

# Supporting Education with Digital Bridges

## BACKUP Initiative

Specific Objective 1: Digital solutions to improve quality and continuation of education services are implemented

The BACKUP Initiative is part of a Team Europe Action on COVID-19 recovery in the areas of health and education. In case of questions to the Action in general, please [contact the coordinator at Enabel](#).

### The Challenge

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose important health and socio-economic challenges, leading to one of the biggest education crises. At its first peak in April 2020, over 90% of pupils worldwide were affected (more than 1.5 billion), as schools were closed nationwide in 191 countries. The prolonged disruption of learning through school closures can have dramatic effects, particularly in Sub-Saharan African countries.

Experiences with other epidemics (e.g. Ebola) indicate that the number of students returning once schools reopen decreases significantly. School closures and the lack of (continued) education can lead to increased numbers of early pregnancies for young schoolgirls or forced recruitment of young schoolboys into armed forces.

**BACKUP Initiative**  
Eastern, Southern Africa  
and Indian Ocean Region



<b>Project Name</b>	German BACKUP Initiative – Education in Africa
<b>Partner Countries</b>	Botswana, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Zambia
<b>Total Volume of the Action</b>	11,5 M EUR (10,4 M EUR EU; 1,1 M EUR BMZ)
<b>Volume of the BACKUP Initiative</b>	6,1 M EUR (5 M EUR EU; 1,1 M EUR BMZ)
<b>Duration</b>	November 2020 to April 2023
<b>Implementing Partner</b>	Enabel

In addition, severe economic and social impacts can occur, including heightened youth unemployment and a widened gap between rich and poor.

Digitalisation and data technologies play a crucial role in bridging school closures and providing continuous education. In African countries, there is great potential to further exploit the benefits of digital technologies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The lack of affordable internet access, limited digital skills and the digital divide between urban and rural areas as well as between the sexes have so far hampered the use of digital solutions. This is compounded by the lack of coordination between different initiatives and actors, as well as issues of integration and quality in the provision of e-services.

## Digital Solutions

In response to the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission and the High Representative announced an EU global response strategy to fight the pandemic in April 2020.

Part of the EU COVID-19 emergency response is the Action "Resilience to COVID-19 through Digitalization" (ResiCOdi). This Action is co-funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is jointly implemented by Enabel and GIZ (Team Europe Approach).

The Action focuses on three areas: education, technical and vocational education training (TVET) and health services.

The specific objectives (SO) of the Action are:

- **SO 1:** Digital solutions to improve quality and continuation of education services are implemented (GIZ).
- **SO 2:** Digital solutions to foster the continuity and quality of TVET services are strengthened (Enabel).

- **SO 3:** Digital solutions to foster the quality and efficiency of health services are improved (Enabel).

GIZ uses its project and team of the German BACKUP Initiative - Education in Africa (BACKUP Initiative) to implement SO 1 (SO 2 and SO3 are implemented by Enabel), building on many years of project experience with a demand-based approach.

The BACKUP Initiative supports the implementation of digital solutions in order to improve the continuity and quality of education services, especially in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In addition, the BACKUP Initiative leverages partner countries' efforts to strengthen the use of digital solutions for education while providing high quality education aligned to their national curriculum. Ministries of Education or ICT and civil society organizations are for example supported in their efforts to provide high quality digital learning content, carry out planning and implementation processes around digital solutions for education, promote digital literacy and obtain connectivity for education professionals and learners.

To enhance connectivity, collaborations with the private sector (mobile network providers, software companies, satellite providers, local digital providers and initiatives, etc.) are envisaged throughout the entire action.



## Our Approach

The BACKUP Initiative was established in 2011 to assist African partner countries, especially their Ministries of Education and civil society organisations, in accessing funding from global actors and using it effectively to implement national education strategies. BACKUP stands for **B**uilding **A**lliances, **C**reating **K**nowledge and **U**dating **P**artners.

At the core of the well-established BACKUP Initiative is a demand-based support mechanism. The programme acts exclusively based on the demand of African partners, which ensures alignment with national processes and priorities by directly supporting their implementation.

By using a quality check system, it is verified that the incoming applications are in line with national education and digitalisation strategies or plans and that double-funding is avoided. This ensures that only locally developed projects are supported, which are anchored in the local community. African Ministries of Education or ICT, national civil-society organisations and regional networks can apply for support for their work on digital solutions for education services.

The services provided by the BACKUP Initiative are based on three pillars: financial support and advice, technical advice, and the support of regional and global networking.

### Financial Support and Advice

Applications from partners on country or regional level can be supported with grants of up to € 100,000. Partners also receive continuous advice on budget planning and financial management before and during implementation of their projects.

### Technical Advice

The technical assistance component provided to partners exceeds by far the administrative support to successfully submit an application, and rather focuses on elaborating the concrete content elements that root in the partners' ideas and needs.

The partners are closely accompanied and supported during the application for project funding and the subsequent implementation process.

For this purpose, partners submit a rough proposal for a project idea. Through an intensive exchange between partners and the project team, this idea is jointly elaborated into a concrete set of activities (use of synergies, establishment of contacts and development of cooperation with the private sector if necessary, etc.). During the implementation of the measure, the project team also advises the partners where necessary.

Cooperation with the private sector is an important aspect of this EU action and is considered throughout the entire consultation process. The BACKUP Initiative project team supports partners in integrating private sector actors into the implementation of measures, as well as in using and expanding existing links between the private and public sectors. In this way, innovative ways can be found to respond quickly and in a targeted manner to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Networking Support

The BACKUP Initiative establishes a network between the eight partner countries on digital solutions in the education sector. By making use of the existing international network of the BACKUP Initiative, the partner countries are supported to exchange with global partners as well as to share and learn from experiences worldwide.



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Furthermore, together with Enabel, it forms a cross-sectorial network for peer-to-peer exchange and joint learning on digital solutions in education, TVET and health services. This way, partners can directly profit from these networks and the regional exchange.

## Key Features of the BACKUP Initiative

- Responding to locally identified needs in the digitalization of education
- Request-based funding approach
- Assuring quality and complementarity through close cooperation with relevant education partners at all levels
- Fostering connectivity and cooperation with the private sector
- Enhancing collaboration between governments and civil society
- Promoting regional exchange
- Emphasising gender equality, conflict sensitivity and national capacity development

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