

RESOLUTION ON VACCINE EQUITY

The Education International Africa Regional Committee (EIARC), meeting online on 9 and 10 March 2022,

Noting that:

1. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been at the centre of global policy and academic debates, pointing to serious negative effects on education, teaching and learning, particularly due to infections and lengthy school closures;
2. Many educators in Africa have lost their lives, have been sick or affected by the pandemic in significant ways;
3. The pandemic has resulted in increased gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, and child labour, increasing barriers to the achievement of quality education;
4. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that vaccines are the most effective way to contain the pandemic, and that vaccinations reduce the incidence of hospitalisation, and death;
5. Vaccine skepticism or vaccine hesitancy continues to be a major hurdle in many African countries;

Stressing that:

6. The long-term effects of COVID-19 on education systems cannot be addressed without dealing with the plight of learners, teachers and education support personnel;
7. Teachers and education support personnel are frontline workers and require information, knowledge and unhindered access to vaccines;

Seriously concerned that:

8. Vaccination rates in Africa are the lowest in the world, with only 13% of the African population fully vaccinated, according to WHO;
9. Vaccine shortages, storage and distribution challenges continue to hinder access to vaccines for the African population, educators and students;
10. The United Nations's COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access) facility is yet to deliver on its promise to ensure vaccine equity, with only 400 million doses delivered to date;

The EIARC therefore urges governments and the international community to:

11. Take immediate measures to ensure that enough vaccines are available and timeously distributed to reach the entire population, including those in rural and remote areas;
12. Recognise teachers and education support personnel as frontline workers and prioritise them in national vaccination programmes;
13. Ensure that educators who are sick or affected receive the necessary medical attention and psychosocial support, respectively; and,

The EIARC encourages EI member organisations in Africa to:

14. Take the lead in demystifying COVID-19 vaccination programmes, including through awareness raising and campaigns, for the benefit of the members.