



## Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

### Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) \*

Project SIFT (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXKBTgQEGe8>)

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented \*

South Africa

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to \*

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

#### 4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) \*

Google, UNDP Accelerator Labs, Think Wifi, OpenNetworks

#### 5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. \*

Supporting education for Secondary School Students (Grades 8+) by bringing under resourced public schools online in South Africa in 2021-22. With the help of funding from both Google and UNDP we have so far been able to connect 20 schools, train over 850 educators and provide online learning resources to over 25,000 students.

#### 6. What makes it a best practice? \*

This is a great example of how partnerships between like-minded private and public entities can create meaningful change and in pandemic. This entire project was deployed by teams working across 3 different time zones, never having met face-to-face, but with a common goal to help students. This project provides a template that can easily be replicated in other parts of the world.

## Description of the best practice

### 7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? \*

Covid-19 created massive disruptions in school education. ~91% of students in Africa were affected by school closures and forced to shift to remote learning. Shift to digital learning saw many Ministries of Education (MOE) and schools turn to digital platforms like Google Workspace for Education, while moving quickly to adopt video conferencing platforms to maintain social reconnection between teachers and students. Google in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) extended online education to school students under prevailing Covid-19 conditions and social distancing measures starting in 2021.

School Selection Criteria:

The programme has been rolled out only to Public Schools that meet our qualifying criteria:

- Primary or Secondary School
- Should have at least 50 teachers
- Should have at least 500 students enrolled
- Teachers should be tech savvy and have reliable internet access at home

What the schools got:

- Google Workspace for Education training for teachers
- Technical setup for Google Workspace for Education
- Online Safety Training for Students and Teachers ( webinar)
- Professional development for Teachers through the Teacher Centre
- Additional internet bandwidth through Think Wifi

## 8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? \*

Our endeavor was to bridge the learning gap for students through connectivity and remote education tools:

- Connectivity: Enable connectivity infrastructure in schools in partnership with an ISP
- Educator: Using Google Workspace for Education partner helps with onboarding, education infrastructure setup and rolling out training to educators. Help teachers realise the ease and benefits of online teaching
- Student Engagement: Educate students on accessing remote learning tools like Google Classroom. Work on implementing simple modules that enable day-to-day learning, download, complete and submit assignments.

The key partners in this project are:

- Google: The Google for Education team is chartered with driving a cohesive, coordinated Education strategy across Google. The focus is on: 1. Being the hub of learning, productivity and collaboration for every classroom 2. Bring better learning experiences 3. Push the boundaries of adaptive and assistive learning experiences
- UNDP Accelerator Labs: Education is a major challenge in the region, directly tied to the SDGs, particularly SDG 4. Education is an area where UNDP has the capability to make an impact & improve learning for the millions of African kids unable to access or obtain a quality education
- Opennetworks: Opennetworks is a Google Cloud Premier Partner, Google for Education and Chrome Partner. We are the only partner on the African continent with an Education Specialization. Established in 2000, and a Google Partner since 2011 we have good experience in working with both business and educational institutions where Opennetworks leverage off of the cross-over between these two sectors
- Think Wifi: Think WiFi has been operating since 2018 and has since launched 180 ThinkZones around South Africa and currently reaches 1.6 mn South Africans. Think WiFi is rolling out more ThinkZones across South Africa and are currently operating in Western Cape, Gauteng, Northern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and will soon be in more provinces and cities. This free Wifi service is offered to everyone through an innovative monetization model. Through their partnerships, Think Wifi provides Free, Uncapped Wifi access to communities in townships, public areas and transportation hubs. In addition to providing these Free Wifi services direct to communities, Think Wifi is working with various partners to bring much needed digital and online education to the youth of South Africa

The budget need to deploy the entire learning module and hardware along with connectivity is USD 10,000.

## 9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? \*

The incremental impact we anticipate is:

1. Increased engagement from school managements to adopt and implement the programme
2. Increased seriousness among educators to upskill digitally and roll out online learning curriculum
3. Increased pull from new schools wanting to join the programme, enabling us to overcome change resistance against traditional teaching methods
4. Long term shift towards more eLearning methods resulting in fewer school days lost due to unforeseen natural emergencies

Google Edu Platform Deployment:

- Training Sessions: 45
- Students Connected: 25,750 (Google Workspace Accounts Opened)
- Students Active: 18,000+
- Teachers Trained: 850
- No. of Active Classes: 1000+
- No. of Documents Shared: 20,000+

WiFi Deployment:

- Schools Connected: 20
- Access Points Deployed: 100+

We are liaising with local and regional education departments to ratify our results.

## 10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? \*

1. Most of the schools had no online presence or internet connectivity prior to our WiFi deployment and digital literacy among teachers was (is) very low. They needed basic digital training first to have a better understanding of what technology can deliver for them. Once this was established, they were then trained to use Google's Edu platform
2. At least 3 visits need to be made to the school to understand the schools context and to build a relationship with them. This also gives the school administration the confidence to drive the initiative from their side with regards to teacher and student adoption
3. Face to Face (F2F) training works better than online training. Most teachers are uncomfortable with online training and the dropout rate is high. We had to find ways to work within Covid restrictions to deliver F2F training
4. We had to simplify the training content to ensure that teachers and administrators did not feel overwhelmed. Training to login to the basic admin console has been repeated in many schools and we intend to repeat these trainings over a period of 12 months
5. Adoption of the platform has been slow. We first have to give the schools a model on moving administration and education tasks away from paper. Once they move basic admin. tasks like Student Registers and Lesson Planning etc. to Shared Drives, we can move them over to the Google environment

## 11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? \*

Project SIFT (Strategic Intervention for Teaching and Education) provides a template for creating and implementing a remote learning setup for educational institutions globally. This project has been programme managed and implemented by teams across 3 continents (Africa, APAC and Americas) during the strictest of Covid lockdowns. With countries opening to normal life, implementation would become much smoother and quicker. We would be happy to share our learnings and experiences with others having a similar mission

## 12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. \*

Project video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXKBTgQEGe8>