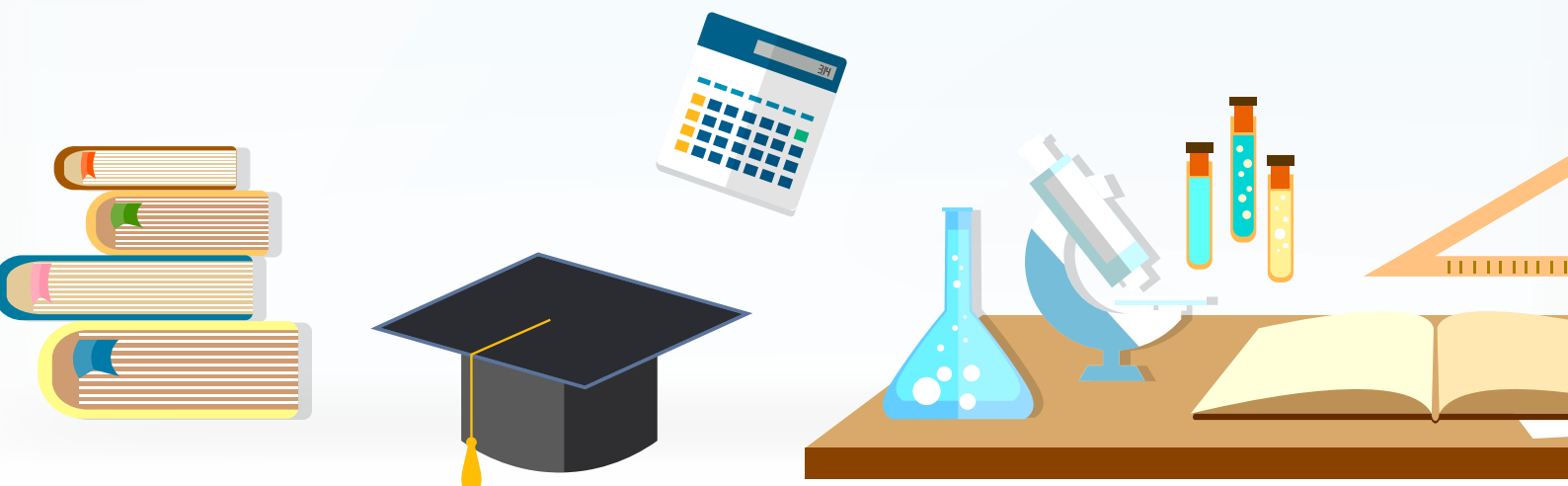


African Union COVID-19 / Occupational Safety and Health **GUIDELINES SERIES**

Education Sector

Volume 4



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Foreword



The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly impacting economies, social cohesion and health systems of African Countries. The effects of the pandemic, if not efficiently and effectively addressed, will have an adverse impact on the realisation of continental goals set in the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals and other developmental goals and targets at the continental, regional and national level.

In February 2020, the AU Member States adopted a strategy that aims to prevent severe illness and death from COVID-19 infection and to minimize social disruption and economic consequences of COVID-19 outbreak. The AU has so far established a Coronavirus fund with commitments to-date totalling USD20 million. At the national level, most African countries have implemented lockdowns, testing (of suspected cases) and contact tracing.

On the 4th of April 2020, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) published a White Paper on AUDA-NEPAD Response to COVID-19 and other epidemics. The Paper features five key priorities with an aim of strengthening: health systems; food systems; skills development and employment; education; and national planning and data systems.

As part of AUDA-NEPAD's White Paper, particular focus has been placed on occupational safety and health (OSH) for both frontline health care workers and the working population at large. It is evident that the impact of COVID-19 on the working population is significant, especially the working population that have high exposure risks due to the nature of their work. This cohort includes healthcare workers, laboratory workers, border management teams, those in the food supply, logistics and public transportation industry, death-care workers, and waste management workers, amongst others. Similarly, the pandemic has posed significant risks to other workers, inter alia, increased absenteeism; loss of wages and jobs; loss of man-hours and productivity; increase in medical costs in the face of limited medical insurance cover and social protection; changes in the way of doing business; and interruption of supply chains.

There is, therefore, need for a coordinated response by the AU Member States to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on the working population. Such efforts will, amongst others, promote the efficient and effective deployment of expert support thereby making available technical support and evidence-based guidance and advice on occupational safety and health needs within the realm of AU's COVID-19 response Plan.

It is with the foregoing that AUDA-NEPAD in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the International Labour organisation and other partners have developed the COVID-19/OSH Guidelines for Specific Workplaces. The guidelines covering thematic areas such as Occupational Safety, Health and Wellness of Health Workers and Clinical Occupation Health, serve as key technical reference instruments for all stakeholders, including national and sub-national governments, regional bodies, civil society, academia and development partners, to work in a coordinated and coherent manner in addressing occupational safety and health at workplaces in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is our sincere hope that the values and imperatives that are framed in the guidelines will inspire all of us to promote occupational safety and health at workplaces as part of the concerted efforts to fight against the effects of the global pandemic and advance the Continent's development agenda encapsulated in Agenda 2063.

Dr Ibrahim A Mayaki
Chief Executive Officer

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Definition Of Terms

The following definitions apply to this document:

Coronavirus disease: (COVID-19) is an infectious disease bred by SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Occupational Safety and health: is the science of the anticipation, recognition, evaluation and control of hazards arising in or from the workplace that could impair the health and well-being of workers, taking into account the possible impact on the surrounding communities and the general environment.

Hazards: is anything with the potential to cause harm.

Risk: is the likelihood that the harm from a particular hazard is realized.

Workplace Risk assessment: is a careful examination of what, in the workplace, could cause harm to people; it enables a weighing up of whether enough precautions are in place or whether more should be done to prevent harm to those at risk, including workers and members of the public.

Occupational accident: is an occurrence arising out of, or in the course of, work which results in fatal or non-fatal injury.

Occupational disease: is any disease contracted as a result of exposure to risk factors arising from work activity.

Personal protective equipment: is equipment that will protect the user against the risk of accidents or adverse effects on health.

Physical or social distancing: means keeping space between oneself and other people by staying at least 6 feet (\pm 2 meters) from other people, staying out of crowded places and avoiding mass gatherings.

Contact tracing: is the identification and follow-up of persons who may have come into contact with an infected person.

Isolation: is a separation of sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

Quarantine: is a separation and restriction of the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

Acronyms

AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency- New Partnership for Africa's Development
CDC	Centre for Communicable Diseases
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
ILO	International Labour Organization
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RPE	Respiratory Protective Equipment
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

The rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented levels of suffering globally and Africa remains severely threatened. The global progression of the disease and the associated mortality to date is a major cause of concern. The African Union's priority in the face of this pandemic is the safety and health of all workers and the public. While a lot is still unknown about the virus that causes COVID-19, we do know that it is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person. While COVID-19 continues to spread communities must take action to prevent further transmission, reduce the impacts of the outbreak and support control measures.

All of the members of the school community have responsibilities for their safety, health and welfare and that of others. The school is charged with the responsibility of informing staff, students and visitors of these responsibilities. One of the most effective ways of doing this is to involve staff and students in identifying challenges to safety, health and welfare and in devising and implementing ways of responding to those challenges.

The protection of children, educators and auxiliary staff is particularly important. Precautions are necessary to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 in school settings; however, care must also be taken to avoid stigmatizing students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus. It is important to remember that COVID-19 does not differentiate between borders, ethnicities, disability status, age or gender. Education settings should continue to be welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environments to all. Measures taken by schools can prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 by students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus while minimizing disruption and protecting students and staff from discrimination. The institutions are huge potential drivers of the spread of COVID-19 by virtual of their populations and lack of OSH programs in place.

2. Application

This guideline applies to the education sector, in both public and private schools in the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary institution including vocational as well as part-time training.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide:

- Clear and actionable guidance for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools and other educational facilities.
- Key messages and considerations for engaging school administrators, teachers and staff, parents, caregivers and community members, as well as children themselves in promoting safe and healthy schools.

4. Elements of the Management System

Policy

- Develop and implement an OSH policy that incorporates COVID-19. The written policy shall contain a declaration of the commitment of the board of management to ensure safety and health in the school
- Develop flexible attendance and sick leave policies that encourage staff and students to stay home when sick or when caring for sick family members
- Develop an emergency response plan and contingency measures to be put into use in the event of a serious accident, outbreak of a disease or a disaster.
- Develop a procedure for the management of learners who return to school including boarding facilities and teachers returning to work after a recovering from COVID-19

Planning

- The school shall plan short, medium and long term objectives in its effort to maintain and improve safety, health and welfare across the whole school. It must identify how the objectives will be achieved, the resources required and the individual responsibilities.
- The safety, health and welfare plan must be incorporated in the overall school plan.
- Develop a preparedness and response plan for COVID-19 prevention at school.

Organization

- The board of management shall nominate a senior member of the teaching staff as the person with responsibilities for safety health and welfare in the entire school preferably the Head or the deputy
- The school shall have a safety health and welfare committee formed that shall be chaired by the person nominated above.
- Safety and health committee members shall

be nominated from among the workers representing all the departments in the school

- The committee shall have regular meetings guided by the local legislation on the duties of the safety and health committee

Risk assessment

- The key starting point in any safety and health management system is risk assessment, and the management of COVID-19 is no exception. Educational institutions should conduct a risk assessment to ensure the safety and health of workers, students and visitors, and prevent the spread of COVID-19 through risk-based precautionary measures. Risk assessment should include: -
 - » biological, physical, chemical and ergonomic hazards, and psychosocial hazards- psychological distress

This includes as a minimum:

- Identification of safety and health hazard including COVID-19
- Assessing and profiling the risk attached to hazards. All operations such as administration, teaching, cleaning, should be considered
- Identifying who is likely to be exposed to COVID-19 and how serious the risk of exposure is.
- Actions were taken to eliminate or control the risk of exposure.,
- Annex 1 provides the Generic school risk assessment template to be considered by educational institutions.

Risk prevention, control and management

Risk Prevention

Managing COVID-19 in the education sector requires the integration of safety and health control measures into health education at different levels, considering students age groups. Below are suggestions on how to engage students of different ages groups and measures to put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- **Pre-school**
 - » Teach pupils basic safety and health issues focussing on hygiene e.g. coughing etiquette, hand hygiene and what unsafe behaviours to avoid.
 - » Introduce singing while washing hands to practice the recommended 20-second duration of washing.
 - » Develop a way to track handwashing and reward for frequent/timely handwashing.



- » Enjoyable ways to practice social distancing (Hula-hoops)
 - » Provide a spacious environment to maintain physical distance.
- **Primary School**
 - » Teach pupils basic safety and health issues focussing on
 - » coughing etiquette, social distancing, hand hygiene and what unsafe behaviours to avoid.
 - » Teach learners the basic concepts of disease prevention and control e.g. how germs can spread.
 - » Introduce the concept of physical distancing and practising social distancing in classrooms by spacing desk apart where practical.
 - » Listen to pupils concerns regarding health within the school premises and outside
 - » Ensuring spacious and well-ventilated classrooms
 - » Provision of adequate hand washing facilities (e.g. soap and water)
 - **Secondary School**
 - » Listen to the students' concerns and answer their questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - » Incorporate basic safety and health with an emphasis on unsafe behaviour and hygiene practices
 - » Reinforce the issue of physical distancing and coughing etiquette.
 - » Practising physical distancing in classrooms by spacing desk apart where practical.
 - » Start safety and health clubs at schools
 - » Spacious and well-ventilated classrooms including boarding facilities to minimize the risk of spreading diseases
 - » Provision adequate handwashing facilities
 - » Encourage students to prevent and address the stigma of CODID-19 positive cases.
 - **Tertiary and Vocational Institution**
 - » Incorporate relevant safety and health education as part of the certificate/diploma/degree in all programs that shall include the history of pandemics and their secondary effects.
 - » Provision of spacious and well-ventilated lecture rooms, workshops and laboratories and boarding facilities to minimize the risk of spreading diseases.
- » Provision of adequate handwashing facilities
 - » Provide appropriate PPE in laboratories and workshops. Provide training on how to put on, remove, and dispose of PPE and RPE
 - » Hygienic disposal of hazardous waste, including PPE.
 - » Promote physical distancing in all learning areas and social situations
 - » Encourage students to prevent and address stigma. Discuss the different reactions they may experience.

Risk Control

After investigating and identifying hazard and risk at an educational institution, an employer should eliminate the hazards or reduce the risk by employing a hierarchy of control. The hierarchy of controls includes elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). These measures should be customised and may include the changing of the organization or schedule of the work performed. Annexure 2 presents the hierarchy of control for OSH and COVID-19.

• **Elimination**

Elimination is the most effective control measure because it removes the hazard and incident of exposure.

- » Workers and students suspected to be ill should be tested.
- » Workers or students who tested positive to COVID-19 should be isolated.
- » Workers, students and visitors with symptoms of COVID-19 should not be allowed in school premises.

• **Substitution**

Substitution involves replacing high exposure activity to less exposure activity.

- » Remote methods of teaching and learning (e.g. e-learning and virtual teaching) reduce the exposure risk to COVID-19.
- » Minimize contact among workers and parents by replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual communications e.g. skype, conference calls, zoom, etc., and implementing telework.

- **Engineering Control**
 - » Building designs that facilitate
 - Adequate ventilation for the number of learners
 - Installation of efficient air extractors in all learning and boarding rooms
 - Furniture that provides adequate physical distancing (1.5 m) or floor marking
 - » Provision of hands-free trash receptacles, soap and towel dispensers, door openers, and other similar hands-free equipment
 - » Create an isolated space for learners with immune deficiency
- **Administrative Controls**
 - » Encouraging sick workers and learners/ students to stay at home.
 - » Minimizing the number of workers at the workplace at a given time.
 - » Providing workers and learners/students with education and training on hazards associated with their work including COVID-19 risk factors.
 - » Training workers and students on how to use protecting clothing and equipment.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
 - » The board of management should provide workers with adequate PPE to keep them safe while performing their jobs.
 - » Parents should provide students with a face mask during COVID-19.
 - » The types of PPE required during a COVID-19 outbreak should be based on exposure risk and in accordance with relevant guidelines as issued by WHO or local public health authority.
 - » All types of PPE must be:
 - Selected based upon the hazard to the worker.
 - Consistently and properly worn when required.
 - Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.
 - Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.
- **Risk Management**
 - » Training of education institution communities; principals, teachers, other workers and their representatives on the



safety and health and adopted measures to prevent risks of exposure to the virus and on how to act in case of COVID-19 infection.

- » Informing workers about their right to remove from a work situation that poses an imminent and serious danger for life or health, in accordance with national law and laid out procedures and immediately inform their immediate supervisor of the situation.
- » Promoting e-learning, as appropriate, to minimize the spreading of COVID-19 in educational institutions
 - Assisting workers to manage any emerging psychosocial risks and new forms of work arrangements.

Protection of persons other than workers

- Employers should do what is reasonably practicable to protect the health, safety and welfare of contractors, parents and visitors. This includes providing water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.
- Reinforce frequent handwashing and sanitation. Prepare and maintain handwashing stations with soap and water, and if possible, place alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitizers) at entrances and exits.
- Implement physical distancing
- Promote the use of appropriate face protection.

Work arrangement and operations (including eLearning)

- Plan for continuity of learning. In the case of absenteeism/sick leave or temporary school closures, support continued access to quality education. This can include:
- Use of online/e-learning and virtual teaching strategies
- Assigning reading and exercises for home study
- Radio, podcast or television broadcasts of academic content
- Assigning teachers to conduct remote daily or weekly follow up with students
- Review/develop accelerated education strategies

Washing, Sanitation and Hygiene

- To promote and demonstrate regular hand washing and positive hygiene behaviours and ensure soap and safe water is available at age-appropriate handwashing stations
- Encourage frequent and thorough washing (at least 20 seconds)

- Place hand sanitizers in toilets, classrooms, halls, and near exits where possible
- Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets or latrines for girls and boys
- Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.)
- Use sodium hypochlorite at 0.5% (equivalent 5000ppm) for disinfecting surfaces and 70% ethyl alcohol for disinfection of small items, and ensure appropriate equipment for cleaning staff
- Increase airflow and ventilation where the climate allows (open windows, use air conditioning where available, etc.)
- Post signs encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices
- Ensure trash is removed daily and disposed of safely

Education, training and communication

- Head Teachers/ Principal to serve as the focal point for disseminating information
 - » to draft information publications and assist with the distribution of information materials.
 - » to establish and maintain lines of communication with students and teachers
 - » to formulate and advise on promotional strategies for parades other activities planned for the outreach and advocacy programmes.

Isolation, quarantine and contact tracing

- Contact tracing and isolation or quarantine of sick or exposed individuals are among the most effective tools to reduce transmission of infectious disease. Yet like many public health activities, it raises concerns about appropriately balancing individual rights, notably privacy and confidentiality, with protecting the health of the community.
- Ethical use of quarantine & isolation," physicians should also educate patients and the public about public health threats, potential harm to others and the benefits of quarantine and isolation and should encourage voluntary adherence. School administrators should support mandatory measures when patients fail to adhere voluntarily.
- Different parts of a country may be in different phases at the same time.



- In Epidemic Phases 1–2 (imported cases and cases in known transmission chains): trace all contacts defined as all persons who have been within one metre of a confirmed case for 15 minutes at any time from two days before symptoms started to the time symptoms resolved.
- In Epidemic Phases 3–4 (community transmission, cases outside known transmission chains): halt contact tracing in all outbreak areas; perform contact tracing only in areas reporting first cases or high-risk settings.

Incident and disease reporting and notification

- Incidents of COVID-19 should be reported according to relevant national authority and WHO guidelines.
- Injuries to students, workers and visitors due to an accident at school or during school activity should be handled according to the national law.

Return to work/school

Before returning to work after school closure for a period due to COVID-19, the responsible authority should make a plan for work resumption that takes account of the safety and health of learners and teacher. The plan should consider:

- Update the risk assessment inclusive of COVID-19.
- Apply appropriate precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Vulnerable workers who are at high risk can be

allowed to stay home (e.g. older people those with chronic conditions and pregnant workers).

- Provision of sufficient PPE to workers
- Provide psychological support to teachers and learners

Protection against psychological impact including violence and victimisation

School management should alert both staff members and students on how COVID-19 affects mental health. The following aspects may be addressed:

- Inability to sleep
- Inability to relax
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling sad all the times and getting angry easily
- Thinking about death most of the time
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs
- Auditory hallucinations

Educate on things to be done to remain mentally health

- Provide information on how to reduce stigma against persons suffering from COVID-19 and their caregivers
- Educate teacher and school managers of how to assist children to cope at this time
- Provide advice for the bereaved
- Advice for persons with existing mental illness

5. Guideline on schools essential goods and supply chain and contractor management

The universities and schools should put a list of essential goods that need to be made available in schools' promises to main and sustain the school educational programme. This will also include a list of supplies and measures to be used to manage them to minimise the spread of COVID-19. The list may include but not limited to:

- Information and Communication Technology devices for educational purposes.
- Gases, liquids and chemicals used in the preservation of biological samples and maintenance of equipment.
- Animal feed for laboratory and farm animals.
- Printed materials to support learning and teaching, which may include textbooks, printed learning materials in other forms, and electronic devices with learning materials.
- Stationery products needed to support teaching and learning.
- Raw materials and technical products used in research and development and the manufacture of products supporting the response to COVID -19.
- Production of radiopharmaceutical products, radioactive isotopes and devices that are used in the nuclear medicine industry for diagnostic and therapeutic medical procedures.
- There should be a clear procedure on the management of supplies and contractors, which may include restriction of supplies in certain areas. Provision of a central goods delivery point and how the goods may be managed before supplied to offices and staff.

6. Key relevant documents

- ILO, 2020. In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring Safety and Health at Work.
- ILO, 2011. OSH Management System: a Tool for Continual Improvement.
- UNICEF, 2020. Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools.
- UNICEF, 2020. Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools.
- HSE, 2013. Reporting Accidents and Incidents at work.
- OSHA, 2020. Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19. www.osha.gov

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