



The  
STEVE  
SINNOTT  
FOUNDATION

TWENTY-SECOND EDITION

# Engage



**Changing Lives Through Education**

*"If children receive the quality education they deserve, they can fulfil the roles needed by society to build more resilient systems for the future." Tom Vandenbosch*

# Jerry Glazier

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## FOREWORD

Welcome to this 22nd edition of ENGAGE, published just over a year after the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Only now are the longer-term consequences of COVID-19 beginning to be understood.

Progress with SDG4 will, regrettably, have taken an inevitable hit. This impact on global education will present new, worrying and sobering challenges.

Post pandemic education recovery will rely heavily on education workers and on governments renewing commitments to education as part of a national recovery programme. In addition to this the growing concern about young peoples' mental health and the recognition that mental health issues also act as significant barriers to learning must be addressed.

Let us all renew our commitment to working together; enabling and innovating to bring down the barriers that deny access to quality education for all.

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# From the Chief Executive's Desk

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Welcome to the latest edition of Engage. We are all looking forward to Spring as it has been rather challenging this winter. Thankfully we are being kept inspired and motivated by the courage and resilience of the teachers, educators and partners we work with globally.

We have had an opportunity to trial new ways of working and think about the best ways of investing in quality education projects that will deliver an education fit to provide the skills needed in the 21st century. We are trialling new ways of breaching the digital divide, as not everywhere in the world has access to the internet. You can read more about this in the Brunel University Study on page 12.

The Steve Sinnott Foundation works at a grass roots level to make a difference to education across the globe. We do this by working in partnership with educators on the ground, who scope and manage each project locally, so it is fit for purpose, respects the local culture and is sustainable and where possible replicable. We work with teachers to create independence not dependency.

Due to the pandemic we have seen schools closed to over 1.6 million students globally and although schools have reopened in many countries, many children may never return to school and for those that do their education has been interrupted. We have had to be flexible and open-minded as to how projects might work in the future and adapt our work to fit local needs.

One thing that the pandemic has illustrated to everyone is how connected we all are to each other. We do not exist in bubbles, our groups are made up of people in other groups, who are connected to more groups and so on. We are all connected across the world.

Lack of education, and therefore opportunities, is something we are passionate about changing. We believe that education is a human right for all children, it should not matter where they were born, who they were born to or their gender. Children should expect access to a quality education that gives them choices for their future.

We are extremely proud of the partners we work with who have been so resourceful in delivering projects that support the achievement of SDG 4 – you can read about some of these projects on pages 8,9 and 10.



The best way to keep up to date with the work of the Foundation is to check out the regular weekly updates on our website: [www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog)

This edition focuses on education Post Covid-19 but we are well aware the end may not be very soon. Therefore, we feel it is important to share the ideas and innovations that have worked for us during the pandemic. Hopefully they may prove useful to others engaged in future work that is needed to improve teaching and learning practice.

In this edition you can read about Safe Passage Inspiring Young Leaders on page 7 and how Unicef are working to prevent future crises on page 5.

We have 2 new global schools projects that we would love you to get involved with. We are excited to announce a partnership with The Big Draw and we are calling for schools to join us to "Make the Change", more details on page 14. We are looking forward to sharing poems for World Poetry Day on the 21st March, through a special invitation from The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation. More details on page 15.

At SSF we are proud to be part of a collective group at the Send My Friend to School Coalition that campaigns for investment in education both in the U.K and globally. Please do get in touch to see how you and your school can get involved in campaigning for investment in education. <https://sendmyfriend.org/>

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of ENGAGE and thank you to everyone for your amazing support, without which none of this work would be possible.



# Teachers and school leaders are critical in solving the COVID-19 crisis

BY TOM VANDENBOSCH

Tom Vandenbosch is Global Director of Programmes at VVOB - education for development is a non-profit organisation founded in 1982. Commissioned by the Flemish and Belgian governments it contributes to the quality of education in developing countries.

As the driving force of learning, teachers and school leaders are the key to achieving all of the SDG4 agenda. But the roles of teachers and school leaders are complicated by the increasing demand for 21st century skills, emerging effects of technologies on teaching and learning, as well as the full consequences of COVID-19.

We cannot expect teachers and school leaders to bear the brunt of today's education disruptions by themselves. In our quest to mitigate this and future crises the best way we can, we need to invest in professional development and support for teachers and school leaders.

If teachers and school leaders are placed at the front and centre of COVID-19 responses, they can be a critical part of the solution to the crisis. If children receive the quality education they deserve, they can fulfil the roles needed by society to build more resilient systems for the future. At VVOB – *education for development*, we have been inspired by the many powerful examples of resourcefulness and resilience of our staff, our partners and teachers and school leaders to keep children learning throughout the crisis. Around the world, many have united in a drive for change, putting education front and centre on the recovery agenda.

Take the example of Honorée Dukuzumuremyi, who teaches chemistry in lower secondary at Ecole des Sciences de Musanze, in Musanze district in Rwanda. She says: *"My mother was a teacher, but also a role model. This was so inspirational to me as a child. I feel uplifted when my students uplift their knowledge and skills. When I see how students like my lessons, so interested and curious to know more, I feel very excited." But she is also worried about deepening inequalities because of the COVID-19 crisis: "I try to communicate to some of my students/ parents through WhatsApp and through emails but I can only reach a few. Some of them don't use WhatsApp or don't have access to internet. I always ask parents to support their children to continue learning during the COVID-19 crisis. We prepare assignments and upload them on the school website."*

We praise and thank teachers and school leaders for their tireless efforts in support of learners throughout this crisis. Teachers and school leaders are navigating a constantly shifting landscape, with not only their own health, but also the health of learners and the community at large at stake. As schools closed their doors, teachers and school leaders reinvented the way they teach and lead. When schools reopened, teachers and school leaders returned courageously to their classrooms and schools and made the necessary arrangements for health precautions and learning continuity.

Without decisive, bold action, the global learning crisis will only worsen amid the social and economic challenges exacerbated by COVID-19. Addressing challenges to children's education is urgent, but it's not too late. Leveraging innovations and tools already at our disposal, as well as the creativity and commitment of teachers and school leaders, there is a massive opportunity to come together and improve the quality of education for millions of children and young people around the world.



# Preventing future crises: lessons from Covid-19 for climate displacement

BY ANJA NIELSEN

SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, EDUCATION AND YOUTH  
UK NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR UNICEF  
(UNICEF UK)

From England to Egypt, India to Italy, children around the world are continuing to face severe disruption to education during Covid-19. Schools are shuttered, playgrounds are closed, sports groups are on pause – children's worlds are on hold. The well-reported UNESCO figure that 1.6 billion learners were out of school at the peak of the pandemic continues to make the rounds, often followed by the phrase 'even before Covid-19' and an alarming statistic about the world's lack of progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the scale of disruption – and its impact on the world's already stagnating progress towards achieving universal education – are deeply troubling.

But while Covid-19 has taken many education systems by surprise, it is neither the first nor the last disruption that many children will face in their educational journeys. Climate change, including climate displacement, could cause further gaps in education if systems are not built to withstand the shocks we know are coming.

There are many lessons to draw from educational responses to Covid-19, including the critical importance of distance learning initiatives, relevant teacher training and support, and closing the digital divide, to name a few. These lessons add to those already developed through previous emergencies, such as the need to prioritise education in times of crisis, addressing children's psychosocial as well as educational needs, and providing school feeding programmes to draw children back to school. These lessons must all be collected and used to strengthen education systems to prevent future disruption.

The impact of climate change is clear and its impact on human mobility stark. The World Bank reports that, in just three regions,



143 million people could be on the move due to climate change by 2050.<sup>2</sup> Across the world, children and their education are already affected by displacement due to storms, rising sea levels, droughts, and other weather-related incidents. As climate change intensifies, these challenges are only likely to increase. The world's response must similarly strengthen, or risk educational disruption for millions of children.

How do we do this? We focus on building systems that support children before, during, and after educational disruption.

Before the crisis, we need to ensure children have the skills necessary to respond and adapt, and infrastructure must be strengthened to prevent any disruption. Plans for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and remote learning must be in place before another crisis hits.

During disruption, children must be able to continue their education and bring their progress with them. Technology, such as UNICEF's Learning Passport, can play a key role in this.

Finally, education systems must be able to bounce back and reintegrate children rapidly following crises. Getting all children back to school should be a priority in any emergency.

Time and again children tell us that they want an education. In their aptly named report *What do children want in times of emergency and crisis? They want an education*, Save the Children notes that '99% of children in crisis situations see education as a priority.'<sup>3</sup> For everything children have given up to stem the spread of Covid-19, we owe them renewed efforts to deliver on the promise of SDG4. We cannot, and must not, let them down.

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, 'Education: From disruption to recovery', 2020. Available at [tinyurl.com/ya3scc7L](https://tinyurl.com/ya3scc7L).

<sup>2</sup> Kanta Kumari Rigaud et al, Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration, World Bank Group, 2018. Available at: [tinyurl.com/ygdfsvsn](https://tinyurl.com/ygdfsvsn).

<sup>3</sup> Save the Children, *What do children want in times of emergency and crisis? They want an education*, Save the Children Fund, 2015. Available at [tinyurl.com/va9f4tc](https://tinyurl.com/va9f4tc).

# Crisis upon a crisis: COVID-19 and the education emergency

BY ZOE COHEN



**Zoe Cohen is the Secretariat Coordinator of the International Parliamentary Network for Education (IPNEd), the first global parliamentary network dedicated to education. IPNEd seeks to grow and deepen political understanding of and commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education for all.**

In mid-April 2020, 1.6 billion children and young people found their education disrupted. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools and education institutions across the world to close, leaving learners in over 190 countries to contend with severe interruptions to their education.

As countries across the world have implemented pandemic-response strategies, the return to, or continued closure of, schools has remained contentious. The International Parliamentary Network for Education (IPNEd) has been supporting MPs to navigate the implications of COVID-19 for education. Whilst there is no zero-risk strategy for the reopening of schools, a lot can be done to ensure they are safe places to learn.

In Argentina, IPNEd member Diputada Brenda Lis Austin has led a powerful campaign for the return of face-to-face teaching <sup>1</sup>, and on 17 February 2021 children from five of Argentina's regional districts began to return to school for the first time in almost a year <sup>2</sup>. In some countries, school reopening was strongly prioritised in government response plans. Sierra Leone, for example, supported by learnings from the 2014 Ebola outbreak, authorised the reopening of all schools by 5 October 2020 <sup>3</sup>.

However, for millions of children, the reopening of schools does not mean a return to learning. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, 258 million children and young people were already out of school <sup>4</sup>. Characteristics including gender, disability and ethnicity have played a significant role in children's likelihood to attend and remain in school. Moreover, 330 million children were in school but not learning the basics <sup>5</sup>. <sup>1</sup> [twitter.com/brendalisaustin/status/1359294032376180738?s=20](https://twitter.com/brendalisaustin/status/1359294032376180738?s=20)

Children affected by displacement, crises and emergencies face additional and protracted obstacles to education. In 2019, over half of all school-age refugee children were out of school <sup>6</sup>.

Projections have found that the pandemic will substantially increase the number of children out of school for the first time in decades. The Malala Fund has estimated that half of refugee girls in secondary school will not return to school due to COVID-19 <sup>7</sup>.

For most children around the world, COVID-19 presented an unprecedented education emergency. For refugee and crisis-affected children, disrupted learning is commonplace. For these children, COVID-19 is a crisis upon a crisis.

Although the global recovery from the pandemic remains unpredictable, education responses must build on lessons from COVID-19 to strengthen education system resilience, implement learner-centred remedial programmes, and retain a focus on the children left furthest behind.

International support for and investment in Education Cannot Wait, the only global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises, will also be crucial to securing an equitable return to learning.

Political leadership at each of the national, regional and international levels will be vital to ensuring a sustainable recovery from COVID-19.

IPNEd is supporting parliamentarians to champion education, reaching across political divides, regions and the world. In the National Assembly of Pakistan, for example, IPNEd Regional Representative for Asia, MNA Mehnaz Akber Aziz, has been working with her colleagues to advocate for the prioritisation of education and the furthest behind in the COVID-recovery.

In a post-COVID world, the political will to ensure children can access learning must be redoubled.

For marginalised children, and particularly those affected by crises and emergencies, COVID-19 has not created an education emergency, it has exacerbated a pre-existing one.

IPNEd is working with MPs to ensure that as the world recovers from the global health crisis, the education emergency is not forgotten.

With less than a decade left to achieve SDG 4, a generation of children may never return to school. The international community must come together and redouble our commitment to ensuring the return to school and learning truly is, for all.

<sup>1</sup> [batimes.com.ar/news/argentina/schools-in-argentina-finally-re-open-doors-for-students.phtml](https://batimes.com.ar/news/argentina/schools-in-argentina-finally-re-open-doors-for-students.phtml)

<sup>2</sup> [snradio.net/ministry-of-basic-education-issues-official-school-re-opening-guidelines/](https://snradio.net/ministry-of-basic-education-issues-official-school-re-opening-guidelines/)

<sup>3</sup> [uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth](https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth)

<sup>4</sup> [report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning\\_Generation\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning_Generation_Full_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [www.unhcr.org/steppingup/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2019/09/Education-Report-2019-Final-web-9.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2019/09/Education-Report-2019-Final-web-9.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [www.globalpartnership.org/blog/displacement-girls-education-and-covid-19](https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/displacement-girls-education-and-covid-19)



# Safe Passage Young Leaders: Education for Social Change in the Virtual World

BY RUTH HOLTOM

**Safe Passage International helps refugees access safe and legal routes to sanctuary. Through a combination of campaigning, advocacy and legal casework, they influence policy and work directly with young people and families to help them reunite with loved ones and reach sanctuary. Youth Advocacy and Campaigns Organiser Ruth Holtom works with an inspirational group of young people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds - Safe Passage Young Leaders - who speak out about issues that affect them and others like them and campaign for a more welcoming, just and equal world. She shares her experience of virtual engagement with the group.**

Every Tuesday morning, I open my laptop and send round a Zoom link to the young people I have the privilege of working with, reminding them that we will be meeting that evening. Then, just before our evening session, I log on to Zoom and get ready to welcome them into our virtual space. Their names pop up in the waiting room, and we all gather on the screen, our faces lit up by the glow of our phones or computer screens.

Compared to preparing for face-to-face workshops, running these weekly Zoom sessions might seem simple and stress-free. Instead of filling my bags with flipchart paper, risk assessments and petty cash, I simply log on to Zoom, share my screen and create some breakout rooms. But as anyone currently facilitating online learning knows, youth engagement in this new virtual world brings a whole host of new challenges.

After hours of algebra and English on computer screens, often struggling to connect to unreliable WiFi, it can be tiring and draining for the young people we work with to participate in additional sessions in the evenings. It is a challenge to ensure that everyone can join our sessions, when there is such disparity in digital access, homelife and English language levels. However, I have been constantly astounded by the Young Leaders' energy and commitment to bringing about the change they want to see in the world, even when they are unable to meet face to face.

## **Safe Passage Young Leaders**

These inspiring young people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds meet weekly online to make friends, learn new skills, and work together to make change and challenge injustice. The young people I get to work with are experts by experience on refugee policy and they care passionately about creating safe and legal routes to safety for people like them. Since the pandemic began, the

Safe Passage Young Leaders have achieved an incredible amount from the confines of their own homes. In the past nine months, they have:

- Produced a video calling on politicians to protect family reunion for refugees.
- Written and delivered a letter to members of the House of Lords urging them to vote to protect family reunion in the Immigration Bill.
- Met influential MPs and peers online and shared their views and opinions on issues relating to asylum and immigration.
- Got involved with Safe Passage as an organisation, shared their ideas and expertise, and helped us to recruit new members of staff.
- Collaborated with other groups of young refugee campaigners, such as Hummingbird Young Leaders and Kent Refugee Action Network Youth Forum, creating connections across geographical divides and building strong networks of solidarity and support.

In this new year of 2021, the Young Leaders have a lot to speak out about. Now that the UK has left the EU, and with it the Dublin Regulation family reunion scheme, refugees must apply for family reunification through domestic immigration rules, which are much more restrictive. Furthermore, various other resettlement schemes for refugees are still on pause due to the pandemic, and the government has recently announced that it will not be continuing resettlement for child refugees from Europe.

Campaigning with Safe Passage, the Young Leaders are hoping to influence policy on these issues in an upcoming government review on safe and legal routes. Over the past year they have proven to be brave and unflinching in their words and actions, and I have no doubt that these young people will stop at nothing to hold the Government to account.

*If you have any questions about Safe Passage's campaigns or the Young Leaders group, contact Ruth at [ruth@safepassage.org.uk](mailto:ruth@safepassage.org.uk). If you know a young person who would be interested in joining the Young Leaders, you can find out more [on our website](#).*

# Our Projects

Over the next couple of pages, you will see updates on our project work. Working in partnership with colleagues on the ground together with the help of our supporters, we have been able to keep children learning as well as support access to education for children who have never had it before now. [www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/projects](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/projects)

Throughout the past year we have had to adapt our ways of working and think outside the box. Often the solutions for safe learning were to bring lessons on-line. Unfortunately, that option is not available to all children everywhere. We have highlighted some of the ways we have overcome problems such as this and given outlines of ongoing projects planned for 2021. You can find more information on our website.



## Positive Periods Programme

In The Gambia and Sierra Leone this project has been running for several years and this month we welcomed

our Cuban colleagues to the initiative. They have been innovatively using WhatsApp to provide the Positive Periods training and the making of period pads or "intimates" as they are called in Cuba. Norma Guillard, Naima Guillard and Rosaida Ochoa Soto are the phenomenal women who organised the sessions and have delivered the training across Cuba through over 20 Women's Organisations, they have named it the "Dueñas Initiative".

## Provision of Solar Radios and Bicycles

Both radios and bicycles have been delivered to remote areas by Marie Antoinette, the General Secretary of the Gambia Teachers Union and her team. The children and teachers in these remote areas had to walk more than an hour to and from school each day. Often the children would be too tired to learn. During the pandemic teachers have been broadcasting lessons via radio for children who do not have access to on-line learning. The children and teachers will all benefit from shorter journey times to school by bicycle and connecting to others through solar radio.



## Gender Based Violence Training

Educators in Sierra Leone and The Gambia have undertaken this training this month. Training on promoting gender equality and safe learning environments in schools is building the capacity of 280 teachers to establish protection mechanisms in various schools and promote equal learning opportunities for both boys and girls.



### The Calderwood Mother and Children Centre Jamaica

*Christiene Walford-Wilmot, the centre manager, is the JP (Justice of Peace) of Calderwood District St. Ann in Jamaica and a BSC Educator with forty years teaching experience in primary and early learning. She is a member of the St. Ann Retired Teachers' Association, Vice Chair of the Grant's Mountain Primary and Infant School, St. Ann and the Women's President in her church.*

As the Manager for the Calderwood MaC (Mother and Children) Centre my main role is to create a safe learning environment for the children to develop core skills in readiness for starting school. Working with the mothers to help develop their parenting skills and encourage interacting with their children is also a key responsibility. I demonstrate and assist them in using the resources and educational materials to ensure their children are given the best support to begin discovering and exploring their senses, while developing core motor skills.



Jamaica has the third lowest adult literacy rate in the Caribbean, so engaging the children in books and encouraging the mothers to read with their children plays an important part of the centre's objectives. The MaC Centre is a hub that is bringing the community closer together in providing a common learning environment where parents can share strengths and weaknesses. Our aim is to create a holistic lifestyle giving parents an opportunity to access a variety of learning resources that will contribute to all aspects of their children's development.

The MaC Centre is generating a great deal of interest and support within the community. Young parents, especially mothers, are looking to the centre to support them with setting up online accounts and help develop their IT, literacy and employability skills. Local people have been suggesting ways to raise funds to help the centre move to its next phase of supporting the elderly and SEN members of the community and provide a safe space for young people to study with text books and internet access.

I believe the MaC Centre has been a lifeline for many citizens living in Calderwood, especially the young mothers and their children. I feel blessed to be part of this incredible initiative and honoured to play my part in promoting its facilities and benefits to the wider community.

*The Calderwood MaC (Mother and Children) Centre was founded in July 2020 by Evadne Bygrave in memory of her late father, Egbert George Bygrave, who built the centre for the Calderwood community in 1996.*



## Life Long Learning Webinar Series

These webinars started out as way of sharing the incredible work of some of our partners and educators. They have evolved into 3 themes of "Supporting Teaching and Learning", "Mental Health and Wellbeing" and "Creativity and Entrepreneurial Skills". As we tested out the different webinars, we realised that one of the most important contributions we could make at this time was to provide webinars that could support teachers and educators, parents and students to thrive. Some of the webinars are purely to encourage you to take an hour out for yourself.

Here we share the story of one of our webinar hosts: Will Thomas, and some of the incredible work he has been doing to support teachers and educators, parents and students through this weird and challenging time.



Will Thomas is a trainer, coach and therapist for over 20 years working in education and private practice. He has been an education advisor and trainer to the Foundation for 10 years. He was research lead for EFT International, the organisation that leads on the use of the potent trauma treatment Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT Tapping).

Over lockdown Will realised that the mental health needs in schools and the wider community were growing exponentially.

Working virtually was the only way to reach people. He quickly worked out that offering a range of options for people to meet e.g. for one-to-one walks, using the telephone or video links and even 'WhatsApp' messaging has meant more people felt comfortable to continue sessions where the Covid rules allowed. One young person who was chronically anxious and unable to use video or telephone media, has now got into work and is thriving in life, through a text-based weekly conversation. In these challenging times Will acknowledged that we have to think laterally and creatively.

Different courses required different technology to work effectively. Will has said "in some ways it's been a steep learning curve to grasp the technology to offer truly blended learning online..... What is most heartening about it, is the way that we've reached more people than could ever have engaged face to face..."

Will's particular passion is supporting the marginalised. He runs the website "The Perfectly Wonky Life", which offers support to those for whom life has not been straight forward. He defines the 'Perfectly Wonky Life' as a glorious celebration of the strengths and joys that come from living a life that is challenging and might seem separate from the mainstream. He sees challenge and trauma as a rich source of opportunity to make the world a better place. This comes from client work but also from his own traumatising life experiences. These, together with his work with the LGBTQ+ community prompted his recent book "When the Bough Breaks". It's a beautifully illustrated poem which charts a path from change and loss to healing and joy.

At a time when so much is changing for us all it's an evocative and simple message of hope and healing.

You can watch the Introduction to Trauma Informed Practice which Will hosted for the Life Long Learning webinar series here: [youtu.be/PkwESD8\\_nwY](https://youtu.be/PkwESD8_nwY)

His education support is offered through [visionforlearning.co.uk](https://visionforlearning.co.uk).

His work supporting the celebration and healing of those for whom life has been challenging is to be found at [www.perfectlywonkylife.com](https://www.perfectlywonkylife.com). His article on the stages of grief and change through the Corona virus epidemic can be found at [willthomascoaching.com/blog/](https://willthomascoaching.com/blog/)

If you would like to find out more about our projects please visit [www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/projects](https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/projects) and check out the blog which is updated weekly: [www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog](https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog)



[www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-steve-sinnott-foundation-31041261381](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-steve-sinnott-foundation-31041261381)

# The Steve Sinnott Foundation Response to COVID-19 Crises in Phnom Penh

*Nicola Palairet is the Partnership Development Director for Flame and has been working in Phnom Penh for more than five years now.*

Life for the marginalized families living in Phnom Penh's slum communities is tenuous at the best of times. Flame staff identify families whose children are unable to attend school because of financial pressure. We give these children the opportunity to go to school. For many it's not just a chance for education, it's a radical change in their life's trajectory. Without it, these children would be unable to break out of the cycle of poverty. SSF and Flame are partnering to make a difference in their lives.

While official cases of COVID have been remarkably low in Cambodia, closing borders and the overall shrinking of the economy has led to massive losses in the tourism and hospitality sectors. COVID-19 has increased stress and financial hardship significantly. For some, there has been the threat of homelessness; for others, a decrease in daily wages has impacted the ability to put food on the table. Incomes for those 'at risk' is so low that hunger was already a serious issue pre-COVID. So, even when a family recognizes the importance of education, food is the first priority – and school takes second place.

Many children have a deep desire to learn in school but are prohibited by the financial strain on their families. We have sought to address this. Children who in the past have had to work to support their families or provide care for younger siblings are now regulars in school and attend the Flame After School Centres daily where they laugh and learn, as well as get a nutritious snack and have their own toothbrush! There are computer classes for the older kids and daily literacy and numeracy lessons for each child. The centres are clean and bright, and the teachers who have also come from hard backgrounds, appreciate the challenges of education for these young kids. They know exactly what it's like to face huge obstacles and overcome them. This is what we call 'The Full Circle'.

As a young child, one of the children in our program, Sokea, walked the streets with a huge plastic sack of recycled bottles on his back. His recycling work to support his family left him no time for school. At home, his dad was on a small daily wage as a motorbike taxidriver and his mother was bedridden. When we first met him at 9 years old, he told us that he would love to attend school. He had previously been in school but had to drop out to support his family. We visited his parents and asked permission for Sokea to attend public school and our After School Centre. We said we would supplement the family for the loss of Sokea's income and they agreed. When finances were tight, however, his family continued to send him out to collect plastic, but this is often part of the transition from working to education. The family and Sokea understood the importance of regular school attendance but making school a daily priority was hard. Sokea has now enrolled at the

University of Management to study law. He works part time for Flame and is a kind and conscientious guy who actively comes alongside other kids and encourages them to stay in school. You can read more about Sokea on the Flame website:

[www.flamecambodia.org/blog/sokea-from-collecting-plastic-bottles-to-university21/1/2021](http://www.flamecambodia.org/blog/sokea-from-collecting-plastic-bottles-to-university21/1/2021).

*The Steve Sinnott Foundation has partnered with Flame to support children of the urban poor in Phnom Penh who struggle to access education. SSF has provided school supplies for 250 children.*



Flame works in fragile communities where children are often a vital part of the family economy and are unable to attend school.



For many of the Flame families, factory closures and job losses have left a large income gap and a number of them have struggled to put food on the table.



# Education after COVID-19 in Three Quotations and Three Questions

**BY MIKE FLEETHAM**

**EDUCATOR, INTERNATIONAL LEARNING DESIGNER  
AND FOUNDER OF THINKING CLASSROOM.**

**I did my governors' meeting from my lounge. It took 45 minutes.  
Why would I ever go back to 2 hours in school hall on a dark,  
wet rainy November evening? May 2020, Headteacher.**

By accident not design, 2020 forced educators and leaders around the world to examine and transform their professional practice. Like a woodcutter losing her axe mid stroke, teachers suddenly lost the tools of their trade – classroom, resources, relationships. But they rallied, grappled with online learning, made it work and began to see opportunity inside the chaos.

**What have you learned or discovered during the pandemic that will enrich your life once we reach a new kind of stability?**

*The younger children are having to grow up faster. In a normal year we have the few children who'll cry every day for half the year coz they don't want to leave mum (which is more about mum sometimes). We've not had any of that this year. Parents can't come in. The kids are more independent. More resilient. They just have to get on with it. November 2020 Early Years Leader*

I've wondered during my online work with teachers since March 2020, whether their loving concern for the emotional wellbeing and mental health of their children is also, in part, a projection of their own anxieties and fears. Kids are Dandelions or Orchids says paediatric health expert W Thomas Boyce. Dandelions thrive in the 'rough-and-tumble-anywhere'; Orchids are more delicate, vulnerable, and need a special kind of nurture. But when orchids are loved, they become more beautiful than anything around them.

**Where are the Dandelions; where are the Orchids in your class, your school, your life?**

*Online chat during live lessons is brilliant. It has given a voice to the quiet children, those who would not usually speak up or say anything in class. January 2021 UK SENCO*

As we push on through the complexity and the challenge, one day

at a time, sometimes using up the last of our energy, we are heading into what might be a far more equitable educational landscape – if we choose to listen for what that might be. In The Great Reset, Klaus Schwab argues that a pandemic like this one accelerates and amplifies. Look around and you will see that in action. Disadvantage is amplified; technology and aspects of research accelerate; we see more clearly what we value – especially when we are deprived of it; and the speed with which we need to respond – often in the moment – is faster than ever. No wonder you are exhausted!

But technology gives everyone a voice; it can amplify our words. Even the quietest ones can now be heard. Let's make sure that we listen and hear what our children are saying. Because most of the children whose learning is in your care – in class or online – will be alive when the year begins with '21' not ends with those digits.

Teaching is the world's most important profession because without it there are no other professions. And while our formidable healthcare workers are saving the present, teachers are saving the future.

**What are children asking of you for their futures and how can you give them their voices?**





# LearnRadio.Net - A broadcasting platform that reaches anywhere that has an internet connection



LearnRadio.Net is a live Internet radio station created during the first lockdown to provide a daily interactive learning experience. We started broadcasting on 20th March 2020 with a vision to reach children, young people and families in their homes to help support and scaffold their learning. Our listeners hear well known authors read from their books. Children then follow our live writing challenges on our showpage. Uniquely, no registration or email addresses are required; our Padlets allow moderated posts to be shown publicly in realtime. It's a fast paced format with music tracks and shoutouts playing an important part for wellbeing.

Last year over 600k listeners joined us and engaged in our shows. Online-Radio is technically light-weight and can be enjoyed using older mobile phones with the tiniest amount of bandwidth. This is perfect for tech-poor households who possibly do not have access to superfast broadband and the latest laptop.

We are now a team of educators from across the UK, the two original founders, Headteacher Ian Rockey in Wiltshire and broadcaster Russell Prue in Oxfordshire have been joined by Maria Wojciechowska-Caneda in London and Hazel Pinner in Orkney.

We have continued our work right the way through to lockdown 3 with our five regular weekly shows that include an after school book club, educator wellbeing shows with live Yoga and professional development ideas. We have shows for inspiring creative educators and a feel good Friday music show. Our Crafty Cafe shows are on Saturdays; designed to engage and inspire young creatives with live make-alongs. Pupil voice and interaction are important elements that run through all of our shows, with children able to connect and feel a part of the community.



Children's mental health and wellbeing have been a primary concern right from the start and our shows are tailored to support this through upbeat tracks, familiar voices and opportunities to get a mention for friends and family, who young people may not have seen for some time. This fully underpins our ethos of 'evolution, innovation and connection' as it highlights how our shows are ever evolving, particularly throughout lockdown. We regularly inspire young people to extend their learning. It's all part of the validation process and getting that quick win, with the many elements of success that our shows bring, all going towards raising self esteem and confidence.

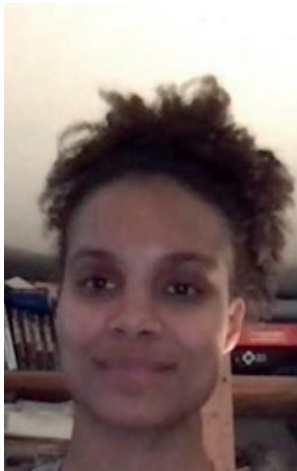
From an educational perspective, we are also evolving to support the broader curriculum through the introduction of 'Bloom's Taxonomy'. The seeds are sown, and the show waters those seeds and the listeners grow them, with endless possibilities for development and enjoyment.

We have recently broadened our focus to take in the Arts, STEM and Music with our programme output. All of our broadcasts and showpages are available to enjoy again from our website, building a huge resource for reference and future use, by families, educators and colleagues alike. We have a formidable, deployable solution that does not involve video imagery or pose any safeguarding risks. LearnRadio also hosts dedicated shows for specific schools and home users.

Our broadcasting platform reaches anywhere that has an internet connection. We have even put on a live show to celebrate a birthday bringing young folks together who have not been able to meet this year. We are available for commissions and specific broadcasting projects. At the moment, we're self funded and looking for sponsors and supporters to allow us to continue our valuable work. We have a Radio Academy for budding radio presenters and podcasters.

Please visit our site [LearnRadio.Net](https://LearnRadio.Net) where you will find a wealth of information and every one of our previous shows as a podcast. [LearnRadio.Net](https://LearnRadio.Net)

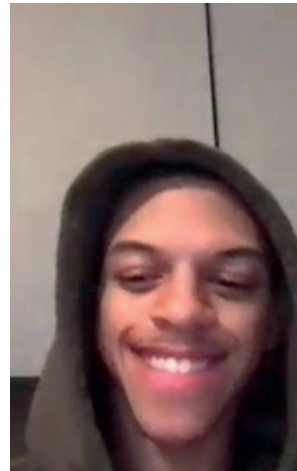
# Working in Partnership with Brunel University to bridge the digital divide.



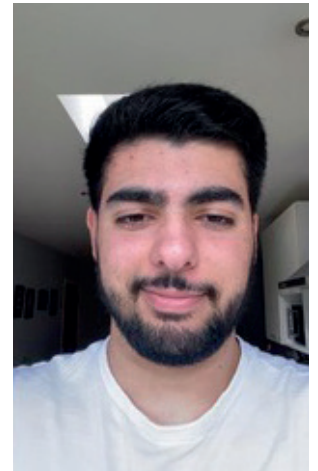
Camille Lovgreen



Jashika Nirmalan



Craig Nelson



Jivan Sidhu

**BY CAMILLE LOVGREEN, JASHIKA NIRMALAN,  
CRAIG NELSON AND JIVAN SIDHU**

**The COVID-19 pandemic put the world on an unexpected pause. In the UK we had to swiftly adjust to sudden lockdown enforcements, resulting in us shifting to a digital working environment. The education system has been completely disrupted by the pandemic and as students, we have had to move away from the classroom and solely rely on e-learning. For students all around the world skills such as adaptability, independence and resilience have been critical to the academic progress under these new circumstances.**

The biggest hurdle has been accessing a stable internet connection, while another barrier has been differing time zones between students and lecturers. In addition to this, lecturers and students who contracted COVID-19 have, in many instances, led to absence from lectures and postponing deadlines. Yet, the barriers we face here in the UK have been exacerbated in places with lack of access to e-learning. This is particularly true for countless students in Global South countries. As *Global Challenge Students* here at Brunel, our own student experiences during the pandemic have inspired us to work towards improving the quality of education in regions where it is subpar.

Education is a fundamental human right and has become one of the greatest global challenges we face today. Around 263 million children are left without access to education, and according to a recent UNICEF

report, the emergence of the coronavirus caused that number to leap to 463 million. This figure accounts for approximately a third of the world's school children who do not have access to remote learning and highlights the prevailing digital divide that enforces the barrier to quality education worldwide. At a time where access to education is most crucial, many young people are excluded from their right to an education, and this is unacceptable.

In conjunction with the Steve Sinnott Foundation and the Gambia's Teacher's Union, we have devised a sustainable solution to improve the quality of education in the Gambia's Lower River Region. Our aim is to enhance the classroom teaching experience by digitalising the classroom and introducing technology. After extensive research, we have advised the implementation of TV screens and laptops that function off a solar powered circuit, with learning materials being downloaded onto a USB stick to be transferred to in-classroom teaching. These screens will serve as visual aids, by allowing for educational videos to be displayed. We believe that this project will not only enhance the children's learning experiences, but also build the foundation for a potential online learning environment which can then be replicated across the region.

Fundamentally we are working towards SDG 4, which aims to ensure a quality education that is both equitable and inclusive and to ultimately promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The coronavirus pandemic and its uncertainty has shown us that digitalising education is essential in upholding a quality education. For that reason, it is crucial to bridge the gap of the existing digital divide to ensure that present and future generations can thrive successfully.

# Drawing is a vital tool for education, more so now than ever

BY KATE MASON, DIRECTOR OF THE BIG DRAW



**2020 was a year of seismic events impacting on world economies, technology, health, culture, politics and, undoubtedly, education.**

*School closures and the impact on education revealed the realities of home schooling, the reliance a country's workforce places on an education system, and the disparity across countries and around the world in access to resources, digital networks and technical devices. Looking at education over the last year, the impact on this societal human construct has been significant, the fragility and inequalities of many systems and processes laid bare for all to see, resulting in many calling for change.*

Over the past year, with so many of us living in a physically distanced world, this has not only impacted on our external, physical world, but also, perhaps to an even greater extent, on the collective human psyche. Lockdown has offered many people time for introspection and positive reflection. This time has allowed people to reconnect with long forgotten creative pursuits, or to discover new ones. Creativity in so many different forms – drawing, painting, printing, knitting, sewing, making, crafting - has emerged as a truly universal tool that can build bridges, communicate across oceans and make dreams a reality.

Running since 2000, The Big Draw Festival is the world's biggest drawing festival and an annual celebration of the power of drawing, with hundreds of schools from all over the world taking part. For many students, drawing is a means of understanding the world, how it looks, and how it works. There is ever-increasing evidence to suggest that drawing is the single most powerful tool for learning and retaining new ideas.



Part of the core activity at The Big Draw is to actively argue the case for creativity in schools and in the workplace. With our ongoing work in visual literacy and creativity, The Big Draw is only too aware of the devastating impact the EBacc (UK) has had on the uptake on creative subjects at schools. Within the UK, we support the Bacc for The Future campaign and continue to work with our ambassadors and patrons to lobby in parliament to make the case for creativity.

Drawing is a transferable skill which can be integrated into the entire curriculum, and we at The Big Draw believe everyone can draw and everyone should have access to the benefits of drawing. It is a vital tool in many professions: from mathematicians, to surgeons, architects to engineers, therapists, political commentators to graphic designers. The humble pencil has built many a pioneer within every profession you can imagine.

And so, we can reveal that our festival theme for this year is a creative call for action, building on last year's theme which focused on the environmental crisis. We expand this theme for 2021 to one of activism and sustainable living, and invite you all to act as champions to help 'Make the Change'.

Each venue can sign up to take part in The 2021 Big Draw Festival from Tuesday 8 March 2021, and we have an Earlybird Subscription offering 20% off the venue fee. As a registered organiser, schools receive a wealth of benefits including a welcome pack for students including tote bags, posters, stickers, certificates and all kinds of goodies to help teachers and students make the change.

We hope you join us in creating an amazing manifestation of making positive social change for good.

To ask about The Big Draw Festival or if you have any questions about The Big Draw, you can contact Sandra at [enquiries@thebigdraw.org](mailto:enquiries@thebigdraw.org)



# An Invitation to Gift a Poem to Celebrate World Poetry Day

The UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) links educational institutions across the world around a common goal: to build the defences of peace in the minds of children and young people. Over 11,500 ASPnet member schools in 182 countries work in support of international understanding, peace, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development and quality education in practice.

If you have not already joined, interested schools and teacher training institutions may [apply here](#) to join the network.

Below follow details of an invitation for UK schools to engage with schools in Poland on gifting poetry to each other. Hopefully many schools here in the UK will respond positively to the invitation from the *Zbigniew Herbert Foundation* to join with them in celebrating World Poetry Day on March 21st. Schools do not have to be part of ASPnet to take part. However, doing so may be a means whereby some begin, or possibly continue, their involvement with UNESCO Associated Schools Network.

Herbert  
THE ZBIGNIEW HERBERT FOUNDATION

Warsaw, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation wishes to invite your school to take part in "Gift a Poem", an educational and social campaign, as part of World Poetry Day – organised by UNESCO and celebrated each year on **March 21<sup>st</sup>**.

Our Foundation's mission is to preserve and disseminate creative legacy of Zbigniew Herbert, one of the greatest Polish poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as to promote poetry reading among wider audience, especially among young people.

"Gift a Poem" initiative has received the patronage of The Polish National Commission for UNESCO.

The activity we invite you and your pupils to join can be summed up in four simple steps:

1. Choose a book of poetry (at home or school);
2. Select a poem;
3. Copy the chosen poem, by hand, onto a stationery card specially prepared by us;
4. Gift it to someone who may well find it valuable.

Zbigniew Herbert wrote Poem Letters to friends, artists important to him, to people he valued (some of these letters were later included in the poet's books and number among his most insightful and moving works). This writer's gesture – a gesture of giving someone a handwritten poem – is what inspires this initiative.

We believe that the act of offering someone words of poetry is a thoroughly human one. Potentially a form of friendly co-presence, spiritual support, of consolation as well as a means of sustaining hope. That is why we wish to encourage students participating in this initiative to find someone and gift them a poem. Not only to people in their closest circle (family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances near and far), but also where a good word is so often in such short supply – in nursing homes, retirement homes, orphanages, community centres, etc.

Thus organised the "Gift a Poem" initiative could become a "lesson in compassion", as well as an opportunity to build intergenerational relationships, to show selfless empathy towards the needy, abandoned, lonely.

We also suggest that selected ASPnet Schools in Poland and the United Kingdom initiate collaboration through their National Coordinators, so Polish and English students from given classes/schools could gift poems to each other.

Promenada 21/4 00-788 Warsaw Poland T +48 22 841 92 93 office@herbertfoundation.com www.herbertfoundation.com

Herbert  
THE ZBIGNIEW HERBERT FOUNDATION

You can get in touch with your UNESCO ASPnet National Co-ordinators to collaborate and to receive the stationery cards:  
Małgorzata Herbich  
Coordinator of Education and Polish National ASPnet  
National Commission for UNESCO  
e-mail: [m.herbich@unesco.pl](mailto:m.herbich@unesco.pl)

Ann Beatty  
UNESCO ASPnet National Co-ordinator U.K.  
e-mail [ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk](mailto:ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk)

If sanitary restrictions – due to the pandemic – make gifting the stationery card with the poems copied by pupils, in person, impossible, then sending a scan or photograph of their poem electronically will be the obvious alternative.

Teachers coordinating "Gift a poem" campaign in their schools are encouraged to prepare a short photo or video presentation and written summary of the event, which we will publish on Facebook at: @Herbert.Pan.Cogito. Please send your presentations in either jpg or png format (photo), or/and mp4 or mov format (video), as soon as possible, though no later than two weeks after the event to: [podarujwiersz@fundacjaaherberta.com](mailto:podarujwiersz@fundacjaaherberta.com).

We trust that your school will wish to become a part of this "Gift a Poem" campaign. We hope that thanks to your help and involvement, poetry words – words truly significant, full of meaning and hope, supportive and compassionate – will above all reach those people who need such words the most.

With best wishes

Maria Dzieduszycka  
President/Executive Director  
The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation

office@herbertfoundation.com www.herbertfoundation.com

# What can you do to support our work?

- It costs £25 for a good quality solar radio which provides lessons for at least 10 children.
- The cost of materials and training for a making 5 reusable period pads which last a girl up to 3 years is £5. Once a girl has learned this skill, she can manage her periods independently and with dignity and pride.
- It costs £75 to provide a good quality bicycle to enable a student or a teacher to travel to school.
- Become a friend of the Foundation by giving a regular monthly donation: [www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/donate](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/donate)
- Sign up to a Life Long Learning Webinar and learn something new: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-steve-sinnott-foundation-31041261381](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-steve-sinnott-foundation-31041261381)  
[www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/projects](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/projects)
- Or maybe you have some learning you want to share with a wider audience? If so, please get in touch with [ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk](mailto:ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk) or call 01923 230208.