

How researchers can help on COVID-19

This newsletter goes out during unprecedented circumstances when a global pandemic prevents many individuals from going to work, threatens to overwhelm health systems, and keeps more than 1.6 billion school children around the world out of school. How can researchers use their skills to help right now? They can produce quick and actionable evidence policy-makers can use as they try to deliver remote learning during the crisis and as they bring children back into schools afterwards. They can also use data they have already collected to identify pre-existing vulnerabilities in service delivery that must be addressed during the crisis.

Call for proposals

Last week, SIEF launched its [fifth call for proposals](#) focused on generating experimental and quasi-experimental evidence on the role of technology in accelerating learning and skills among children and adult learners. The call includes an emergency COVID-19 window designed to quickly identify (i) remote learning approaches that achieve high coverage, high take-up, and learning, (ii) supplementary interventions that might be needed to maintain children's psycho-social well-being, and (iii) and successful strategies for transitioning children back into school. First round applications are due April 10 for the [emergency window](#) and June 1 for the [general window](#).

Using existing data

Recently collected data can also identify issues immediately relevant for the crisis. For example, SIEF-supported researchers used data collected [for an evaluation on improving inspections in healthcare clinics in Kenya](#) to show which infection and prevention control practices in clinics have the lowest compliance and to assess whether shortfalls in compliance are associated with access to supplies. You can see their results in this [brief](#).



Teaching at the right level *at scale*

Interventions that aim to help teachers teach at students' levels of understanding rather than at their age or grade levels are now an integral part of the strategies of many aid organizations, non-governmental organizations, and countries' ministries of education. While many pilot experiments have established the efficacy of teaching at the right level, evidence on effectiveness at scale is still scarce and maintaining adoption of the practice by teachers and schools remains a challenge. In a [SIEF-supported evaluation](#), researchers tested the strategy in Ghana and incorporated an experimental arm to test whether additional management training of head teachers and mid-level management would improve implementation fidelity. Results in the [endline report](#) suggest that training teachers in targeted instruction improved their students' learning in both Math and English; spot checks suggest implementation fidelity was quite high, with students divided by their knowledge level around 60 percent of the time. The additional management training, however, did not seem to generate additional effects over and above the program targeting teachers.



