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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS
Evidence from the Global Student Affairs Impact Survey

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Presentation based on the Global Covid-19 Student Affairs Survey developed and conducted between April and May 2020 by Dr Lisa Bardill Moscaritolo, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates;
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Background and problem

1. Universities worldwide have had to respond rapidly to COVID-19

2. Shut down face-to-face T&L

3. Closed residences, some Student Affairs and Services provisions moved online

4. This has affected both T & L as well as all the services that help facilitate T & L, student engagement, and related services
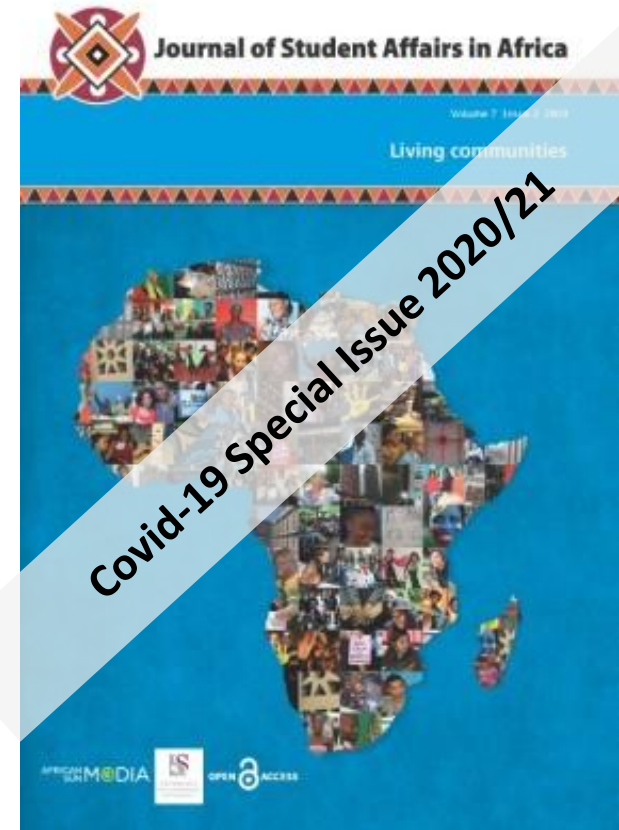
Student Affairs and Services

- Student Affairs and Services divisions/departments
  - ✓ facilitate a range of services and functions, including residences, sports, catering, health, counselling, financial aid, etc.
  - ✓ provide co-curricular development experiences for students
  - ✓ provide academic development / T & L support and development opportunities, including support for special student groups like differently abled students, students with disabilities
  - ✓ promote institutional practices and frameworks for social justice

- SAS have different institutional size and shape and ability to migrate to remote and online engagements

How to support students during COVID-19 ?

1. Central Qs for SAS:

   1. How can Student Affairs reach the typical students in need as well as 'new' groups of difficult-to-reach students? Who has slipped under the radar?

   2. How can SAS enhance student engagement in a remote learning framework?

   3. How to develop graduate attributes (e.g. leadership skills, critical thinking skills, engagement and diversity skills, democratic citizenship, etc.) in a remote learning framework?

   4. How do we address critical issues such as discrimination, gender violence and abuse in a remote learning framework?

# Global Student Affairs Covid-19 Impact Survey

- Survey developed in March/April 2020 by an international consortium of SAS professionals and researchers

- Purpose of the Global Student Affairs Covid-19 Impact Survey
  - Establish a global knowledge base on the impacts of student affairs' Covid-19 response on students and understand the variation of responses Inform, support and develop meaningful responses to overarching goals of SAS which may be at risk due to Covid-19
  - Inform future practices for the profession

- Key question clusters
  - Modalities of decision-making around universities' Covid-19 response
  - Types and stages of university and student affairs response
  - Financial impact of the crisis on students and universities; responses
  - Ongoing student affairs services; communication with students and student leaders
  - Impact on specific student groups: international students, discrimination,
  - Looking back / thoughts about the future / expectations

Survey Methodology

- Survey of 59 questions self-administered online (Qualtrics)

- Snowball Sampling
  - Disseminated via the membership of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS), regional and national student affairs associations, researchers' networks, newsletters, websites, etc.

- 922 responses (April-May 2020)
  - 70 countries worldwide; 13 African countries (South Africa N=100)
  - ca. 1/3 senior SAS executives, 1/3 middle management, 1/3 SAS officers

Were there any students that were more affected? Why?
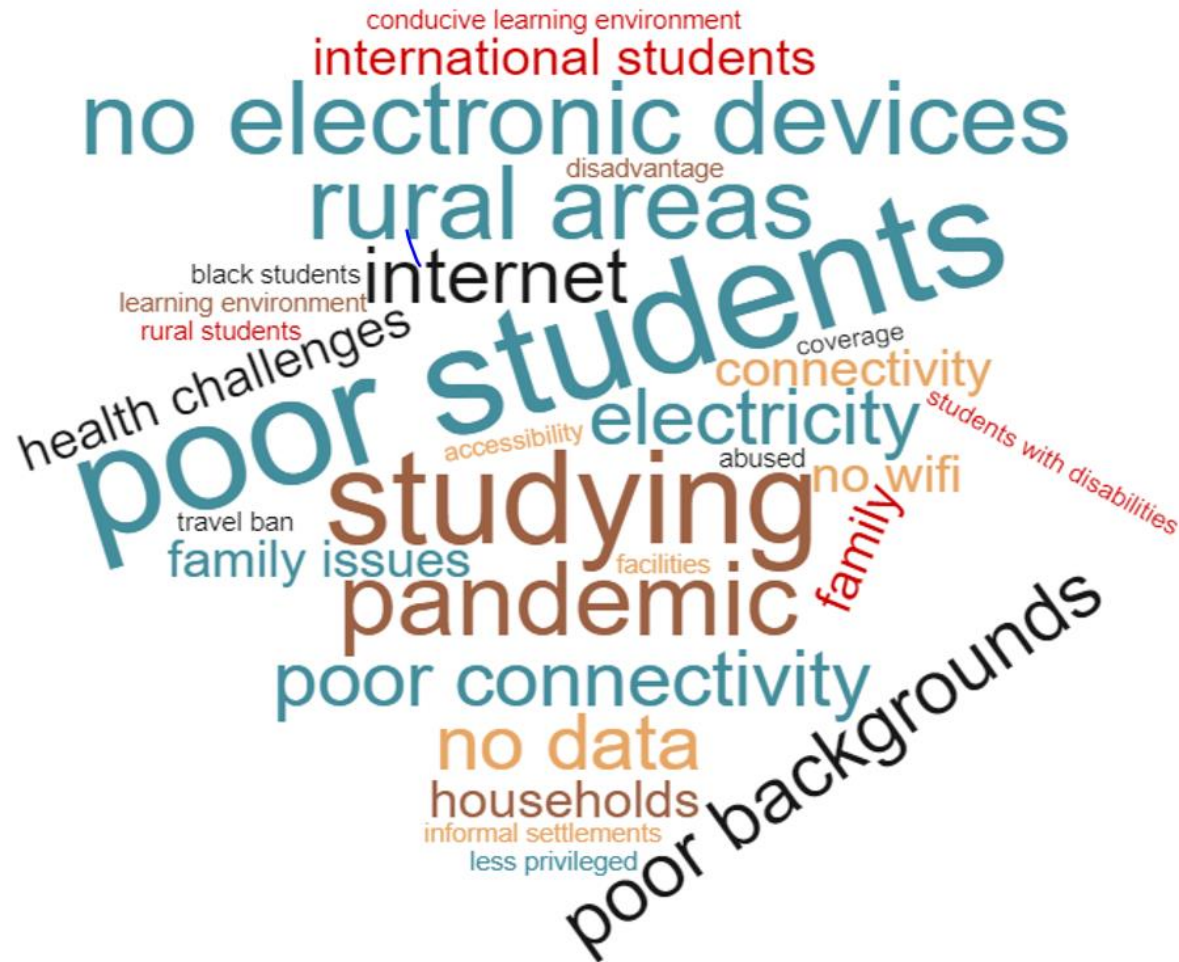
Were some student groups more affected than others by the pandemic?

- Some specific groups mentioned:

  - Students from remote rural areas, students living far from the university, students living in informal settlements (under-resourced)

  - Students from poor households, students in financial need

  - Some students with disabilities

  - Students with health challenges and personal development challenges

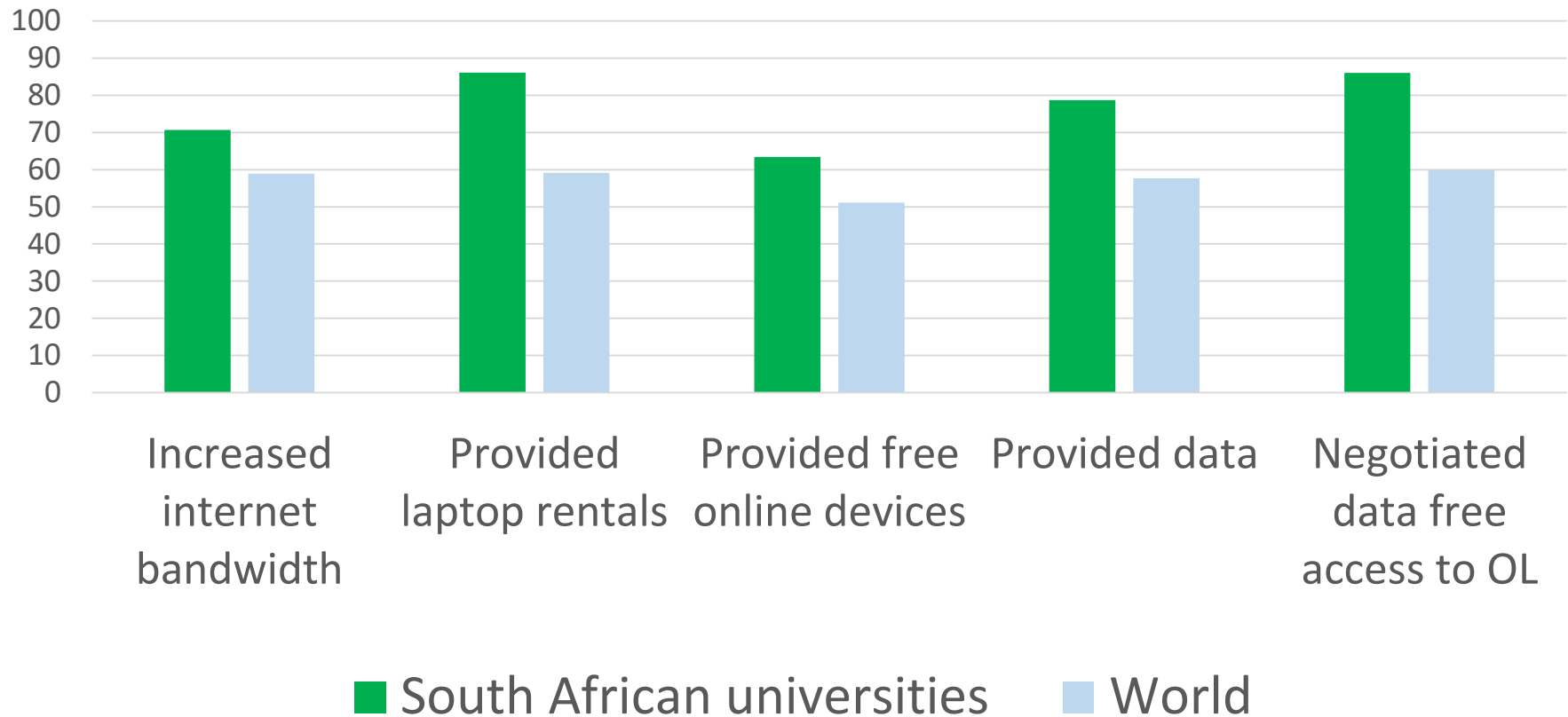 - International students (initially affected by lockdown/travel ban)

How did universities mitigate the financial impact of lockdown?
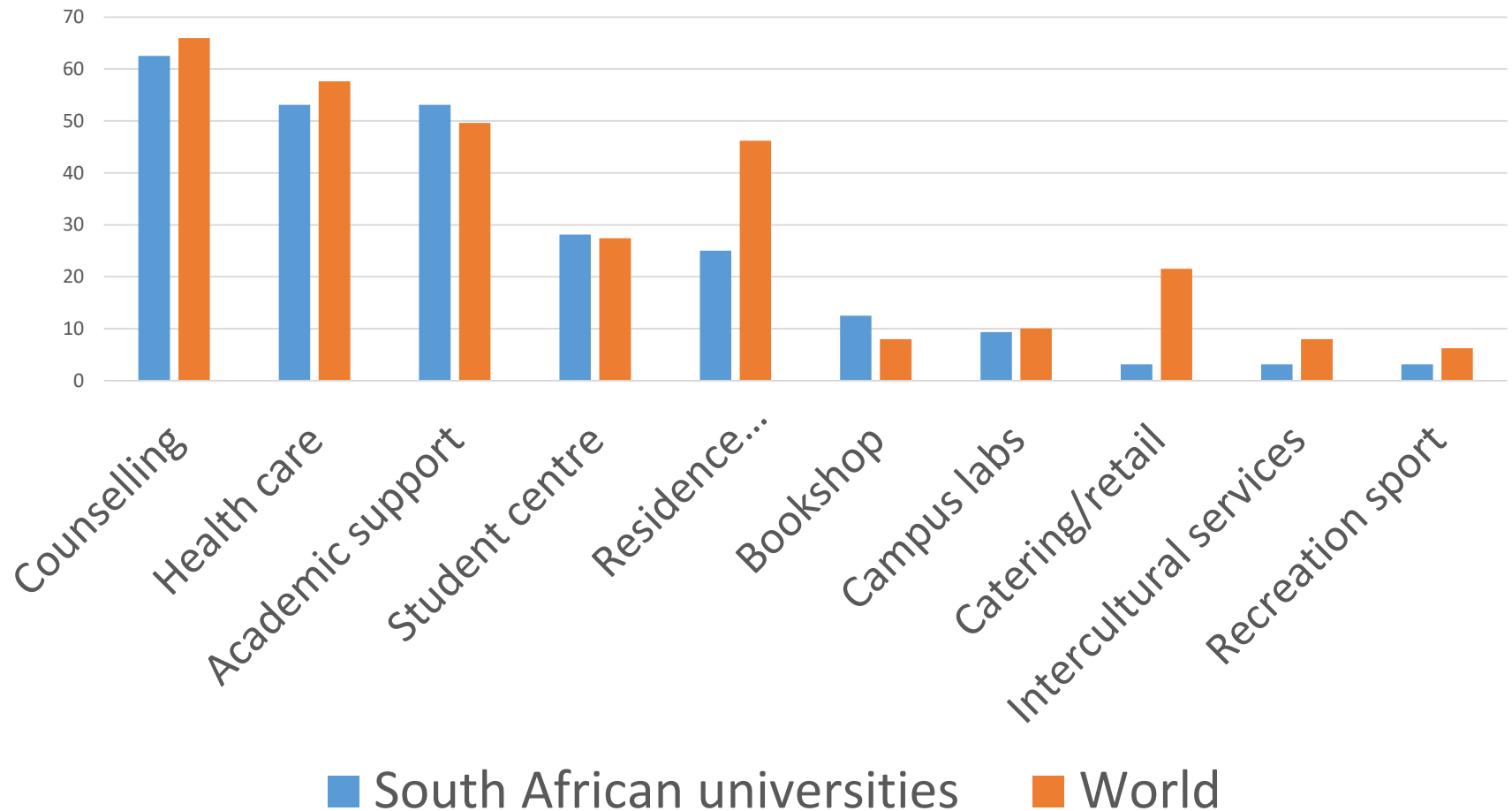

Providing Financial Relief
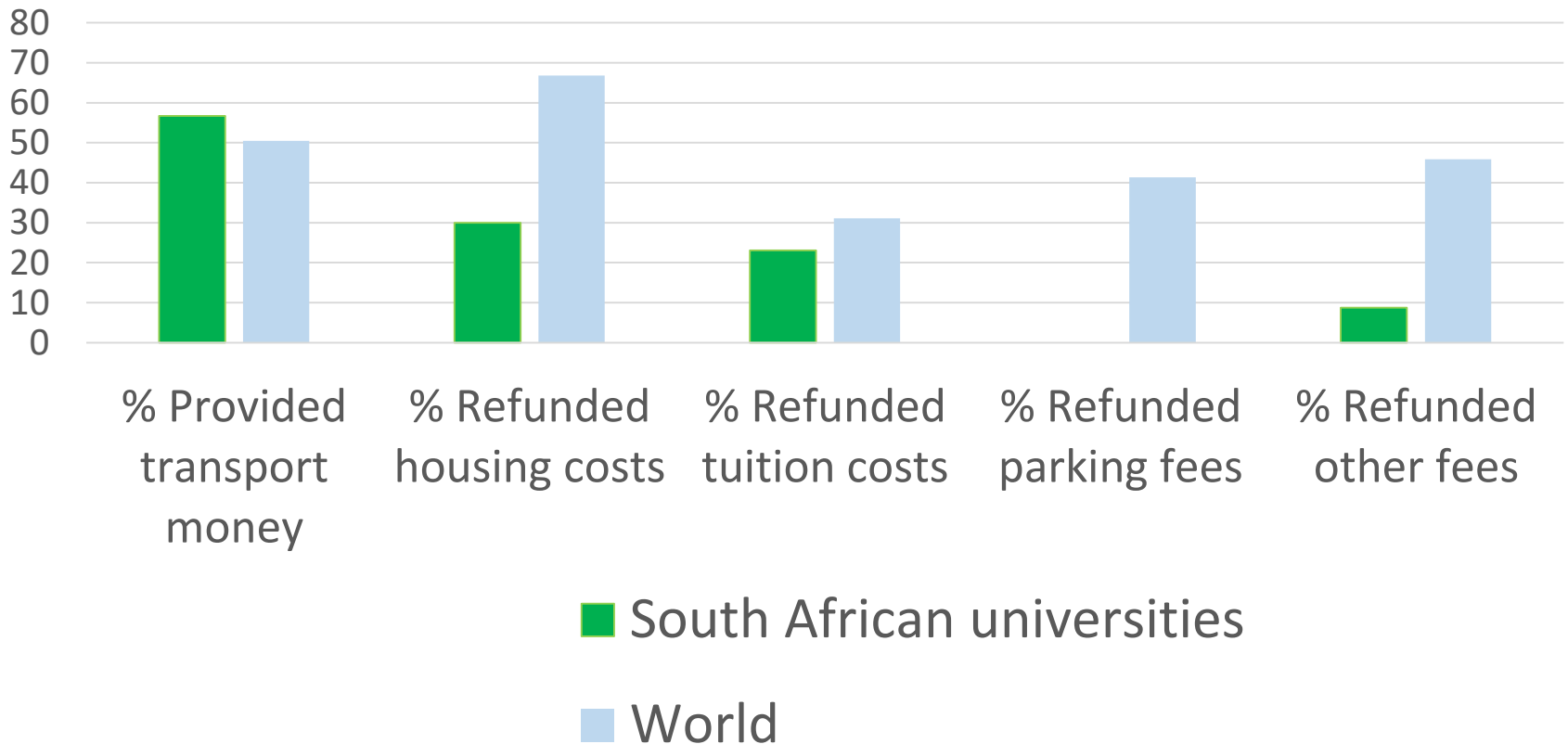
What did universities do to help facilitate emergency online T&L and SAS?
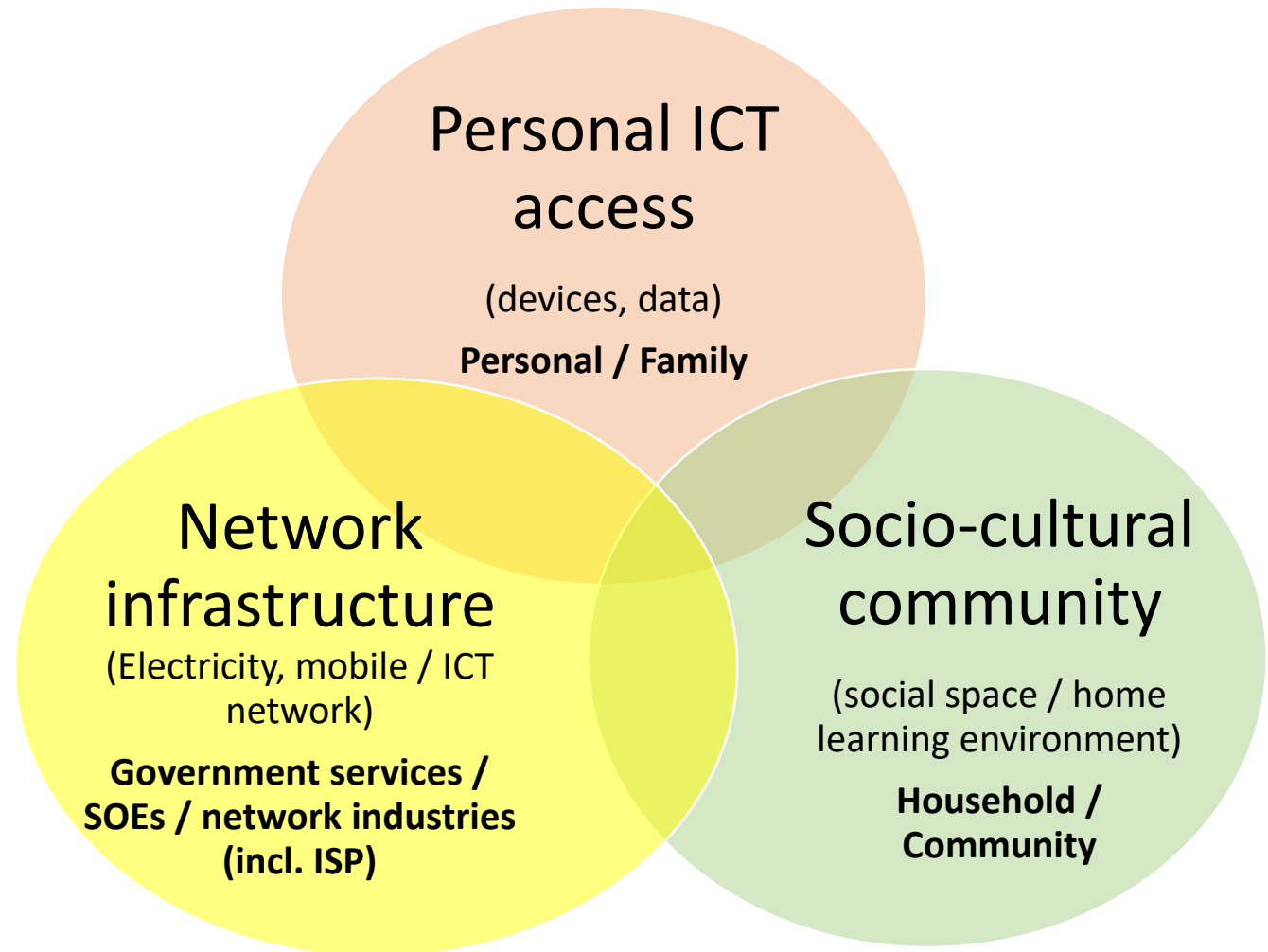

Enhancing Remote Online Access

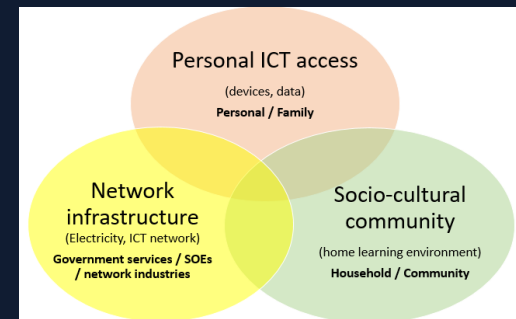# What SAS were typically declared 'essential services'?

Why are some students more affected? A resource-based perspective on access to online learning

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- Interpreting SAS practitioners' responses to different and unequal impact of the pandemic and Covid-19 response on different student groups

Personal ICT access

(devices, data)

Personal / Family

Network infrastructure

(Electricity, mobile / ICT network)

Government services / SOEs / network industries (incl. ISP)

Socio-cultural community

(social space / home learning environment)

Household / Community

Broader findings and implications

- *Resource-based perspective shows: All* systems are implicated, incl. Family/Household & Community level, Network Industries and Infrastructure, Personal Resources

- Medium to long-term: infrastructure backlogs must be addressed (network industries) and community and household level (social space)

- SAS: Not get stuck in crisis mode → Focus on support of hard-to-reach students

- Transformation goals need to be focussed on

Areas for concern for SAS

- Online learning is unevenly advantaging/disadvantaging students – so even *if* SAS migrates to online, it still reaches students differently.
- The socio-cultural community aspect is the key dimension where SAS provides support and development to students at HEIs.
  - This aspect is compromised if learning is remote online.
  - Issues such as student leadership, support and development, diversity and engagement, equality and transformation are not served in online teaching and learning environments.
- SAS is compromised and struggles to reach the exact students who are in need: poor students in resource-constrained households and communities
- Students who experience(d) abuse, alienated, special needs

Boarder conclusions and practical implications

- The exact students who are in most need i.e. poor students in far-flung rural areas or underserviced, resource-constrained communities, offline students, alienated, abused students are the most difficult to reach → social justice goals are compromised

- Overall values of transformation, support and development must also migrate to online environments → need functional online networks and supportive-caring home environments

- Network industries (electricity, internet, etc.) must address one dimension of inequalities asap.

- While *crisis* mode persists, the overarching values of social justice may not be neglected → move away from 'crisis' to putting in place a 'new normal'

- → Prioritise reopening residences for the most 'difficult to reach' student groups i.e. those students most disadvantaged by remote online learning