The Nonprofit's Playbook in the Era of COVID-19

Globally, most all businesses have been touched in one way or another by the coronavirus pandemic, and charitable organizations are certainly no exception. The projects that the ECOM Foundation supports, and the organizations it partners with, are faced with one primary and deeply challenging question in the era of COVID-19: How do we continue to deliver services amid a crisis that greatly reduces in-person interaction when the project model inherently requires in-person interaction?

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Impact reports across our projects differ depending on their local government's response to the pandemic and efforts to slow the spread of the virus. For example, mandates for school closures across the globe have affected all but one (Nicaragua) of the ECOM Foundation Satellite School operations. However, preparing for what the operational landscape looks like in the long-term is a common theme among all.

One of the ECOM Foundation's grantees, Educate!, who tackles youth unemployment by preparing youth in East Africa with the skills to succeed in the economy they'll face after school, is analyzing its model in response to the changing landscape. Boris Bulayev, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Educate! tells us "After the initial shock of going from operating intensively at scale to standstill overnight settled, we realized fairly quickly that given our business model is rooted in in-person delivery, we were effectively out of business. We were forced to deeply and swiftly process and accept the new reality of today: Schools [in Uganda and Rwanda] are closed indefinitely, the health and economic impact of the pandemic is uncertain, in-person group activities are high risk and least likely to resume quickly, and there are no models or scenarios that can predict the course of the spread, political decisions, nor public behaviors with any reliability".

In the vulnerable populations the ECOM Foundation serves, technology resources are scarce, or even non-existent. Predicating a response that relies on individuals having access to the Internet, smartphones, video conferencing capability, and the like is simply not a viable option. Understandably, adapting to a COVID-19 world has proven difficult in education and health care centered projects. But, the passion to help the farmers and farming communities we serve is fueling efforts to identify solutions to overcome obstacles faced by COVID-19. The ECOM Foundation Satellite Schools in Chiapas are making arrangements with community members to use the facilities in compliance with social distancing mandates. Eastern Congo Initiative, who operates a literacy training project for women cocoa farmers, sought special permission to resume project activities under strict hygiene and reduced group size protocols. Educate! is exploring the use of telecommunication platforms such as radio, robocalls, and SMS texting to foster youth's continued engagement in its program. Grounds for Health in Kenya, limited in its ability to conduct mobile campaigns in its cervical cancer screening and treatment program, has shifted some of its focus to the fixed-site health centers where it operates.

As we all know too well, the COVID-19 landscape seems to change day by day, hour by hour. We are deeply grateful that ECOM Foundation's grantees and project coordinators are fiercely working to identify innovative solutions to keep our farming communities front and center. Post the pandemic – because, yes, this too shall pass - we believe these innovative approaches will serve not only to be crisis response, but have a long term role in expanding our reach and impact.

Article By: Lynne Howard

Scholar Hellen explains

My brother Moses and I decided to fight food insecurity by starting a sack garden using available resources.
Our first step is to create seedlings from food scraps (vegetable cut-offs). Here's how you re-grow an onion, try it out today!

1 Fill a container with 1 cm of water

2 Place the base cut-off of an onion in the water

3 Leave the base in water. When roots have grown transplant to soil.

Today 12:30 PM

Hi Mukisa, Please share your progress. Which veggie did you regrow? 1 Potatoes 2 Onions 3 Cabbage 4 Other 5 None. Send your answer. - AutoMentor

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Educate! Opportunities in Challenges

According to Educate!, the coronavirus has caused new challenges in Uganda. For example, food prices have increased and people have lost income. Educate! is helping its youth students identify solutions where others see problems, through robocalls and SMS text.

Click to Listen
Sample Robocall audio

Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19
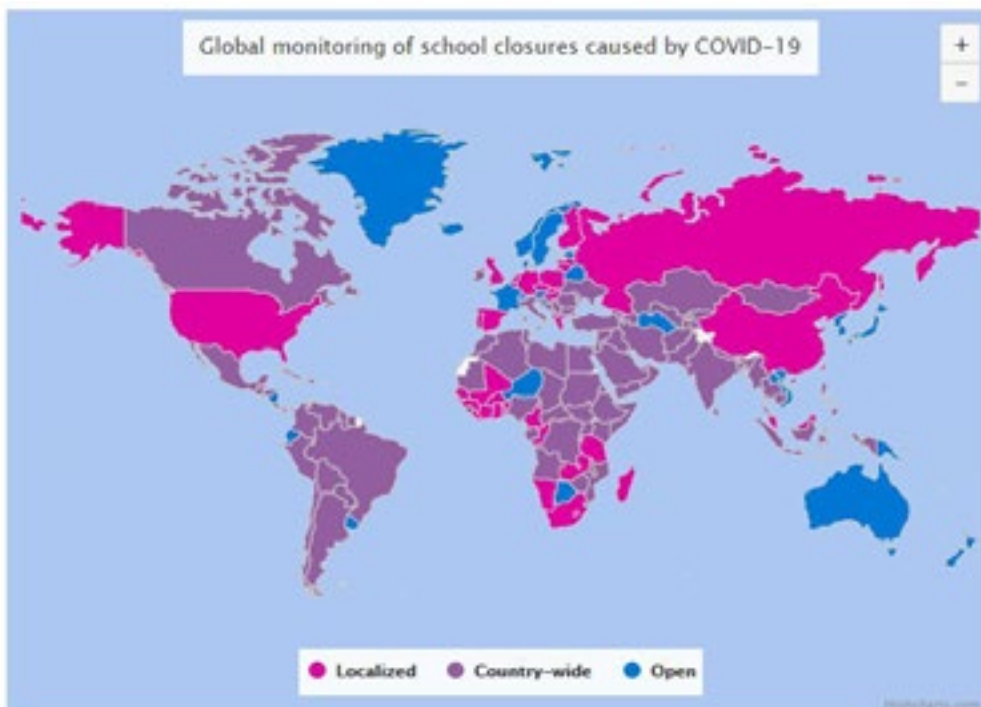
Visualize evolution over time.

29/06/2020
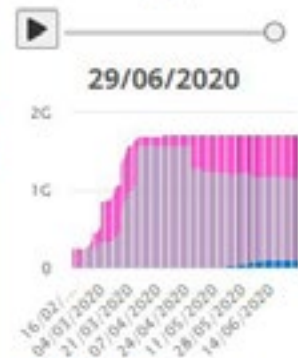
1,068,197,694 affected learners
61% of total enrolled learners
112 country-wide closures

● Localized ● Country-wide ● Open

Note: Figures correspond to number of learners enrolled at pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary levels of education [ISCED levels 0 to 3], as well as at tertiary education levels [ISCED levels 5 to 8]. Enrolm figures based on latest UNESCO Institute for Statistics data. See methodological note.