

COVID-19: Perspectives for school systems in Africa

Overall perspective

April 2020

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Executive Summary

COVID-19 is, first and foremost, a humanitarian challenge.

Thousands of health professionals are heroically battling the virus, putting their own lives at risk. Governments and industry are working together to understand and address the challenge, support victims and their families and communities, and search for treatments and a vaccine.

Solving the humanitarian challenge is the top priority.

Much remains to be done globally to prepare, respond, and recover, from protecting populations at risk, to supporting affected patients/ families/ communities and to developing a vaccine. To address this crisis, responses must be evidence-informed, and based on partnership among various stakeholders/sectors, including but not limited to: medical product industry, regulatory/ compliance agencies.

As schools are closed governments face major challenges in ensuring continuity of learning

The global spread of COVID-19 has affected 199 countries and territories. In response, over 188 countries, 52 within Africa, have closed schools country-wide leaving over 1.6 billion children out of school globally and more than 300 millions in Africa; a measure that is expected to result in substantial personal and societal costs. Given school closures, globally governments have a double imperative of minimizing loss of learning while ensuring equity, this is all the more challenging in developing countries where digital readiness is low and education systems are already fragile.

Given their context developing countries might focus their response on key priorities

In the short term, and given challenging contexts governments might focus their response to school closures around 3 key priorities: (i) Setting up a targeted remote learning leveraging low/no tech solutions; (ii) offering targeted support to students, parents and teachers/staff; (iii) Adjusting assessment and grading to ensure fairness and equity;

In parallel, governments can prepare the Return to school by focusing on 4 key priorities; (i) ensuring health and safety at school; (ii) re-enrolling students in schools; (iii) bringing students back to their grad levels; (iv) preventing resurgence

An successful operationalization of the response can rely on an empowered nerve center, a strong partner engagement, and an effective communication



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Pandemic impact on education systems, and how to respond?

↗ Propagation trend⁵

- >100,000 reported cases
- 10,000-99,999 reported cases
- 1,000-9,999 reported cases
- 250-999
- 50-250
- <50

North and Central America¹
 Total cases >901,00
 Total deaths >49,600

Africa
 Total cases >30,000
 Total deaths >1,000

South America
 Total cases >86,900
 Total deaths >4,000

Europe
 Total cases >1,219,400
 Total deaths >109,900

China
 Total cases >84,200
 Total deaths >4,600

Oceania⁴
 Total cases >7,800
 Total deaths >80

Middle East³
 Total cases >139,300
 Total deaths >6,300

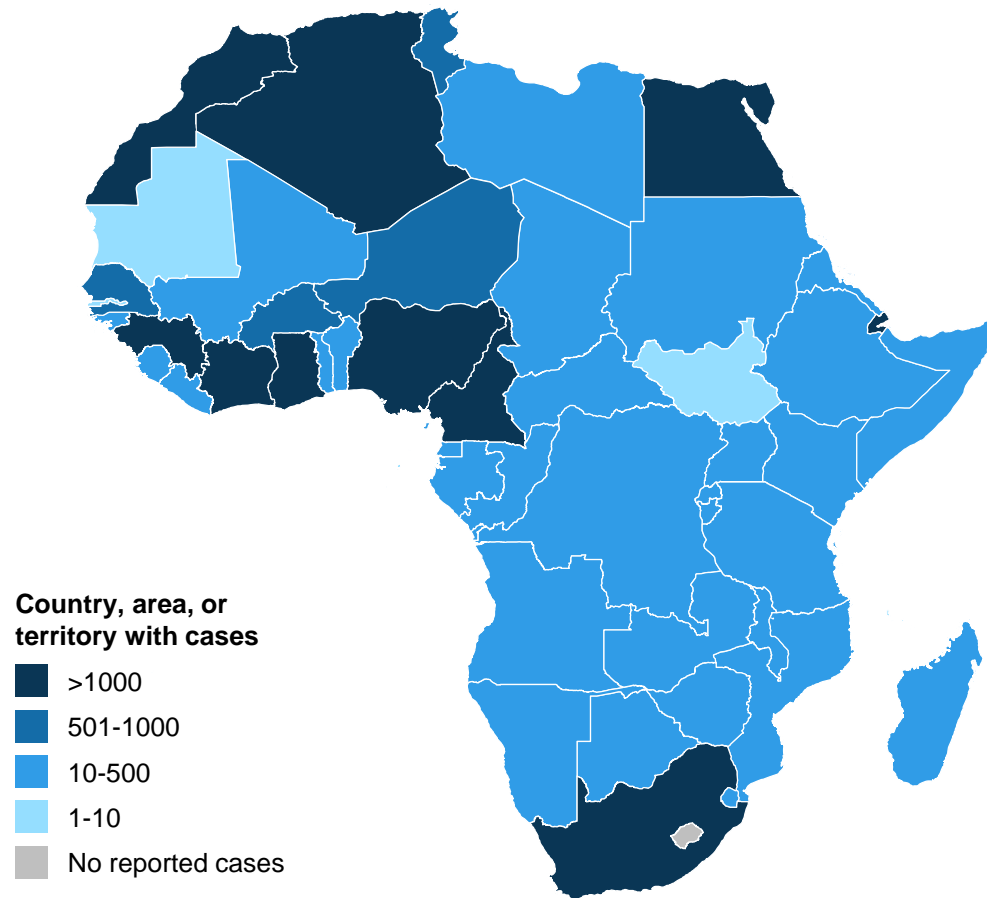
Asia (excl. China)²
 Total cases >78,000
 Total deaths >2,00

The virus has spread worldwide despite containment efforts

1. Johns Hopkins data used for U.S., all other North America countries reporting from WHO
2. Includes Western Pacific and South-East Asia WHO regions; excludes China; note that South Korea incremental cases are declining, however other countries are increasing
3. Eastern-Mediterranean WHO region
4. Includes Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea
5. Increasing: > 5% average daily case increase over 7 days; stabilizing: -5% ~ 5% average daily case increase over 7 days; decreasing: < -5% average daily case increase over 7 days

There are over ~30,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Africa...

At April 28, 9.00am GMT, 33,273 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 1,467 deaths and 10,091 recoveries across 52 African countries

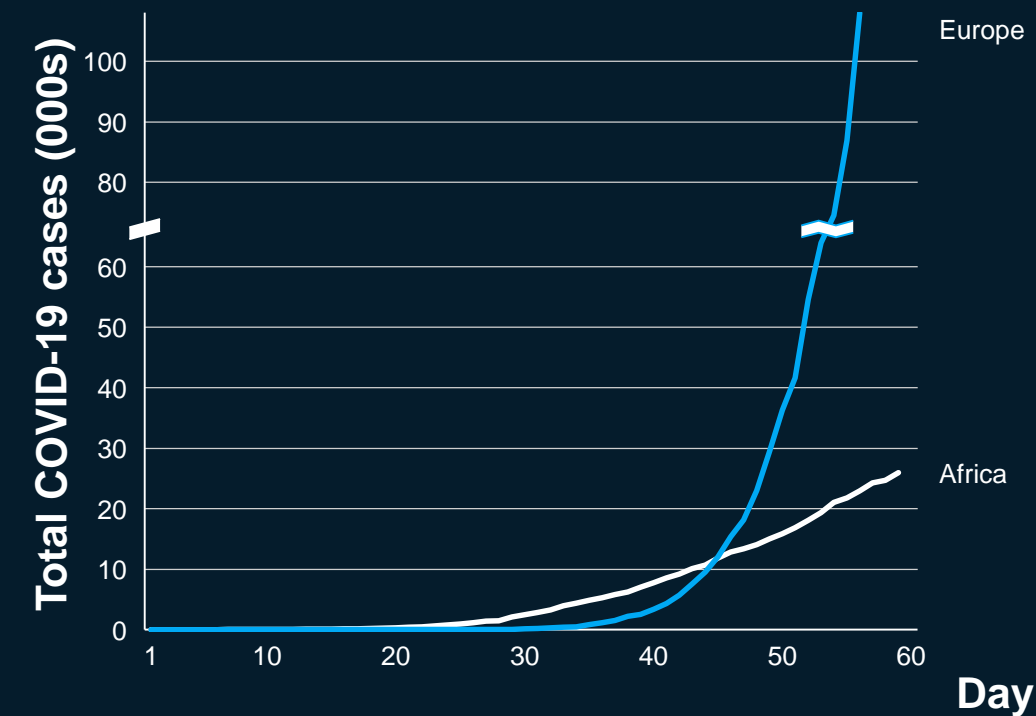


Source: Africa Centre for Disease Control and European Centre for Disease Control

...but the pandemic is growing at a slower rate than other regions

COVID-19: first 60 days

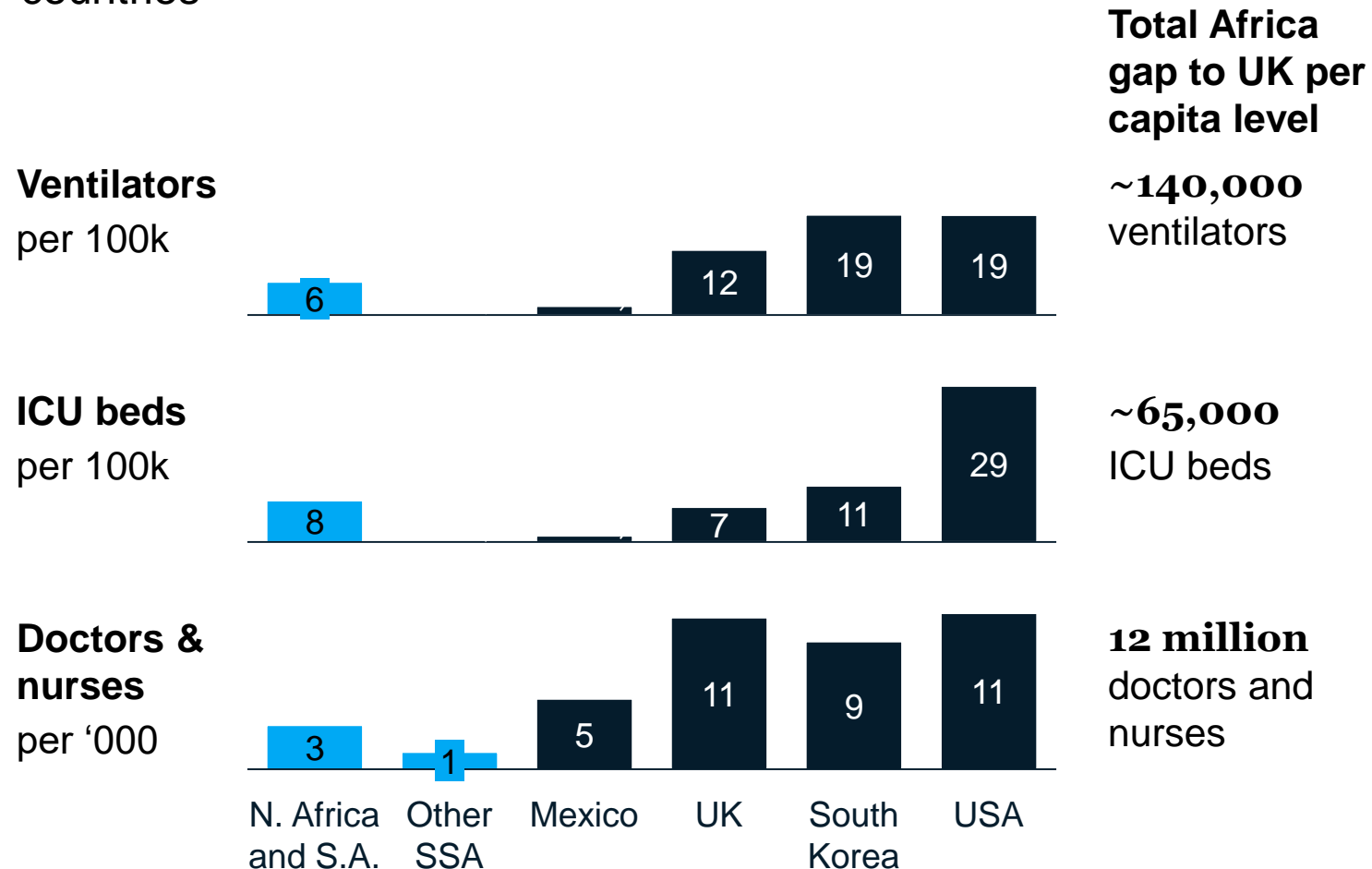
Comparison of the total number of COVID-19 cases reported over the first 60 days since first^{1,2} case reported in each region



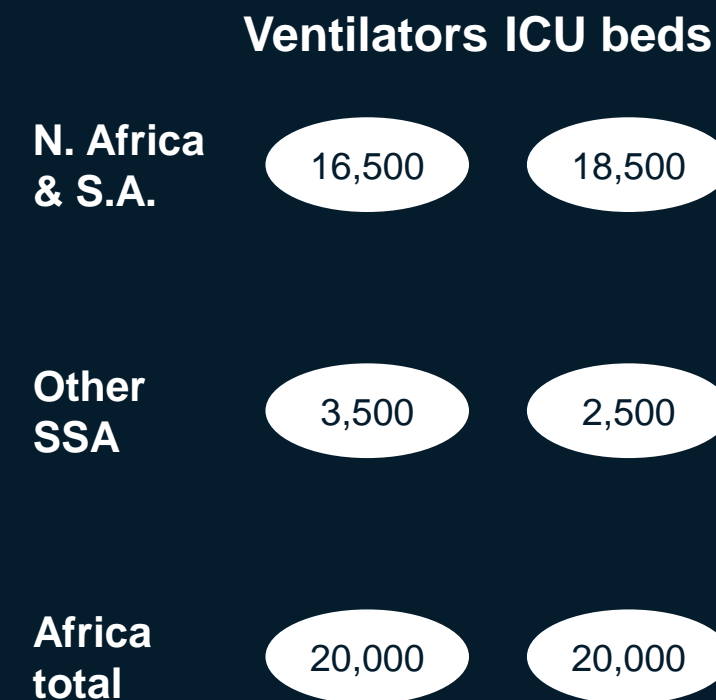
1. Africa counting from the second case for more accurate comparison as there was 1 case in Egypt during 10 days before more cases appeared
2. The numbers in Africa may be lower due to limited testing / different testing strategies

Africa's health system capacity lies significantly behind other regions

Africa's estimated critical-care health system capacity versus other countries









Estimated total capacity of continent



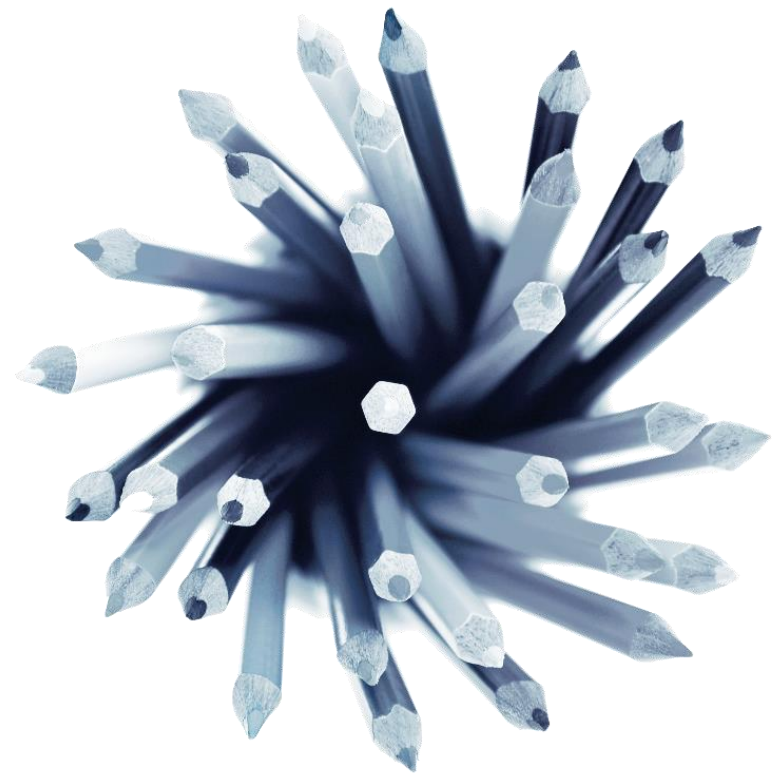
Source: McKinsey analysis, World Bank World Development Indicators, World Health Organization, Press searches

Consequently, at least two-thirds of the countries in Africa have implemented partial or nationwide lockdowns

Tally of countries by most restrictive policy deployed¹

	% of population affected	# countries	Country examples
Nationwide lockdown: Stay-at home restrictions nationwide	28%	~20	 S. Africa
Partial lockdown: Stay-at-home restrictions in certain cities	35%	~11	 Nigeria
Restricted intra-regional travel: Restricted movement across city zones	0%	0	Strategy not yet deployed
Restricted inter-regional travel: Restricted movement into and out of quarantined cities	11%	~3	 Cote d'Ivoire
Curfew¹: Restrictions on movement at certain times	9%	~8	 Egypt
Shutdown: Closure of schools, churches, non-essential businesses	16%	~11	 Ethiopia
Border restrictions only	1%	1	 Burundi

1. Restrictive policies are not mutually exclusive (e.g. countries have partial lockdowns and curfews), but we categorize countries only by the most restrictive policy implemented (i.e. one policy per country)



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Although the response to COVID-19 is focused on health systems, the pandemic is having a devastating impact on education systems

School response to COVID-19 pandemic in Africa



52 countries in Africa have completely closed schools



Affecting ~300 Mn learners



Madagascar partially re-opened schools



Burundi maintained schools open



● Closed ● Open

Every week of learning missed has substantial personal and societal costs. This impact is aggravated in countries with fragile education systems as they are facing a serious threat to the right of education and set backs for the sustainable development goal 4, in particular in terms of access and equity

In this context, some developing countries are facing a double challenge

Many countries experience low digital readiness...



Limited access to technology

Low digital adoption e.g. Morocco have 56% digital adoption vs. >80% for developed countries like Germany



Limited connectivity

Lack of access to internet e.g. in Sub Saharan African countries, 1 in 4 people use the internet, as compared to 4 out of 5 in developed countries



Low adoption of digital skills

Developing countries severely lack in digital skills e.g. in Sudan, only 4% adults are able to use basic computer functions



Lack of digital content

Limited focus on digital content e.g. total edtech spend for Africa is <5% of total global spend



Offering remote learning will be challenging and potentially differentiated within the country

... and already have fragile education systems



Low school completion

Large proportion of students do not complete their education e.g. only 44,1% of lower secondary completion rate in Sub-Saharan African countries



Unequal access

Girls particularly have limited access to education e.g. in Nigeria, more than 50% of girls are out of school

Inequality in learning opportunities b/w rural and urban e.g. 48,7% rural literacy vs. 74,6% for urban in Nigeria



Poor education outcomes

Below average learning outcomes e.g. ~88% of children, across Sub-Saharan Africa, are not achieving minimum proficiency in reading and math




Shortage of qualified, skilled teachers

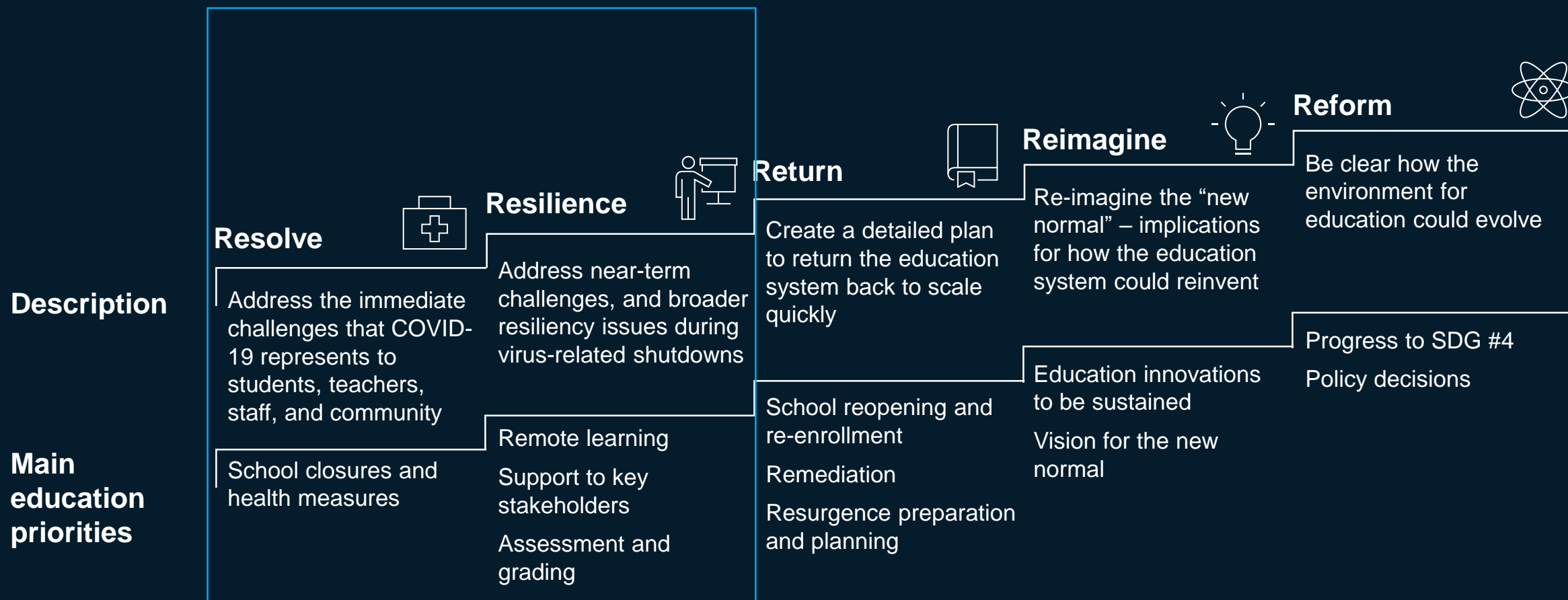
Shortage of qualified teachers e.g. shortage of 17mn qualified primary and secondary school teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa



Considerable efforts will be required to bring back students to school and ensure a return to their grade level of learning

Education system response to the pandemic could be approached along 5 key steps

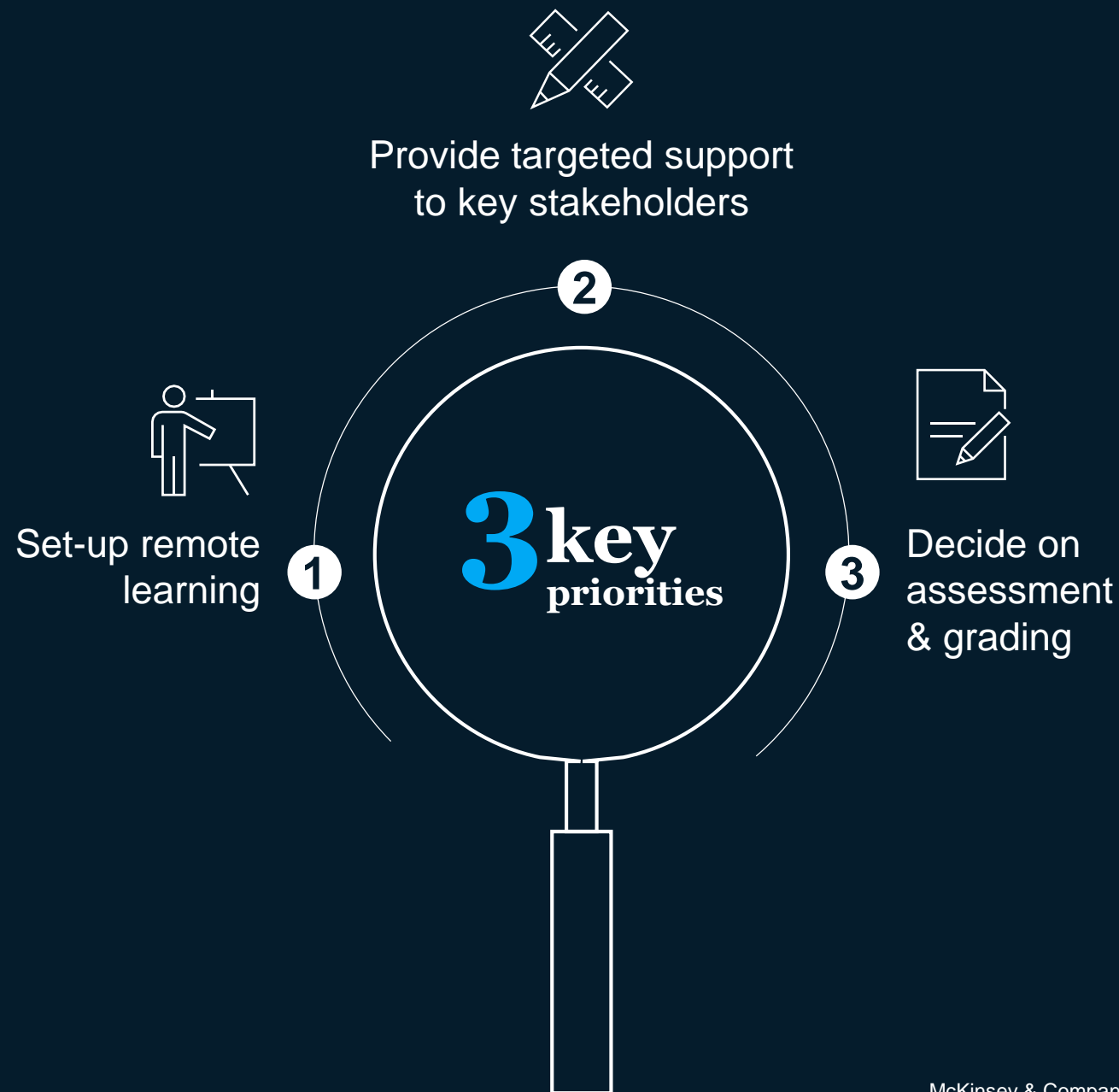
 Focus of this section



Nerve center

Managing across the 5Rs requires a new architecture to plan, coordinate, manage stakeholders and external partnerships

3 key priorities governments could focus on in the Resolve and Resilience



1. Depending on the level of digital readiness, countries may use different levers to set up remote learning

 Deep-dive

Digital readiness



Description

No/low tech maturity

- Teacher-student interaction limited or through **basic phones**
- Use of **printed material** for reading/assignments
- Use of textbooks for lesson planning and learning

Medium tech maturity

- **Quickly adapt in-person curriculum** using video conferencing and offline assignments
- Build sophistication of **adaptive learning and assessment software and curriculum aligned content** over time

High tech maturity

- Roll out of **virtual learning systems** with advanced learning features
- **Facilitation of peer-to-peer interaction**, practice assignments, interactive channels



Requirements

- High TV, and radio penetration
- Basic phone access for students and teachers

- **Internet access** for whole population
- Access to digital devices for students and teachers
- Availability of existing digital learning solutions at scale
- **Digital literacy for instructors**

- High speed internet access for students and teachers
- Access to digital devices for students and teachers
- Teacher digital savviness



Channels

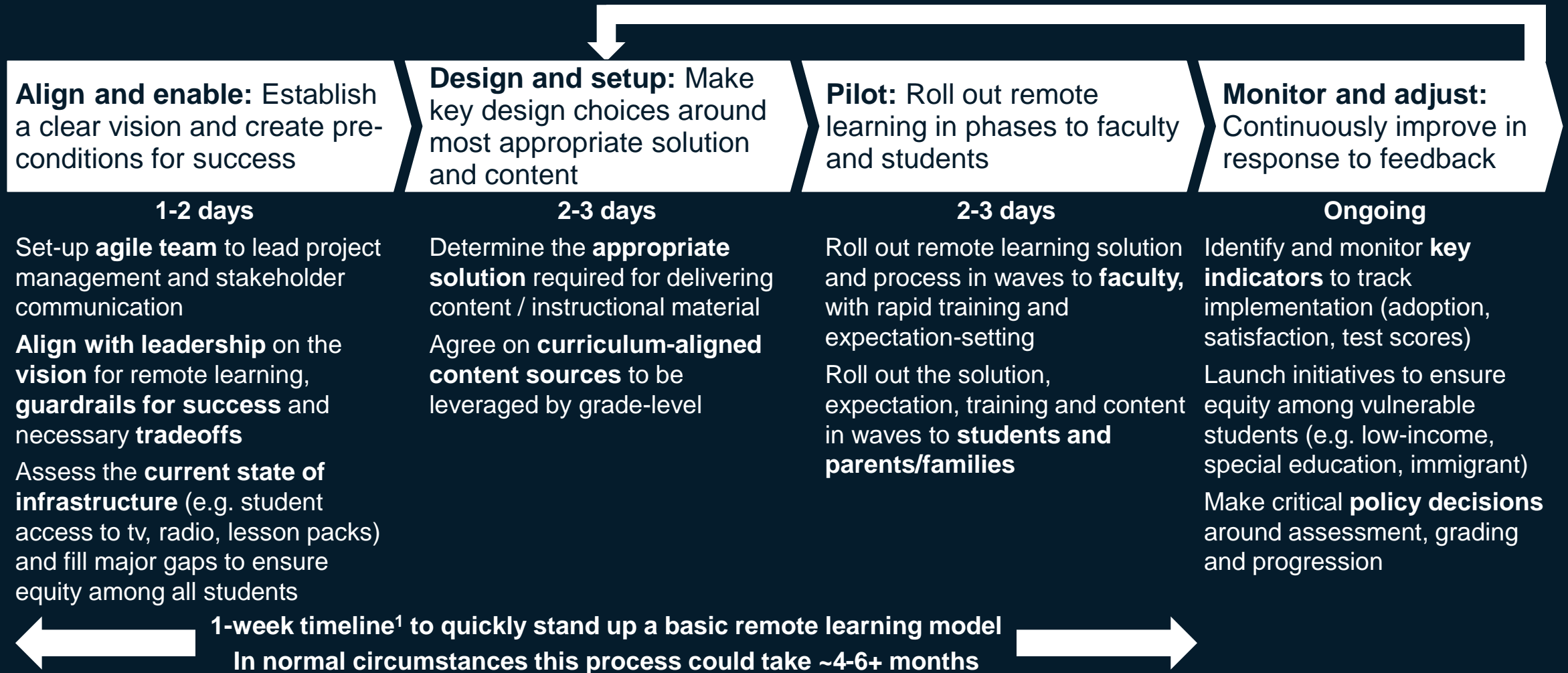
- Mass media channels
- Existing textbooks and worksheets

- Solutions with offline capacity
- Systems for basic phones

- Intelligent adaptive software
- Video-conferencing platforms
- Learning Management Systems

Level of tech maturity can vary be within and across countries

1. Rapid scaling of remote learning can happen in as little as a week, and requires multiple iterations to keep improving continuously



2. To ensure effectiveness of remote learning at scale, targeted support could be provided to students, parents and teachers

Non-Exhaustive



A Students

Support students in their learning and well-being during the crisis

Provide access to required solutions (e.g., lend phone, provide 4G cards, etc), and guidance in using them

Identify vulnerable students and provide addition targeted support to improve their well-being (e.g. counseling, child protection initiatives, etc)



B Parents

Engage parents to enable them to effectively support their children during the crisis (e.g. establish a robust communication channel for all relevant resources and updates)

Encourage parents to support the return of their children to school (e.g. awareness campaigns, economic and family support in particular to disadvantaged families, etc)



C Teachers

Empower teachers to safely and effectively support students in their learnings through targeted information and communications, health and safety assurance, aligned incentives, relevant trainings, access to necessary tools and infrastructures, and mental health support

2.A. Learning and mental health support could be provided to students with a special attention to children at risk

Not Exhaustive

Support learning



Limited access to internet



Prioritize existing platforms for mass remote learning delivery, e.g., TV or radio

Lend basic devices, e.g., radio, to students

Limit distance learning delivery to fewer or lower-tech platforms

Consider partnerships to fill basic infrastructure gaps, e.g., UNESCO, mail services to deliver materials to students with no internet access

Provide basic resources, e.g., videos, articles, on IT support

Reasonable access to internet



Prioritize vulnerable populations when distributing loan equipment

Consider external partnerships to fill infrastructure gaps, e.g., Telco companies for broadband connectivity/capacity

Repurpose non-teaching labor to provide IT support, e.g., hotline for support

Provide alternative space for students to access devices at safe distance e.g., computer lab with computers >6 ft apart

Support wellbeing



Provide guidance and increase awareness for self-care by launching communication campaigns on mass media (Radio, TV, etc.)

Mobilize counselors and specialized personnel to support children and work closely with local communities and Ngo's to provide feasible solutions

Identify children at risk (violence, abuse, early marriage, exploitation, abuse) and work closely with parents and communities to spread awareness and consider/take immediate action for those who are most at risk

2.B. The government has multiple options to support to parents as they play a key role in ensuring education continuity

Not Exhaustive



Inform/communicate

Make sure information and initiatives related to the system reach parents using multiple channels (Radio, television, SMS, platforms, programming, circulars, toll-free numbers, surveys, etc.) with frequent updates



Provide financial support

Provide economic support for the most disadvantaged families (e.g., stipend) encouraging them to let their kids go back to school



Raise awareness

Make sure parents understand the issues and the importance of educational continuity

Increase awareness on the value of school and encouraging families to send their kids back to school once the crisis is done

Supervise parents in difficulty (parent with low education level)



Offer family support

Set up a listening unit for parents with support from educational psychologists, associations, etc.

Launch pulses-checks (mood barometer) and surveys, or offer a green line for parents to collect their feedback and difficulties

Offer community support especially for essential workers (doctors, nurses, police officer, etc.)

2.C. Multiple initiatives could empower teachers to safely and effectively support students in their learnings



Inform/communicate

Provide a one-stop platform including all the information and initiatives relating to the system (platforms, channels, programming, circulars, toll-free numbers, surveys, etc.) with frequent updates



Ensure health and safety

Establish a health and safety protocol and provide the necessary equipment to teachers / teams mobilized for the creation of content for remote learning



Provide incentives

Set up communication campaigns that value teachers' work through TV and social media capsules

Set incentives for teachers to motivate and engage them sustainably



Provide trainings

Train teachers on using remote learning solutions (e.g., digital literacy and pedagogy webinars or toolkits)



Increase access to necessary infrastructure

Make the infrastructure needed for remote learning available :

- Access to electricity
- Access to devices
- Access to internet




Offer mental health support

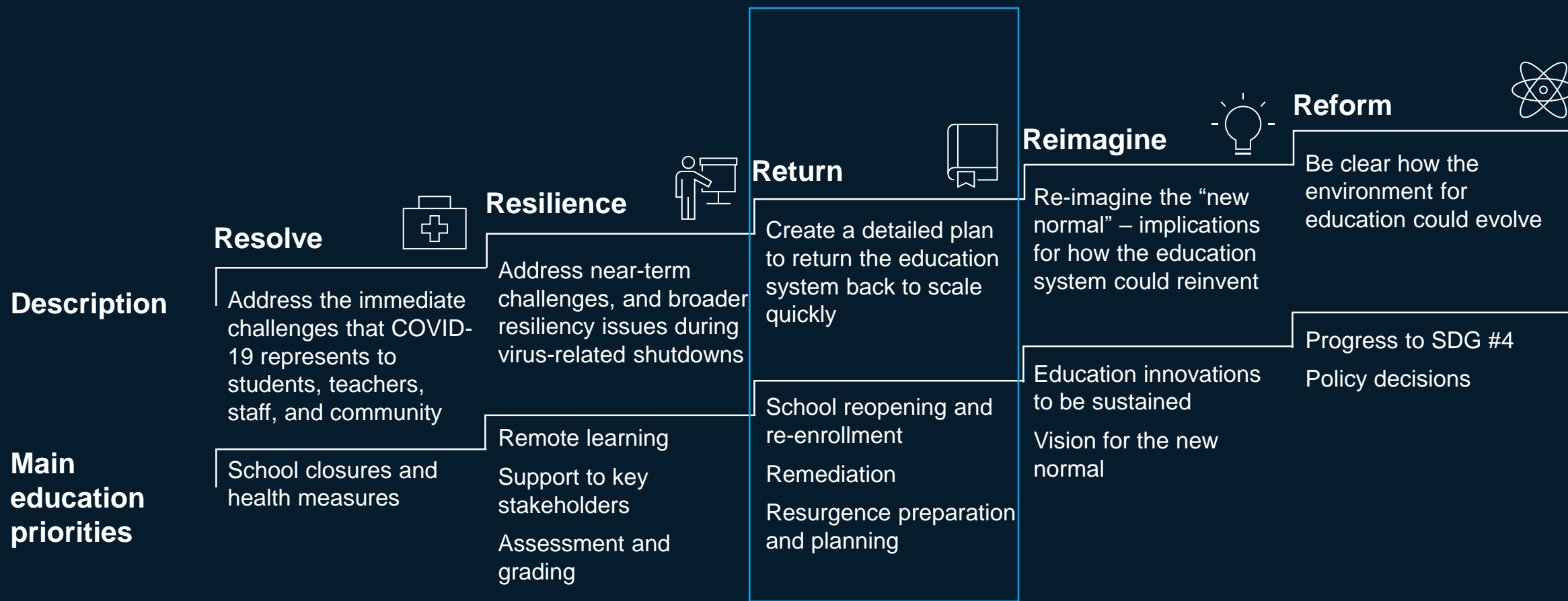
Set up a listening unit for teachers with support from educational psychologists, associations, etc.

Set up pulses-checks (mood barometer) and surveys



Education system response to the pandemic could be approached along 5 key steps

 Focus of this section



 **Nerve center**

Managing across the 5Rs requires a new architecture to plan, coordinate, manage stakeholders and external partnerships

Re-opening schools is important for societal continuity...

Benefits

- Allows pupils to resume their learning and development from qualified teachers and together with peers
- Decreases the risk of drop-out (in particular for girls, and students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds)
- Enables parents to return to work and reopen the economy by extension
- Safeguards support for vulnerable children that lack access to nutritious meals, safe environment, academic support, or effective/ affordable remote learning

...but risks need to be duly considered and mitigated

Risks

- Health of pupils, their families and teachers could be at risk if the pandemic is still not completely under control
- The regional/national transmission rate might increase as children are more likely to be asymptomatic carriers and maintaining social distancing measures at schools may prove challenging
- Parents may not send children to school yet and teachers may not yet come to work, if they do not feel it is safe to do so, causing a wedge among pupils, classes (teachers) and workers (parents)
- Premature reopening may leave schools ill-equipped to provide essential services, leading to more disruption among children

Deciding on reopening requires weighing public health risks against economic activity, student impact and ability to safeguard

Extent and weight of risks will vary across countries and regions

Not Exhaustive

Factors

Key questions

Public health risks

To what extent can the health of students, families, staff and the general population be safeguarded while opening schools?

Criticality for economic activity

To what extent does school closure contribute to GDP loss and unemployment by preventing reopening the economy?

Impact on student learning & thriving

To what extent is student learning falling behind when schools are closed?
To what extent are inequities exacerbated during school closures?
To what extent may students drop out of school? And what are the short and long term implications for society?

Ability to safeguard schools

To what extent are school systems ready to reopen with the right health & safety measures in place?




Considering the inputs of 3 key stakeholders

- **Parents**
- **Teachers**
- **Students**

Once reopening decision is made, readiness depends on four elements; health & safety becomes a pre-requisite

Preliminary insights

 Focus of today's discussion

1 Health & Safety

Key safeguards to be put in place with respect to following categories:

- Physical infrastructure
- Transportation and food service
- Scheduling and staffing
- Health and behavioral norms

2 Re-enrollment

Critical to reenroll students back to school especially those who are at a **higher risk of dropping out** and the ones who have not kept in touch with teachers during the lockdown

3 Remediation

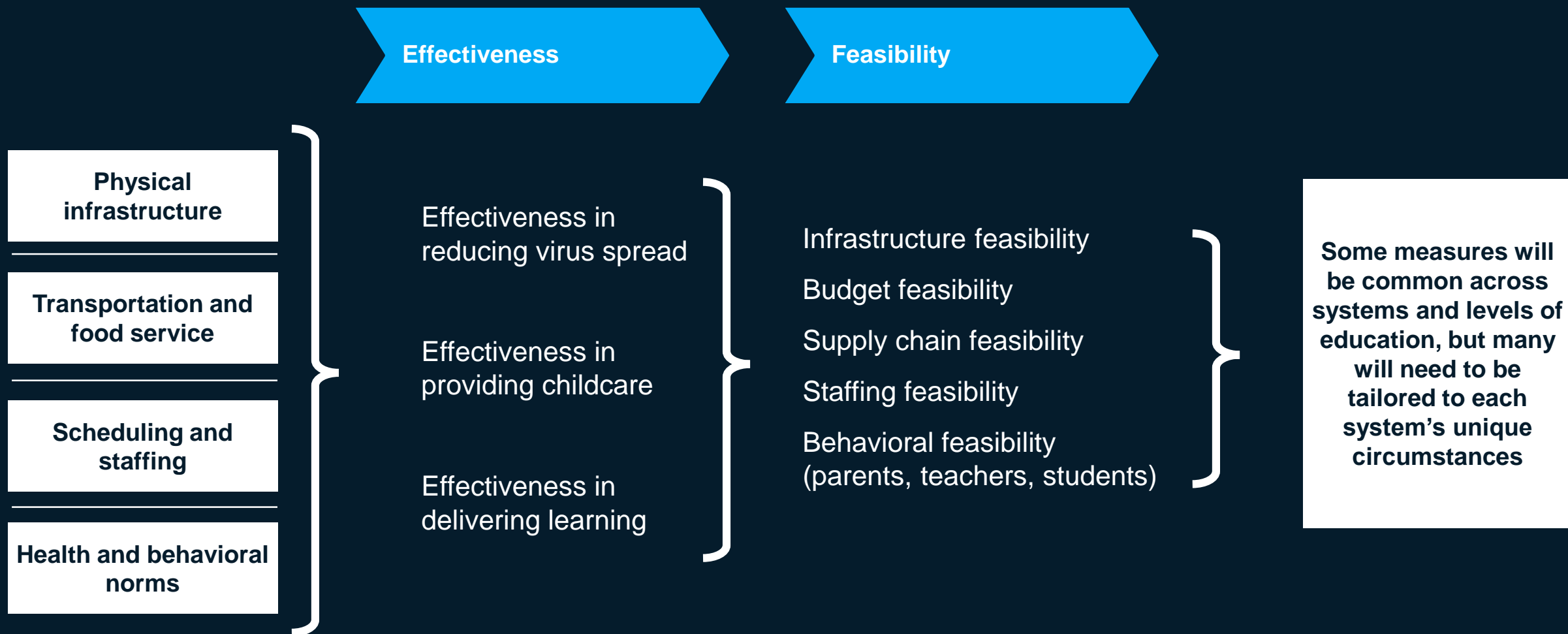
Planning required to fill **academic and non-academic gaps** created during school closure leading to loss of learning or other socio-emotional disadvantages

4 Resurgence planning

Advanced preparation for schools to be able to continue education for students **in case second wave of virus resurges**; readiness for blended learning for all students

1. In deciding which health and safety measures to implement schools are facing difficult trade-offs between effectiveness and feasibility

Preliminary insights



1. Illustration of example measures that schools in countries are taking to ensure health and safety (1/3)

Non-exhaustive

Physical infrastructure	Changes to ensure physical distancing	<p>Establish controlled entrances and exits (e.g. based on grade levels, students and teacher entry) and flows (e.g. one-way traffic in tight corridors)</p> <p>Restrict access to places that allow larger gatherings (e.g. cafeteria, staff rooms, libraries) or close these entirely</p> <p>Grid off sections for common spaces and lunch areas to help students separate and reduce seating to ensure >6ft physical distance</p> <p>Separate partitions in open spaces with high risk of interaction/ contact (e.g. playground, blacktop)</p> <p>Add plastic barriers and guards between desks (students and teachers)</p>
	Changes to enable health and sanitization protocols	<p>Install no-touch bathroom fittings, no-touch trash cans</p> <p>Install hand washing or hand-sanitizing stations at entrances, common areas in the school</p>
	Changes to create healthy buildings	<p>Improve building conditions and airflow (e.g., ventilation per OSHA guidance)</p>
Transportation and food service	Changes to transportation forms, routes, and sanitization procedures	<p>Increase number of bus routes to reduce occupancy on each bus</p> <p>Change bus schedules to bring students in batches that align to cohorts (grade-level, floors)</p> <p>Sanitize school transportation after each use</p> <p>Subsidize parking/ sponsor carpools / create safe bike/walking routes to encourage use of private transport</p>
	Changes to food service to reduce cross-contamination	<p>Ensure all food items and choices are fully boxed and no food can be directly touched by students; enforce 'take what you touch'</p> <p>Package cutlery, seasonings, sauces and napkins in single serve packages</p> <p>Stagger lunch times by class to ensure physical distancing; add markings on ground to prevent crowding</p>

1. Illustration of example measures that schools in countries are taking to ensure health and safety (2/3)

Non-exhaustive

Scheduling and staffing	Scheduling adaptations that reduce number of students on campus at any time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create staggered schedule for students to attend school on different days (alternating days) or different parts of the day (morning/afternoon) Place fewer than 50% students in the classroom to allow physical distancing
	Creation of cohorts to minimize number of people each student/teacher interacts with (e.g. by grade, by floor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create staggered schedule for cohorts to start/end at different times to avoid contact Develop learning schedule in cohorts to minimize contact with broader group of students (e.g. in primary reduce mixing for electives) Stagger recess, lunch hours to avoid contact between cohorts
	Avoidance of large groups and gatherings to reduce mixing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cancel assemblies and other large gatherings
Health and behavioral norms	Behavioral norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish physical distancing (>6ft) protocol at all times (either just teachers, or teachers and students) Enforce wearing of masks (either just teachers, or teachers and students) Set up regular schedules for hand washing and sanitation Enforce no sharing of supplies, lunches among students
	Training of staff, parents and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use promotional programs around hand washing and other best practices (e.g., “masks are cool” campaign) Set up trainings for current staff on health protocols Educate parents/ communities on school protocols and frequently share updated policies

1. Illustration of example measures that schools in countries are taking to ensure health and safety (3/3)

Non-exhaustive

Health and behavioral norms	Sick leave policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review attendance policy for students (ensuring students stay home in case of symptoms exhibited individually or for a family member) Set up sick leave and remote teaching policies for teachers to accommodate schedules of different grade levels
	Procedures on entering the school site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish controlled entrances and exits (e.g. based on grade levels, students and teacher entry) Check and log body temperature (with contactless thermometer, thermal camera) for all employees, visitors, and students Limit visiting hours from external members (incl. parents) Adjust protocols on receiving mail, deliveries, etc.
	Enhanced cleaning and sanitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced hygiene protocols on school ground with a focus on common touch points (e.g., doors, stairwell handles, light switch, elevator switch) Promote hand-washing multiple times a day (create schedule to avoid over-crowding for washing)
	Contact tracing, emergency and disease management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify health officials of suspected or confirmed positive cases Set up policies for closing classes, cohorts, or entire institution and for managing symptomatic students Set up protocols for contact tracing if cases are detected in school/ community Set up isolation facility to handle emergencies in case of cases detected on campus Partner with local communities, health institutions to be first point of contact during emergencies Schedule regular inspection in line with COVID-19 health protocols

2. Re-enrollment needs tailored approach...

Schools may need to develop tailored approaches to address concerns of...

- Parents who are unwilling due to inadequacy of health & safety measures at schools or increased transmission risk
- Students who may need to go to workforce over education after the lockdown, in particular due to worsening of economic conditions
- Students who may choose to learn remotely over attendance at brick-and-mortar school
- Students who have dropped out or reduced engagement with their schools/teachers during remote learning
- Students who are traumatized by the virus outbreak experience and unwilling to go to school
- Students migrating to inaccessible areas
- Students demotivated due to falling behind their curriculum over the remote learning period

...and a process that includes and addresses concerns of all stakeholders

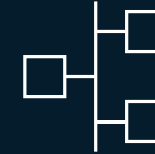
 Details follow



Tracking and data

Identify key metrics / gaps and track key census data related to re-enrolment, including:

- Number of students whose families may have moved out / changed districts
- Number of students who/whose families may need additional economic support to continue their education
- Number of students who did not have access to remote learning or fell behind their curriculum during the remote learning period



Interventions and measures

Lay out a set of interventions to facilitate re-enrolment after the outbreak including measures on:

- Raising awareness
- Communications and tracking
- Economic support / stipends
- Community support
- Enforcing negative incentives
- Partnerships








Policy and coordination

Develop a well-functioning implementation policy tailored to local conditions through:

- Stakeholder engagement and inputs from local communities on school needs
- Regular communication and coordination across local institutions on logistics and funding needs
- Increased private sector engagement

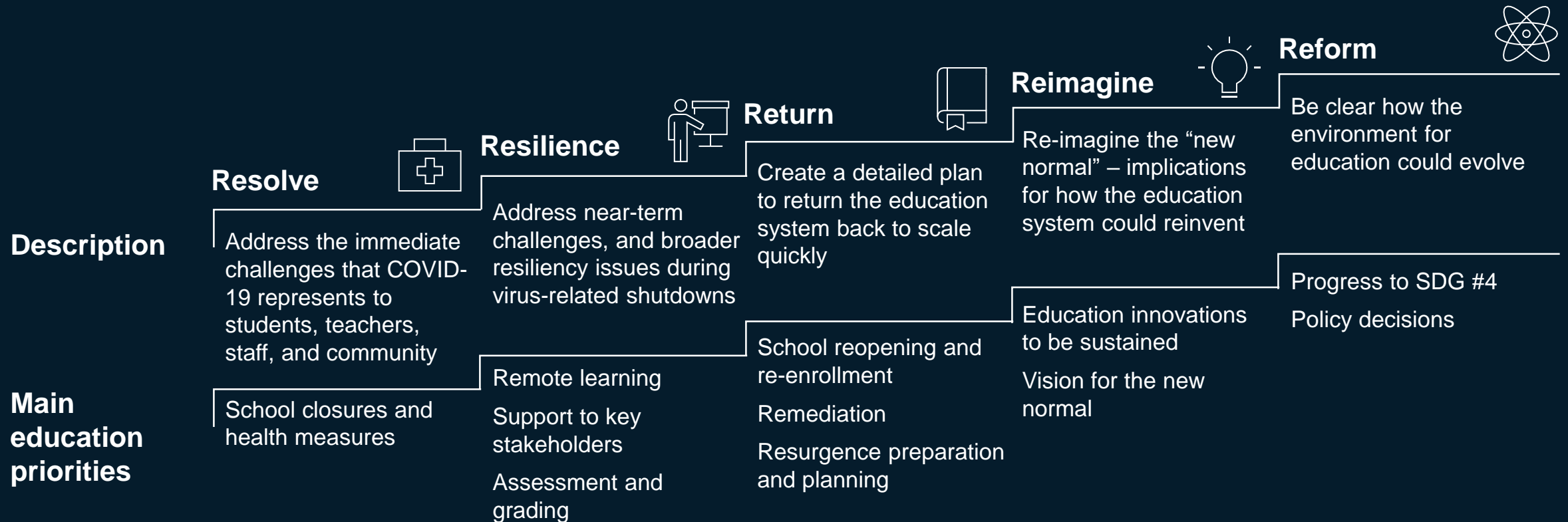
2. Schools can take a number of measures to support re-enrollment


Lever	Potential measures	Example interventions from past incidents
Raising awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochures on learning and precautions being taken schools to ensure students are not at risk • Conduct introductory webinars for parents and virtual tours for students 	 <p>After the Ebola outbreak in DRC in 2018, UNICEF trained 7,200 teachers in measures of prevention against Ebola and dispatched handwashing points, soaps, and thermometers to affected schools; schools also received information on methods of transmission / prevention</p>
Offering community incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outreach by schools through emails, text, phone calls to ensure parents understand the enrolment/re-enrolment process and dates • Leverage community volunteer groups to help establish community-based social uplift • Peer-to-peer network (buddy system) to keep students engaged 	
Online pre-learning /	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer additional flexibility on enrolment deadlines; provide clear online enrolment guidance and support • Offer online pre-enrolment learning options for incoming students (and personalized support) 	 <p>After Idai tropical cyclone, an NGO constructed two disaster-resilient schools in Sofala province with improved Wash (water, sanitation, health) facilities by working with local communities</p>
School-initiated engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular 1:1 check-in from teachers with students and parents • Visit with student families (if needed and possible) • Additional engagement by schools with at-risk students (in coordination with parents) -- 73% of high school dropouts indicated their parents tried to talk them into staying compared to 37% indicating their school tried to talk them into staying according to a 2017 survey in US¹) 	 <p>After the Ebola outbreak, Liberia provided subsidies to private schools for recovery, in addition to full funding of public schools, enhancing learning infrastructure and re-enrolment</p>
Economic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Conditional) cash transfers and stipends for families/students in need • Free school meals / equipment • Private school vouchers / subsidies • Strengthen enforcement of laws requiring enrolment • Strengthen enforcement of bans on child labour 	 <p>Davis Joint Unified School District (CA) offers online re-enrolment resources for parents, including an FAQ section in both English and Spanish</p>
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partnerships and increased private sector engagement • Agricultural incentives where applicable 	 <p>During the 2015 floods in Costa Rica, Education Minister asked school directors of more than 400 schools to check in with families to make sure they “don’t lose one boy or girl in the classroom”</p>

1. Educationdata.org (2017)

Education system response to the pandemic could be approached along 5 key steps

Focus of this section



 **Nerve center**

Managing across the 5Rs requires a new architecture to plan, coordinate, manage stakeholders and external partnerships

3 key elements could empower the nerve center to successfully drive the response to the pandemic



1 Agile organizational structure

Plan, coordinate, and manage COVID-19 response and collect essential data



2 Strong partner engagement

Involve private sector and the international community in the response, e.g.

- Telecoms and tech companies for remote learnings and stakeholder engagement and support
- International aid, bilateral & multilaterals for funding and expertise



3 Effective communication

Keep the public and key stakeholders (e.g. students, parents, and teachers) informed in real time to ease anxiety and fear and built trust with them during the crisis

Q&A