

South Africa, through the ratification of international instruments and its renowned Constitution<sup>1</sup>, has entrenched the right to education to all children in the country.

Before COVID-19, South Africa faced problems in securing quality education for all. In urban areas, 47.4% of individuals aged 19 to 24 completed secondary school, while only 32.3% and 29.3% of children in traditional and farming areas were also able to.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, 21.6% of children between 7 and 18 were not attending school due to a lack of funds; 22.6% due to poor academic performance and 10.8% due to disability.<sup>2</sup> Within schools, further discrepancies exist with 80.29% of schools lacking laboratories, 74.18% of schools lacking libraries and 79.2% of schools lacking internet connectivity for learning.<sup>3</sup>

Remote learning caused by COVID-19 has exacerbated these inequalities. Children in public schools (31.7%) and private schools (16.5) experienced lack of access at different levels.<sup>4</sup> Those who had access to remote learning, 68.4% struggled to adapt.<sup>5</sup> Overall, 65.4% of learners had access to interactive learning and 39.6% of learners do not have access to sufficient data to complete their schoolwork remotely.<sup>6</sup>

The inaccessible nature of quality basic education in South Africa is the antithesis of the commitments made by South Africa. South Africa must address the existing inequalities in the quality of education and to adapt its existing education strategy to accommodate learners who have missed out on crucial aspects of their education due to the particularly inaccessible nature of remote learning, so that more children are not left behind.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 as understood in *Governing Body of Juma Masjid Primary School and Others v Essay NO and Others 2011 (8) BCLR 761 (CC)* para 37.

<sup>2</sup> Education Series Volume IV: Education and Labour Outcomes 2018 Report No. 92-01-06, Statistics South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> General Household Survey 2019 P0318, Statistics South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> National Education Infrastructure Management System Standard Report 2019, Department of Basic Education.

<sup>4</sup> Social Impact of COVID-19 Report No. 00-80-04, Statistics South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> SIC Report.

<sup>6</sup> SIC Report.