



## Continuing to deliver an education project during a pandemic

[A Partner in Education](#) (APIE) (opens in a new window) is a UK Aid Direct [Small Charities Challenge Fund](#) (SCCF) (opens in a new tab) grant holder. Their current project aims to enhance the level of teaching being offered in pre-primary education in Rwanda. This is done by providing cost-effective, professional development and capacity-building with schools, government, and non-government organisations.

### What problem did APIE face?

When the COVID-19 virus was first identified in Rwanda in March 2020, the government implemented a strict lockdown and people were only able to leave the house for food, medicine, and essential travel. Travel between districts and international travel stopped and social distancing guidance was put in place.

APIE's programme was designed around face-to-face interactions and in-school delivery. Teachers accessed training materials at school using a USB stick. Without being allowed into school, this was not possible.

### How did APIE overcome this problem to continue project delivery?

The charity had already completed face-to-face training in two out of three target districts (reaching 200 out of 250 intended schools). In these districts they had also set-up WhatsApp groups to communicate with headteachers.

The team soon realised that these groups would be instrumental in sharing information and receiving feedback during the lockdown. Through them, the project team were able to identify headteachers who needed additional support and paired them up with those who had already completed the teacher training course.

The project team had already designed a small eLearning course which could be used by the teachers who were participating. The course was adapted, and a fully online version created which the Rwandan Education Board (REB) agreed to host on their eLearning platform.

APIE project staff also conducted phone calls with all beneficiaries to see how they were finding the course and to offer technical support. This meant that the project maintained momentum.

APIE now plan to provide a data allowance for each teacher so they can complete the online course with ease.

It is hoped that all teachers in the two initial target districts will complete the course before schools reopen and will have time to implement their new learning in the classroom by January 2021.

The decision was made not to implement the course in the third district as the one-day orientation training was unable to go ahead. This was based on feedback from the first two districts, who still needed technical support despite attending training. The allocated funds for the third district have been redirected to support the creation and sharing of online remote learning activities for children from the pilot district instead.

### **What was the impact of the project?**

The course has seen increased engagement due to lockdown. As schools were closed, headteachers and teachers have been able to dedicate more time to their professional development and very positive feedback has been received on the online training.

Since lockdown restrictions have reduced in Rwanda, some beneficiaries are organising study groups to meet and discuss the course whilst maintaining social distancing and adhering to recommended hygiene measures. This innovation was led by the beneficiaries, not project staff, and is a great demonstration of their keenness to study collaboratively during the school closure.

There has also been more interest in the course from the Rwandan government and other partners. Save the Children piloted the course with their staff in Rwanda, giving useful feedback on the course content and ideas for future edits. They also plan to use the course to reach more pre-primary caregivers.

Through the re-directed funding, 200 high quality PDF lessons have been produced and shared with 220+ children via WhatsApp. With support from their parents who have been liaising directly with class teachers via WhatsApp, sharing their children's work and gaining feedback from the teachers, these resources have allowed children to keep learning during lockdown.

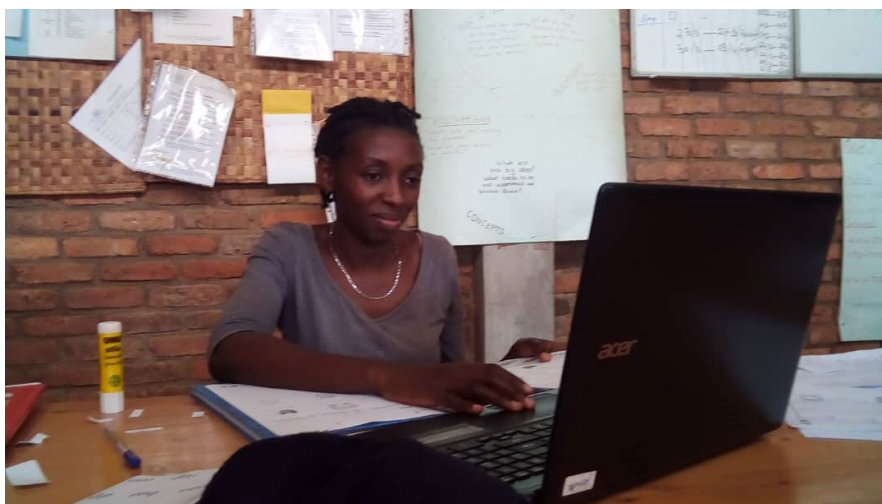


Figure 1: A teacher prepares WhatsApp lessons for her students

### Top tips for other education projects adapting to a pandemic landscape

- It is important to focus on what is possible in the context. Take time to formulate adaptations to the project design. Make sure these are based on what is already known through previous beneficiary feedback
- Learn how to see the opportunity in the pandemic, such as lockdown providing a chance for school employees to focus on their professional development
- Look for innovative solutions, such as utilising an existing WhatsApp channel as a communication platform to keep the project in-tune with the needs of beneficiaries
- Remember remote learning is a powerful tool – even in a country where it has not been utilised in the past. With enough support, and patient step-by-step guidance, this project found that beneficiaries were ready to embrace technology to achieve their learning goals
- Reach out to your stakeholders and listen to their suggestions, encouraging them to share ideas even if they have never voiced them before!

For further guidance and resources from other organisations to help your organisation and beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, why not visit this [UK Aid Direct learning page](#) (opens in a new tab).

Thank you to A Partner in Education (APIE) for your help in creating this case study.