Engage

Changing Lives Through Education

“Capitalising on innovations and lessons learned over the past few months, the time is ripe to reimagine education so that it becomes everyone’s right and leaves no one behind.” Julie Saito
Welcome to the 21st edition of ENGAGE. As it is published we face renewed and escalating global risks as a result of the 2nd wave of COVID-19 newly impacting on many parts of the world. While the continuing of education provision may be at the top of political agendas in the developed world, the Foundation will keep a careful eye on those whose access to education has been significantly reduced and will be further threatened.

The global digital divide has been with us since the establishment of the Foundation but its significance for learning has now been thrown into very sharp relief. We are committed to progressing the work of the Foundation in the most effective ways we can and have a responsibility to act with agility and renewed focus to maximise the impact of our work. In this edition you can see how we have responded. All this would not be possible without the well-established support the Foundation continues to receive, even in these critical times, which is greatly valued.
From the Chief Executive’s Desk

It has been a tumultuous 6 months since publishing our last edition of ENGAGE. Life as we knew it has all but disappeared. Schools were first closed to pupils in March here in the UK, with the exception of allowing children of key workers to attend. With many of our projects on hold due to the COVID 19 pandemic we have had to find new ways of supporting our partners to keep children learning whilst ensuring everyone’s safety and wellbeing.

We have had to reassess our priorities and find new ways of supporting learning to continue in many of the countries we work in, particularly in the rural areas. We have supported over 5,000 students to keep learning through the provision of solar radios and learning resources in The Gambia in partnership with The Gambia Teachers Union (GTU). We have launched our Life Long Learning Webinars to enable us to share learning online and we hosted ‘Myths and Stories’, bringing young people from Haiti, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the UK to learn together, share stories and get to know each other. Sometimes the technology works and sometimes it doesn’t.

There is a huge divide between those who can afford to learn online and those who cannot. This gap will only get wider if we don’t all do something to help. We have teamed up with students at Brunel University to work on finding solutions to this challenge. You can read more about the work we have been doing on pages 10 and 11.

In this edition we share stories of hope and of working together. There are many organisations like ours who are working hard to achieve SDG4. Much of this edition is devoted to sustainability and girls’ education. Before the pandemic there were an estimated 263 million children that did not have access to education and there are now a further 20 million girls across the world that have had to stop going to school. It is unlikely that they will return. It feels so fitting that women working in this sector are sharing the important work that is taking place to provide education for all in this edition. There are articles from likeminded NGOs who are doing incredible work supporting the provision of education and campaigning for the right to education for all children everywhere.

The Steve Sinnott Foundation is proud to work in partnership with Send My Friend to School (you can read about the current campaign on Page 8), Teacher Unions in the UK and globally (page 9) and Unesco ASPnet (page 4).

The past few months have given us an opportunity to think, to create and to listen. We need to ask who is missing from this narrative, whose story are we not hearing, whose story is not being told? You will see on Page 10 the work of YTT who are giving children and young refugees a voice to tell their stories and allow healing through the medium of art.

We believe that to be deprived of a voice is to be deprived of agency over our own lives and that is why storytelling is so important to our work. Listening to other people’s stories brings us together, untold stories keep us apart.

We are pleased to promote The 100 Black Britons Competition and we hope as many schools as possible will take part in this learning opportunity (see page 7).

Our Ambassadors have been connecting us with partners, promoting our work and giving of their time to help in developing resources and projects as well as delivering webinars! I am so grateful to our staff team as well as our trustees and all our partners and funders and last but not least especially all the teachers for pulling together as usual throughout this difficult time, to keep children learning.

Whilst many of us are missing human connection we have found other ways of keeping in touch. This pandemic has brought immense changes and the future will be different but we are hopeful that this is an opportunity to improve ways of learning and the provision of education across the globe. What we have learned is that we are all stronger together. Communities do not need their power unlocked, they need it unblocked and we need to listen to hear what is needed, as local people have the local knowledge and experience to achieve what is necessary and sustainable for their context. We have witnessed people on the ground organising learning and support for others less able than themselves with great speed and efficiency.

It is the strength of working in partnership that allows us to change lives through education - working together, winning together!!!
UNESCO seizes an opportunity for change in education

BY JULIE SAITO

Julie Saito is International Coordinator for UNESCO’s Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) which connects more than 11,500 schools in 182 countries on the themes of peace, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development and quality education. She talks about the chance for change offered by COVID-19.

The pandemic has given us all an opportunity to think about more than one paradox in education. It has exposed the fragility of our education systems but demonstrated their capacity to adapt almost overnight to ensure learning continuity. It has been heavily reliant on technology for remote learning but highlighted the paramount role of teachers in supporting their students academically and emotionally. Above all, it has shown the extent of our interdependence, the impact of inequalities, and the value that education holds for individuals and society.

If we are to build back more resilience, education has to transform, with inclusion and sustainability as primary concerns. Education for Sustainable Development is already at the heart of ASPnet’s activities based on Sustainable Development Goal 4, and, in particular, Target 4.7 which aims to ‘ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development’. Each word here carries weight. Our work is to bring those words to life and action in all of our activities, communication and collaboration with our network of teachers, students and partners. And what is their meaning in the current context of the global pandemic the world has faced for the past 9 months that has affected 1.5 billion students in 190 countries? What role does education play in recovering from this crisis and how must it transform to meet everyone’s learning needs?

After drawing global attention to school closures and their impact, UNESCO launched the Global Education Coalition in March, a platform for collaboration and exchange to support learning continuity, bringing together more than 150 partners from the UN family, civil society, academia and the private sector. Within this context, ASPnet has adapted its activities along the main axes of Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development and Intercultural Learning, developing new ways to strengthen communication and collaboration among all our members. A global webinar in May provided the opportunity for over 600 teachers, students and parents of ASPnet from over 80 countries to share their experiences of learning and living in confinement. Anne-Fleur Lurvink, an English teacher in the Netherlands, summed up the chance for change offered by the pandemic: ‘I believe this crisis is an opportunity to think big, to be brave and to really make some bold decisions, when it comes to how we organize our education and learning’.

We also launched “the Change Initiative” that brings together teacher training institutions aiming to effectively support teacher educators and teachers, through a series of online activities. What is clear is that there can be no back to normal in education. Many governments are planning the future along more hybrid and blended lines. The foremost challenge is to get all children back into school, prioritize the most marginalized, address learning losses and harness technology as a force for inclusion. Across all these dimensions, teachers must be consulted, supported with professional development opportunities and their health and well-being ensured.

Fundamentally, the new normal in education must contribute to the emergence of a more equitable and sustainable growth model. Our education systems must help children and youth to become catalysts for positive change. They must be trusted and heard. Now is the time to embed socio-emotional skills in the curriculum, together with critical skills to assess information, combat intolerance develop a shared responsibility for our common humanity and planet – in short education that wires learners to champion peace. Capitalizing on innovations and lessons learned over the past months, the time is ripe to reimagine education so that it becomes everyone’s right and leaves no one behind.
The Stakes Couldn’t Be Higher

BY CELIA DIGNAN,
NEU INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

Having worked as a senior education policy adviser for the National Education Union (NEU) since its formation in September 2017, following the merger of NUT and ATL, and before that for the NUT, I was delighted to be appointed this year as the International Secretary of the NEU, the UK and Europe’s largest education union.

I am so proud of the dedication that educators across the UK and globally have shown to their pupils, both during lockdown and since schools have reopened. The move to distance and blended learning during lockdown was sudden and unexpected but educators rose to the challenge to keep children learning whilst also opening schools for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils; distributing food, ensuring families had access to books and educational resources, computers and internet connections as well as supporting pupils’ mental health and wellbeing and ensuring that children remained safe.

School reopening has posed many new challenges. Ensuring schools are Covid-safe and secure is a huge responsibility for educators everywhere but in countries where many schools lack basic sanitary conditions, such as access to clean water, it is a huge barrier to safe reopening. Covid outbreaks among staff and pupils and enhanced restrictions continue to cause school closures locally, nationally and internationally.

The pandemic threatens to set back by decades achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) which calls for inclusive, equitable and quality education for all. The impact on girls’ education in particular could be catastrophic without coordinated action to address this global education crisis.

According to UNESCO, over 875 million of the world’s students remain affected by COVID-19-related school closures, with the majority in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many may never return to school as the economic impacts of the virus limit government spending on education and force families to make difficult choices between education and economic survival, particularly where schooling carries a financial cost. When family budgets limit the affordability of education, gender inequality means girls are most likely to lose out.

The Malala fund has analysed the impact of previous health and economic crises and finds that marginalised girls are more at risk than boys of dropping out of education altogether following school closures. They estimate that approximately 20 million more secondary school-aged girls could be out of school after the Covid crisis has passed, if dropouts increase by the same rate as they did following the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone.

Girls who are out of school are more likely to face early marriage and motherhood, violence and domestic abuse. Save the Children has estimated that an additional 2.5 million girls are at risk of child marriage over five years and that adolescent pregnancies are expected to rise by up to 1 million in 2020, as a result of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

The stakes couldn’t be higher. An educated female population leads to improved health, gender equality, democratic engagement and economic growth for an entire country.

The theme of this year’s World Teachers Day, ‘Taking the Lead’ celebrated the crucial role of educators during the pandemic. Now Governments and global institutions must accept their responsibilities to ensure that high quality, free public education for all, girls included, is at the front and centre of sustainable national and international global recovery plans.

3 Ibid.
Education Interrupted

BY ANNA DARLING

Anna Darling leads Plan UK’s policy and advocacy work around global education. Anna’s role is to make sure the UK Government and other leaders prioritise access to good quality education for young people across the world, especially adolescent girls living in crisis such as in war zones and refugee settings.

The right to a quality education is the cornerstone of sustainable development. A quality education is critical to children’s safety and provides opportunities for them to reach their potential. However, education around the world, and the hope that it brings, is facing a generation-defining emergency: COVID-19. The pandemic has obstructed this right on an unprecedented scale. To stem the pandemic, in 2020, schools closed their doors to an estimated 1.6 billion learners globally.

But while unique to this century, COVID-19 is not a one-off crisis. The climate crisis, natural disasters and resource depletion mean children are increasingly on the move and therefore out of education. It is clear that education systems are not as resilient as they should be, often unprepared to deal with large-scale disruption. If COVID-19 was a test paper for the future, climate change will be the final exam.

And it is the world’s most marginalised children that will suffer the most. COVID-19 has laid bare social and economic inequalities worldwide, especially in the poorest countries.

For girls, many may never return to school, further entrenching gender gaps in education, increasing the likelihood of child marriage and exploitation, and undermining girls’ longer term opportunities. The risks are also severe for children with disabilities. Before COVID-19, over half of children with disabilities were out-of-school at the lower secondary level in low and lower-middle income countries.

COVID-19 is unlike any crisis the world has experienced in the last century. But it has also presented an opportunity for a more sustainable approach to quality education. Now more than ever, we have the opportunity to strengthen critical elements of education systems across the world. We have the opportunity to reassess the resilience and stability of our education systems and build back better.

The pandemic has highlighted the critical role that schools play in children’s lives beyond learning. From nutrition to health to child protection, school closures had a significant impact on children, beyond a loss to learning.

Education also has a critical role to play in building children’s resilience and adaptive capacities in the face of non-conflict crises. We need to look no further than the current crisis to see the unpredictability and complexity in the world around us. Education empowers children and young people to create a more sustainable future. Quality, safe and inclusive education provides children and young people with the critical life skills and knowledge to navigate this.

The sustainable goal on education includes a target promising that by 2030 all learners will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. Education can contribute to a more sustainable world because it can develop the skills and mindsets needed for building and contributing to a green economy and the promotion of sustainable communities.

Education improves the capacity of children and young people to be active citizens and agents of change who are better able to take action on crises that are interrupting their education. Young people can hold governments and other powerful decision makers to account.

The world must now take a systems-based approach to education if we are to ensure their sustainability for the future. As the Government prepares to host the Climate Summit next year, we must learn from the impact of crises – including COVID-19 and the climate crisis – on education across the world. And we must recognise the critical role that education can play in preparing young people for the world around them and creating a more sustainable future for all.
“It is great that after 16 years we are relaunching the 100 Great Black Britons campaign and producing a major publication celebrating a thousand years of Black British history and achievement. It is even more crucial that our history is seen as part of the national narrative, especially in the context of Brexit, as British identity is going through change and we have a legitimate right and voice in the shaping of this economic, social and political transformation which will have an impact on future generations. By learning about our shared history and the impact of Black British history and successes, I hope we will no longer be marginalised or erased out of public consciousness for the next generation.”

You can enter the competition here: https://www.100greatblackbritons.co.uk/competition.html

BY PATRICK VERNON OBE
FOUNDER OF 100 GREAT BLACK BRITONS
Send My Friend launch campaign to keep young people learning

BY HANNAH NIXON
SEND MY FRIEND TO SCHOOL CAMPAIGN MANAGER

Send My Friend to School is a UK civil society coalition of international development NGOs, teachers’ unions and charities. It brings together young people, politicians, teachers, civil society and the media in joint campaigning to demand quality education for all children across the globe.

A quality education is critical to children’s safety, opportunities and ability to reach their potential. However, education around the world, and the hope that it brings, is facing a generation-defining emergency: COVID-19.

Every child has the right to a quality education, but the COVID-19 pandemic has obstructed this right on an unprecedented scale. To stem the pandemic, in 2020, schools closed their doors to an estimated 1.6 billion learners globally.1

School closures amid the pandemic have compounded the already dire progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) - the global commitment to guaranteeing a quality education for every child. 258 million children were already out of school before COVID-19 struck, including 130 million girls, and UNESCO has predicted zero progress on reducing this number by 2030 (the deadline for SDG4).2 COVID-19 has been one of the greatest challenges of our lifetimes. However, we now have an opportunity to influence change and ensure all children receive the education that is their right. With the international G7 and COP26 conferences taking place in the UK in 2021, the UK government has the chance to be a global leader and take centre stage in driving sustainable and resilient progress towards quality education for all.

In practical terms this means:

• Keeping children learning by making home learning inclusive so that it meets the diverse needs of the poorest and most marginalised children. This is an important investment so that quality learning can still take place when schools are closed.

• Supporting a safe return to school through, for example, risk assessments, providing better school hygiene and building additional classrooms to make social distancing possible.

• Building back better so that education systems are better than they were before the pandemic and are more resilient to shocks and changes in case of future crises or emergencies. This requires greater investment and global leadership.

These tasks are the responsibility of the entire global community and not one country alone. However, the UK Government has the unique opportunity to set an example and lead other countries when it sets its new priorities and budgets for international aid, and meets other world leaders at the G7 and COP26 conferences taking place in the UK during 2021.

Therefore, Send My Friend to School are calling for urgent action now to ensure that all children everywhere can keep learning during and after the pandemic. Tackling the problems caused by the pandemic will also help to solve many of the other problems too.

To do this, we’re asking schools and young people to take part in the Keep All My Friends Learning campaign – anyone can take part, whether you’re in school or at home, and the resources are free to download. There are some really interesting case studies, a fun activity and instructions on how to tell your MP about the campaign and why it’s important. All you need to do is follow this link and download your campaign pack to start making change!

It is widely acknowledged that gender representation, in addition to other forms of diversity, is essential for society to thrive, yet women are still underrepresented globally in politics, health, business, and other organisations. Despite research which highlights the positive influences women bring to leadership positions, many organisations report difficulties in attracting and retaining women leaders. Schools can therefore play an important role in helping girls to realise their potential so that they can be the change that they want to see in society.

How can schools better prepare girls for future leadership positions?

1. **Engage men as allies**
   It is important for us to engage boys as allies by raising awareness of gender privileges so that they feel confident to challenge inequality when they see it. We need boys to appreciate the positive qualities that women leaders bring to the table and to work with girls so that gender equality can be achieved.

2. **Encourage STEM careers**
   Just 24% of UK STEM roles are occupied by women and these are wide-ranging, technical professions which are critical to the economy. By harnessing positive role models from organisations such as STEM Ambassadors, we might ignite a passion for future careers in STEM, particularly in young women from households where there is no prior experience in these areas.

3. **Financial education**
   Women live longer but financially poorer lives than their male counterparts, and part of this is around the ownership of finances, occupying lower paid, part-time roles, and the lack of professional careers with occupational pensions. Although no one young wants to think about retirement, financial education is key.

**Imposter Syndrome**
For years, girls have outperformed boys academically, yet girls may lack the confidence to believe in themselves and their future potential. We can help girls to be aware that having feelings of self-doubt is normal: imposter syndrome can affect anyone at any time. We can help girls to recognise the positive skills and attributes they possess so that they feel empowered to embrace and celebrate their positive qualities.

4. **Encourage Self-Care and Wellbeing**
   We teach our children and young people to take care of their physical and mental health; it is equally important to encourage girls to invest in their wellbeing. Whether schools are promoting positive body image or banishing berating self-talk, girls need to grow up appreciating that self-care is far from selfish: it is a necessity.

5. **Inspirational Role Models**
   We can celebrate the multifarious roles that women leaders possess: women can be mothers and partners in addition to being leaders. Let us teach our girls about the possibilities of flexible working patterns, showing them how to be assertive and confident so that they are able to make the future life choices which are right for them. Let us help our girls learn about inspirational women from diverse backgrounds in a range of careers so that they have positive role models to look up to.

For the first time in history, two women shared the 2020 Nobel prize for Chemistry proving that the realisation of a more equitable society is achievable. So, let’s encourage our girls to aim high, dream big and work hard to become the change we want to see in society. After all, you cannot be what you cannot see.

**BY SARAH MULLIN & DR DEBORAH OUTHWAITE - EDUCATORS AND WRITERS.**
Still Learning

Learning with Solar radio in The Gambia

Right now, we are supporting teachers in The Gambia through our project with the Gambia Teachers Union to deliver solar radios to students throughout the rural areas. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lessons are being broadcast through radio, but many children lack access to radios and have limited access to power. By delivering solar powered radios and other resources we have enabled over 5,000 children and teachers to access education in The Gambia during the pandemic so far.

Positive Periods

Girls are still missing up to 50 days of school each year just because they have their period. We are about to relaunch our new Positive Periods campaign. Teacher Training recommenced in Sierra Leone at the end of September and we are hopeful we can continue the training in all the other countries signed up to the programme over the coming months. This programme has been the result of 2 years of pilot research and will enable teachers to learn about periods and how to make reusable sanitary pads so that they can teach students in their schools as well as community members about managing periods. This will mean that girls can continue to go to school and not miss up to a quarter of their education because they lack any means of managing periods and the stigma attached to them. The project is flexible, owned and managed in country, sustainable, eco-friendly and highlights the power of women doing it for themselves with the support of some male colleagues!

Celebrating World Teachers’ Day 2020

The theme for the 2020 World Teachers’ Day is “Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”. For us this highlights an essential point about the role of teachers’ in the world and why we are working to support them.

We are delighted to be able to share a wonderful poem composed and read by one of our ambassadors, Sovel Cunningham of Quiet Mind Poetry, to celebrate World Teachers’ Day, which you can see on the right. This poem transports us back to our first day at school, and invites us to think about the changes we go through from year to year.

More of Sovel’s work can be found here: https://www.justbeingme.life/
Introducing the Wednesday ‘Life Long Learning Webinar Series’.

Keep your Wednesdays free for our Life Long Learning opportunity.

During the pandemic we have almost all been drawn into the wonderful world of webinars, video conferencing and online learning. We realised that not everyone has this opportunity and started to think of ways to raise money to support those who don't. So, here is our story of how we are using webinars to both offer Lifelong Learning and raise money to support others.

Our focus as an organisation is providing access to education for all children everywhere. To do this we need to share knowledge and learning, and raise funds too, and we've been developing ways to do both at the same time.

The partners and teachers we work with are doing amazing work across the globe, and we are trialling ways to share some of this learning so it's available to an ever-widening audience.

Our partners are giving their time to share educational webinars on useful topics for a wide range of people, and offer a percentage of any subsequent course sales to support the project work of the Foundation so that we can achieve Education for All children everywhere.

The webinars are carefully selected to support teaching and learning and they may also support building business skills, creativity and wellbeing.

We need to raise enough funds to provide technology and network connectivity to ensure teachers and students across the world can access the same learning opportunities in a safe way that we may take for granted. We also know that in today's climate many people can't offer the support they could before. So, we are offering these useful educational webinars on a 'donate what you can' basis so that all of our supporters gain something, and can help change the world at the same time.

As this story unfolds, we are finding that new people are discovering the Steve Sinnott Foundation through these webinars, and we are raising vital funds through the ‘Suggested Donation Tickets’.

Please have a look at the webinars coming up soon on the link below, they almost always held on a Wednesday afternoon or evening, so keep your diary free and come and learn something invaluable, whilst helping others around the globe have access to the same opportunities.

You can see some of our past webinars here too:

Trauma Informed Coaching with Will Thomas

Wednesday 9th September 2020

In this webinar Will shared some very useful information about recognising trauma and understanding the grief cycle. We got to understand how this affects learning and the ability to relate to others. Knowing more about trauma helps us to understand the children in our classrooms and their ability to learn. Children affected by adverse childhood events, are at higher risk of trauma. This needs to be treated as there is a higher chance of adverse effects later in life too.

To learn more, you can watch the video of the webinar here:

The Power of Intuitive Art with Heather Lillieth

Wednesday 30th September

Intuitive Art is a great way into, or back into, art and creative practice both for adults and children. For some reason many of us are are often put off art, thinking that we are not good enough but we can let go of all that in sessions like this. Intuitive art is about letting go of all the worry, and all the stresses of your day. It's a time for play and having fun, and in so doing it recharges your batteries. For artists its great to loosen up. For others it's a chance to play. For all of us it's a chance to reconnect with ourselves.

www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-steve-sinnott-foundation-31041262381

www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4W0Mv1mvVE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShWiqA4zJ64
Education and Sustainability: innovating to build resilience in education

BY REBECCA SHARKEY, CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY MANAGER, THEIRWORLD

The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the fragility of many of the systems that we live by today. For the education projects supported by Theirworld, it is clear that in order to keep going - to be sustainable - they have had to be even more adaptable and resilient than usual. Given the challenging environments many of these projects already operate in, this has been no small feat.

In 2013, more than 500,000 school-aged refugee children were living in Lebanon and very few were in school due to being displaced by the Syrian war. Theirworld funded a team of experts to work with the Government, international agencies and NGOs to develop a solution. The result was an innovative ‘double-shift school’ system in Lebanon, which saw Syrian refugee children use schools from 2pm onwards, after the Lebanese school day had ended.

Today, Theirworld continues to support the delivery of the double-shift schools, working in collaboration with local NGOs and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. However, due to political unrest and the Coronavirus pandemic, the 2019-2020 school year was severely disrupted in Lebanon. Parents became concerned their children would enter the next school year ill-prepared. To ensure that children were able to learn during school closures, we adapted our project activities so that teachers and special educators were able to reach children remotely via WhatsApp, with prepared videos and learning materials, and through Covid-19 safe distributions of activity packs at five pilot public schools.

Theirworld’s work to end the global education crisis is present in many countries around the world. For instance, another organisation Theirworld supports is the Youth for Technology Foundation (YTF), which uses digital tools to deliver learning and skills programmes to young people and women in vulnerable communities in Kenya and Nigeria. YTF provides most of its digital skills programmes - such as Code Clubs for girls and Skills for Their Future initiatives - within school classrooms. So the Covid-19 shutdown meant delivering learning in different and innovative ways.

“We were thrown into this new world just like everyone else. We are used to pivoting but not to this scale,” said YTF founder and President Njideka Harry. The organisation’s short-term Covid-19 response included supporting 100 teachers at primary and secondary school levels in Nigeria and Kenya. Professional development workshops showed teachers how to move their class content online and share it with students.

“Our role has changed and the role of the teachers that we work with has changed,” said Harry. “They are no longer the sage on the stage, they are now the guide on the side, as the students themselves have to lead their own learning. When teachers in Nigeria and Kenya go to teacher training college, they are shown how to teach using a pen and paper, with barely a mention of digital. So it is something that many have never seen. Some had never used email”. For all the suffering and disruption it has caused, the pandemic has also provided the chance to give teachers new, sustainable skills.

Amid Covid-19, governments, aid agencies and businesses are facing recession, budget cuts and competing priorities. In response, Theirworld has launched The Key - a comprehensive information resource to help everyone make a clear and robust case for education.

The free digital report is crammed with messages, statistics, taking points and infographics about dozens of subjects where education plays a key role - from climate change and inequality to public health and financial literacy. With education spending under threat, it is more important than ever to protect education and make its provision as resilient and sustainable as it deserves to be.

Please take a look at www.key.theirworld.org.
Education in a Time of Coronavirus

Elizabeth Pennington is Communications Officer for Yesterday – Today - Tomorrow and a freelance Journalist. She plans to study a Masters Degree in International Development next year, with a focus on Education in Emergencies and War Crime.

‘Names have been changed to protect the individuals’ identities.

When the first COVID-19 cases were announced last year, few expected such a Tsunami-like wave to follow. Now, almost ten months on, with approximately 30 million cases worldwide, and rising, in a WHO declared Pandemic, it is crucial that we do not ignore one of the most pressing global issues: children’s access to education.

In a recent campaign, Keeping Girls in the Picture, led by UNESCO, the pandemic could mean almost 11 million girls may never return to education. This places them at even greater risk of early child marriage and gender violence.

As the Communications Officer for a Global Education NGO, Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow (YTT), based in Paris, our team have seen firsthand the impact losing education has on a child’s well-being. Collectively, we have worked in over 40 refugee/migrant camps, centres and squats in over ten countries in Europe and North Africa, with hopes to expand further into conflict areas, where girls are at particular risk.

Since 2016, our research has led us to develop a Learning through Art & Theatre Approach focusing in two key areas: working in and for child/youth populations in emergency situations, designing psychosocial support, children’s-rights and peace/capacity building programs and working within the formal school structure, were our programs promote inclusion, diversity and the reduction of prejudice/racism for children and teachers. These programs, in line with the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, are adaptable to the local needs of the refugee, migrant and/or displaced populations.

Through our psychosocial support workshops, participants are invited to draw their past (Yesterday), their present (Today) and their future lives (Tomorrow). These drawings, collected from thousands of individuals since 2016, aged between 2-70 years old, have allowed us to create our visual database, sharing their stories, irrespective of one’s spoken language.

Our organisation’s Founder, Bryan Mc Cormack said: “With COVID, it is the most fragile populations that are the most affected. (...) Refugee education is or at least should be a priority for the world for the simple reason that having over 70 million refugee/displaced persons, the majority of whom are children, means that we are talking about an enormous percentage of humanity. (...) humanity is everyone’s responsibility.”

Reflecting on the educational impact, I am reminded of a 14 year old Afghan refugee, Amal’ who we met in Serbia in 2018. Now 16 and in Germany, she wants to become an author. Through her drawing, she explained how she uses her love of learning to block negativity in her life.

Or Malek*, a nine-year-old Iraqi-Kurdistan refugee, too young to fully understand her trauma, yet articulate enough to explain how she returned from Church to find her family decapitated by ISIS, their bodies hung from a hook on the tree in the garden of their Mosul home.

Now 11 and fluent in four languages, Malek wants to become a doctor, win a Nobel Peace Prize and help her community recover after ISIS occupation.

Malek, like so many young refugees I have met, is not allowing their past to define their future.

As a human right, every child must have the opportunity to engage in education. I believe that education changes lives and saves lives. There is still a grave misunderstanding about who refugees are. At Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow, I hope we can be a small part of the larger conversation on inclusive education for refugee and migrant children and for education in emergencies worldwide.

[Images of drawings]
Parents/adults are given the opportunity to assess mental and emotional wellness and provide intervention, if necessary, to address possible issues. We also do not assume that all parents are equipped to address trauma, stress, and mental wellness concerns with children, so we equip each box with a parent’s guide to help their child navigate through their thoughts and emotions. This guide also includes contact information for professional services that may be able to assist.

We’ve launched our Spark Box Summer Initiative providing Spark Box activity kits to families in Baton Rouge, Louisiana at absolutely no cost to parents. Support from the Mayor’s Office for the City of Baton Rouge and local businesses helped to make it happen, with currently over 2,000 kits distributed to children since June 2020. This initiative quickly caught the attention of eyes across the country through the amazing feedback from kids and parents. I was honoured to have the opportunity to share Spark Box on an international stage at Theirworld / Global Business Coalition for Education’s “Unlock Big Change” event for UNGA 2020. As a panelist for their conversation on “Education in Emergencies”, I was asked to explain why education is important and how education unlocks opportunity. My response was, “I believe education unlocks the opportunity to better articulate the greatness within us. We all have a light of greatness and revolutionary ideas within us. When this energy is matched with the knowledge of how to better express ourselves and challenge our current ways of thinking, it introduces new growth and opportunity to be a greater asset to ourselves and the world we are a part of.”

Unlocking Opportunities to Articulate the Greatness Within Us All

BY BOO MILTON

Emanuel “Boo Milton” is the creator of Spark Box and a member of Cities United Advisory Board. He is an active community organizer in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

In this time of many uncertainties, one thing that is certain is the need for continual growth and development of our society. The two key factors of that continual development are our youth and their education. When the pandemic first hit home here in the United States, and schools were closing, it really shifted how children received education. As the new virtual and distant learning continued, I observed many challenges within this new way of educating our youth.

Moving into the summer, when schools close and summer camps usually embrace the opportunity to engage with kids, many camps closed this year or only provided limited services. This really touched me personally because I enjoy volunteering at camps and helping children navigate through leadership roles and social-emotional learning. With this in mind, I created a solution to make sure kids receive continual development throughout the summer, called Spark Box.

Spark Box is an activity kit that focuses on social awareness, self-awareness, and critical thinking through social-emotional learning and creativity. These kits were designed and created with the idea that all children, no matter their economic background, are able to participate and thrive. With this in mind, all activity boxes are packed with everything a child needs, without having to rely on their own resources or purchasing new supplies such as crayons, a pencil, and other basic items to complete provided activities. So, even children who do not have access to the internet can engage and enjoy. Our activity boxes not only provide fun educational activities but also ask children to complete a “daily check-in” to express how they feel every day.
I completed a four-year law degree and, as many before me have done, started a new chapter. On the 24th July 2020 I officially graduated from the University of Nottingham from the comfort of my parents living room via MS Teams. It wasn’t the most celebratory or self-indulgent ending to what was an extraordinary period of my life but, we are living in extraordinary times. Starting as a fundraising assistant at the Foundation, however, has granted me a huge opportunity to tip toe myself into this new world.

A few years ago, I heard about the Foundation and its work and had been captivated by the stories relayed by Ann Beatty from her travels to Sierra Leone. There was clearly an unfaltering commitment by those involved to the Foundation’s mission of achieving universal access to education and the achievement of gender equality. Reflecting on my degree award and my education journey I became aware of the privilege of the education I had been able to receive and equally, acutely aware of how far that privilege is not widely shared. It was in the knowledge of the Foundation’s sincerity and determination in their mandate that I was keen to undertake this new project and hopefully be of some help.

In order to support the longevity and success of the projects being carried out globally, the Foundation relies on the support of its generous supporters and external partners. I had previously undertaken community projects and volunteered for charities, but I had never been tasked with developing a new scheme of fundraising before. I’ll admit the task was daunting, however, I can gladly say after some months that I have learnt a lot. Attempting to encourage a group of solicitors to undertake ‘pro-bono work’ and donate the usual fee, or, at least a percentage of it, to the Foundation was always going to be a task.

However, there is nothing that can’t be achieved with an inspiring email, a conversation and the right partner. Luckily for me the Foundation has undertaken so many impressive projects, that it was easy to connect with people over shared values. In particular, the Foundation’s commitment to sustainability was a key element of discussions. The importance of designing long-term solutions that utilise local resources and engage with a variety of stakeholders is an important factor to many.

Following the uncertainty and upheaval caused by the pandemic, I have been able to see the importance of fundraising and I began to look forward to the future of the Foundation and how the Foundation might be supported beyond the work I am able to do. It was on this line of inquiry that I discovered the importance of legacy donations in supporting non-for-profit organisations. Legacy income derives from gifts left in wills and the Foundation has, to date, received two generous legacies which have already been reinvested into their projects.

Recently, as a growing number of people are focusing on settling their affairs, there has been an increase in will writing, allowing many to contemplate what is important to them and how they want to be remembered. Although, these thoughts and their impact can often be uncomfortable, it is in these times that the bigger picture can also be seen. A goodwill gesture made now has the ability to affect the future; if this is something you have never given thought to please consider thinking about it now. A gift, large or small made to the Foundation, may mean the difference to a child or children around the world in having access to education and in turn to achieving their best potential.

If you would like to talk about this please call me on 01923 230208
https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/fundraising
https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/resources
Children’s Rights Are Human Rights

To mark Human Rights Day, join this webinar to learn how The Steve Sinnott Foundation and the Gambia Teachers’ Union are advancing human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thursday 10 December, 6pm

PLEASE REGISTER HERE:
https://neu-org-uk.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LLj_F25-TyKfzEdlQ_QHQw

If you would like to find out more about our work and get involved please call us on 01923 230 208 or email admin@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk