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Editorial

Welcome to *ESR Review 2* of 2022, the third issue in a special series on the impact of Covid-19 on the enjoyment of socio-economic rights. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of socio-economic rights globally, with basic needs such as those for food and water having taken centre-stage. The effect of the pandemic on children's right to education is especially noteworthy – Covid-19 has compromised the right to education, particularly among the poor and vulnerable, including children with disabilities.

In South Africa, as in most parts of the world, schools were abruptly closed in March 2020, with children ordered or encouraged to continue learning from home. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) committed to making resources available to support remote learning, including broadcasting educational content on radio and television. However, these resources were not enough to make a meaningful impact on the majority of learners whose education was compromised by the pandemic. Across the nation, reports were rife about the inability of pupils to access online resources and the inadequacy of printed materials, among other things. The DBE also indicated that Covid-19 was, in 2020, a contributor to increased dropout rates that affected vulnerable groups of pupils the most.

With many schools unable to complete the curriculum for 2020 (even after it had been trimmed), the result was disparate educational outcomes for children based on socio-economic differences. The consequences of this state of affairs continued into 2021, with the reopening of schools for the 2021 academic year postponed from

27 January to 15 February. Reasons provided for the postponement included the need for more time to prepare school environments to ensure the safety of teachers and learners.

Against this background, it is evident that drastic intervention measures are required to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the right to education. These include measures to trace and track school dropouts and reintegrate them into schools; making provision for all Covid-19 protocols to ensure safety; bridging the digital divide between poorer students and others; implementing targeted interventions for children with disabilities among other vulnerable groups; and developing remedial or catch-up programmes for those who need them.

In this issue, our first article by Paul Mudua explore the implications of corruption for the distribution of food parcels, which worsens the impact of the pandemic on the poor. The second and fourth articles by Wilson Macharia and Tuhairwe Herman and Godfrey Ayeranga examine the impact of the pandemic on the right to education for children with disabilities in Kenya and Uganda, respectively; the third article by Nomzomhle Kona explores the impact of the pandemic on the right to education in South Africa generally. In the updates section, we consider the significance of *Equal Education and others v Department of Basic Education and Others (2020) on the school National School Nutrition Programme*.

We hope you find this issue useful in shedding light on these topical subjects, and we thank our guest writers and anonymous peer reviewers for their contributions.

Prof. Usang Maria Assim
Guest Editor