Uk website
- There is no evidence that schools are super-spreader settings

➔ Action points

TAG members to send additional evidence to UNICEF. UNICEF to revise the paper based on comments received during the TAG and organize a meeting of the working group to review.
Share revised paper with the larger TAG for final comments.

4. Update from the Research Network on COVID-19 and Educational Institution:
   A systematic review to assess the indirect effects of school closures
Presentation by Silvia Minozzi, Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Rome, Italy

- Systematic review looked at short and long term impacts of school closures, or other isolation measures in childhood, on physical and mental health
- The objectives of the review were: 1) to assess the impacts of school closure/other school isolation measures (partial closure, some classes dismissed) alone or during lockdown on physical and mental health outcomes (over the short and longer term) and 2) will examine the impact of school closures caused by any non-routine event (i.e. not only COVID-19 pandemic)
- The review assessed 6 outcomes and the preliminary analysis was presented:
  1) Physical health outcomes: 26 studies
  2) Mental health outcomes: 15 studies
  3) Wellbeing outcomes: 11 studies
  4) Health related behaviours: 8 studies (1 non-COVID)
  5) Academic achievements: 3 studies
6) **Parental outcomes**: 11 studies (6 non-COVID)
- Conclusion: This is a huge review with many outcomes; it is difficult to summarize all the data; the risk of bias was not yet assessed; the study selection and data extraction is not yet complete; the studies are heterogeneous for study design, way to measure and report outcomes, quality of report and conduct.

**Considerations for implementing and adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19: interim guidance**
Presentation by Valentina Baltag, WHO

- The revised considerations for PHSM has 4 levels of classifications in community transmission. For each transmission level, the document spells out actions for education for children. The recommendations are aligned with the annex ‘Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19’ which is not based on the revised classifications.
- The school-related document is an annex to the main PHSM. Consider whether to revise the annex to align with the same classifications.

5. **Subjective Well Being of adolescents in Luxembourg, Germany and Brazil**
Presentation by Pascale Engel de Abreu, University of Luxembourg

- This is part of a larger project of the University of Luxembourg exploring the wellbeing of kids between May and July and to explore experiences of home schooling. The presentation focused on the wellbeing.
- The purpose of the study is to examine common predictors of subjective wellbeing in three countries that are differently affected by the global health crisis.
- This was based on an online survey with self-reporting of children aged 6-16 in Luxembourg, Germany Brazil. The tool included 3 broad sections:
  - general information of the participants,
  - life and school before COVID-19,
  - life and school during COVID 19
- The measure is based on sociodemographic and intrapersonal covariates & other predictor variables from the following spheres of influence: activities, relationships, resources, policies and context (UNICEF, 2020)
- 1,515 participants, 58% of whom were girls. Respondents came from families of high socioeconomic status based on parent occupation
- Core of similarities between the lives of children in these very different contexts.
- Gender, resources, intrapersonal factors, activities and relationship with adults were important common predictors of subjective wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic in this cohort of adolescents from Luxembourg, Germany, and Brazil.

**Update from Martin Weber who shared materials from the EURO region’s TAG on schools.**
The next meeting will be held 8 December with ministries of health and education to look at next semester.

**Action points:**

- TAG members to share new evidence on children, schools and covid-19 with UNICEF
- UNICEF to organize a meeting of the subgroup to revise document
UNICEF to share final draft with the TAG for review

Concluding comments and remarks:
- The chair expressed thanks to the TAG members.
- The next 7th TAG meeting will take place on **16 December 2020** from 1pm to 2:30 pm (Paris/Geneva Time). It will be chaired by WHO.