



UN GHANA STATEMENT

Joint Statement in Commemoration of 2021 International Day of Education

January 24th is International Day of Education (IDE). It was proclaimed three years ago by the United Nations General Assembly, inviting Member States, international and regional organizations and civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders “to continue to give consideration to enhancing international cooperation in support of the efforts of all Member States towards the realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4”ⁱ.

The proclamation of IDE stems from the UN’s recognition of the **central role of education** in building sustainable, resilient societies and in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN also acknowledges “the importance of working to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and distance education, including technical and vocational training – so that all people may have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to access opportunities to participate fully in society and contribute to sustainable development.”ⁱⁱ

This year, Education Day is being observed at a period of global learning disruption of unprecedented scale and severity caused by when the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme for the Day is ‘**Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation**’. Globally, Education Day is being observed along three main segments: **learning heroes; innovations, and finance**. The year we celebrate initiatives being led by governments, educators, organizations—from global to grassroots efforts—as well as partnerships demonstrating the potential to recommit education to the principles of equity and relevance; and we highlight commitments and follow-up actions taken to protect education through the recovery, increase inclusion and combat drop-out.

The UN family in Ghana, particularly the agencies working in Education (ILO, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNU, WFP), joins the education fraternity to celebrate this international Day which falls a week after the reopening of schools.

In Ghana, schools, colleges, and universities were disrupted from 16 March 2020 to 15 January 2021 as part of the Government of Ghana’s measures to contain the spread of the virus. At the peak of the pandemic, an estimated 9.2 million students from KG to Senior High School were affected, in addition to 0.5 million tertiary education students, 450,000 non-teaching staff and 450,000 teachers in the public and private institutions. The closure of schools, universities, and other learning institutions, as well as the interruption of many literacy and lifelong learning



programmes have adversely affected the lives of many learners, teachers and education service providers.

It is commendable that the Government of Ghana responded swiftly to the learning disruption by putting in place alternative learning solutions, notably **Learning Management System (LMS)** in many tertiary institutions, the **icampus, Ghana Learning TV and Ghana Learning Radio**, through which lessons were delivered to basic school pupils. Despite the contribution of these initiatives to the continuity of learning during the period of school closures, there were limitations. For instance, many students have not been able to effectively access and use these remote learning solutions, thereby reinforcing the existing inequity in the education sector, with children from poor households, remote and deprived communities as well as persons with disability bearing the brunt.

In early January 2021, the Government of Ghana, with support from the UN System in Ghana launched the **Back to School Campaign**, through which learners, especially girls, were encouraged to return to school safely. It is important that all parents, caregivers and institutions ensure that the school environment is both welcoming and supportive and is made very safe for the students as they return. Wearing of masks and regularly washing hands with soap under running water are key practices that can enable schools to remain open, and 9.2 million children to continue learning. In addition, specific protocols have been developed to ensure that the school environments are devoid of Gender Based Violence (GBV), corporal punishment and bullying.

In these challenging times, there are also opportunities to continue addressing capacity needs of the education system and make it more resilient. This includes further enhancing the capacity of all teachers and education workers in remedial and catch-up teaching and learning, so that students can make up for the lost 1700 hours learning in class. In addition, efforts to further promote **digital literacy** will enable the Government to support teaching and learning remotely, during and beyond the period of this crisis. The efforts to enhance digital literacy among educators and learners needs to be pursued to equip them with the requisite skills to enable them to leverage the numerous online learning opportunities that are available globally.

We also encourage the Government to keep prioritizing investment in **IT infrastructure** and equipment in the various educational institutions, to facilitate easier internet accessibility for educators and learners with the aim of improving access to equitable quality education through virtual and open sources. These initiatives are capital intensive but there are excellent opportunities to explore public-private partnerships. For example, there is scope to leverage the UNESCO Global Education Coalition, which has some of its members actively operating in Ghana (e.g. Huawei, Google and Microsoft).

Furthermore, in building the education system back better, the Government of Ghana has been paying attention to the learning needs of persons with disability, with support from UN agencies.



These commendable efforts shall be intensified to ensure access to quality inclusive education for all children.

Recently, in December 2020, the world marked the 60th Anniversary of the **Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE)**, which reaffirms that education is a fundamental human right and highlights States' obligations to ensure free and compulsory education, bans any form of discrimination, and promotes equality of educational opportunity. We acknowledge that Ghana has made significant strides in promoting and realizing many of these human rights principles in the education sector (eg. the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and Free Senior High School (SHS) policies). On this important occasion, we encourage the Government of Ghana to ratify this Convention to enhance Ghana's respect for the human right of its citizens.

Learners have the right to inclusive quality education. Together, let's reimagine a better world for all learners, especially children.

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¹ See resolution 73/25

