Impact of COVID-19 on Gender and Education
BACKGROUND
Countries worldwide have closed schools at an unprecedented rate in an attempt to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Caribbean region, it is estimated that 876,849 girls and 864,722 boys have been affected by COVID19 related school closures.

It is therefore easy to assume that learners will be safer or better off staying at home than mixing with others in the classroom.

The reality, however, is that for a percentage of learners out-of-school, school shutdowns bring other risks.’

While children’s health appears less impacted by COVID-19 than older adults, children’s education will be interrupted, protective structures disrupted and their families and communities placed under stress by health and economic burdens.
“WE ARE LIVING A PERIOD OF HIGH UNCERTAINTY DURING WHICH WE KNOW THAT COVID-19 RELATED SCHOOL CLOSURES WILL EXACERBATE GENDER INEQUALITIES.”

-- Suzanne Grant Lewis, Director of UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)
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IMPACT

Challenges and Ongoing Efforts
Food Security

- Poor families spend a large portion of their income on food.

- Changes in the price of food strongly affect the poor in Dominica, as they spend, on average, 54 percent of their income on food, double the share in most other countries.

- Members of poor households borrow money and engage in high-risk activities in response to poverty and food insecurity. Other negative coping mechanisms include reducing the number of meals and food portions.

- During emergency situations such as COVID-19 schools are usually closed and children are out of school. For many, meals through the school feeding program are one of the main sources of nutrition in the day.

- Sustainable Development Goal 2 – Zero Hunger

- Related program: Fresh Produce Deliveries
Access to technology

• Online Learning Challenges:
  – Zero/Shared Devices
  – No internet access
  – Minimum supervision/support
  – Language Barriers (Migrant Population)
  – Rural and indigenous communities

• Sustainable Development Goal 4
  – Quality Education

• Related program: Educational Packages, Full internet access at schools
Child Protection

- **Gender Based Violence**
  - COVID-19 is altering family dynamics in ways that threaten to put already vulnerable children at increased risk of abuse and neglect
  - Social distancing measures will compel children to spend most of their time at home with their parents, who are often the main perpetrators
  - Containment measures brought global economic activity to a halt, leading to higher unemployment. Research has shown that economic hardship is considered a strong predictor of child abuse and neglect

- **Psychological Well-being**

- **Related Program: Advocacy, Awareness-Raising, Health and Family Life Education**

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Dropout Rate</th>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>2011/12</td>
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Child Labor

- Return to Traditional Gender Roles
  - Unpaid work - Women and girls do the majority of household chores. In the absence of alternative options, unpaid care falls to girls to ‘pick up’. This may result in limited time to do course work/spend in online learning platforms.
  - Generally, more boys than girls drop out of secondary school, more boys than girls drop out of secondary school (Education Planning Unit, 2014). COVID-19 poses unique financial challenges that may lead boys to drop out of school to provide for their families.

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Recommendations
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» Promote Parental Support and father involvement

» Financial and psychosocial support for families at risk: welfare and safety net programs should be available particularly for the most vulnerable (Brown and De Cao 2020)

» Monitoring and Evaluation of learner’s participation and re-enrollment

» Increase access to technology especially in rural and indigenous communities

» Increased community sensitization on the importance of education for both boys and girls

» Consider needs of migrant population in policy development and programming

» Collect sex and age disaggregated data for effective program/policy development

» Strengthen synergies between Ministries of Education, Health, Social Services and Gender Affairs to strengthen response to issues that affect learning
THANK YOU