



## COVID-19 ISSUES: EDUCATION FACT SHEET

### *Reopening of schools*

- The reopening of schools was the result of a carefully considered process that took into account different views including the fears and anxieties of parents and learners.
- We considered the advice of science and medical experts who pay careful attention to the evolution of COVID-19 and the resultant implications on education policy and practice.
- Guiding principles on the decision to reopen schools included the safety of learners, teachers and workers in schools while ensuring the reopening does not contribute to the spread of the virus.
- Scientists have encouraged the country to brace itself to co-exist with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future and therefore workable solutions needed to be found to continue educating our children.

### *Salvaging the academic year*

- Salvaging the academic year allows the poor access to open classrooms so that they can advance their dreams and build a future free of poverty.
- Reopening of schools ensures that children who do not have access to computers or online resources would benefit in school which is where they are better serviced.
- Remote online schooling is relevant for those who have access to technology resources, but for poor communities with inadequate technology and human capacity this is not the case.

### *Protecting marginalised children*

- The closure of schools for the remainder of the year is not a favoured option given the many marginalised children who rely on our schools.
- 80 per cent of learners receive publicly funded meals at schools. Before the pandemic, 11 per cent of learners were in households which experienced hunger at some point in the year.
- The National School Nutrition Programme is currently available to Grade 7 and 12 learners, and will be expanded to include other learners as more grades begin to return to school.
- The report: “**Adverse Consequences of School Closures**” by Unesco and “**Counting the Cost: Covid-19 school closures in South Africa and its impact on children.**” by Professor Servaas van der Berg and Dr Nic Spaull support the reopening of schools.

### ***Preventing high economic costs***

- The provision of basic education is part of livelihoods. Government is allowing various sectors to gradually resume activities to maintain the balance between saving lives and livelihood.
- The protracted closures of schools and economic shocks placed on families can lead to high dropout rates and pressure on children to generate income to support financially distressed families.
- Working parents are more likely to miss work when schools close in order to take care of their children. This results in wage loss and a negative impact on productivity.
- The opening of the economy without reopening schools resulted in young children being left at home without any adult caregivers. There are a million children aged 0 to 6 where the only adult caregiver in their household is away at work.