



## SDG-Education 2030 Webinar Series for Latin America and the Caribbean: Leaving no one behind in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

**Wednesday 6 May 2020**

**11:00 (-4 UCT)**

### Background

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has brought about an unprecedented crisis on all fronts. In the area of education, this resulted in massive closures of educational institutions in more than 190 countries around the world in order to prevent the spread of virus and mitigate its impact. According to UNESCO<sup>1</sup>, as at early April 2020, over 1,576,021,818 students worldwide were out of school. Of these, more than 160,000,000 were students from Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>2</sup>.

This situation has provoked an acute emergency for national education systems. The governments of the region, led by the Ministries of Education, have rapidly implemented distance learning modalities, supporting educational staff and mobilizing parents, caregivers and communities, with a view to ensuring the continuity of learning as an immediate response.

At the regional level, multiple instances of technical and political dialogue have been convened, which clearly demonstrated strong commitment and corresponding action by Governments with the support of international, regional and national organizations. The various dialogues held during the first month of pandemic then highlighted three common central themes that require immediate and longer-term political and programmatic support:

- (1) Important advances and innovation in the area of distance education have been made through the use of technologies in recent weeks more than at any other time. However, there are still important challenges to guarantee equity and inclusion, considering the most vulnerable and marginalized population groups;
- (2) There is need to move towards flexible educational systems, with a focus on preparedness; and
- (3) A new mentality and paradigm shift towards interdisciplinarity and intersectorality is required beyond education sector-focused planning and implementation. Cooperation and collaboration across different sectors and actors is paramount.

In other words, this crisis presents itself an unprecedented opportunity to transform national education systems into one of resilience, making the SDG-Education 2030 Agenda more relevant and necessary than ever.

### Regional Webinar Series

It is against this background that in collaboration with the Regional Education Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO launched on 17 April, a biweekly series of knowledge and information exchange, and of policy dialogue, in order to respond to the pandemic, focusing on the four pillars of

<sup>1</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>

<sup>2</sup> <https://es.unesco.org/fieldoffice/santiago/covid-19-education-alc>

SDG-Education 2030: *equity, inclusion, quality and lifelong learning*.

The objective of this initiative is to support the Ministries of Education and the different educational actors for the development, management and dissemination of relevant evidence and to inform the immediate response as well as the medium and long-term actions towards the 2030 goal. In addition, considering the need for interdisciplinary response, the dimension of culture and other areas will also be touched upon during the series.

Considering the specific contexts of each sub-region, Latin America and the Caribbean, two parallel schedules will be implemented.

Each webinar will be recorded and made available with presentations and reference materials on UNESCO's portal dedicated to COVID-19 (<https://es.unesco.org/fieldoffice/santiago/covid-19-education-alc>). At the same time, for each webinar, in-depth country experiences will be further explored and documented both in Spanish and English with a view to promoting sustainable knowledge exchange and policy dialogue with regional public goods across the region and to contributing to the same at the global level.

The Caribbean webinar series will be organized in partnership with CARICOM Secretariat.

### The Caribbean Webinar Series n° 1: Supporting teachers and education personnel to ensure continuity of learning in the Caribbean

As a result of school closures due to the spread of COVID-19, many countries have resorted to distance education in order to continue the continuity of teaching and learning. According to the estimates by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), at least 63 million primary and secondary school teachers worldwide have been affected in the response to COVID-19<sup>3</sup>.

This emergency occurred with little time for teachers to prepare, acquire or improve their ICT, digital or social media skills necessary for technology-enhanced distance education<sup>4</sup>. While being exposed to the potential risk of infection themselves, many education personnel have had to also provide food, healthcare and socio-emotional support for students and their own families. Meanwhile, the potential risk of job loss or lower wages has been a concern for many of them. Ensuring that quality learning continues in its new adopted forms during the crisis requires that teachers have access to adequately resourced and safe teaching environments and decent working conditions<sup>5</sup>

Teachers in the Caribbean have shown commitment, creativity and professionalism to maintain communication with their students and respond to the demands generated from governments. They are in acute need of support to continue delivering quality education to learners.

How empowered and safe teachers are will determine the quality and commitment of their response to emergencies. Therefore, it is essential that teachers have recognition, guidance and support in various dimensions. The purpose of this webinar is thus to provide a platform where knowledge and experiences in teacher and education personnel support can be shared and exchanged, with a focus on the Caribbean region.

The first inaugural webinar of the SDG-Education 2030 series for the Caribbean will thus touch upon the heart of education system: teachers and education personnel.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/teacher-task-force-calls-support-63-million-teachers-touched-covid-19-crisis>

<sup>4</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373248>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_742025.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_742025.pdf)

## Objectives:

- To highlight issues and challenges confronting national education systems in support of teachers and education personnel
- To share promising and innovative approaches and practices

## Agenda:

Wednesday, 6 May 2020	
Facilitator: Dr Laurette Bristol, Programme Manager, Human Resource Department, CARICOM Secretariat	
11:00 – 11:05	<b>Introduction: Overview of the impact of the pandemic on national education systems in the Caribbean – facts and figures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Faryal Khan, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean</li></ul>
11:05 – 11:50	<b>Presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The global and regional perspectives: Dr. Carlos Vargas Tamez, Chief, Unit of Teacher Development, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean</li><li>• Policy implications for teaching during the health emergency: Dr. Roderick Rudder, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Technical and Vocational Training, Barbados</li><li>• Safeguarding the teaching professional and the conditions of work: Mr. Mark Lyte, President, Guyana Teachers Union</li><li>• Supporting the preparation of teachers for distance education and reopening of schools: Dr. Freddy James, Lecturer, Educational Leadership, School of Education, the University of West Indies, St Augustin Campus</li><li>• Call to Action by the Teacher Task Force: Dr. Carla Diamond, St. Kitts and Nevis / Member of the Steering Committee, TTF,</li></ul>
11:50 – 12:20	<b>Q&amp;A and discussion</b>
12:20 – 12:30	<b>Summary, key messages and closing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Laurette Bristol, CARICOM Secretariat</li></ul>