

# SUMMARY DOCUMENT: KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION EXCHANGE (KIX) WORK ON ECCE



# INTRODUCTION

The GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) is a joint endeavor between the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) that connects expertise, innovation, and knowledge to help partner countries build stronger, transformational education systems.

KIX is comprised of two main components. **The KIX learning exchange** is comprised of four regional hubs that surface shared policy challenges, and support knowledge mobilization and exchange between partner countries on responses to those challenges through varied format events including workshops, presentations, podcasts, and capacity building activities. **The KIX funding mechanism** provides multi-country grants that invest in knowledge generation and innovation, and scale proven approaches, in a range of thematic areas.

This document provides a summary of learning exchange activities and investments in grants – i.e., both KIX components – in the thematic area of **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**.

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# KIX LEARNING EXCHANGE

## KIX AFRICA 19 REGIONAL HUB

[HTTPS://WWW.GPEKIX.ORG/REGIONAL-HUB/KIX-AFRICA-19](https://www.gpekix.org/regional-hub/kix-africa-19)

## VIRTUAL ROUND TABLES

### Takeaways and Policy Proposals from KIX Africa 19 Learning Cycles

Virtual round table – October 14, 2021

The objective of this round table was to bring together Ministry of Education focal points and country representatives to review, synthesize, and make plans to act on the national policy recommendations that arose during the capacity strengthening and knowledge exchange in the four communities of practice learning cycles and workshops held between May and October 2021. The following topics were discussed: (i) Early Childhood Education; (ii) Educational Management Information Systems; (iii) Inclusive Education; and (iv) Teaching and Learning. Full [recording](#) of the event is available.

## VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

### Supporting the youngest learners in the youngest continent

Virtual three-session CoP workshop – May 20, 26 and June 2, 2021

The objective of this KIX Africa 19 Hub community of practice (CoP) workshop –coordinated with UNICEF-ESARO, UNESCO-IICBA, the African Union (AU) Commission, and the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN)– was to bring together regional ECE experts, policy actors, ministry officials, and thought leaders to share their expertise, experiences, challenges, and innovations in ECE to enhance countries' knowledge of the domain and to explore relevant educational policy. The workshop included the following sessions: (i) increasing access to early childhood education; (ii) effective teaching methods for ECE; and (iii) monitoring systems for early learning outcomes. Over sixty participants from twelve countries exchanged evidence and practices in this event. Derived from this CoP workshop, a [report](#) was developed and published.

## NATIONAL DIALOGUES

### KIX Malawi National Dialogue

KIX National Dialogue – May 19, 2022

This dialogue –organized by the Malawi Ministry of Education (MoE), the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, and the KIX Africa 19 hub– focused on the role of evidence-based policymaking and action towards accelerating access to equitable and quality education in Malawi. One of the main topics discussed was early childhood care and education, with a key presentation on the subject by Foster Kholowa (UNICEF). More than sixty stakeholders involved in education in Malawi attended the event.

## KIX Ethiopia National Dialogue

### KIX National Dialogue – January 29, 2022

This dialogue brought together more than 25 participants from different directories of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the National Commission for UNESCO, the Ethiopia Teachers Association, and the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building for Africa (IICBA). The participants spent the day deliberating over evidence and identifying priorities and promising practices in four themes selected by the MoE: (i) early childhood education; (ii) education planning; (iii) school improvement programs; and (iv) education management information systems.

## KIX Kenya National Dialogue

### KIX National Dialogue – September 22, 2021

This dialogue – organized by the Kenya Ministry of Education (MoE), the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, and the KIX Africa 19 hub – focused on fostering a shared understanding on the role and functioning of the regional KIX Africa 19 Hub towards strengthening national education systems and accelerating educational progress. Participants discussed translating policy into practice and examined the role of the hub in strengthening capacity within the thematic context of three themes selected by the MoE: (i) education management information systems (EMIS); (ii) early childhood education; and (iii) teaching and learning. Anne Ngatia, Senior Officer at the Kenya National Examinations Council and KIX focal point, recapped learnings and findings from recent KIX interventions in these themes. More than thirty stakeholders involved in education in Kenya participated in the event.

# DIGITAL TOOLS

## KIX Africa 19 Hub Digital Repository

KIX Africa 19 Hub Digital Repository. The repository is a tool to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources in education in the hub's 19 member countries including stakeholders and the general public. It contains evidence-based resources on education innovations from the countries that are covered by the Africa 19 hub across East, West, and southern Africa. One of the main thematic sections in the repository is '[Early Childhood Care & Education](#)'.

## KIX AFRICA 21 REGIONAL HUB:

[HTTPS://WWW.GPEKIX.ORG/REGIONAL-HUB/KIX-AFRICA-21](https://www.gpekix.org/regional-hub/kix-africa-21)

**So far, no activities related to ECCE have been detected.**

## WEBINARS

### [10th KIX EAP Webinar: Tools for Transformation, Advancing Early Learning through the ECE Accelerator Toolkit](#)

Webinar – November 11, 2021

This webinar was organized in collaboration with UNICEF and was attended by 202 participants from 48 countries. The event discussed the need and benefits of implementing ECE systems-level solutions with sustainability and capacity development at their core. Work from the BELDS KIX global grant was presented, highlighting its global E-toolkit (aka the ECE Accelerator Toolkit) and implementation experiences of the [BELDS](#) approach in Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Derived from this event, a [blog post](#) was developed and published.

## MISC.

### [KIX Grantee in Focus: Integrating early child education in sectoral planning](#)

Short video – September 2021

The KIX EAP hub produced a video to succinctly present the KIX global grant '[Integrating early child education in sectoral planning](#)' currently under implementation in Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Tajikistan. In the video, Divya Lata (Education Specialist, UNICEF) briefly describes the BELDS approach and the ECE Accelerator global E-toolkit, and their uses/relevance in reaching universal access to quality pre-primary education.

## KIX LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN HUB:

[HTTPS://WWW.SUMMAEDU.ORG/EN/KIXLAC/](https://www.summaedu.org/en/kixlac/)

## INSTITUTIONAL VISITS AND EXCHANGES

### [KIX LAC Hub: Technical knowledge exchange visit from El Salvador to Chile](#)

In-person technical exchange – December 14, 15, and 16, 2022

During recent decades, Chile has obtained positive outcomes by devoting significant resources and efforts to strengthen the governmental institutions in charge of providing quality early childhood education. Thus, the KIX LAC Hub coordinated an El Salvador-Chile technical exchange visit, with the aim of sharing experiences on the challenges and opportunities to establish a quality early childhood education. A country delegation from El Salvador, which included Ministry officials and other country representatives, travelled to Santiago and met with Chilean Ministry officials and researchers to learn about effective educational initiatives, programs, and policies implemented by the Chilean government. The objective is that these learnings can contribute to El Salvador's ECE work plan and enrich the national policy dialogue..

## KIX LAC Hub: Institutional visits to El Salvador, Honduras, and Saint Lucia

### In-person work meetings – October 2022

As part of the collaborative work being carried out by KIX LAC with the countries that make up the hub, institutional visits and meetings were held with various educational actors, ministerial representatives, academics, and civil society actors from El Salvador, Honduras, and Saint Lucia, with the aim of developing areas of collaboration, identifying the main challenges and strengthening relations with representatives and other key actors in the educational ecosystems. In El Salvador and Honduras, Ministry officials defined early childhood education as a priority for their country. Challenges, needs, and recommendations to promote, enhance, and strengthen ECE were discussed during diverse meetings held during these visits.

## VIRTUAL ROUND TABLES

### Education roundtable on the challenges and opportunities in the Eastern Caribbean countries

#### Virtual roundtable – July 2021

In this virtual roundtable, country reviews –conducted by Dr. Verna Knight and her team of researchers from the University of the West Indies for KIX LAC– were presented to Ministry officials of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. These reviews identify the needs and current educational challenges, as well as evidence-based recommendations that can strengthen educational provisions and, by extension, the experiences of individual learners in these countries. During this meeting, some challenges and recommendations on early childhood education for a couple of these countries were discussed.

### Roundtable on the challenges and opportunities of the educational system in Nicaragua

#### Virtual roundtable – June 2021

In this virtual roundtable, Nicaragua’s country review ‘[Challenges and opportunities of the education system in Nicaragua](#)’ –conducted by researcher David Otero for KIX LAC– was presented to Ministry officials and other country representatives. The main objective of this roundtable was to gather comments, thoughts, and ideas of the Ministry officials and the other country representatives to enrich, expand, and/or edit the review. Some challenges and recommendations on early childhood education for Nicaragua were discussed during the meeting.

## PODCAST EPISODES

### “KIX LAC Conversations”: A conversation with Juan Carlos Fernández Saca

#### Video podcast episode – January 6, 2022

This episode, hosted by Mar Botero (Community Coordinator, KIX LAC), featured Juan Carlos Fernández Saca (National Director of Educational Evaluation, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of El Salvador). The topic discussed was “learning assessments – measuring capacities and competencies in El Salvador”. The objective of the conversation was to talk about how the learning assessment ‘PARES’ was adapted during the pandemic, and how it evolved, changing its name to ‘AVANZO’. In addition, Fernández Saca described how the Ministry is currently developing a comprehensive holistic learning assessment model for early childhood that will allow to measure learning progress for boys and girls in the earliest school ages with the aim of rethinking and restructuring pedagogical strategies from early childhood.

## “KIX LAC Conversations”: A conversation with Neva Pemberton and Claudia Louis

Video podcast episode – February 12, 2021

This episode, hosted by Ivana Zacarias (Researcher, KIX LAC), featured Neva Pemberton (Technical Specialist, Education Development Management Unit, OECS Commission) and Claudia Louis (Chief of the Planning Unit, the Ministry of Education of Saint Lucia). The topic discussed was “COVID-19 and equity in education”. The objective of the conversation was to discuss challenges, strategic responses, and opportunities to build back better in Eastern Caribbean countries. One of the topics discussed was the impact of COVID-19 in early childhood education.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Teaching under construction: Challenges in teacher professional development in Central America and the Caribbean

Policy brief – August 2021

In this policy brief, the author addresses the challenges of teacher professional development (TPD) in Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (such as the low requirements to become a teacher, the need of further training and shortage of teachers in certain areas, unequal distribution of trained teachers, limited opportunities for in-service development, among others), and proposes policy recommendations to surpass them. Among the main challenges identified, there exist significant shortages of trained early childhood education teachers in most of these countries. Author: Ivana Zacarias.

### Country reviews – KIX LAC

Reports – 2021-2022

These documents try to identify the main challenges and opportunities in the education system of the reviewed country. So far, country reviews for Dominica, Haiti, Honduras, Grenada, Guyana, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have been developed and published. All these reviews have sections on early childhood education, and present diagnostics, challenges, recommendations, etc. related to the ECE sector in each country.

## MISC.

**Infographics.** An infographic that briefly touches upon the subject of ECCE was developed: ‘What are the main educational challenges and strengths of educational systems in Central America?’.

## GLOBAL GRANTS

### Integrating early child education in sectoral planning

**Problem.** Despite the documented benefits of early childhood education (ECE), in numerous countries access remains limited and unequal, while plans and financing for this subsector are alarmingly lacking. In many cases, one key factor exacerbating the problem is that ECE is not integrated into national education systems and remains on the margins of sector plans.

**What is KIX doing?** Over the course of 36 months, UNICEF-ESARO, in partnership with the WBG and ECDAN, will support the effective and strategic integration of ECE within education sector planning (ESP) processes in **Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Sierra Leone<sup>1</sup>, South Sudan, and Tajikistan.**

Specifically, this project seeks to adapt, deepen, and scale up BELDS (Better Early Learning and Development at Scale Initiative), a proven and innovative approach that will support target countries to integrate ECE systematically into ESP processes (general education policy-setting, planning, budgeting, etc.) and to build the capacity of national education systems to effectively plan for and implement ECE programs. In addition, to generate and mobilize global knowledge on ECE policy and practice, this project will support the expansion and launch of a comprehensive global E-toolkit<sup>22</sup> meant to support the scale up of quality ECE programs.

**What do we hope to see?** Adapted, enhanced, and scaled BELDS, and expanded and disseminated global E-toolkit; heightened capacity and knowledge of MoEs -and other education stakeholders- to mainstream ECE into education sector plans and policies; ultimately, improved access to -and implementation of- equitable and quality ECE programs.

### Adapting, testing, and scaling a proven summer pre-primary education model in Cambodia, Laos, and Tanzania

**Problem.** Despite global commitments and irrefutable evidence, progress in universalizing pre-primary education (PPE) has been slow and uneven. At the current rate, universal PPE will be achieved after 2050, far later than the 2030 SDG deadline.

Countries not on track to achieve universal PPE targets require universal programs that aim to reach a majority of young children; as well as targeted, flexible, or shorter-duration programs in support of children who are most vulnerable to exclusion from traditional PPE programs.

**What is KIX doing?** By adapting, testing, and scaling SPP (Summer Pre-Primary education model), a proven accelerated PPE model, KIX aspires to enhance the capacity of ministries of education (MoE) in **Cambodia, Laos, and Tanzania** to adopt evidence-based, quality, gender-responsive PPE programs for vulnerable children in underserved communities.

SPP is a 10-week intensive pre-school program to prepare children for grade 1, which takes advantage of existing available resources in public schools (grade 1 classrooms are used as program class sites and grade 1 teachers are trained to deliver

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<sup>1</sup> This project, particularly Sierra Leone's experience in using the ECE Accelerator Toolkit, was featured in the 'panel on early childhood education in Africa' during the [Second Annual KIX Symposium](#), held virtually on November 9, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> For more details, visit the blog post "[Tools for Transformation: Early Learning through the ECE Accelerator Toolkit](#)".



the program). It strengthens the skills of teachers on play-based, age-appropriate early childhood development curriculum and instruction, and provides a smooth transition from pre-primary to grade 1 for children.

For 36 months, Plan International, The Mother Child Education Foundation, and The American Institutes for Research will adapt SPP to include a specific and deeper focus on gender equality and inclusion. Then, it will be rolled out in the three participating countries. MoE officials and other key stakeholders will be involved in the processes to adapt, test, and scale SPP.

**What do we hope to see?** Increased availability of cost-effective, proven, and replicable, quality, gender-responsive, accelerated PPE models targeting vulnerable children in underserved communities; enhanced capacity of technical staff in MoE to implement these programs and raised awareness of decision-makers of their relevance, operationalization, impact, and cost-effectiveness; ultimately, increased access to PPE in participating countries.

## REGIONAL GRANTS<sup>3</sup>

### The inclusive home-based early learning project

**Problem.** Despite the proven and lifelong benefits of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), many African countries still grapple with the challenge of providing cost effective and sustainable quality ECCE for rural and marginalized children (i.e., children with disabilities or from extremely poor households).

**What is KIX doing?** By adapting and scaling IHELP (Inclusive Home-Based Early Learning Project), a proven hybrid -center-based, home-based, play based- ECCE model, KIX seeks to improve both access and learning outcomes for rural and marginalized children in **Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe**.

In a nutshell, IHELP enhances the capacity of parents to support and complement center-based learning for children from a home environment enriched with sensory materials and activities. Parents are guided by a curriculum adapted for inclusive home play-based learning and are mentored by government officials and preschool teachers on a regular basis.

Over a period of 30 months, Kyambogo University, Sense International, Masinde Muliro University, and University of Zimbabwe, will use quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate lessons about how teachers and parents can complement each other and support learning in a hybrid -classroom and home- environment enriched with sensory experiences.

**What do we hope to see?** Contextualized home play-based curriculums that support learning for all children including those with complex disabilities<sup>4</sup>; strengthened capacity of parents, teachers, and communities to implement and scale sustainable and inclusive ECCE hybrid models; ultimately, increased ECCE access and improved learning outcomes for marginalized children in participating countries.

### Inclusive child-to-child learning approach: scaling up inclusive play-based learning for smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school

**Problem.** In many countries, preprimary education does not adequately prepare children to transit to primary school, especially in communities where formal preschools are either unavailable or not well equipped. In these contexts, play-based learning approaches have produced promising results. However, in Africa, many play-based approaches remain within organizations and at the pilot stage due to minimal lesson sharing and scaling-up efforts.

What is KIX doing? By scaling the child-to-child learning approach, a proven early learning play-based model, KIX seeks to support the development of children and prepare them for a smooth transition to primary school in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda.

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<sup>3</sup> Five of the six KIX ECCE regional grants are being supported by the LEGO Foundation, to research diverse learning through play approaches. For more details on this collaboration, please visit the blog post '[Playful beginnings: new KIX research collaborations for better early learning](#)'.

In a nutshell, child-to-child's core principle is that children can and should be actively involved in improving their own situation and that of their family and neighbors. Thus, the idea of the model is to train young facilitators –older learners from the same early learning centers who have shown proficiency in desired skills and/or from primary schools located near early learning centers– so that they can support the learning of younger children through play and free activity lessons, or through child-to-child literacy and numeracy lessons.

For 22 months, Kyambogo University, University of Gondar, Chancellor College University, and LABE, will generate evidence on how to adopt and scale up this approach.

**What do we hope to see?** Evidence on the impacts of the child-to-child play-based learning approach and on how it can be adopted and scaled; young facilitators and teacher support supervision manuals developed, and increased number of teachers trained in their use; expanded number of young facilitators trained; increased adoption of this learning approach; ultimately, improved rates of transition to primary school in participating countries.

## Promoting positive early-learning outcomes through strengthened capacity in learning through play: evidence from Nigeria, Gambia, and Kenya

**Problem.** Across Africa, access to ECE continues to increase. However, challenges with quality and equitable access still exist. One of the quality challenges is effective delivery of content through play-based approaches. While governments have committed to implement learning through play (LTP) in national policies and ECE standard guidelines, challenges exist on how best to support teachers and other stakeholders to facilitate this approach.

**What is KIX doing?** By adapting and testing proven ECE models –such as the 'Tayari Preschool model'– to incorporate LTP approaches into their teacher capacity building programs, KIX seeks to build the capacity of stakeholders in the ECE workforce to implement LTP approaches within pre-primary schools in the **Gambia, Kenya, and Nigeria**.

For 22 months, the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), and UNICEF, will generate evidence that could inform adoption and scale-up of play-based approaches, and enhance the capacities of the education workforce, parents, and communities, to use and promote LTP approaches in pre-primary education.

**What do we hope to see?** Adapted, refined, and tested models incorporating LTP approaches developed; knowledge mobilized for adaptation, implementation, and scale up of these models in other contexts; strengthened capacities and increased numbers of government officials, teachers, parents, and communities trained to adopt and apply these models in schools and homes; ultimately, increased adoption of these models, enhanced quality of pre-primary education, and improved early-learning outcomes in participating countries.

## Gender-responsive education and transformation: early childhood education through play for scale in Mozambique and Rwanda

**Problem.** Despite the undisputable benefits of ECE and of increased commitments to early learning in many African countries, there are gaps in knowing how to adapt and scale ECE approaches that work best for young children, while addressing equity and gender equality.

**What is KIX doing?** By adapting and implementing GREAT (Gender-Responsive Education and Transformation), a proven gender responsive and play-based learning program that already shows promising results at the primary education level, KIX seeks to gather evidence on GREAT use in ECE settings in Mozambique and Rwanda to assess its benefits and potential as a low-cost and contextually appropriate solution for scale-up.

Through the development and implementation of specialized curriculums, manuals, knowledge products, and training, GREAT aims to integrate gender-responsive play-based learning into teaching practice and into in-service and pre-service teacher training and engage parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys.

Over a period of 22 months, Three Stones International Rwanda, Right to Play, and Cambridge Education, will use quantitative

and qualitative methods to generate evidence on how gender-responsive and play-based learning approaches can be introduced in pre-primary education and on how this contributes to shaping gender norms, life skills and learning outcomes.

**What do we hope to see?** Evidence on how gender responsive and play-based learning approaches can be scaled in pre-primary settings; adapted GREAT curriculums, activities, and manuals for ECE settings, and teachers and caregivers trained in their use; increased adoption of gender-responsive and play-based learning approaches in teaching and learning activities; higher engagement of parents in children's early learning experiences; ultimately, improved learning outcomes and life skills among children in participating countries.

## Scaling the school readiness initiative: strengthening school and community capacities for adoption of play-based learning in Uganda and Zambia

**Problem.** While Uganda and Zambia have made significant gains in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE), they continue to face challenges: Limited ECDE access; inadequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to implement play-based approaches; lack of learning environments to facilitate play-based learning; and insufficient coordination among key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, school administrators, and communities.

**What is KIX doing?** By adapting and scaling SRI (School Readiness Initiative), a proven early learning play-based model that involves home, school, and community, KIX aims to support the development of children and prepare them for a smooth transition to primary school.

SRI provides training for ECDE untrained volunteers via a distance learning 20-weeks offline course (made available to the volunteers on a tablet). The course is contextually adapted, and exposes the volunteers to knowledge, skills and competencies aimed at enabling them to provide a quality early education to children, anchored on facilitating play-based and age-appropriate learning activities.

Over a period of 22 months, Zambia Open Community Schools, University of Zambia, and Makerere University (Uganda), will carry out a thorough review of play-based learning in the ECDE curriculum frameworks of Uganda and Zambia and -with the involvement of teachers, parents, and children- will adapt and redesign SRI to identify and develop contextually relevant learning materials. School administrators, parents, teachers, and ECDE teacher educators will be trained on the model's implementation. Learning generated by the project will be shared with relevant stakeholders in the education sector.

**What do we hope to see?** Strengthened ECDE curriculums; increased capacity of teacher, teacher educators, parents, education leaders, and communities to adopt and support play-based learning; improved ECDE coordination structures at national, provincial, district, and zonal levels; ultimately, improved school readiness and transition in participating countries.

## Teacher capacity building for play-based early learning in Ghana and Sierra Leone

**Problem.** Evidence suggests that play-based early learning generates diverse benefits for children and helps them to succeed in school. Yet, in Ghana and Sierra Leone teachers find its implementation challenging due to the limited training received in play-based approaches.

**What is KIX doing?** By studying the implementation of two play-based early learning teacher training programs, being provided by 'Right to Play' and 'Teach for Sierra Leone' in Ghana and Sierra Leone, KIX seeks to generate knowledge and evidence on how to improve play-based early learning approaches, their cost-effectiveness and scalability.

For 22 months, University of Ghana, Associates for Change, and University of Sierra Leone, will assess the teaching and learning outcomes of the abovementioned programs by comparing them to the outcomes observed in similar schools -in urban and rural settings- not benefited by them, and will measure their unitary costs of implementation. Derived from this evaluation, recommendations will be provided on the design and deployment of play-based early learning teacher trainings to improve their cost-effectiveness and scalability.

**What do we hope to see?** Evidence on the value added of play-based early learning approaches, and on how teacher

trainings in these approaches can be scaled in a cost-effective way; enhanced capacities of teachers to implement play-based early learning approaches; increased support of key stakeholders –e.g., education authorities, headteachers, parents, and the communities– to play-based early learning approaches; ultimately, improved quality and access to play-based early learning across participating countries.

## KIX COVID-19 OBSERVATORY FOR AFRICA:

[HTTPS://WWW.ADEANET.ORG/EN/KIX-OBSERVATORY](https://www.adeanet.org/en/kix-observatory)

### **KIX Observatory on COVID-19 Responses in Africa's Educational Systems.**

The KIX COVID-19 Observatory collects, synthesizes, and disseminates information and data on national education responses to COVID-19 particularly at the primary and secondary level. Thus, **no activities or products related to ECCE have been developed under this initiative.**

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