In November, the Community of Practice focused on finishing this year strong! We primarily evaluated our work, extracting lessons from our experiences and planning our collective approach to 2021. With the rapid shifts brought about by COVID 19 to the education space, After School Programmes made readjustments to normality while finding ways to remain relevant in a time of crisis. What lessons do we intend to take forward and what do we leave behind as we step into 2021?
KEY LESSONS LEARNT IN 2020

■ Working with LEARNERS
Establishing online tutoring programmes
Even though only a portion of learners owned smartphones and could afford data, online tutoring remained the most effective way of keeping in touch with learners whilst maintaining core programming. With these tutoring sessions, many organisations incorporated fun activities to keep learner engagement at a growing pace.

■ Working with PARENTS
Improving communication with parents via WhatsApp groups
The COVID-19 pandemic, which has proved to be far from over, showed the influence parents have on children and their learning. Even though learning has returned to the classroom, parents continued to hold the fort throughout the pandemic. Many

After School organisations adapted to change by forming close relationships that continue involving and engaging parents. On a more practical level, parents supported online tutoring by engaging on the activities given for the learners and continued providing feedback.

■ Working with SCHOOLS
Strengthening relationships with partners schools
Communication remained at the core of the work that After School Programmes drove during the pandemic. Ensuring that we kept in touch with the school staff brought After School organisations closer with partner schools and allowed for the smooth transition when in-person learning was reintroduced. Organisations played the role of wellness support for the Principals who have been very stressed and overworked during the trying times.
In the coming year, After School Programs aim to continue focusing on the expansion of the necessary structures and technological systems for virtual learning. As organisations continue to come together, sharing lessons and taking best practices forward – the power of the youth in enabling the transfer of best technological practices should not be overlooked.

To reignite classroom learning, and to undo the many months of isolated learning, important socialisation and learning experiences must be shared in the After School space. Going forward, After School Programmes are to play a vital role in fostering strategies for effective in-person interaction to encourage further learning and development.

Due to extended school closures and even now as the new school year is about to begin, one of the greatest lessons of the pandemic is how much organisations lean on each other to maximise impact. Going into 2021; we cannot deny the role that partnerships and collaborations have played in improving on efficiency and effectiveness, while allowing programme redesign and development. These relationships are key to initiating and sustaining change.

After School Programmes are a vibrant part of the education ecosystem and many young people from low-income backgrounds rely on them. To ensure that we maintain continuity; the relationship pillar between learners, schools and parents must continue to be strengthened.

Working on ensuring effective database methods is key going forward. Collecting accurate contact information and ensuring timely updates of these will help us to engage efficiently with parents and partners.
Over and above everything else, we cannot deny that COVID 19 also afforded us opportunities to co-construct and deconstruct certain aspects of our lives. On this last CoP of the year, we invited our After School community to participate in a Metamorphosis activity by writing a letter to reflect on the past year and project wishes for the future. The Metamorphosis process speaks to how butterflies begin their lives as caterpillars and then transform into beautiful flying insects. Much like this, we have to look back and reflect on the journey we have walked and be honest about the lessons learnt along the way; while wishfully looking into the future with our heads held up high.

Below you can read just one of the beautiful letters that emerged from the activity, as shared by one of the participants at the CoP:

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Dear [Name],

Excited for the possibilities the future holds and I am doubtful whether I am doing my best for my own family. I need to put their needs first.

Strength: I am absolutely amazing at working with youth and developing them to their own potential as a mentor, coach, or counselor. I would love to help my family's needs into children.

Challenges: Career - linked to becoming also my organization is to adjust to survive or thrive or respond need times.

Choice - choose to develop engaged. The better.

Value - quality time moment which allows growth development of individuals.

Lessons: My purpose is my passion and it is being created, my ability is being created, tuned, improved.

Next Step - I must build myself so that I can be there for myself, family, kids, and work in which ever form.

What's needed - Possibly a better feeling, longer exciting, hope, of your happiness, laughter, family.
A GUIDE TO THE METAMORPHOSIS ACTIVITY

STEP 1: WHAT YOU NEED
- A space to write – preferably a piece of paper and a pen
- 10 minutes – don't overthink it.
- Next to each word, write a response.

STEP 2: LETTER TO YOUR FUTURE SELF
Dear me (future self),
- Emotion
- Superpower (and your kryptonite)
- Challenge
- Choice
- Values
- Insights
- Next steps
- What excites me?

LOOKING AHEAD

COVID 19 is a pandemic that shook the world. Looking back at the year, After School Programmes have undeniably played a significant role in closing the education gap. As we look ahead to the coming year, some lessons learnt this year will continue to shape programming. Innovation, relationship building and online learning are some of the best practices we take into 2021.

RESOURCES & LINKS
- Access to previous Learning Briefs
- After School Activity Packs

Next WC CoP: To be announced in the new year!