

25 April, 2020

Accessible to Quality Education to All Learners

We hope this mail reach you in good health and safe under this difficult period of COVID19.

On the occasion of Freedom Day 27, April 2020, we South Africa Human Rights Forum, comprising of diverse representatives of community based organisations, civil society organisations, human rights defenders, gender based activists, women, children, youth, people with disabilities, people with albinism, sexual orientation and gender identity, environmentalist, interfaith, traditional activists, academicians and individuals commend the Department of Basic Education for the comprehensive Curriculum Recovery Plan Readiness, April 2020 for recovery of the lost time for teaching and the efforts that are made for resuming the teaching and learning from 6 May 2020. We totally agree with you that the reality of COVID19 impacted enormously on the conventional physical and face to face teaching. This require pliable teaching methods that will not compromise the quality of both curriculum and outcome. We welcome the decision of Department to use the online tools and remote digital system for teaching learners. Internet is a human rights which place a duty on the state to ensure its accessibility to all in the country.

However, we are concerned that many communities have no infrastructure for internet. The Department is also aware that many leaners don't have access to online platforms. It will also be unreasonable to expect parents to do something about this under this difficult time of COVID 19. We realise that despite these challenge the Department is going ahead with the online teaching with no alternative arrangement made for learners who don't have access to online platforms. This means efforts to recoup learner's time will only benefit privilege learners. Unfortunately this will infringe on children's safeguarded rights to equality, respect of human dignity; as well as section 28 which esteem children's matters as paramount. The departments has a duty to protect and promote every leaner's right to access quality, equitable and relevant education. Over and above this, the Minister is expected to ensure no child is left behind in effecting the realisation of Goal 4 of Sustainable Development which promotes accessible quality education for all learners.

In this regard, we are calling the Minister of Basic Education to make alternative arrangements for leaners who don't have access to online platform to access quality education during and beyond the lockdown. We request the Minister to particularly do the following;

(A) Access to Quality Education and access of online lessons

1. Provide 5g for Primary Learners : Grade 7-5
2. Provide 15g for Secondary Learners : G10-12
3. Buy time on local radio stations for wider access of lessons for (i) Local Radio Programming Broadcasting Curriculum Lessons , as per Grade Group
4. Audio lessons on SD Cards to be distributed among learners in rural areas with curriculum guides and time frames
5. Data bundles for resourced learners with smartphones in urban areas

(B) Poor Infrastructure development in schools

1. To progressively address the issue of poor school conditions in disadvantaged communities
2. Forge partnership with communities and private sector to provide generators in school with no electricity

(C) Mitigation and Protection of Learners from spread of COVID 19

1. Promote practice of hygiene by making wearing of face masks compulsory in all schools
2. Provide safe water for regular washing of hands with soap
3. End inhuman degrading condition of sanitation in disadvantaged communities , posing health risk to learners and teachers

(D) Long term and sustainable solution

1. Increase capacities for advancement of work of the Department by advertising new in sectors working in communities. Especially within the creative artisan, writers, authors, story tellers, ICT, retired teachers, nurses, and youth for example will benefit immensely as a group with highest unemployment rate in the country. We believe the sectors will add value in to your work this time of need. Lastly, forge partnerships with communities to curb crime, violence, drugs, and gender based violence, including playing constructive roles in curbing the pandemic and successful delivery of the recovery plan.

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