



ECOWAS –UNESCO Joint Statement on the Response to COVID-19 in West African Countries

The COVID-19 pandemic is a common threat facing all nations. It has placed immense pressure on healthcare systems and resulted in serious economic and fiscal crisis with negative social impact. Every facet of life has been affected with educational disruptions, business shutdowns and communities under lockdown due to stay-at-home orders. Socio-economic systems have never been disrupted at such a global scale.

Given its fragility, West Africa can even be disproportionately affected by the global crisis. There have been massive school closures in all 15-member states of ECOWAS to control the spread of the pandemic, but also the restriction on movement, physical gatherings for cultural activities have been limited; businesses are facing serious disruptions and many people are finding it difficult to earn a living at this point in time. Additionally, there has been a serious impediment on research and scientific activities within universities and research institutions in the Region.

Nevertheless, some efforts have been initiated, here and there at ensuring distance learning and the continuity of education, continuity in the preservation of cultural activities and the involvement of universities and other scientific and research institutions in the finding of local solutions to fight the COVID-19.

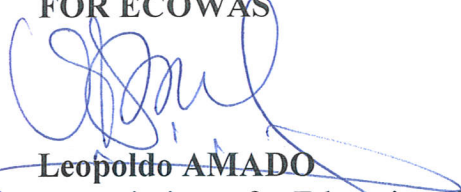
Undoubtedly, this situation imposes immense challenges. Yet, it has presented an opportunity for ECOWAS and UNESCO to come up with immediate solutions to strengthen national capacities in responding to the crisis. UNESCO alongside ECOWAS

is ready to provide its technical expertise in its fields of competence, where it has comparative advantage.

As the impacts of the pandemic are multidimensional, multi-pronged innovative approaches are required to address the challenges facing member states. Guided by the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ECOWAS and UNESCO, both institutions have developed a work plan to support member states to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in the fields of education, science and culture. The strategic work plan is result-oriented with clear expectations for the current pandemic and beyond. The plan includes capacity building interventions to ensure the continuing of learning during the pandemic and training in pedagogical and administrative reforms for the reopening of schools post COVID-19; assistance in strengthening Science technology and Innovation (STI) Systems; and support for the promotion of cultural heritage and artistic expressions. Both organizations have pooled financial and technical resources to enable the actualisation of the interventions.

UNESCO and ECOWAS express firm commitment to implement the programmes in the work plan from June to December 2020 to assist ECOWAS Member States to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic as well as build resilient societies that are adequately prepared for future emergencies.

FOR ECOWAS


Leopoldo AMADO

Commissioner for Education, Science and
Culture

03.07.2020

FOR UNESCO


Yao YDO

Regional Director

3/07/2020

Attachment:

Work Plan on ECOWAS-UNESCO Joint Response to COVID-19

44