AUECHO

2024 Annual Magazine

THE YEAR OF EDUCATION

2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

INSIDE

African Union

Editor's Note

Africa's rising and youthful population is also one of the continent's greatest assets and, by 2075, not only will Africa have doubled its population, it is estimated that the continent will have 700 million children aged between 0 to 14 years, and the proportion of working-age persons is expected to reach 1.5 billion. In addition, by 2060, it's estimated that 750 million children will be in the education system. These numbers point to the urgency that must be placed on investing in quality education today and building the requisite human capital – namely the knowledge, skills and health that people accumulate over their lifetime that will create employment opportunities and ensure Africa achieves its development goals envisioned in Agenda 2063 and beyond.

The decision to declare 2024 as the Year of Education, with the theme of 'Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality and relevant learning in Africa', is only the first step in focusing attention on Africa's education system. It acknowledges the irrefutable fact that if Africa is to achieve the development goals of Agenda 2063, much needs to be done in addressing pedagogy, and what is being taught and imparted as knowledge for future generations, as well as the concomitant investment in education infrastructure. We must do away with rote formulaic teaching, improve the balance between theory and practice to ensure industry-relevant skills are being taught, as well as invest equally in the physical and mental well-being of children as important facets in the education ecosystem.

As Africa strives towards its desired future, what we are imparting as knowledge must be anchored on an education system that bravely renders to the confines of history knowledge that adds no value to the prospects of our young people. We must overhaul the post-colonial education systems that entrenched and promoted rote learning with no emphasis on critical thinking, as this system has for too long trained for employment as opposed to entrepreneur-ship and innovation, thus creating a pool of 'workers' as opposed to entrepreneurs. Workers who for generations have diligently 'produced what we don't consume and consumed what we don't produce'.

Africa is not a country; but I dare say Africa is a planet. Because in it we can find all the resources that our citizens need to survive and thrive. Despite these vast resources, Africa is still punching below its weight on the global scale. This can be attributed partly to an education system that places little value on promoting an in-depth understanding of the resources we have and how to exploit them for the benefit of the continent by investing and adding value.

When we think about it, the fact is that the best petroleum engineers on the planet should be from the oil-producing countries on the continent; the best agronomists should be from the continent with 60% of the world's arable land; the best health-research scientists should be from the continent that has the widest variety of the human genetic makeup; the best historians and cultural anthropologists should be from Africa, the cradle of mankind and the most culturally diverse place on the globe; and the best electronics engi-neers and even the largest tech industries should be from

the continent that has the largest repository of minerals that are essential components in every piece of electronic item on the plant. Imagine if we were taught to value what lies beneath our soils and how to use it to create value through the local production of goods and associated services. It is not enough to mention that our countries are the largest producers of particular minerals or agricultural commodities. That boast has no value anymore. What are doing with what we have is what matters now.

It must be a requirement that our education systems combine the knowledge of our resources with practical teaching that enables learners to experiment, as well as interact with local industry so that they can – at an early age – begin to identify the opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. Added to this should be the investment in digitalisation of education and introducing curricula that will skill our youth to have the knowledge necessary for employment within the technology-led industrial revolution. We must also train them to know what goes into making the technology that they are using to learn or learning about. We can teach our children how to code, and also teach them about the hardware and the value of the resources behind the hardware, so that we create an understanding of value chains at an early age.

Our education system must introduce basic accounting or finance at elementary or primary school level to promote financial literacy. Financial literacy is critically important in education as it equips learners with the tools that will promote their empowerment and independence by allowing them to make informed decisions and reduce dependency on others. Furthermore, an early understanding of financial concepts will support improved decision-making, and promote long-term individual and community economic stability.

Incorporating financial literacy into education ensures that individuals are prepared to face the financial challenges of the modern world, fostering a more informed, resilient and economically stable population.

We should go further and infuse learning that inculcates pride in our history, cultural heritage and diversity. Ignorance about African history and culture that would unify us in our sameness is often relegated below history and culture from other parts of the world. We know less, if nothing, about the culture and history of fellow Africans. This lack of knowledge of our shared history, culture and collective identity has contributed to the entrenchment of 'mental barriers' that make regional integration a much greater challenge than the physical integration that can be eliminated by removal of physical borders.

The value of play and recreation in education cannot be ignored, as it contributes to physical and mental well-being, and provides an environment for innovation and learning. Children are creative and innovative, and part of their learning experience comes from creating an environment where their imagination is allowed to soar and experiment. Investing in education must include creating spaces where children can play and learn the technical and social skills honed in the playground with their peers. Through play and team activities, young people develop the skills that can eventually lead to professional careers in the sports industry. If we look back on the 13th edition of the African Games, which were held in March this year, the large number of the over 4 000 athletes who participated in the various sporting disciplines were young people who were also students attending colleges and universities. These young people were beneficiaries of the playgrounds and sports facilities found mostly in their educational facilities. The fact that most of the sporting events for this huge continental event were held in the University of Ghana speaks volumes about the importance of investing in sporting infrastructure within educational facilities.

Education and literacy are cornerstones of sustainable development and prosperity. They form the bedrock of an enlightened society, fostering critical thinking, innovation and the empowerment of individuals and communities. Whereas the year 2024 has been dedicated to education, let this be the beginning of a longer-term endeavour to transform Africa's education system so that it is fit for purpose and contributes to building The Africa We Want. ■

LESLIE RICHER
DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

The African Union Peace Fund

The African Union Peace Fund (AUPF) serves as an extraordinary testament to Africa's Unity of Purpose, a manifestation of the ideals of pan-Africanism and unwavering commitment to the remarkable progress made towards realising its exemplary ideals. The AUPF has been meticulously designed to harness the full potential of our collective resources in order to propel our own development and advance our peace efforts.

The Peace Fund is an essential operational tool in fulfilling the African Union's mandate of achieving peace and security as underscored in Aspiration 4 of Africa's Agenda 2063 and the continent's vision of building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens.

EVOLUTION OF THE PEACE FUND

Self-reliance was a core pan-African value of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union, and the Peace Fund has been in existence since 1993 as a key mechanism for financing the continental body's peace and security activities and programmes.

At the Thirty-seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Lusaka in 2001, the OAU Secretariat was directed to conduct studies on alternative sources of funding for the Union (Decision (AHG/Dec. 1 [XXXVII]). Subsequent decisions of the Executive Council and the Assembly have reiterated and reaffirmed the need to explore options for more sustainable and predictable means to finance the Union's integration and Development agenda.

Following the launch of the African Union, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC Protocol) was adopted on 9 July 2002, and Article 21 of the Protocol called for the establishment of a special fund that provides financial resources for peace and security activities in Africa, and thus provided the legal and normative basis for the establishment of the AU Peace Fund.

As a key pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the AU Peace Fund was envisaged to be financed through Member States' contributions, including voluntary and assessed contributions and from partners, including the private sector.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) appointed Dr. Donald Kaberuka as the AU High Representative for the Peace Fund in January 2016. Dr. Kaberuka presented his proposals to the Retreat of Heads of States and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Finance on the

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'The African Union Peace Fund is a vital initiative aimed at bolstering our capacity to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts and a concrete expression of our collective endeavour and commitment to play a tangible role in addressing the peace and security challenges on the continent. Through strategic investments in mediation and preventive diplomacy, the Peace Fund addresses the root causes of instability and fosters an environment conducive to sustainable development and economic growth.'

H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
CHAIRPERSON OF THE
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Financing of the African Union in Kigali in July 2016. Assembly/AU/Dec.605 (XXVII), based on the AU High Representative for the Peace Fund's Report, requested the Chairperson of the AUC to implement all aspects related to the operationalisation of the AU Peace Fund, in particular the legal instrument, the operational and the financial rules and regulations.

Between June and July 2017, the PSC, the Executive Council and the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments endorsed and adopted the enhanced governance and management structure for the Peace Fund.

In January 2018, the AU Assembly adopted the Peace Fund Instrument. This provides the framework for the development of the dedicated Peace Fund regulations which will be adapted to the core business of the Fund and ensure that the Fund is able to deliver timely and effectively support in the areas of mediation and preventive diplomacy, AU-led peace support operations, and the development of core institutional capacities.

Following the adoption of the Peace Fund instrument, the different bodies of the Peace Fund were operationalised: Board of Trustees assumed duty (2018); Fund Managers brought on board (2021); Director of the Peace Fund Secretariat appointed (2023); and the Executive Management Committee on-boarded (2023).

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE THE OF PEACE FUND?

The initial financial objective of the revitalised Peace Fund is to achieve a target of US$400 million through Member States' contributions and to attract external funding with the reform measures introduced by the AU. However, this initial target is not going to be enough considering the Peace and Security challenges in our continent.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF THE REVITALISED PEACE FUND

The Peace Fund is formally established with enhanced governance, oversight, accountability, fiduciary rules and procedures based on core African ownership. (See Figure 1)

The current governance of the Peace Fund is structured as follows:

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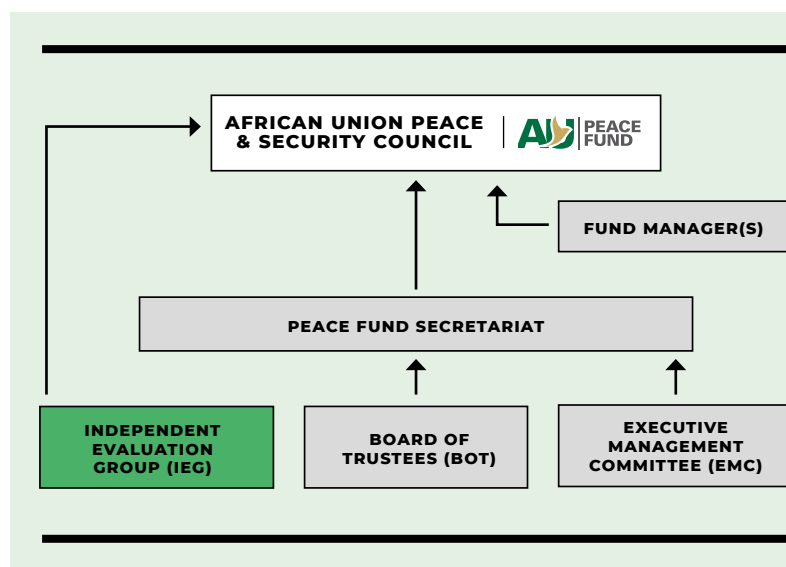
Figure 1 Governance structure of the AU Peace Fund

African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC): The AU PSC provides decisions on mediation and preventive diplomacy, as well as guides the Peace Fund's funding priorities.

Board of Trustees (BoT): The Board of Trustees holds a position of fiduciary responsibility towards the Fund and therefore plays an oversight and monitoring role over the Peace Fund for AU Policy Organs. The BoT comprises five African members representing the five AU Regions and two of the AU's strategic international partners: the European Union and the United Nations.

Executive Management Committee (EMC): The Chairperson of the AUC, Deputy Chairperson, and Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, are members of the EMC. The Chairperson chairs the EMC, and the Director of the Peace Fund Secretariat serves in the EMC in an advisory capacity (i.e. non-voting). The EMC's primary function is to exercise executive management and oversight of the Peace Fund, and is responsible for directing its activities.

The Fund Manager(s): Performs fund administration, investment, accounting and reporting on behalf of the Peace Fund Secretariat. The BoT appointed two fund managers, namely Old Mutual Investment ▶

> '**Realising our vision of sustaining peace in our continent requires a concerted effort of all stakeholders. I recognise the invaluable role the business community plays in achieving this noble cause for peace. Investing in conflict prevention is cost-effective, as it is estimated that for every US$1 spent on prevention, over US$16 is saved on the downstream costs of violent conflict. By avoiding the human, economic, and social costs associated with conflicts, the Peace Fund prioritises prevention as a fundamental cause for the continent.'**

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H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Group from South Africa and Sanlam Investments East Africa from Kenya. All funds of the AU Peace Fund are under the investment management of these fund managers. By appointing independent fund managers, the AU has ensured best practice in international fund management, setting the investment objectives of capital preservation, liquidity and the financial sustainability of the Peace Fund.

Peace Fund Secretariat: The Secretariat is responsible for the overall management and administration of the AU Peace Fund.

Independent Evaluation Group (IEG): The IEG is an impartial and independent pool of experts appointed by the BoT on the recommendation of the EMC with the responsibility of providing rigorous independent technical review of the performance and operational impact of the Peace Fund on an ad hoc basis.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR THE AU PEACE FUND?

As per Article 21 of the Protocol that establishes the PSC and Rule 36 of the FR, the Peace Fund shall be financed through:

- Statutory contributions from Member States to the initial endowment of US$400 million
- Statutory contributions from Member States
- Contributions from Development Partners in line with Rule 27 of this FR
- Voluntary contributions from Member States
- Revenue from investment of the Peace Fund
- Contributions from the African private sector and any other sources as may be approved by the Accounting Officer, provided they are consistent with the objectives and principles of the Union.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT BALANCE OF THE PEACE FUND?

As of January 2024, the fund balance stood at US$388.6 million, and is composed of:

- Assessed MS Contributions to RPF: US$338.89 million
- Voluntary contributions (received from Senegal): US$499,643.45
- Proceeds from Legacy Peace Fund: US$25,032,053.75
- Interest earned on investments on fixed deposit over 3 years: US$16,904,183.52
- Interest earned (net of fees) from investments with fund managers over one year: US$14,299,794.78
- Withdrawals (from Crisis Reserve Facility): (US$6,500,000.00).

WHAT ACTIVITIES DOES THE PEACE FUND FINANCE?

The Peace Fund will finance activities that have been authorised by a competent AU Policy Organ that falls with the scope of the following three thematic windows:

Window 1: Mediation and Preventive Diplomacy

- Peace-making, including the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation, and enquiry,

which aim to prevent, manage or resolve intra- or inter-state conflict.

- Early warning and preventive diplomacy, which aim to prevent the outbreak or escalation of violent conflict

Window 2: Institutional Capacity

- Cross-cutting: Support to Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/ Regional Mechanisms (RMs) for peace and security in strengthening financial and reporting systems, as part of the Peace Fund partnership.

Window 3: Peace Support Operations (PSOs)

The Fund shall finance the following types of PSOs, and actions mandated or authorised by, as the case may be, the Assembly, or the PSC

and delivered by the AU, RECs/RMs or a coalition of Member States:

- Observer missions
- Preventive deployment and peace-enforcement missions
- Stabilisation missions following peace-enforcement missions
- Missions and security initiatives in response to complex national and transnational security threats.

HOW DOES THE CRISIS RESERVE FACILITY WORK?

The Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF) is a revolving trust fund that can respond quickly to the African continent's immediate and evolving peace and security needs. The deployment of PSOs and preventive diplomacy capacities in the past has been hampered by the absence of a reserve facility that can finance missions at short notice. These deployments are further hindered by the fact that the budgeting cycle of the AU is based on a calendar year (January to December), with annual budgeting requirements decided up to six months in advance.

The CRF is envisioned to address these challenges to support the activities that meet the criteria such as start-up costs of PSOs, emergency mediation and preventive diplomacy initiatives, and other unplanned and unbudgeted activities until these activities can be incorporated into the AU's regular budgeting cycle. Essentially, the CRF would provide the AU with the flexibility to address crisis that erupt rapidly without sufficient warning.

HOW MUCH RESOURCES DOES THE CRISIS RESERVE FACILITY HAVE?

AU Policy Organs in line with the AU Financial Rules have allocated the following resources for the CRF:

- US$7 million for 2023
- US$10 million for 2024.

HAS THE PEACE FUND MADE DISBURSEMENTS SO FAR?

Following the Executive Council decision, the Peace Fund has made disbursements through the AUC Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) for the following interventions under the CRF. Four disbursements of US$6.5 million in total made via PAPS in 2023: ▶

'Peaceful conditions allow businesses to expand their market reach and explore new opportunities for growth'

- US$2 million: EAC Regional Force in the eastern DRC
- US$2 million: ATMIS Shortfall
- US$1.5 million for Phase II Technical Pause for the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)
- US$1 million for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in northern Ethiopia, Tigray Region to sustain the Pretoria peace process.

HOW CAN THE PRIVATE SECTOR BE INVOLVED?

The AU Peace Fund is an African Fund, and the private sector – as the major driver of the African economy – has a significant role to play in supporting peace-building initiatives of the African Union through its Peace Fund.

This could be done by contributing resources that would be used to address the root causes of conflict on our continent, mainly through mediation and preventive diplomacy.

Overall, the private sector's active involvement and commitment to sustaining peace in Africa are crucial for achieving long-term stability and fostering economic development across the continent.

THE BENEFITS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR OF INVESTING IN PEACE

Sustained peace in Africa offers numerous benefits to the private sector, including the following:

Stable business environment: Peace fosters stability, which creates a conducive environment for business operations. Companies can invest with confidence, knowing that their assets and investments are protected from the risks associated with conflict and instability.

Market expansion: Peaceful conditions allow businesses to expand their market reach and explore new opportunities for growth. With reduced barriers to trade and investment, companies can access previously untapped markets, increasing their customer base and revenue potential.

Risk Mitigation: Peace reduces the likelihood of disruptions to supply chains, transportation networks and infrastructure, minimising operational risks for businesses. This stability allows companies to better plan and manage their operations, reducing the impact of unforeseen events.

Long-term sustainability: Sustainable peace lays the foundation for long-term economic development and prosperity.

The African Union Peace Fund stands as a beacon of hope for our collective journey towards peace and stability in Africa. Through its strategic activities, the AU Peace Fund addresses the root causes of conflict across the continent. With a transparent governance structure in place, the AU Peace Fund ensures that resources are efficiently managed and disbursed to initiatives that have a tangible impact on the ground.

The Peace Fund has made significant strides in its resource mobilisation efforts, amounting to more than US$388 million. However, much more resources are required, and the private sector's involvement is paramount in sustaining and expanding the Peace Fund's impact.

The African Union Commission, through its Peace Fund Secretariat, calls upon the business community to join us in our efforts to build a more peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Your contributions to the Peace Fund will not only help address the root causes of conflict but also create enabling conditions for doing business in our continent thereby ensuring sustainable development and economic growth. Together, let us invest in peace and pave the way for a brighter future for all Africans. ■

REFERENCES

1. African Union/OAU Decisions on alternate sources for funding: Executive Council June 2006 Banjul Decision, (EX.CL/Dec.285 (IX)), the July 2007 Accra Declaration (Assembly/AU/Decl.2 (IX)), the January 2011 Executive Council Decision (EX.CL/Dec.643 (XVIII)), and the July 2011 Assembly Decision (Assembly/ AU/Dec.364 (XVII))

THE YEAR OF EDUCATION

2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

African Union

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> **The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.**

DIOGENES

African Union

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

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Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation.

WALTER CRONKITE

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AU | PEACE FUND

Increased appetite for the private sector's inclusion in Africa's peace-financing landscape

Security threats ranging from armed conflicts, civil wars, terrorism, coups and the increased use of technological warfare coupled with the shrinking space for civic engagement as led to an evolution in the trends around peace, security and governance architecture. Whereas the trends have been dynamic, the financing mechanisms for early warning and prevention, peace support and stabilisation, have remained mostly within their traditional structures.

Coupled by the inflexibility of funding methods, bureaucracies, and slow turn-around time to disburse support when its needed, financing peace activities has over the years remained relatively inadequate to sustainably address the security challenges on the African continent.

The African Union Peace Fund is designed to address the unpredictable and unreliable funding cycles, eliminate bureaucratic red-tape, and enhance response time to crises through effective governance structures, supported by effective audit, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The AU Peace Fund disbursements are aimed at the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, and facilitate timely and effective responses to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. The Peace Fund covers more than just the peace support operations. The objective of the endowment is to enable the African Union to fully finance mediation and preventive diplomacy activities, support institutional readiness and capacity, maintain a crisis reserve facility, and enable the AU to meet its commitment to finance its peace operations and deliver on the goal of providing African led solutions to issues facing Africa. In 2024, the African Union is set to launch the expanded resource mobilisation strategy

for the Peace Fund. **Mrs. Dagmawit Moges Bekele, Director of the AU Peace Fund Secretariat**, reflects on the journey of the establishment of the Fund and elaborates on the new strategy and the value proposition for the private sector's involvement in financing peace.

WHAT DOES THE EXPANDED RESOURCE MOBILISATION FOR THE AU PEACE FUND ENTAIL?

The AU Peace Fund is a demonstration of a major shift in the way peace and security activities on the continent are funded using a home-grown mechanism that ensures the financing mechanism is reliable, predictable, and sustainable. The AU Peace Fund was informed by a simulation of trends in financing peace processes on the continent, analysing what has worked and what has not. ▶

As of 31st January 2024, the African Union Peace Fund had a kitty of US$388.6 million. Notably, of this amount, 34 (of 55) AU Member States have contributed 100% of their assessed contributions, an indication of a strong commitment to finance peace on the continent.

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Mrs. Dagmawit Moges Bekele, Director of the Peace Fund Secretariat, African Union Commission

To promote financial transparency, a financial audit of the operations of the Fund is conducted on an annual basis by an independent external auditor in accordance with international auditing standards. The audited financial statements are made publicly available after the close of each financial year.

The major challenge with the other existing mechanisms has been the unpredictability of when the funds would be available for timely interventions, particularly because the funding and the support comes from international partners on bilateral arrangements. The bureaucracies around the Peace and security funding have undermined the whole intended purpose to have peaceful continent.

Having said that, the need for an expanded approach for resource mobilisation where the AU Peace Fund looks beyond the Member States, is of paramount importance. The private sector has always been on our radar because of the growing appreciation that when it comes to peace and security, we all have multiple vested interests and stakes in ensuring the continent is able to address any security lapses in a timely manner. However, we have been approaching the whole financing mechanism in phases from the Member States assessed contributions, return-on-investment and voluntary contributions; and now we are expanding the resource mobilisation base to include more stakeholders.

For the longest time, the peace and security architecture has been viewed as a reserve responsibility, largely, for the states and international partners. However, with the increasingly complex nature of conflicts, there is need for more involvement and inclusion of a diverse range of stakeholders at the local, national, regional, continental, and global levels. Financing is just a start.

We have seen several private organisations, particularly at the local level, financing peace activities such as peace tournaments, peace caravans and so on, in efforts to bring together and restore peace between warring communities and therefore, I think it is timely to scale and institutionalise such efforts at a larger level.

Under the expanded resource mobilisation strategy, we are engaging different stakeholders, be it the private sector, philanthropists, high-net worth individuals, bilateral and multilateral organisations, and all the African citizenry on the continent and in the diaspora, for the main reason that we see their involvement in peace financing as a long-term investment.

In fact, the African Union Executive Council, in their 43rd session held in July 2023[1], adopted the proposal for the expanded resource mobilisation strategy and presently we are in the implementation phase of that decision.

WHAT'S THE VALUE PROPOSITION FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE CITIZENRY TO DONATE MONEY TO PEACE ACTIVITIES?

The greatest value proposition is peace, above all. Insecurity and instability affect all of us directly or indirectly and therefore, if we have an opportunity to contribute to efforts that allow the African Union to respond to any security lapses in a timely manner, then we would have contributed to saving lives and livelihoods. Remember, the AU Peace Fund has a Crisis Reserve Facility component, which is utilised to address unforeseen and urgent operational peace and security requirements that require rapid and flexible responses. The Crisis Reserve Facility is quite important because it reduces the administrative burdens for disbursement to ensure timely response. The other thematic support windows of the AU Peace Fund also allow for mediation and preventive diplomacy, and the deployment of Peace Support Operations on short notice.

The private sector relies on a conducive business environment to thrive and as such, it would be in their best interest to support the preservation of peace dividends. Without peace and stability, business enterprises are destroyed, access to raw materials and services are disrupted thereby slowing down businesses and sometimes leading to closure. Export and import of products and services is also disrupted and often, the cost of all of these is passed on to the consumer.

During instability, the movement of financial flows is affected causing a big strain to businesses and individuals, which as you can imagine, has a domino effect at the family level of those affected. The cycle of insecurity and instability is not a government challenge only, it is a challenge we all get to inherit and experience. When you speak to financial institutions for instance, they will tell you they would be the first to support any peace support initiatives because during crisis, the number of defaulters they experience, negatively affects their books.

How do you recover money from individuals or businesses that no longer exist due to either death or displacement? At the government level, how do you recover funds from a country under a coup? These are just a few examples that demonstrate how we are all affected and why a peace financing marketplace and

contributions of small or large amounts to the AU Peace Fund, is smart economics.

There certainly is great value proposition for the private sector's involvement in financing peace. We are stakeholders in peace restoration efforts whose success can be credited to a culmination of collective efforts.

WHAT ARE THE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS THAT GIVE CONTRIBUTORS THE ASSURANCE THAT THE FUNDS ARE GOING INTO GOOD USE?

The AU Peace Fund has a very well-established governance structure that allows for checks and balances at every level of the funds once they enter the kitty. The governance structure of the AU Peace Fund provides fiduciary guidance and the necessary checks to ensure the funds are utilised when and where they should be.

The structure tier was established to respond to the accountability demands, effectiveness of response processes, results, and value for money. What we have done to ensure the accountability is a tier process cushioned by the governance structure of the AU Peace Fund consisting of a Board of Trustees, am Executive Management Committee, the AU Peace Fund Secretariat, Peace Fund Managers, an Independent Evaluation Group and the AU Peace and Security Council.

The **Board of Trustees** was inaugurated in November 2018. The Board has seven members, five of them are eminent persons representing the five AU Regions, and two international partners, that is the United Nations and the European Union. The Board has been working to ensure the full operationalisation of the governance and management structure of the fund.

Among its various roles, the Board ensures the strategic coherence and enhanced governance, financial and administrative oversight of the Peace Fund, and approves the framework for the monitoring and evaluation of performance of the Fund, the financial accountability of activities supported by the Fund and external audits.

The **Executive Management Committee** (EMC) provides executive management, oversight, and directs the activities of the Peace Fund. The Executive

Management Committee is comprised of the Chairperson of the AU Commission; the Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission; the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace & Security; and the Director of the Peace Fund Secretariat. The EMC plays several critical functions such as recommending the operational and access modalities, as well as approve the funding in line with the Fund's principles, criteria, modalities, policies and programs. The Committee also reviews the audited financial statements of the fund.

The **AU Peace Fund Secretariat**, which I lead as the Director. As a Secretariat, we run the day-to-day operations of the Fund providing the administrative, legal and financial expertise required in the management of the Fund. We also prepare the consolidated financial and narrative reports for the EMC, Board of Trustees and external/internal auditors.

The *Fund Manager(s)* are responsible for administering the assets of the Fund. Currently we have two fund managers who are investing the Peace Fund into lucrative portfolios to ensure we benefit from worthwhile returns on investments. By investing the funds, we are also addressing the replenishment aspect to minimize on the depletion of the funds.

We also have the **Independent Evaluation Group**, which undertakes periodic independent evaluations of the performance of the Fund to provide an objective assessment of the performance of the Fund, including the impact of its funded activities, administrative management, and effectiveness.

The utilisation of the Peace Fund is a consultative process that involves the AU Member States as well. The Member States have their voice in the **Peace and Security Council** which is the decision-making organ of the ▶

'The AU Peace Fund is a demonstration of a major shift in the way peace and security activities on the continent are funded'

AU for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts. All the 15 Peace and Security Council members have equal voting powers, therefore their evaluation of the security atmosphere during early warning and in event of crisis breakout, and where funds should be utilised, is well informed.

I have outlined the governance structure of the AU Peace Fund which gives you a perspective of the different tiers of management and ensures the funds are collected, invested, and utilised appropriately to reduce wastage or misappropriation. The governance structure is very important here when it comes to ensuring flexibility, predictability of both the availability of funds and early warning systems of any crisis, as well as the having the full understanding of the peace process and support needed.

Allow me to add that the monitoring and evaluation approach of the fund is adopted to a results-based framework with guidelines and appropriate performance indicators which are reviewed periodically to support the continuous improvement of the fund's impact, effectiveness, and operational performance.

Remember, the AU Commission also prepares periodical reports on the status of peace and security on the continent, which also outlines the funding mechanism and the progress and impact of the AU interventions. This report is analysed by the AU policy organs, which goes all the way up to the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government.

Additionally, in terms of procurement of goods, works and services using the resources of the fund, this is governed in accordance with the AU procurement rules and procedures and in accordance with internationally accepted public procurement standards.

To promote financial transparency, financial audit of the operations of the Fund is conducted on an annual basis by an independent external auditor in accordance with international auditing standards. The audited financial statements are made publicly available after the close of each financial year.

I am convinced the African Union has done quite well in addressing the transparency and accountability mechanism of the AU Peace Fund particularly with the new efforts to expand the resource mobilisation funds which certainly adds to the value and accountability of investments in peace and security.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE AU PEACE FUND AND WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE FUND THUS FAR?

The AU Peace Fund is a one-stop shop that aligns complementary efforts and administrative processes on a continental scope. The instrument establishing the AU Peace Fund is elaborate on the sources of funding which go beyond Member States contributions to allow for accumulation of sums accrued to the Peace Fund by way of interest, dividends, fees, sale of assets and other sources.

As of 31st January 2024, African Union Peace Fund had a kitty of US$388.6 million. Notably, of this amount, 34 AU Member States have

'There is close strategic collaboration in planning and monitoring and evaluation of the disbursement of the fund'

contributed 100% of their assessed contributions, an indication of a strong commitment to finance peace on the continent. The former President of Senegal H.E. Macky Sal, extended a voluntary contribution to the fund, proof of the growing spirit of pan-African solidarity and dedication to securing peace across the continent. The total amount also reflects the growing returns on investments on bank balances held under the peace fund.

From these funds, US$6.5 million has been utilised since 2023 when the very first disbursement of the AU Peace Fund was approved. US$2 million was disbursed to bridge the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) funding gap, and another US$2 million disbursed to support operations of East African Community Regional Force in Democratic Republic Community. Further, US$1.5 million for Phase II Technical Pause for the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and US$1 million approved for the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in Northern Ethiopia, Tigray Region to sustain the Pretoria Peace process.

The impact has certainly been positive. For example, during the February 2024 AU Summit, H.E. Taye Atske-Selassie, Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, lauded the efforts by the African Union to address in a timely manner crises on the continent underlining the impact on resolving the crisis in Ethiopia and the promotion of sustainable peace and security in Africa. Ethiopia, as a beneficiary of the AU Peace Fund highlighted the Pretoria Peace Agreement that

ended the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and noted that the government is working closely with the African Union, and the monitoring verification and compliance mechanism to consolidate peace and to advance the inclusive national dialogue process.

This is one example, and you must remember, peace processes do not always play out openly in the media and in the public, there are processes such as mediation and dialogue that very often take place behind the scenes. By the time you are hearing of the peace processes, a lot of work has already gone on behind the scenes and the AU Peace Fund covers such components to prevent the outbreak or escalation of violent conflict; and peace-making, which includes mediation and conciliation to prevent, manage or resolve intra- or inter-state conflict.

What has also made the AU Peace Fund an effective mechanism that through its governance structure, there is close strategic collaboration in planning and monitoring and evaluation of the disbursement of the funds. H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Chair of the AU Peace Fund Executive Management Committee, announced[2] on the side lines of the UN General Assembly in September 2023, that US$10 million was approved for 2024. As you can see, the amount earmarked for disbursement is increasing year after year to enable the AU to address the security challenges on the continent effectively and timely. This, in essence, requires that more funds are mobilised.

The upcoming launch the expanded resource mobilisation strategy for the AU Peace Fund, scheduled to be held in July 2024 will be an opportunity to enhance a public-private partnership and to reflect on the collective successes, draw lessons from the past, and to pool our strengths to address the existing and emerging security threats on our continent.

We must make Africa a more secure, peaceful and a prosperous continent. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. ■

To learn more about the African Union Peace Fund, visit

PEACE FUND – AFRICAN UNION (AU.INT)

REFERENCES

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2. Statement by H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, on 'Financing AU Peace Support Operations at the Peace and Security Council Meeting' (https://au.int/en/speeches/20230923/he-moussa-faki-mahamat-financing-au-peace-operations)

Peace for development: For intra–African trade to thrive, peace must prevail

Africa's Agenda 2063 sets a minimum annual growth rate of 7% which is crucial to promote creation of decent jobs, reduce inequalities, and match global growth rates. For this goal to be realised, the nexus between peace, security, and development must be recognised, as stable economic environments are a prerequisite for sustainable economic development and vice versa

As the African Union (AU) seeks to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to ensure its benefits are felt by every African citizen across all the AU Member States, the African Union Peace Fund is a critical element to support intra-African trade on the continent.

Distinct but interwoven strategies must be harnessed to propel Africa towards a prosperous, inclusive and peaceful future to ensure the AfCFTA realises its envisioned long-term regional integration, economic growth and development for the continent.

THE AFCFTA AND AFRICAN UNION PEACE FUND: ENGINES FOR INTEGRATION, PROSPERITY AND PEACE

With the fastest-growing economies, the youngest population, a robust labour force, and a growing population, Africa is expected to benefit from a demographic dividend boom. And the AfCFTA, the world's largest free trade area bringing together 55 countries, is key lever for harnessing the demographics dividends by igniting economic integration, prosperity and directly contributing to economic growth and stability that will foster peace and security in Africa.

The AfCFTA as a trade regime dismantles trade barriers, setting the stage for the increased integration, competitiveness, economic diversification, and investment in African economies.

The AfCFTA will enhance the level of trade among African countries, stimulate production through the development of regional value chains to ensure that manufacturing, agricultural processing and other activities power global markets, and strengthen Africa's economic and commercial diplomacy.

The economic rejuvenation of the AfCFTA carries inherent peace dividends: increased integration, interdependence, and co-operation significantly promote peace. The AfCFTA forges an integrated economic landscape that acts as a deterrent to conflict due to heightened economic interdependence. By fostering economic growth and the creation of decent jobs, the AfCFTA directly addresses economic inequalities, a recognised root cause of social unrest and conflict, and in doing so it contributes indirectly to stability and security on the continent, amplifying its role beyond economic integration.

Whilst the AfCFTA is the engine driving economic growth, the AU Peace Fund is a linchpin mechanism that, together with other mechanisms instituted by the African Union

'Sustainable peace, security, and economic development in Africa are not just interconnected goals; they are interdependent pillars that uphold the continent's vision of a unified, peaceful, and prosperous Africa'

such as the AU Peace and Security Council, the African Standby Force, the Military Staff Committee, the Continental Early Warning System, and the Panel of the Wise, works to support the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, and facilitates timely and effective responses to conflict and crisis situations in Africa.

Recognising that the prosperity of Africa is intricately linked to its stability and security – and as a key pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) – the AU Peace Fund delivers timely and effective support in the areas of mediation and preventive diplomacy, AU-led peace support operations, and the development of core institutional capacities.

The AU Peace Fund is designed to swiftly address emerging crises and underscores the readiness to ensure regional stability. By providing a secure environment, the Peace Fund sets the stage for the AfCFTA's successful implementation by boosting investor confidence and enabling smooth trade relations. This mutually reinforcing relationship illustrates the strategic harmony between the AfCFTA and the Peace Fund.

THE NEXUS: A VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF PROSPERITY, PEACE, AND STABILITY

The relationship between the AfCFTA and the AU Peace Fund creates a virtuous cycle that enhances economic prosperity and ensures peace and stability.

Peace and stability, enhanced through the utilisation of the AU Peace Fund, is a prerequisite for the AfCFTA's seamless implementation. At the same time, the economic prosperity spurred by the AfCFTA can diminish conflict triggers and expand the resource base available for the Peace Fund, reinforcing its efforts towards peace and security.

As countries become more economically integrated, the cost of conflict increases, making peace a more attractive option. This way, the AfCFTA and the AU Peace Fund are mutually reinforcing, demonstrating the fundamental symbiosis between economic development and peace and security. This symbiotic relationship extends beyond

To learn more about the African Union Peace Fund, visit

PEACE FUND – AFRICAN UNION (AU.INT)

Africa's borders. As the continent becomes more peaceful and economically robust, it can forge stronger partnerships on the global stage. A peaceful Africa attracts foreign investment, which further fuels economic growth, while an economically prosperous Africa can contribute more significantly to global peace and security efforts.

As Africa strives to achieve its vision of a unified, peaceful, and prosperous Africa, the intricate nexus between the AfCFTA and the Peace Fund remain an important mechanism. The mutual benefits and positive cyclical relationship will propel Africa towards realising its Agenda 2063.

Sustainable peace, security, and economic development in Africa are not just interconnected goals; they are interdependent pillars that uphold the continent's vision of a unified, peaceful, and prosperous Africa. As the continent continues to strive for this vision, understanding and leveraging the symbiotic relationship between the AfCFTA and Peace Fund will undoubtedly be key to its success. ■

The African Union Sports Council

Delivering the Agenda 2063 ambition to promote pan-Africanism, cultural integration and economic development through the sports economy

XIIITH **AFRICAN** GAMES

◄◄

More than 5 000
Athletes took part
in the 13th Edition
of the African Games
held in Accra, Ghana

Africa's Agenda 2063 aspires to promote
inclusive growth and social development
through pan-Africanism, cultural integration
and economic development. One of the key
levers for achieving these ambitions is sports.

In recognition of the important role sports
plays in society, African leaders, in 2016
adopted the Statutes establishing the African
Union Sports Council (AUSC), thus creating the
technical body that would lead in achieving
Africa's Agenda 2063 aspirations underscored
by sports by focusing on the promotion and
development of sports on the continent,
promoting development through sports.

The AUSC delivers its mandate by focusing
on key priority areas, as outlined in its statues,
in order to achieve its mandate and realise the
ambitions of Africa's Agenda 2063.

It does this by developing and support-
ing platforms for African citizens to engage
in sports at community, national, regional
and continental levels; positioning sports
as a lever for promoting social and cultural
cohesion; and promoting economic deve-
lopment through investments in the sports
economy and industry.

STATUTES AND MANDATES OF THE AFRICAN UNION SPORTS COUNCIL
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Service the sports policy development
  needs of the AU
- Promote and defend sports development
  and development through sports
- Ensure that Member States develop
  sports policies, programmes, systems
  and structures ▶

- Facilitate the development of relevant sports structures in Member States and the alignment of national sports policies and strategies to the African Union policy for sustainable development of sports in Africa and other continental sports policies to achieve harmonisation and co-ordination of sports development.

MANAGE CONTINENTAL SPORTING PROPERTIES

- Oversee the overall co-ordination, organisation and management of the African Games, and improve the profile of the Games to attract high-profile athletes to ensure that it becomes the sporting event of note on the continent, and the qualifier for the Olympic Games and other international events

Watch highlights from the African Games here.

SCAN TO WATCH

- Increase the revenue of the African Games and institute transparent mechanisms regarding the proceeds raised from the marketing and sponsorship of the African Games.

MEMBERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

- Grant membership of the AUSC subject to approval by the Specialised Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports (STC-YCS)
- Ensure that the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) and Association of African Sports Confederations (AASC) play their assigned roles in collaborating with the African Union Sports Council.

CAPACITY BUILDING

- Ensure that Member States fund sports development
- Promote co-operation with international sports organisations with a view to solicit sponsorship, funding and training of sportsmen and women
- Facilitate sports development on the African continent in terms of skills development, social interaction, and communication of relevant information on programmes in combating HIV/Aids and anti-doping programmes, as well as to promote person-to-person development programmes
- Promote and strengthen the institutional, human and operational capacities of African civil society.

PROMOTE GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN RIGHTS THROUGH SPORTS

- Promote sports as a fundamental human right to be enjoyed by all
- Promote and defend a culture of good governance, democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, human rights and freedoms as well as social justice in the domain of sports
- Promote, advocate and defend a culture of gender equality in the domain of sports.

THE AFRICAN GAMES

BACKGROUND OF THE AFRICAN GAMES AND FORMATION OF THE AUSC

The African Games, formally known as the All-African Games, are a continental multi-disciplinary pan-African sports event held every four years, and exclusively owned by the African Union on behalf of its Members States. The Games have a long history that is linked to various other games, such as the Community Games and, later, Friendship Games, held in 1963 in Senegal, where 24 independent African States participated in track-and-field events. ▶

XIII AFRICAN GAMES

Exclusively owned by the African Union

59 Years
of bringing African Sports

20+ Sports
A multidisciplinary event with more than 20 sports

4 Years
Held every four years, and one year before the Olympic Games
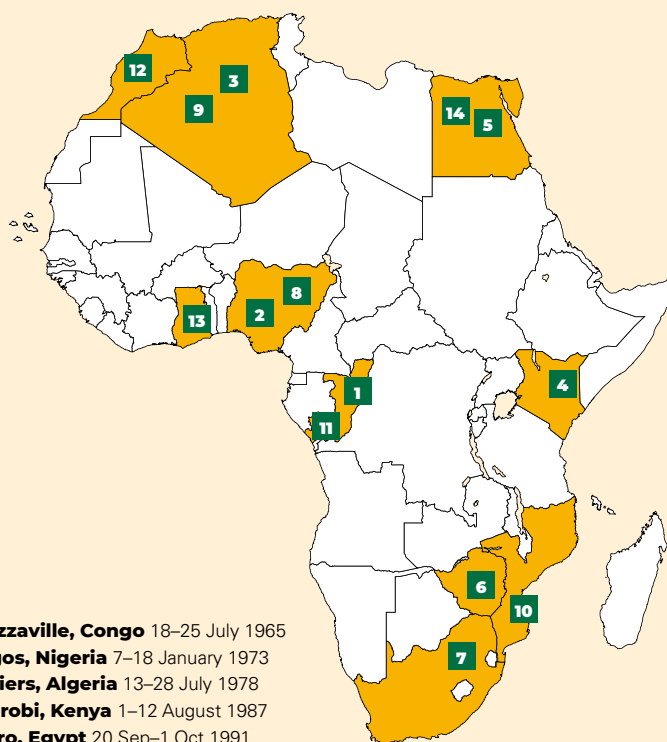
1. **Brazzaville, Congo** 18–25 July 1965
2. **Lagos, Nigeria** 7–18 January 1973
3. **Algiers, Algeria** 13–28 July 1978
4. **Nairobi, Kenya** 1–12 August 1987
5. **Cairo, Egypt** 20 Sep–1 Oct 1991
6. **Harare, Zimbabwe** 13–25 September 1995
7. **Johannesburg, South Africa** 10–19 September 1999
8. **Abuja, Nigeria** 4–18 July 2003
9. **Algiers, Algeria** 11–23 July 2007
10. **Maputo, Mozambique** 3–18 September 2011
11. **Brazzaville, Congo** 4–19 September 2015
12. **Rabat, Morocco** 19–31 August 2019
13. **Accra, Ghana** 8–24 March 2024
14. **Egypt** 2027

A General Assembly of African Ministers of Youth and Sports, convened in Dakar, Senegal, during the Friendship Games in April 1963 and discussed the organisation of pan-African Games that would include all independent African countries. The Assembly instructed the Republic of Congo to examine the Friendship Games and build on them to come up with rules that would govern the Games that were going to be held in Congo, Brazzaville, in 1965.

This was followed by a preparatory meeting in Brazzaville from 24 to 29 February 1964 that adopted a framework for the organisation of the first All-African Games, organised by Africans, for Africans in July 1965 in Congo, Brazzaville.

The successful hosting of the first All-African Games in 1965 was followed by the establishment of a pan-Africanist sports institution, called the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa (SCSA), in 1966 by the Ministers of Sports of African countries.

The SCSA had its headquarters in Yaoundé, Cameroon, with the responsibility of co-ordinating the organisation of the All-African Games, promoting, developing and co-ordinating all sports on the continent.

In 1967, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) recognised the SCSA as the official organisation responsible for co-ordinating sports on the continent.

In July 2013, the SCSA was dissolved by its General Assembly in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and all functions, liabilities and assets were transferred to African Union Commission. The 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Union, Heads of State and Government adopted the Statutes of the African Union Sports Council (AUSC) on 31 January 2016, leading to the establishment of the African Union Sports Council Secretariat, whose headquarters is in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The African Games were established to promote high-performance African sports and enhance sporting and cultural exchanges between African Union Member States. The ▶

Games are a multidisciplinary sports competition established under the ownership and patronage of the African Union, and the exclusive property of the African Union, which holds all rights relating to their organisation, exploitation, broadcast and reproduction by any means whatsoever.

Article 18 of the Statute of the African Union Sports Council explains the composition of a Technical Committee for the African Games that oversees the organisation and management of the Games in collaboration with the host country. Article 18 also explains the primary entities expected to spearhead the organisation and management of the Games.

These include the AU Member States represented by AUSC Regions, the African sports movement, experts and all stakeholders defined in the Fundamental Regulations for the African Games adopted by the STC-YCS in line with Article 26 (6) of the Statute of the AUSC.

Furthermore, the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports adopts the African Games governing instruments, such as fundamental regulations for the Games, which ensures inclusion and participation of all Member States. All countries ▶

Re-live the exciting moments and sights from the African Games here.

SCAN TO WATCH

◀◀
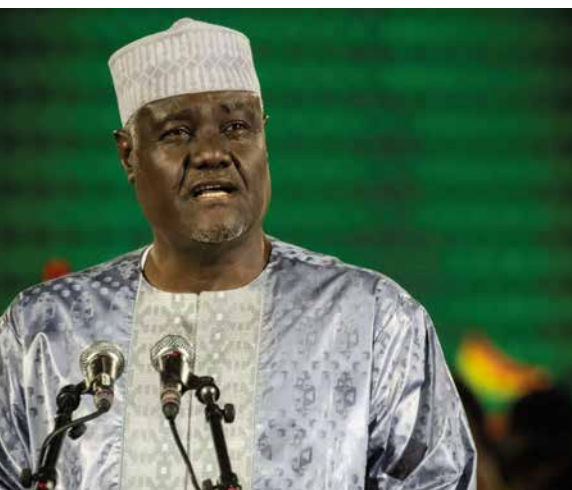
'Most importantly, these African Games are also an opportunity to highlight the values of fair play, equality, discipline, inclusion, perseverance, tolerance and teamwork; these are all key for building character and peaceful societies.'

H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

African Union

THE YEAR OF EDUCATION 2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

"

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

NELSON MANDELA

#YearOfEducation #Agenda2063 #TheAfricaWeWant

au.int

◀◀

'We thank and congratulate all the athletes who showcased and wowed the world with their excellent display of talent, skills and comradeship. And to the host country, Ghana, and various stakeholders, sponsors, partners and media, we commend the investment and support towards the hosting and showcasing of African sports to the world. And to the wonderful fans in Ghana, across Africa and the world, who followed the games, thank you for tremendous support and raising Africa's sporting voice on the global stage.'

DR. DECIUS CHIPANDE
HEAD OF THE AFRICAN
UNION SPORTS COUNCIL

athletes participating in the African Games are fully sponsored by the African Union Member States that own the Games.

The African Games are organised once every four years and one year before the Olympic Games. They are organised in line with the rules and regulations adopted by the African Union Specialised Technical Committee for Youth, Culture and Sports. The African Union Sports Council Technical Committee for the African Games is given the mandate to propose an objective criterion for evaluating the bidding files for the host countries and overseeing the management and organisation of the African Games by the Local Organising Committee.

The 13th edition of the African Games were hosted in March 2024, in Accra, Ghana, under the theme 'Experience the African Dream'. The Games attracted more than 5 000 athletes, who competed in 29 sports codes, with athletics, badminton, table tennis, tennis, triathlon and wrestling as qualifiers for the Olympic Games in Paris 2024.

◄◄

'It's been 16 days with over 5 000 athletes from 54 Member States of the African Union competing in 29 different sports disciplines in Accra. Ayekoo is a Ghanaian way of saying well done.'

H.E. NANA AKUFO-ADDO
PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

RANK	COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
1	Egypt	103	47	43	193
2	Nigeria	47	34	40	121
3	South Africa	32	32	42	106
4	Algeria	29	38	48	115
5	Tunisia	22	27	38	87
6	Ghana	19	29	21	69
7	Morocco	9	12	14	35
8	Ethiopia	9	8	5	22
9	Mauritius	9	5	11	25
10	Kenya	8	8	21	37
11	Eritrea	7	2	6	15
12	Senegal	4	7	18	29
13	Uganda	4	6	10	20
14	Zambia	4	5	5	14
15	Madagascar	4	4	7	15
16	Niger	4	1	6	11
17	Cameroon	3	13	14	30
18	Zimbabwe	3	4	4	11
19	Benin	3	1	0	4
20	DRC	2	7	9	18
21	Angola	2	1	5	8
22	Mali	2	1	5	8
23	Gambia	2	0	0	2
24	Libya	1	11	1	13
25	Namibia	1	4	5	10
26	Burkina Faso	1	2	7	10
27	Guinea	1	1	0	2
28	South Sudan	1	0	0	1
29	Cote d'Ivoire	0	9	9	18
30	Mozambique	0	5	1	6
31	Botswana	0	3	10	13
32	Liberia	0	2	2	4
33	Central African Republic	0	1	3	4
34	Gabon	0	1	3	4
35	Togo	0	1	3	4
36	Equatorial Guinea	0	1	0	1
37	Somalia	0	1	0	1
38	Republic of the Congo	0	0	5	5
39	Tanzania	0	0	3	3
40	Chad	0	0	1	1
41	Djibouti	0	0	1	1
42	Guinea-Bissau	0	0	1	1
43	Lesotho	0	0	1	1
44	Rwanda	0	0	1	1

In addition to athletes, the Games brought together technical officials, sporting associations, journalists, and fans from all corners of the African continent; a clear demonstration of the power and spirit of sports to unite African people across boundaries and promoting continental integration.

The 13th edition of the African Games provided an excellent platform for the best and upcoming African athletes to showcase their talents and skills, and all athletes were accommodated at the Games Village, in the University of Ghana. The Games created an opportunity for social cohesion, cultural exchange and solidarity, in line with the ethos of African renaissance and pan-Africanism, as propagated in the Aspirations of Agenda 2063, and building the Africa We Want. ■

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Whether you're beginning a new journey with us or staying involved with your alma mater, we commend you on choosing a world-class institution that has been building Africa's intellectual future for more than 150 years.

Unisa is the largest comprehensive open, distance and e-learning (CODeL) institution in Africa and the longest-standing dedicated distance education university in the world. We enrol nearly one-third of all South African students.

Unisa caters for a multigenerational student body by employing a multimodal approach to teaching and learning, and offers multidisciplinary qualifications, across a truly impressive range of academic disciplines at its eight colleges and one graduate school:

College of Accounting Sciences
College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
College of Economic and Management Sciences
College of Education
College of Human Sciences
College of Law
College of Science, Engineering and Technology
College of Graduate Studies
Graduate School of Business Leadership

Research Niche Areas

Unisa has identified five research niche areas on which to concentrate its research efforts and resources. Drawing on the particular research strengths of the university and its researchers, these areas focus on the challenges facing South Africa and the rest of the continent and lend themselves to transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.

The niche areas are as follows:
- Knowledge production and capacity building in response to the needs of South Africa and the African continent
- The promotion of democracy, human rights and responsible citizenship
- Innovation in science and technology
- Economic and environmental sustainability
- Open distance learning

In addition to the above, Unisa has identified ten catalytic niche areas that will not only activate and enhance the institution's academic agenda but also enhance academics' experiences as engaged scholars who refuse to be academic pies in the sky; scholars who will care to address the needs of our society
The catalytic niche areas are as follows:
- Marine studies
- Aviation and aeronautical studies
- Automotive studies
- Energy studies
- Space studies and the Square Kilometre Array
- Fourth industrial revolution and digitalisation
- Biotechnological studies
- Health/Pharmaceutical studies
- Feminist/Womanist/Bosadi theorisations
- Student support and co-curricular activities

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150 YEARS

THE TRUE SIZE OF AFRICA (30.37 MILLION KM²)

FRANCE
(549 970 km²)

PORTUGAL
(91 470 km²)

SPAIN
(498 980 km²)

US
(9 147 593 km²)

CHINA
(9 326 410 km²)

GERMANY
(348 672 km²)

ITALY
(294 140 km²)

PERU
(1 279 996 km²)

INDIA
(2 973 193 km²)

UK
(241 930 km²)

JAPAN
(364 485 km²)

An image is worth a thousand words, as is this one in conveying the true size of Africa – and its vast potential. Mercator map projections, which are widely used to this day, create the misconception that the continent is geographically smaller than the US, China, countries in Europe and even Greenland, which is only 2.17 million km². It is obviously a false notion, and one that diminishes the significance of Africa when, in fact, its true size dwarfs that of many nations. With this being the Year of Education, addressing the misconception that has become part of the misinformation about Africa is key.

African Union

2024: The Year of Education

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

On the sidelines of the UN Transforming Education Summit held in September 2022 in New York, the African Union (AU) through the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) in collaboration with several key partners including UNESCO, UNICEF and WFP organised an AU High-Level side event on education, which took place on the 20 September 2022.

The event was a culmination of prior work undertaken by the ESTI to incorporate the view of education and technical expertise from within the continent and diaspora, development partners, civil society, private sector and youth representatives to identify and incorporate concrete, realistic recommendations, which served as a basis for a formal declaration submitted to the AU High-Level side event and constituted a roadmap for AU Member States and the AU Commission to translate the Transforming Education Summit's recommendations into actions, tailored to the African context.

It is against this backdrop that the proposal of choosing Education as the Theme of the Year 2024 was submitted for the consideration and adoption by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government during the 36th ordinary session held in February 2023.

« «

'Education is a human right, a public good and, also, a public responsibility. As duty bearers it is incumbent upon us to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all.'

H.E. PROF MOHAMMED BELHOCINE
AUC COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

WHY THE NEED TO FOCUS ON EDUCATION IN AFRICA?

Despite the significant progress made in Africa over the past two decades in terms of access, completion and quality of basic education, disparities persist within and between countries. Learning achievement remains low in many parts of Africa. Girls, children from the poorest backgrounds, children with disabilities and children on the move, such as those forcibly displaced, face difficulties in realising their right to education.

Limitations also continue to exist in teacher development in Africa with recurrent teacher shortages coupled with a lack of professional development opportunities, and low status and working conditions. Multiple, protracted emergencies have gravely impacted on educational provision, including increased attacks on schools. There is an urgent need to strengthen peace education and cultivate a culture of peace and tolerance at all levels of education – formal, informal and non-formal.

These systemic challenges range from early childhood education, through primary and secondary education, technical and vocational education and training, to tertiary and higher education levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the limitations of the current education models at all levels, compounding inequalities in education and squarely threatening to set back decades of progress, albeit insufficient, in Africa.

The adoption of the year 2024 as the Year of Education is therefore aimed at bringing focus to the issues that affect education on the continent, such as addressing the burden and disruptions caused by COVID-19 on education systems, and promoting the systematic implementation of transforming education in Africa for accelerated implementation of CESA 2016–2025 and SDG 4.

The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025 (CESA 16–25) provides a framework for the policies and

> ## 'Classrooms in Africa must be the microcosms of peaceful societies, where history is taught not as a chronicle of conflict, but as a shared narrative of human struggles and triumphs. Where languages and progressive traditions are celebrated, not ostracised. Where differences are not sources of division, but sparks of curiosity and learning.'
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> ▼▼
>
> **H.E. PROF MOHAMMED BELHOCINE**
> AUC COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE,
> TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

programmes that will transform education on the continent, and in the last decade, we have seen significant improvements in education, with African Governments undertaking a wide range of programmes and implementing a wide range of policies to ensure that no child is left behind in access to education.

There have been substantial efforts on the continent to ensure access, completion, and quality of basic education for all, and the overall proportion of out-of-school children has been on the decline. The completion rates have improved in primary and lower secondary education, as well as access to and participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

There has also been noticeable progress in access to pre-primary education and in adult literacy and lifelong learning. With regards to School Feeding, low-income countries doubled their national budget expenditures to Home-Grown School Feeding programmes from 17% to 33% between 2013 and 2020. In lower middle-income countries, national budgets now account for 88% of school meals financing, up from 55% in 2013.

However, despite efforts and progress made, four main indicators ring a warning bell:

Out of school rate
Although the 'out of school rate', i.e. the 'proportion of children and young people in the official age range for the given level of education who are not enrolled in pre-primary, primary, secondary or higher levels of education' keeps steadily decreasing, especially for the primary level, the absolute number has reached the alarming global estimate of 98 million in Africa.

Learning Poverty Rate
'The share of children who cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10' was the highest in sub-Saharan Africa before the COVID-19 pandemic, at 86%. This rate is likely to have worsened after the pandemic, estimated now at 90%. This means that nine out of ten children cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10.

Availability of qualified teachers
Africa will need 17 million additional teachers to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.

Financing for Education
It is estimated that Africa will account for more than 90% of global external financing needs for education by 2030, with an additional US$40 billion needed to finance education to meet the goals and aspirations of Africa's Agenda 2063, as well as to achieve SDGs for education.

In this context, if nothing is done to transform and revitalise education in Africa, the achievement of Africa's Agenda 2063 is compromised. Swift and well-co-ordinated remedial action is required to reduce learning poverty in Africa, without which the consequences for children and society will be devastating, with long-term negative effects on children's life outcomes, including their learning, health (physical and mental), nutrition and socio-economic development.

Progress in education has a far-reaching impact on all the other aspects of human capital development. The large population of young people in Africa is a powerful source of economic growth and progress, provided it receives quality education and skills for the 21st-century job opportunities. Investing in ▶

education is thus the most effective investment in the fight against poverty, reducing gender inequalities, enabling people to survive and thrive, and helping to improve socio-economic development. Education is also associated with more peaceful communities, greater civic engagement, and stronger democracies.

Analysis of the goals of the AU's CESA 16–25 brings to the fore the urgency to transform and revitalise the entire education system on the continent, while paying special attention to marginalised groups including girls, children in rural areas, those living with disabilities, and those on the move, including those in fragile countries and contexts. This is coupled with the urgent need to address issues affecting teaching and to rehabilitate the profession, without which progress in education cannot be achieved in the future.

Within a global context, Africa aligns its voice to the growing consensus that more funds are needed to rescue education systems, particularly in Africa. The idea of improving the co-ordination of financing across multilateral agencies at the global level and exploring innovative financing mechanisms based on the experience of other sectors is taking shape.

The AU voice at global fora, including the G20, will elevate the call advocating for action to be taken sooner rather than later. At a continental level, in response to the financing gap of education the African Education Science Technology and Innovation Fund (AESTIF) is being developed with a high potential for employment and wealth creation leading to industrialisation and economic transformation to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063.

Initiated, owned, and managed by Africa, through the African Development Bank, the AESTIF is designed to be a blended finance mechanism that aims at pooling US$300 million via innovative financing mechanisms.

IMPLEMENTING THE THEME OF THE YEAR ON EDUCATION

For the AU and our Member States, focus will be on the development and implementation of effective, long-lasting, system-wide transformational strategies for education in Africa, and recovery from COVID-19, building resilience and transformation, riding on the global momentum.

It is also expected to spur implementation of the declarations emanating from the key

continental and global education moments including the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST4), the declarations from both the UN Transforming Education Summit, the High-Level side event on Transforming Education in Africa as well as the Youth Manifesto on Transforming Education in Africa.

Activities will be structured around sub-themes encompassing the entire education and skills development spectrum from early childhood education and development through to tertiary and vocational education and life-long learning. Focus will be on development and implementation of effective, long-lasting, system-wide transformational strategies for education in Africa, and addressing the constrained education financing landscape.

The role of teachers as key agents of trans-formation will be emphasised, as teachers need to be adequately supported and empowered to play their part for the envisaged transformation to take place.

Implementation of the Theme of the Year shall be under the technical leadership and co-ordination of the AU Commission Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) in close collaboration with the AU Committee of Ten Head of States (C10) on Education in Africa. The Department will work closely with the AU Member States (including

> **'Education for peace must encompass transforming hearts and minds, nurturing empathy, dialogue, and critical thinking. It is about understanding and respecting diverse perspectives, and building bridges across cultural divides.'**
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> **H.E. PROF MOHAMMED BELHOCINE**
> AUC COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

through the STCs), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), development partners, UN agencies and all education stakeholders, including the private sector and the youth.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE THEME OF THE YEAR

1. Encourage the teaching profession reform through comprehensive, quality teacher development programmes. Including advocacy for implementation of teacher development instruments; peer-to-peer learning; the implementation of the AU Continental Teacher Award; Knowledge and learning products.

2. Emphasise investments in STEM and foundational learning through, among others, integration of technology and co-curricular activities, including toolkits for improved STEM education and teaching standards (developed and implemented); teaching methods that strengthen play-based STEM education at the basic learning level; continental campaign strategy on 'Ending Learning Poverty'.

3. Strengthen and accelerate the teachers' capacity to teach African history, and support the inclusion of the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in school curricula, including the general history of Africa (GHA) flagship programme (launched and implemented).

4. Strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education space through accelerated implementation of TVET and higher education strategies.

5. Upscale the implementation of evidence-based innovative, feasible and sustainable digital solutions. Includes platforms for research and development and knowledge exchange on digital education solutions (established); public awareness campaign around Africa: Safer Internet Day for Women, Youth and Children, in accordance with the AU Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy.

6. Strengthening Home-Grown School Feeding, Peace Education and Health Education to create and accelerate healthy and conducive learning environments for improved learning outcomes. Includes dissemination and implementation of the Continental Strategy on Education for Health and Well Being; ▶

supporting the operationalisation of the Adolescent Health Component of the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA); implementation of Safe Schools Declaration and the revised 1974 Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation, and Peace and Education (promoted); and advocacy and dialogue on addressing the impact of climate change on education and accelerating climate change action in and through education (promoted).

7. Enhancing and protecting equitable access to quality education for girls and women, youth, people with disabilities and especially children in emergencies and conflict contexts. Includes the promotion of gender equality in education; protection of girls, youth and children in emergency and conflict contexts in compliance with the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child; implementation of the #AfricaEducatesHer campaign; the development and implementation of the AU Youth Manifesto Roadmap and products for inclusion in the AU Youth Empowerment Toolbox for use in capacity building training (developed/curated); and facilitating the hosting of a Pan-Africa Children's Parliament.

8. Strengthen the production and synergies between education management information systems and labour market data. Includes strengthening/developing Member States' capacities in the application of skills anticipation methodologies for trade, economic diversification and industralisation, to harness the prospects for jobs created through the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCTFA).

9. Establish and strengthen multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships for education. Includes operationalisation of CESA clusters; capacity-building initiatives to strengthen civil society voice and collective action; and harnessing the potential of the African diaspora in the development of Education in Africa.

10. Strengthening resource mobilisation for increased sustainable financing and systematic investment in education. Includes the launch and operationalisation of the African Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Fund (AESTIF); analysis of teacher wages' competitiveness in comparison to other professions, job satisfaction levels depending on pay levels, and public spending to education sector, developed through evidence based data, to inform policy priorities; advocacy for equitable, gender-responsive, inclusive and efficient budget allocation and utilisation, including a renewed commitment to allocate 20% of budget to education; and country investment cases on promoting girls' access to secondary education through Education Plus Initiative (developed and launched). ■

African Union

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Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

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Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

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AN INTERVIEW WITH MAZALO KATANGA, ANADEB CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Mazalo Katanga has held the reins of ANADEB since 2017, and the Agency's actions are perceptible across several sectors, including education, health, people's access to drinking water, employability of young people, and the promotion of financial and economic inclusion of disadvantaged households, among many others

Q: What is the mission of ANADEB and what is the broad spectrum of actions it covers in the Togolese landscape in terms of public development?
A: ANADEB's mission is to ensure the integration of the 'grassroots development' dimension into all development policies, plans, programmes and projects taking place in the country.

More directly, the Agency aims to support the implementation of the National Grassroots Development Policy.

It contributes to the realisation of the vision of the Ministry of Grassroots Development, namely to sustainably ensure universal access for all grassroots communities in Togo to the common minimum subsistence level by 2032.

The Agency strives to provide an inclusive offer of highly professional quality services for the benefit of local authorities, private individuals and NGOs involved in local development, and especially for the benefit of grassroots communities as well as the individuals that these communities comprise, in particular young people, women and people with disabilities.

Its mission positions it on populations little or poorly served by public development actions, and who are generally ineligible for traditional mechanisms of access to employment, income, financing, education, healthcare and social safety nets in particular.

Q: 'Grassroots development' sounds similar to 'local development', which is devolved to the municipalities. How does ANADEB coexist today with municipalities in the deployment of its initiatives?
A: When ANADEB was created, one of its missions was to prepare the ground for decentralisation. Today with the realisation of decentralisation, where municipalities are established and local elected officials installed in their roles, the role of ANADEB is to position itself clearly in its own attributions which are, among other things, to ensure its support technical support to decentralised state services, local authorities, grassroots community organisations, private individuals and NGOs in the promotion and management of grassroots development initiatives. With the aim of realising at all levels the community-led development approach promoted by Togo, ANADEB is gradually strengthening information, education, communication and training actions for the management of development actions by municipalities, cantons and villages.

This is how, as part of the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion project (SOCO), infrastructure subprojects are implemented from start to finish by communities at the village, cantonal and municipal levels.

The Social Safety Nets and Basic Services project uses the same approach to empowering communities in terms of infrastructure. The populations themselves choose their priorities in terms of work, enter into contracts with service providers who offer them the best conditions of price, quality and deadlines, and ensure the monitoring of the work and the maintenance of the infrastructure.

All development projects for which ANADEB is responsible are managed in such a way as to put the primary beneficiaries at the heart of the action, and it is for this reason that ANADEB, through its status of delegated project owner, supports the 117 municipalities of Togo in carrying out investments financed by the support fund for local authorities.

Today, ANADEB and the municipalities, like all other public and private institutions involved in the field of development, function in a complementarity, whereby ANADEB provides technical support to ensure good alignment with national grassroots development policies and strategies.

Q: What are the two flagship initiatives that have marked the existence of ANADEB within communities for the past year?
A: ANADEB is working on several projects, but those that have received more attention over the past year are those that have seen innovations. This is the social Safety Nets and Basic Services project, which allocates digital monetary transfers to vulnerable households to strengthen their consumption and their capacity to cope with shocks.

This support for vulnerable populations has long covered households in rural areas but over the past year, it has been extended to urban areas which are also full of pockets of severe vulnerability. As part of this support, certain households are provided with additional resources in the form of a grant for starting or expanding an income-generating activity through local support provided by ANADEB to them.

The second initiative that is attracting attention is the extension of the so-called 'community-led development' approach to all projects executed by ANADEB. This approach covers the process of establishing community infrastructure, the implementation of school canteens and the operation of school gardens by beneficiary communities as part of the promotion of school feeding based on local production.

In all areas where this approach has been used, the level of ownership of the interventions by the community is excellent because all components of the population participated in the action and are able to account for it, from the

Mazalo Atchidalo Katanga, CEO, ANADEB Togo

identification of the need to the exploitation of the developed sub-project.

Q: How does ANADEB finance its various projects?

A: ANADEB's interventions are mainly financed by the Togolese State and through various partnerships. For example, the SOCO project is financed by the World Bank in the form of credit and donations. The Safety Nets and Basic Services project is also financed by the World Bank, the State and the French Development Agency.

School canteens, for their part, have been fully supported by the Togolese State since 2021 with contributions from beneficiary communities, national economic operators and civil society. This entire set of contributors is supported both technically and financially by the World Food Programme (WFP) for technical innovations, the formalisation

of the institutional framework of the operation and its extension to other vulnerable areas.

Funding provided by the State comes from three main sources, namely the Support Fund for Local Authorities, the Support Programme for Vulnerable Populations and direct allocations made to ANADEB from the State budget. But there are also other sources of funding for specific activities to which ANADEB provides support.

Q: What are the challenges regarding school canteens today?

A: Togo's ambition is to cover 300 000 school children benefiting from the national school feeding programme by 2025. This requires an annual budget of 9.5 billion CFA francs. The challenge today is to achieve a canteen model where, from an initial investment, the entire system can definitively support

itself without requiring significant new allocations each year.

For this reason the government is striving to develop, with the support of its partners such as the WFP and the World Bank, innovative financing mechanisms.

Togo has already initiated, with the support of the WFP, 'home grown school feeding' with a view to being able to produce a large part of the foodstuffs needed for the school canteen in school gardens. It also relies on the consumption of food from local agriculture in the beneficiary localities, the symbolic monetary contribution of parents, the financing of national economic operators and any donor of goodwill. Communication actions are therefore initiated for the entire population to popularise the donation collection channels.

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African Union International
Center for Girls & Women's
Education in Africa

#AfricaEducatesHer: A continental initiative to keep girls in schools by the African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA)

By **Simone Yankey-Ouattara**, Acting Co-ordinator, AU/CIEFFA (yankey-ouattaras@africa-union.org); and **Lorato Palesa Modongo**, Gender Research Officer, AU/CIEFFA (modongoL@africa-union.org)

In order to realise the Africa's Agenda 2063 and contribute to the development of the African continent, it is imperative to prioritise, and invest in education for all, especially education for marginalised girls and women.

The African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA), through its #AfricaEducatesHer programme and campaign, aims to rally African Union (AU) Member States, development partners, civil society organisations, young people and other key multisectoral education stakeholders to champion girls' education. The continent-wide #AfricaEducatesHer campaign aims to promote girls and women's education in Africa.

Agenda 2063, specifically Aspiration 1, speaks to 'A Prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development', where all citizens are well educated. Aspiration 6 further notes 'An Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for Children'.

Education is one of the documented high-impact strategic tools that if invested in the continent, would ensure Agenda 2063 is realised. Over the past few decades, there has been some progress in children accessing education, and attempts by policymakers to close the gender gap in enrolment and completion rates are ongoing.

AU/CIEFFA is committed to joining forces with all key education stakeholders including AU Member States to champion girls' education and push forward for progress in ensuring that girls access education, remain in schools, and complete learning.

AU/CIEFFA is a technical and specialised institution of the AU, under the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) and its mandates are aligned with the vision of key African Union instruments and policies including the African Union's Agenda 2063; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of

Approximately 30% of all out–of–school children globally are in sub–Saharan Africa. 32.6 million girls of both primary and lower secondary school age are out of school, with 9.3 million of them likely to never set foot in a classroom.

Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), which provides a legal framework for ensuring civil and political, economic, social and cultural as well as environmental rights for all African women; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004); the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25); and the Science and Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA, 2014–2024).

In addition AU/CIEFFA works towards the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 focusing on gender equality and education.

It is worth noting that although strides have been made in ensuring access to education for girls, overall progress has been impeded by socio-cultural, economic and political factors, including poverty, gender gaps and forced migrations. UNESCO (2020) estimates that approximately 30% of all out-of-school children globally are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Some 32.6 million girls of both primary and lower secondary school age are out of school, with 9.3 million of them likely to never set foot in a classroom. The schooling of millions of students across the continent was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected the marginalised, including girls (Brookings, 2023). During the pandemic, there were school closures, lock-downs and overall disruptions to learning. At the peak of the pandemic, schooling was disrupted for 236 million students across nearly all the African continent (UNESCO, 2020). After schools reopened, millions of students remained affected, with gender-related vulnerabilities and inequalities placing female learners at a higher risk of not returning to school.

It is against this backdrop that the AU/CIEFFA launched the #AfricaEducatesHer campaign in September 2020. The campaign was launched as a rallying call for AU Member States to adopt affirmative actions and policies to encourage girls to return to school particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic and to remain in school beyond the pandemic. The campaign engages gender experts, youth, educators, media practitioners, researchers and academia, civil society organisations, development partners and other multi-sectoral stakeholders to take

positive action that guarantees girls' return to school.

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign mapped and categorised current and emerging challenges that specifically affect the education of girls and women in Africa. These were classified into four main thematic categories: Socio-cultural; Economic & Health; Psychological; Political & Environmental.

Based on the above challenges and considering that the African continent has half a billion children aged 0–14, a number expected to reach 580 million in 2030 (World Economic Forum, 2022), AU/CIEFFA views the ambition of educating children as a necessity and not a luxury.

For the continent to harness this demographic dividend, educating the most vulnerable and ▶

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HTTPS://CIEFFA.AU.INT

marginalised children and especially girls should be invested in and prioritised by all. It is worth noting that this is a massive undertaking that needs concerted efforts from all education stakeholders.

This was also reflected at the AU/CIEFFA Education Experts meeting, which was held in June 2022, of which the outcome document is the Dakar Declaration on 'Assessing learning losses to embrace learning recovery for African girls'. In the

Table 1
Current and emerging challenges affecting girls' and women's education
▼▼

declaration, there is a call to action for African Union Member States to:

Prioritise legislative and policy reforms to guarantee re-integration and continued learning for all children, particularly for all girls and adolescents in and out of school, in formal and informal education systems, using multiple alternative learning pathways.

Invest in strengthening evidence-based research on multiple vulnerabilities that affect girls' and women's education through data-driven advocacy to evaluate learning losses and learning recovery strategies, including gender disaggregated evidence for out-of-school learners to assist in advocacy, legislation and policy reforms.

Invest in Gender-responsive School Feeding, school health and nutrition strategies to increase retention rates of girls and young women and build their nutrition resilience, supported by value-added agri-food chains. Furthermore, there has been a recommendation for AU Member States to domesticate and implement the #AfricaEducatesHer campaign to enhance awareness around issues that have hindered girls and women from accessing education during and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus far, two Member States have launched the campaign at national levels – Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire – a commitment that is necessary and demonstrates need for progress by other Member States.

Furthermore, youth and development partners around the continent are implementing the campaign through their various on-the-ground initiatives and pledges, and there is a targeted campaign song by young artists from Nigeria (Ifé), Uganda (Afrie) as well as Burkina Faso (Smarty), which can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5N5Q9QbLME&t=2s. ■

SOCIO-CULTURAL	ECONOMIC & HEALTH	POLITICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL
• Increased cases of sexual and gender-based violence • Increased cases of forced and early marriages • Harmful cultural practices including FGM • Sexual violations • Unsafe schools and learning environments • Increased cases of school-related bullying • Gender inequalities leading to preference of educating boys over girls.	• Loss of interest in learning and return to school upon disruptions • Excessive trauma on students caused by isolation and exposure to abuse • Lack of psychological support for teachers and students • Drug and substance abuse.	• Poverty • Digital gaps and digital illiteracy • Lack of resources • Inaccessibility to information on STEM career options • Lack of menstrual products (period poverty) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities • Limited access to education, educational resources and infrastructure (e.g. classrooms, books, transport, libraries, technology) • Limited representation of female teachers • Poor teacher development • Unpaid care labour • Lack of SRHR services • Lack of youth-friendly services • Lack of funding and investment to promote STEM uptake by girls and women.	• Food insecurity and increased malnutrition stemming from non-access to food usually served in schools • War and armed conflict • Displacement and forced migration • Climate change and crises • Natural disasters • Public health emergencies: Ebola, COVID-19, etc.

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" The ability to read, write, and analyse; the confidence to stand up and demand justice and equality; the qualifications and connections to get your foot in the door and take your seat at the table — all of that starts with education.

MICHELLE OBAMA

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African girls and women in space robotics through 21st-century education

*By **Udi V. Philippa**, Space/Robotics Scientist, Nigeria Space Agency – National Space Research and Development Agency (philippa.udi@nasrda.gov.ng / philippa_udi@yahoo.com)*

Space robotics, science and technology as a model of education is key for Africa's socio-economic development. Tapping into the potential of African girls who are the future leaders and creating a pathway of opportunities in advanced technology are crucial for the skills development needed for the Africa we want in the 21st century, as the continent is on the brink of a significant transformation in space exploration and technology.

This essay explores the empowering of African girls and women in the field of space robotics through the lens of the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025 (CESA 16–25), Agenda 2063, the African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and other relevant treaties of the African Union (AU). It looks at the challenges and opportunities presented by these frameworks and proposes strategies to ensure inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning, emphasising gender equality in the context of space robotics.

THE ROLE OF CESA 16–25, AGENDA 2063, AU TREATIES, AND THE GENDER EQUALITYAND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY

CESA 16–25, Agenda 2063, various treaties of the AU, the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and other visionary initiatives by the African Union, aim to revamp education, drive continental development, provide the legal framework for progress, and advance gender equality. They place a strong emphasis on inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant education, that fosters economic progress, and ensures equal opportunities for women.

Space robotics encompasses the creation, assembly, operation, and deployment of robotic systems for space exploration and activities. These systems are indispensable for tasks like deploying satellites, conducting maintenance, and exploring outer space. Regarding African development, space robotics assumes a vital role in advancing technological capabilities and addressing diverse challenges. Its application can bolster telecommunications, improve weather monitoring, and enhance resource management, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Furthermore, the integration of robotics in space endeavours enables participation in global space initiatives, fostering international collaboration and providing African nations with opportunities for scientific research, technological innovation, and skill development in emerging fields. As African countries continue to invest in space programmes, the incorporation

> '**These comprehensive strategies, vital for 21st-century education, foster international collaboration and support the preparation of a diverse and technologically proficient workforce**'

of robotics positions them at the forefront of space exploration, unlocking associated socio-economic benefits.

The Continental Frameworks and Treaties of the AU aims at addressing the persistent challenges in the education sector in Africa. They recognise the importance of access to quality education for all, a crucial concern in a continent where many individuals still lack access to schools. Moreover, the strategies highlight the gender disparities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, and seek to create a more equitable learning environment. They also underscore the need to make education more relevant to the rapidly evolving global landscape while advocating for gender equality.

OPPORTUNITIES IN SPACE ROBOTICS

The growing African space industry presents vast opportunities for the continent. With increasing investments and a budding interest in space exploration, the demand for experts in fields like space robotics is expanding. The AU Frameworks referenced in this article aim to bolster investment in the space industry by emphasising quality and relevant education and creating a synergistic relationship between the strategies' goals and the aspirations of the space industry.

In addition, the AU's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA–2024) recognises the demand for experts to position science and technology as transformative, in harmony with the Agenda 2063 Flagship Programme on the Outer Space Strategy. This emphasises the AU's commitment to holistic development, addressing challenges, and strengthening Africa's utilisation of outer space.

The Agenda 2063 Africa Outer Space Strategy, a priority project, aims to enhance Africa's capabilities in outer space for deve-lopment. The integration of science and technology into STISA–2024 addresses the need for skilled professionals, positioning Africa for active participation in space exploration, technological innovation, and socio-economic development. This transformative potential extends beyond space, forming a cohesive framework for Africa's 21st-century trajectory, reinforcing the significance of the AU's outer space strategy for the continent's development.

GENDER DISPARITIES IN STEM AND SPACE ROBOTICS

Gender disparities in STEM, including space robotics, have been a longstanding issue. The AU Continental frameworks address this problem by emphasising the importance of gender equality in education. They recognise the cultural and societal barriers that have limited girls and women in STEM fields and commit to addressing these disparities.

The AU frameworks play a pivotal role in addressing gender disparities in STEM and space robotics and emphasise inclusive STEM education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and gender-responsive policies. The frameworks are aligned with initiatives such as the OECD's 2016 Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook, and UN Women.

These comprehensive strategies, vital for 21st-century education, foster international collaboration and support the preparation of a diverse and technologically proficient workforce, actively targeting gender disparities in STEM and space robotics, and thus contribute significantly to advancing inclusive development and innovation in Africa.

ALIGNING EDUCATION WITH SPACE ROBOTICS

Inclusive STEM education programmes, ▶

scholarship initiatives, early exposure to STEM subjects, and promoting female role models are key. Education systems must be aligned with the demands of the space industry and this requires adapting curricula to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities in Space Robotics, where the industry's growth intersects with the goals of the continental frameworks.

CONCLUSION

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025, Agenda 2063, relevant treaties of the AU, and The AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment offer a comprehensive framework for empowering African girls and women in space robotics. By advocating for inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning, providing the legal framework necessary for progress, and advancing gender equality, these strategies create the ideal environment to close the gender gap in STEM, and prepare individuals for careers in the rapidly growing space industry.

These frameworks hold the potential to drive gender equality and African participation in space robotics, ultimately contributing to the continent's advancements in space exploration and overall development.

Governments, educational institutions, and the space industry should collaborate to implement policies and initiatives that align with the principles of CESA 16–25, Agenda 2063, AU treaties, and GEWE Strategy. These recommendations should be supplemented by robust data collection and research to track progress toward the goals set by these visionary frameworks. ■

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EG CAPITAL

WHY INVESTING IN FOOD, HEALTH AND EDUCATION IN AFRICA MATTERS

The relevance of strategic allocation to Africa, and defensive sector allocation in food, health and education with EG Capital

Author: Sandrine Henton, Managing Director, EG Capital

EG Capital, a growth investor focused on mezzanine debt investments for SMEs and mid-cap companies in East Africa and Zambia, aims to invest up to US$100 million into 10 to 12 African SMEs and mid-sized companies, delivering tangible returns and impact in the food, climate, health and education sectors.

Some regions in Africa represent some of the world's fastest-growing economies where population growth, rising incomes and urban demographic shifts are driving sustained consumer-driven economic expansion. This, accompanied by significant increases in literacy, access to electricity and high penetration and uptake of digital technology, is expected to drive productivity growth across a number of different sectors, particularly food, climate, health and education. With relatively diversified economies and an existing competitive foundation to build more sophisticated industries and value-chains, some countries like Rwanda, Kenya and Zambia are projected to outpace the growth of their more commodity-dependent neighbours.

RESILIENCE TO LONG-TAIL SHOCKS AND DEFENSIVE SECTOR ALLOCATION

The world is seemingly entering a phase of transition and ultimately human progress, whilst also experiencing long-tail shocks much more frequently, and at a higher scale than ever seen before (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and war in Europe, and climate-related shocks such as flooding in Pakistan). Still, how will Africa resolve the tensions between a growing youth population, demand for food security and economic development in the face of growing climate adaptation challenges? Coincidentally, based on the findings of Project Drawdown, counter-cyclical and defensive sectors such as food, health and education also play in the Top 10 solutions to reduce emissions and accelerate climate-change adaptation.

REWARDS OF GENDER BALANCE

A 2019 IFC study reveals that companies that maintain a team of between 30% and 70% women enjoy higher returns, with 20% higher net IRR on average. Gender-balanced teams also see better increases in their valuation, growing on average 9% faster than male-dominated companies.

A world with more female fund managers would be a world with a more equitable distribution of resources, where the gender of an entrepreneur will not dictate how easy it will be to access funding. For Africa to succeed, we need to feminise investment funds, and EG Capital is a member of 2x Global, as part of the G7 commitment to bring more capital in the hands of women.

African Union standards for teachers and school leaders: Where do West African countries stand?

This article investigates the state of professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders in West Africa against the backdrop of guidance from international best practice, including instruments developed by the African Union. The analysis considers frameworks of professional standards and competencies and their implementation; teacher education, both pre-service and in-service; and the working conditions of teachers and school leaders.

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As is the case in some parts of Africa, children in West Africa suffer from high rates of learning poverty – many cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10. Improving teaching in the classroom and the quality of the school leadership, including through professional standards and competencies, is key to improving learning. Indeed, revitalising the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels is the first strategic objective of the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–25[1] (CESA).

UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) conducted a study of professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders in West Africa. The work was implemented against the backdrop of guidance from international best practice, especially instruments from the African Union such as the African Continental Framework of Standards and Competencies for the Teaching Profession, African Continental Teacher Qualification Framework, and African Continental Guidelines for the Teaching Profession. These continental frameworks provide a foundation to assess professional standards and competencies in African countries.

Apart from sub-regional work on West Africa namely 'Investing in Teachers and School Leaders: Professional Standards and

> **Teacher education data from a study in the WAEMU region shows that the qualifications required of teachers are often limited (one or two years of post-secondary school training), with significant issues for continuous professional development and a large contingent of 'unqualified' and 'untrained' teachers in many countries (those teachers do not meet the required qualifications or training in their country).**

Competencies, Working Education, and Teacher Education[2], in-depth country case studies on Situation Analysis of the National Framework of Professional Standards and Competencies for Teachers and School Leaders were completed for Sierra Leone, a country at an advanced stage of developing its professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders[3], and The Gambia[4], a country still in the process of developing its standards but with major recent achievements in this area.

The West Africa study as well as the two country studies focus on three areas: (1) country frameworks of professional standards and competencies; (2) teacher education; and (3) the working conditions of teachers. In addition to identifying the need for professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders based in part on guidance from the African Union, the core of the study is structured into three chapters devoted to the three focus areas above. The analysis relies on a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach that includes results from (i) nationally representative household surveys (especially the Enquête harmonisée sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages or EHCVM for 10 countries); (ii) an online survey of officials from Ministries of Education and other agencies across West Africa; (iii) in-depth analysis

and online surveys for teachers and school leaders for Sierra Leone and The Gambia; and (iv) key informant interviews, focus groups, and brainstorming sessions. This article outlines key findings and recommendations.

COUNTRY FRAMEWORKS FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES

On professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders, many countries in West Africa still need to make progress. The analysis targeted 15 ECOWAS countries, of which eight responded at the time of writing. Apart from an online survey, key informant interviews were held with officials of five countries. While results should be considered as illustrative and preliminary, they are nevertheless instructive to provide a comparative perspective. All countries face challenges, but some are more advanced than others in confronting them.

Most countries have legal or policy provisions that support the establishment of a national framework of teaching standards and competencies, but they are at various stages of this process and have not aligned their frameworks with recommendations from the African Union, UNESCO and Education International, with Nigeria and Sierra Leone being exceptions.

Except in those two countries and Ghana, Ministries of Education continue to regulate the teaching profession.

Practices such as professional licensure examination, registration, and licensing of teachers and school leaders tend to be absent in most countries (Sierra Leone and Nigeria are some of the exceptions). Career paths and mandatory school leadership training for school leaders are yet to be implemented in most countries. Except for Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso, countries do not participate actively in African and global federations of teaching agencies, which reduces their ability to benefit from exchanges of good practices.

TEACHER EDUCATION

On teacher education, using a household survey for West African Monetary and Economic Union (WAEMU) countries, a profile of the education and other characteristics of teachers was provided. The analysis of household survey data for WAEMU countries suggests (1) a very low proportion of women among teachers, particularly at senior primary and secondary school levels; (2) low levels of education, particularly for primary school teachers, but with little difference between public and private schools; (3) a minority but ▶

> **On teacher education, we need to progressively move towards higher qualifications required for teachers, but we also need to provide pathways for 'unqualified' and 'untrained' teachers to acquire the qualifications they need.**

nonetheless significant proportion of teachers in rural areas with limited internet access.

Data from an online survey of Ministry of Education and other officials also suggests that the qualifications required of teachers are often limited (one or two years of post-secondary school training, typically), with significant issues for continuous professional development and a large contingent of 'unqualified' and 'untrained' teachers in many countries (those teachers do not meet the required qualifications or training in their country).

WORKING CONDITIONS OF TEACHERS

On working conditions for teachers, using the same survey, a profile of the salaries, benefits, and levels of poverty of teachers was also provided. Among the main results, we can note (1) higher annual salaries and other benefits in public schools than in private schools; (2) correspondingly, a higher proportion of teachers in poverty for teachers in the private sector than in the public sector; (3) a lack of medical coverage in the event of an illness or injury that requires medical care; (4) nevertheless a high portion of teachers located in the top quintile of well-being compared to the population as a whole; and (5) a more modern financial profile for teachers in the public than private sector.

The data from the online survey of Ministry of Education and other officials suggests in addition that the teaching profession is not well perceived in terms of its social status, with job satisfaction likely to be low for many teachers. This is confirmed from data from teacher surveys in Sierra Leone and the Gambia.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

While progress is being achieved in many countries, a lot remains to be done. On standards and competencies, countries should

> ## 'All countries face challenges, but some are more advanced than others in confronting them'

ideally reform the career path for teachers based on the guidance from the African Union. There is also a need to increase the proportion of female teachers, including possibly through financial incentives.

On teacher education, we need to progressively move towards higher qualifications required for teachers, but we also need to provide pathways for 'unqualified' and 'untrained' teachers to acquire the qualifications they need.

On working conditions, especially in the context of teacher shortages faced by many countries, we need to make the profession more attractive. This may require some countries to improve teacher wages, but we also need to train school principals better so that they can serve as mentors for teachers, and we need Ministries of Education to implement job satisfaction surveys among their teachers and school leaders. Implementing national teacher awards as done by the African Union under its Continental Best Teacher Award is also a good idea.

As mentioned earlier, the West Africa and country studies were conducted against the backdrop of guidance from the African Union. The next step will be to provide more guidance and support to participating countries on how to improve and update professional standards and competencies for teachers, including improving teacher education and working conditions. ■

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ROAD TO SUCCESS

The C-BRTA places harmonisation and digital transformation at the centre of its operations as it charts its way into the future

As a regulator of cross-border road transport, the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency (C-BRTA) has a proud history of providing a dedicated service to this unique niche of the road transport industry. Established in 1998, through the Cross-Border Road Transport Act, its mandate is to facilitate the movement of passengers and goods across the border.

The C-BRTA plays a vital role in ensuring in the efficacy of the cross-border road transport space, with specific reference to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

For the past 25 years of its existence, the C-BRTA has navigated through complex problems in a turbulent environment characterised by massive misalignment and lack of common approaches by different countries on matters pertinent to the region. This has, over the years, placed a difficult, but necessary task of driving the harmonisation agenda in the region for the benefit of cross-border transport and trade in SADC.

This mandate requires the C-BRTA to embark on extensive stakeholder engagement programmes with different SADC countries through consultation and lobbying to promote the harmonisation of regulatory regimes in the region.

Mr. Lwazi Mboyi, CEO of the C-BRTA, believes in improved intra-Africa trade and in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and hence he advocates for the development of smart corridors in the SADC region. Thus, Mboyi places emphasis on harmonisation and extensive co-operation among Member States and various stakeholders in the region as a precondition.

According to Mboyi, harmonisation of systems, regulations and processes across the region remains the biggest challenge. 'There is a need to align systems and processes across borders to ensure seamless movement of passengers, goods and services,' he says.

As part of its efforts to addressing the issue of harmonisation in the region, the C-BRTA, as a founding member and first chair, played a leading role in the establishment of the of the Cross-Border Road Transport Regulators' Forum (C-BRTRF) to monitor and to assist in the mediation and resolution of inter-state road transport disputes and disagreements. This important Forum was officially commissioned by the SADC ministers of Transport, Communication and Meteorology to serve as a body that will improve the cross-border road transport systems in the region by harmonising policies and reduce transportation costs, delays and transit times, as well as eliminate regulatory fragmentation in the region.

The initiative was driven by the need to ensure efficiencies in the cross-border road transport industry through the elimination of

challenges that hamper trade between and among countries in the region.

'As the C-BRTA, we hold a view that harmonisation is a key ingredient to free trade. We are delighted that there is a noticeable move from manual systems towards various digital platforms across the region and the continent at large. As the Agency, after many years of relying on manual permit application systems, we recently launched a digital cross-border permit application system,' says Mboyi.

The new Permit Application system, which is widely known as Cross-Easy, has transformed the permit issuance in the cross-border road transport industry by making it easier for operators to apply for permits from anywhere, anytime without having to visit the C-BRTA offices.

Having witnessed the benefits of the system to operators, the C-BRTA is now lobbying various countries to adopt the system as a way of standardising permit administration in the SADC region. So far, the Agency has signed memoranda of agreement with several countries in the region to pilot the system. The system will soon be deployed to these countries, thereby enhancing the efforts of harmonising cross-border permit application and administration processes in the region.

This is a step in the right direction because harmonisation of the permit system in the region will assist in harmonising regulatory requirements, procedures and standards and the integration of permit systems between Member States in alignment with the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme (TTTFP) and Multilateral Cross-Border Road Transport Agreement (MCBRTA).

As a way of enhancing the system, plans are well under way to launch digital permits, which is an additional value-add for the operators and to ultimately move away from carrying paper permits. These digital permits will have the capability for tracking vehicles, which will contribute to the safety of cargo for both the shippers and transport operators.

'It will be good to see many countries in the region moving in this direction. As the C-BRTA, we will continue working and collaborating with Member States and various Transport Authorities on the continent to realise efficiencies in the cross-border road transport space,' says Mboyi.

Looking towards the future, the C-BRTA will continue collaborating with various stakeholders in South Africa and in the region to lobby and come up with mechanisms to confront all the challenges faced by the cross-border road transport industry. Fundamentally, the C-BRTA will continue to play an active role in the Cross-Border Road Transport-Regulators Forum to ensure that the harmonisation agenda is realised in the region.

In addition, the Agency is going to embrace smart law enforcement to ensure that there is general compliance to cross-border road transport laws and regulations. To this effect, the C-BRTA will deploy smart law enforcement tools to enable the Agency to conduct law enforcement in a smart and efficient manner to ensure general compliance in the industry. For instance, the Agency has Smart Law Enforcement Vehicles which are used to enhance law enforcement operations and promote compliance to the C-BRT Act and various other road regulations. These vehicles assist with gathering intelligence that is used in profiling

operators and operations that assist management to ensure improved compliance.

The Agency remains committed to implementing quality regulation to ensure general compliance with the relevant laws that govern the cross-border road transport industry. This will entail conformity with the quality regulation guidelines set by the Tripartite Alliance, comprising SADC, COMESA and EAC. These measures would culminate in quality cross-border road transport operations that will enhance safety standards and compliance to road traffic, transport legislation and permit conditions. The guidelines provide a structured framework and standards that must be adhered to in conducting cross-border road transport business in the tripartite region.

In the next 25 years, the C-BRTA will cement its authority as an innovative and dependable and efficient regulator dedicated to ensuring seamless movements of passengers, goods and services, thereby improving trade in the region. The ultimate goal is ensuring transit and trade facilitation, hence promoting economic development in the region.

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH   AfriLabs   **SUPPORTERS OF THE AFRICAN UNION DIGITAL AND INNOVATION FELLOWSHIP**

Empowering Africa's innovation future: Unveiling the impact and learnings of the African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship

*By **Joshua Omena**, **Nanko Madu** and **Woka Philips-Anyinu**, AfriLabs (www.afrilabs.com)*

The African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship has created a platform for young Africans with innovative minds to contribute to the digitalisation of the continent and the African Union (AU). This innovative programme catalyses talent development and the promotion of digital progress across the continent.

Looking back at the impressive accomplishments of the first cohort, it is apparent that the fellowship is positioning the upcoming generation of African tech leaders to bridge the gaps between them and the policymakers on the continent.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION TODAY

On September 20, 2021, the African Union Commission, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) and AfriLabs launched the African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship with a call for applications, which attracted over 700 submissions from every region of the continent. Thirteen young Africans aged between 25 and 35 – examples of a growing generation of technology innovators and influential leaders in their communities and countries – were selected to participate in the programme as Fellows, deployed to different organs and institutions of the AU to improve data management and digitalisation of processes. They were deployed to the AU headquarters in Ethiopia; the African

'The African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship was a life-changing opportunity for me. Through this programme, I not only acquired technical skills but also built a strong network of like-minded individuals who share the same vision for the future of Africa. I am grateful for the support and mentorship that enabled me to embark on my professional journey, confidently and determined.'

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LORETTA BINU KADE
(KENYA) AFRICAN UNION DIGITAL AND INNOVATION FELLOW

Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat in Ghana, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) in The Gambia, and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-Nepad) in South Africa.

The African Union 2024 Theme of the Year places a strong emphasis on education, which is a welcome initiative. The African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship Programme is playing a pivotal role in advancing education across Africa by bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thereby enriching the educational experience.

This programme not only supports skills development but also facilitates networking, encourages interdisciplinary learning, and nurtures a practical mindset, all of which are essential for educational growth on the continent.

Implementing the African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship provided numerous valuable and relevant lessons across various industries. Here are some key takeaways:

- **The importance of stakeholder buy-in:** The programme's success is largely hinged on the unwavering support from the host organs of the African Union. This highlights the importance of gaining support from

To find additional information about the fellowship and the specific projects the fellowship alums are working on, visit the official Medium page at

HTTPS://MEDIUM. COM/@AUDIGITAL FELLOWSHIP

stakeholders at all levels to achieve success within institutions.

- **Balancing innovation and compliance:** Introducing innovation while adhering to existing systems and structures can be challenging. Understanding the rationale behind established systems and processes in an institution like the African Union is crucial. This realisation prompted the need for agile thinking while respecting and leveraging existing structures.
- **The power of inclusion:** Despite Africa's diversity of nations, cultures and languages, there is a shared aspiration for growth, autonomy and sustainability. The programme's inclusive approach ensured that eligible young data and technology enthusiasts across Africa were given equal access. The use of working languages of the African Union facilitated a merit-based selection process that eliminated barriers based on gender, geography or language.
- **Extending the timeframe for innovation:** The programme's success revealed that 12 months is often insufficient for fellows to develop and test their tech solutions. Future iterations will encourage ▶

'Being a part of the African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship has been an eye-opening experience. It has educated me on the African Union's role in advancing development. I will always appreciate the privilege to contribute my quota to improving the internal processes at the AUC.'

▼▼

OBALOLUWA AJIBOYE JOSEPH
(NIGERIA) AFRICAN UNION
DIGITAL AND INNOVATION FELLOW

fellows to refine existing technologies while introducing innovations within the AU, promoting adaptability and sustainability.

A GLANCE AT THE OUTCOMES OF THE FIRST COHORT

The African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship has had a remarkable impact, resulting in several positive outcomes, such as:

- Enhanced the ability and capacity of AU staff to embrace emerging technology and innovative solutions
- The development of over 12 digital products to address various data management challenges in targeted AU organs
- Achieved gender parity within the programme's first cohort, with a female-to-male ratio of 8 to 5
- Strengthened relationships between the African Union and the African Innovation Ecosystem
- Launch of internal digital portals to manage routine processes
- Six fellows were retained by the AU to continue their impactful. interventions and pilot their projects
- Each fellow gained invaluable leadership skills.

The African Union Digital and Innovation Fellowship unlocks the AU and Africa's digital potential while promoting innovation, collaboration and progress in a rapidly evolving world. ■

Community service learning for an African university grounded in its socio-economic environment

By **Brahim Fathi**, Head of the Centre for Intensive Language Teaching (CEIL), University of Tissemsilt, Algeria, farmer.brahim@univ-tissemsilt.dz; and **Djillali Logab** – Vice-Rector in charge of animation and promotion of scientific research, external relations and cooperation, University of Tissemsilt, Algeria, Logab.mkg@gmail.com

This article highlights the fundamental importance for Africa to adopt effective educational strategies in order to train citizens adapted to current societal challenges. The University of Tissemsilt has embarked on a project, aligned with continental educational goals, to train graduates committed to sustainable development. Its approach is based on engaging students in concrete actions, such as the preservation of biodiversity and the adoption of agro-ecological practices, thus shaping professionals rooted in their environment.

These initiatives are accompanied by literacy programmes, support for migrant children and the promotion of vocational training among young people in rural areas and poor regions, promoting inclusive education through community-service learning.

To train citizens who have adapted to contemporary challenges, the building of robust education systems guaranteeing equitable access to quality education throughout life is essential. The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) has focused its objectives on strengthening technical and vocational training in secondary and tertiary education in order to establish fruitful links between the worlds of education and work.

The government impetus in Algeria, followed by scientific and pedagogical bodies, has encouraged university institutions to become more involved in the challenges of their social environment, as explained in the report of the Regional Conference of Western Universities (CRUO) on the post-COVID-19 period. This orientation represents a significant step towards the establishment of a knowledge society that meets the expectations of the African authorities.

In addition, Algeria is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive education for all children, without discrimination, to ensure quality, relevant and efficient education (Algeria's Education Report: 03). Its massive investments have been praised by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), placing the country at the top of Sustainable Development Goal achievements in Africa and the Arab world, occupying the 64th position globally in 2022.

Despite notable progress in SDG4 indicators, Algeria's National Education Report, presented at the Education Transformation Summit in New York on 19 September 2022, highlights the need for regular curriculum updates and closer collaboration between the world of education and the economic sector.

To address this concern, the University of Tissemsilt has initiated a community-service learning project aimed at preserving biodiversity and promoting agro-ecological and civic practices, in line with the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa for the period 2016 to 2025. This project aims to train graduates capable of contributing effectively to the sustainable development of the country.

The approach stems from the recognition, by Susana Lukas Manga (2021), and Lence and Javier (2019: 01), of this method as a pedagogical strategy, allowing participants to learn from the needs of their daily lives in order to improve them. This paper focuses on the results ▶

obtained during a specific project aimed at the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of the Theniet El Had – Tissemsilt National Park.

One of the activities launched is to mitigate the impact of human activity on the park, including the conflict between the park administration and herders practising prolonged transhumance and over-grazing in the forest. Our students, as part of the courses related to the subject 'Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development', in collaboration with various actors in the field, have succeeded in convincing residents of the need to adopt agro-ecological practices, such as hydroponic barley cultivation, ecotourism, cuniculture, beekeeping, extraction of essential oils, and fruit growing. Campaigns on various media have also been organised by the students, on the occasion of the various mountain sports activities, in order to raise awareness among users of the benefits of preserving and protecting the rare species of the park. These activities have fostered economic and tourism solutions for the regeneration of the Atlas cedar, which is threatened by wasting.

Another challenge that our students have been working on is the problem of the processionary caterpillar. Graduation projects have focused on the control of this insect through the use of diatomaceous earth. Diatomite traps designed on-site by students and national park staff were set up. The results have been promising in the fight against the processionary caterpillar, but also in the exploitation and valorisation of diatomite, a local natural resource, as an insecticide (Bounouira et al: 2022).

It has been observed that, outside this framework, end-of-studies projects are often

'They will foster the emergence of a more enlightened and fulfilled society as envisioned in Africa's development framework'

disconnected from the realities on the ground. Even when they address local problems, they lack value and often remain unexploited on the shelves of the faculty's library, because they are carried out without participation or co-ordination with socio-economic partners.

A collaboration agreement with the agricultural services of the wilaya of Tissemsilt in order to initiate a partnership programme has enabled the university to participate, through community-service learning, in a vast government action programme and, through it, in local development by working on issues having a direct or indirect impact on the socio-economic environment.

It was agreed that the university will participate in the field, through the participation of teachers and students in the agronomy sector, to support the implementation of the programme by contributing through its staff and know-how, made directly available to the citizens of rural areas, with a view to promoting activities such as cuniculture, beekeeping and fruit growing in poor and mountainous areas to combat poverty and unemployment.

This strategy is in line with the concept of promoting service learning to contribute to the success of African priorities by creating new opportunities for value-added employment by adapting and marketing local products, while protecting the environment and developing agriculture and the rural economy as outlined in the African Union's Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024: 21).
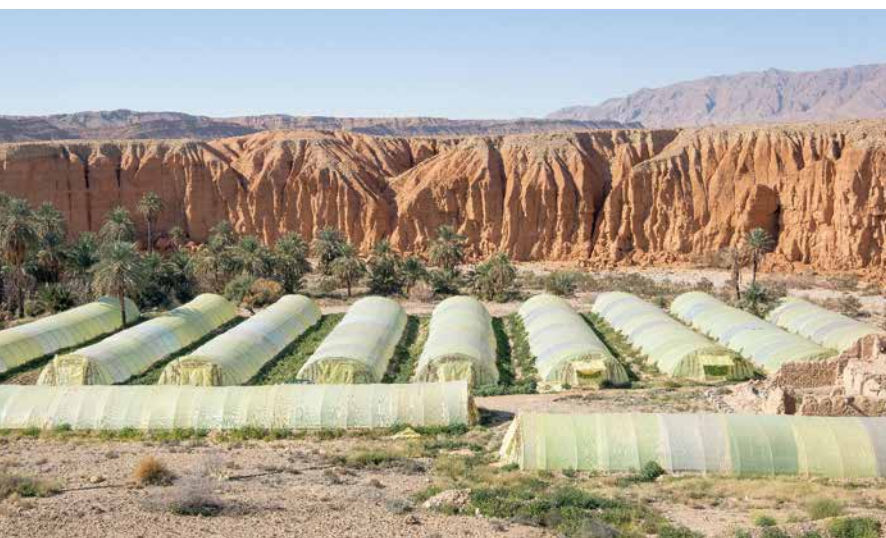
The University of Tissemsilt has recently initiated, under the leadership of its Centre for Intensive Language Teaching (CEIL), a series of diverse initiatives, revealing a strong commitment to education and socio-economic development, through community engagement and volunteerism inherent in service learning.

The students' close collaboration with a variety of institutions such as cultural centres, mosques and youth centres for adult literacy and the care of immigrant children, combined with their involvement in artistic projects, field trips and eco-citizen awareness campaigns, clearly demonstrates a strong desire to promote access to education, citizenship and environmental awareness.

These actions, combined with efforts to encourage young people in rural areas to integrate vocational training while tackling social problems, demonstrate an overall commitment to the personal and professional development of young people. The results of these ongoing initiatives will be monitored for future reporting.

The experiment was extended to certain courses of teacher training colleges for the training of teachers capable of caring for vulnerable children such as autistic children and those with mental retardation, with a view to accompanying these vulnerable groups in their educational career, particularly at the pre-school level and during the first years of primary school. The involvement of students in teacher training colleges in this way can compensate for the shortage of teachers in rural and desert areas.

The results from the different activities not only reveal the enthusiasm and motivation of the students, as well as the satisfaction of the professionals involved, but also demonstrate that the application of this method allows the university to take root in its socio-economic environment. This certainly allows it to become an essential player in its own development, while offering it the opportunity to objectively adjust its training offer in accordance with the economic and social needs of its environment.

Despite the preliminary and limited nature of this experiment, we strongly believe that community-service learning is one of the essential levers that the African university needs. It is a way to strengthen its pedagogical and scientific skills, while developing its governance capacities.

This approach promotes an openness to professionals and the challenges present in its socio-economic environment, thus reducing the gap between education and training and the skills needs of African companies (AUECHO: 2023).

In short, a university that is open to its environment and invested in community service can profoundly influence the personality and future of young Africans in the 21st century. These initiatives embody an inclusive vision of education. Facilitated through learning through community service, they will foster the emergence of a more enlightened and fulfilled society as envisioned in Africa's development framework, Agenda 2063. ■

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CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

As it commemorates its 65th anniversary, the University of Limpopo continues
its mandate to find solutions for the continent

Prof Mahlo Mokgalong,
Vice-Chancellor of the
University of Limpopo

2024 is a special year for one of Africa's most iconic institutions of higher learning. The alma mater of the President of the Republic of South Africa, HE Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, and the President of the Republic of Malawi, HE Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, among others – the University of Limpopo (UL, formerly the University of the North) in South Africa – is celebrating its 65th anniversary.

The decision to establish UL was taken at a meeting of 13 traditional leaders converged at Mankweng, 30 km east of Polokwane, on 11 October 1956. This was during the rise of apartheid nationalism in South Africa, which resulted in the banning of several political organisations, the sentencing of many of them – including Nelson Mandela – to prison in 1964. UL would evolve rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s as the cradle of leadership. It also became the hub of political activism, subsequently maturing in the turbulent 1980s, before finally taking its place in the democratic South Africa.

UL fortuitously came full circle when President Nelson Mandela became its chancellor in the early 1990s. Currently, the chancellor of UL is the 3rd Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma – who was in Mandela's Cabinet as Health Minister and is South Africa's incumbent Minister Presidency for Women, Youth and People with Disabilities in South Africa, in a Cabinet headed by one of UL's prominent alumni.

Nestled in the picturesque Limpopo province, about 330 km north of Johannesburg and 220 km south of the Beitbridge Border Post, UL is among South Africa's traditional universities. It caters for more than 23 000 local and international students in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These programmes, all accredited with their respective professional bodies and the Council for Higher Education, are organised into four faculties, namely Humanities, Health Sciences, Management and Law, and Science and Agriculture.

UL has always been at the growing edge of the country, responding to several societal needs. To date, it remains a relevant contributor to the various challenges facing humanity, giving meaning to its motto – finding solutions for Africa.

AU ECHO speaks to the Vice-Chancellor of UL, Prof Mahlo Mokgalong, who has been in the position since 2002.

Q: Describe for us the socio-political environment in which UL was founded in 1959
A: From its inception, the University of the North, now University of Limpopo, was considered a 'bush

university'. It was a Bantustan institution, created by the apartheid government to keep black South African students from their white counterparts. Similar universities included Fort Hare, Eastern Cape; the Durban-Westville in KwaZulu-Natal, for Indian students; and the Western Cape, for coloured students. There was also the Transkei, now the Walter Sisulu University; Bophuthatswana, now the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University; Venda, which was a branch of the University of the North, along with the Qwaqwa branch; and the University of Zululand.

These institutions were extensions of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. In 1956, 13 South African traditional leaders came together under a fig tree, which still stands near the university's Golf Club House. They took a resolution to establish this university. Some of these chiefs, not the apartheid government, donated the land on which the institution was built. It was the visionary leadership of these traditional leaders, who believed in creating a university for their subjects instead of complaining about being excluded from white institutions, that birthed the University of Limpopo.

UL was bound to become the citadel of political consciousness because of the political climate of the 1960s onward. Among other highlights, it hosted the inaugural conference of the South African Students' Organisation in 1969, accelerating the rise of Black Consciousness.

Q: Would you say African solidarity foregrounded the establishment of UL?
A: Africa, in the late 1950s, was characterised by political realignment. The post-World War II decade focused on rebuilding key European economies, such as Germany. With Europe preoccupied with fixing itself, many African countries gained independence, starting with Ghana in 1957 – followed by 17 countries in 1960. Pan-African solidarity was gaining momentum,

ushering the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, now the African Union or AU) in May 1963. Freeing South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe was the focal point of the OAU.

Unsurprisingly, UL attracted students from Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, etc. Pan-African solidarity and consciousness made UL an African institution, underlining the cardinal importance of education as a unifier and liberator. UL was founded in the era of rising Black Consciousness and pan-Africanism, and is coming of age in the epoch of intra-African trade and investment and of the reclamation of African pride and dignity.

Q: You arrived on campus in 1972 as a student – how did the political temperature of that era affect you?
A: UL was synonymous with political consciousness. Black South Africans had resolved to resist racial segregation and apartheid oppression. I majored in zoology and botany. The architect of apartheid, HF Verwoerd, believed that black people had no business learning mathematics; and I was doing my first year in natural sciences. That was my baptism of fire. It was in 1972 also that Abram Onkgopotse Tiro – then SRC president – made that famous speech at the graduation ceremony, challenging the system of apartheid. He was expelled, and went into exile in Botswana where he was killed by a letter bomb in 1974. On 25 September 1974, our student leaders organised the Viva Frelimo Rally – inspired by the attainment of independence in Mozambique, which shook the foundations of apartheid authority.

Q: How did all that prepare you for your role – running a university with more than 23 000 students?
A: My own experience as a student in a faculty that was not intended for black people shaped me. I started working as a laboratory assistant. Contact with many black students, struggling with the adjustment from high school to varsity life, refined me.

The University of Limpopo
Law and Accountancy
Faculty Building

I developed compassion and empathy because, in the 1970s and 1980s, it became clear that change had to come – and fast. My role as a laboratory assistant, then junior lecturer, especially in the turbulent 1980s and against the backdrop of Black Consciousness in the 1970s, taught me the nuances of the black-student experience.

By the time I was a senior lecturer – during the period that the campus was occupied by the army – I was quietly aware of what it took to run a department and a faculty in volatile conditions. I learned about the workings of a professional environment, interpersonal dynamics of a scientific environment in a constantly changing milieu.

Backed by these years of experience – and of observing an ever-changing professional environment from within – I was confident to take the leap of faith in 2002. There was no script on how to lead, so I had to learn on the job. Fortunately, having sound relations with colleagues helped.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing higher education?
A: Higher education must get more in touch with the world of work. It must assess the labour-market dynamics of the present and the future in order to continuously adapt. Unemployment in Africa – especially among the youth – is alarming. Higher education must make the student the focus. This will better shape our programme and qualification mix (PQM), and craft our teaching and learning methodologies as well as our research topics to render them responsive to real-life challenges. This will build commercial partnerships to raise funding instead of depending entirely on government funding.

Q: Higher education funding in South Africa is in crisis. What is the state of UL's finances, considering you cater for students from disadvantaged backgrounds?

A: Daily Investor, in August 2023, published an article titled South Africa's Richest Universities Revealed, placing UL among the top 10 public institutions of higher learning in terms of the amount of money in their general reserves and endowment funds. Our university is financially sound. This is more intriguing, considering the fact that more than 65% of our 23 000 students depend on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This puts a strain on our cash flows, especially when NSFAS struggles to disburse funds on time. Therefore, being recognised for being financially sound is something not to take lightly.

UL became financially sound while raising its student enrolment from 8 000 students in 2002 to more than 23 000 in 2023. Our university would be in an even better financial position had it not been for the hundreds of millions in rands of student debt. Knowing that we have been able to manage the finances of the university to build some reserves, while allowing our less-privileged students to graduate and progress to postgraduate programmes is quite commendable.

Q: As Vice-Chancellor you presided over the merger of your university with Medunsa, which was later reversed. Which achievements of UL are you most proud of since the demerger?
A: We have added the MBChB programme – the first in post-1994 South Africa – to our PQM. Our first cohort of 47 doctors graduated in May 2022, and more continue graduating each year. That is good for the province of Limpopo, where the doctor/patient ratio is still under 1:1 000.

We also got our Bachelor of Accountancy degree accredited by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, and our pass rates at the Initial Test of Competency and the final board exam are above national average.

This means that we are able to train students en route to their chartered accountant qualification.

Q: How have you managed to attract competent staff, especially for UL's academic project in the face of increasing international competition?
A: The University of Limpopo is competing for staff and students with the rest of the world. The advent of ICT in the form of hybrid learning, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, has pushed every institution of learning to adopt new (hybrid) methodologies of teaching and learning, assessment, research and so on.

An even bigger problem than attracting professionals and academics is retaining them. The answer lies in continuous development and training to ensure their careers are interlinked with their personal and professional growth that can keep them relevant to the changing economic landscape.

This training and development should give the staff an opportunity to travel, learn from other universities in the country and elsewhere in the world. This exchange and cross-pollination of our intellectual capital will guarantee we are part of that growing world of virtual learning, and of the world of work in which AI will continue to play an increasing role.

As we speak, we have enlisted the services of experts to conduct information-sharing sessions and workshops for our staff on such technologies, such as ChatGPT and other generative pre-trained alternatives.

Q: NSFAS struggles to disburse payments from time to time and you are battling high historical student debt. What plans are UL making for a more sustainable funding model for students?
A: We face a pressing need to create an endowment fund to reduce the reliance of our students on government funding and subsidies.

We have a powerful alumni, enough credentials and professionals on the academic front to generate the right partnerships to make this a reality. So far, we have managed to assist our students, thanks to the financial reserves we accumulated over the years. However, with government funding continuing to decline as Treasury cuts spending, it is imperative that we find creative ways to generate self-funding models.

In November 2023 we held a successful fund-raising gala dinner in Midrand, thanks to our Alumni and Convocation Association, where we raised ZAR8 million for the 'missing middle'. These are students whose parents are not poor enough to qualify for NSFAS, but can still not afford to pay their fees. That was a reassuring start from which we can only grow. We are also exploring partnerships with the private and public sectors to shape our research programme towards more practical relevance of our research topics that the entire research programme can increasingly fund itself.

Q: How did you sustain 21 years at the helm of a university as dynamic as UL?
A: I did not set out to last 21 years. The long tenure has been the outcome of decisions at different stages by the council to extend my term.

My own philosophy has been to serve as long as my services are required, listen to others, have empathy, inspire a vision of bigger and better things, correct mistakes promptly when they occur, and to lead by example.

Q: Please share some of your key leadership lessons.
A: You lead with others, not by yourself; shared vision is important. I took over in 2002, when UL was coming straight out of administration. We had about three rickety cars and old buildings, most of which needed a facelift. There were months during which we were unable to pay salaries.

Retaining staff was hard, but attracting new professionals was harder. Academics, professionals and institutions viewed us with suspicion. To move even one step in such circumstances, therefore, required getting others to believe in the future although it was hard to describe what that was.

One had to forge a spirit of shared destiny, build a fellowship and create a culture of solidarity and compassion – of caring for one another – as we were all in the same boat, facing possible doom, unless we were able to turn our fortunes around, as a collective.

Leading the university then was like a reprise of Dr Martin Luther King's 1961 speech at Syracuse University, where he famously told an audience of the critical need to 'learn to live together as brothers [and sisters]', or 'perish together as fools'.

Back then, I equated coming out of administration to 'moving from military to civilian rule'. This emboldened my colleagues, though sometimes it equally created a false sense of laxity in others. Leading, therefore, required a balance of vision, inspiration to make others believe, trust to let others help to shape the shared destiny of the university's people, and the toughness to correct mistakes whenever they happened. That encouraged my colleagues to hold on, and saw us through trying times.

I had to enlist the loyalty and sentiments of staff, many of whom were alumni of the institution who were keen to guard their heritage and legacy. ∎

Educating the African woman fit for the 21st century through increased access to inclusive, lifelong and quality digital skilling

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This paper explores the imperative of educating African women to meet the demands of the 21st century through enhanced access to inclusive, lifelong and quality digital skilling programmes. The dynamic landscape of the global economy, shaped by technological advancements, underscores the critical role of digital skills in personal, professional, and societal development.

Despite progress, African women continue to face barriers to accessing quality education and technology-driven opportunities. Recognising the transformative potential of digital skills, this article advocates for an inclusive and lifelong learning approach tailored to the unique digital skill needs of African women. By examining digital skilling approaches within the ecosystem and proposing strategies to augment access and quality, this research contributes to the discourse on empowering African women through comprehensive digital education.

The first section reviews the current educational landscape for African women and underscores the importance of addressing existing disparities. It addresses socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that hinder women's access to quality education and technology skilling.

The paper further explores the successful Tech4Dev Women Techsters Fellowship programme as a case study, emphasising the demand for digital skills and the need for Africa to fund key initiatives and programmes that help equip the African woman fit for the 21st century. Highlighting case studies and best practices, this paper outlines effective

> **The gender gap in digital skills education can be addressed through inclusive policies, improving digital infrastructure, promoting STEM education for girls, creating safe online spaces, easing financial constraints that limit women's access to digital devices and internet services, and addressing socio-cultural norms that act as barriers to entry for women and girls.**

strategies for overcoming barriers and promoting lifelong learning, proposing recommendations for the African Union and other stakeholders to create an enabling environment that fosters increased access to inclusive, lifelong and quality digital skilling for African women. By synergising efforts across sectors, this paper aims to contribute to the broader agenda of empowering African women to actively participate and thrive in the 21st century which is driven by digital technologies.

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced economy, which is interconnected by digital technologies, digital skills have become increasingly important across the globe, reshaping the way we live, work, communicate, and navigate the world. From education and employment to communication, problem-solving and socio-economic attributes, digital skills are the key to thriving in this rapidly changing landscape (Hakeem, Javaid, Quadri & Suman, 2022).

This significance is particularly pronounced in Africa as the continent strives to educate its population for the future. Digital skills hold the potential to bridging socio-economic and gender gaps as it provides marginalised communities with access to economic opportunities, education, and healthcare, serving as a mechanism for equity and equality (Fuller, 2020; Bailey & Nyabola, 2021). This makes it possible for individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate in the digital revolution.

Within the broader goal of building resilient education systems for increased access to

inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa, digital skills education in Africa remains a formidable challenge, with profound implications for economic development and gender equality.

A substantial portion of the African population, predominantly women and girls, lack reliable access to digital devices, digital skills training, and the internet; and where the opportunities exist, women are often disadvantaged when compared to men (Umukoro et al., 2021).

According to UNESCO, an estimated 230 million jobs in sub-Saharan Africa will require digital skills by 2030 and less than 30% of women receive STEM training to be able to participate in the tech sector, while women and girls are 25% less likely to possess the critical digital skills needed to compete in the modern labour force (UNESCO and Equals Global Partnership, 2019).

Despite these challenges, digital upskilling remains one of the most promising opportunities for women economic empowerment as the African Union puts plans in place towards educating an African fit for the 21st century.

GENDER DISPARITY IN THE AFRICAN TECH ECOSYSTEM

The disparity in fair gender representation in the African tech ecosystem is rooted in a complex web of factors that hinder women and girls from fully harnessing the potential of the digital age. One is the absence of female role models in the tech sector, which perpetuates the belief that technology is not a viable career choice for women. Several literatures have highlighted the importance of visible role models in inspiring young girls to pursue digital skills (Antoine, 2020; Ghoshal, 2023; Brixi, Peschka & Qiang, 2023).

Also, safety concerns in the online space, including cyberbullying and harassment, ▶

creates an additional layer of obstacles. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by diverse socio-cultural and economic factors (Umukoro et al., 2021), dissuading them from engaging in digital education and online forums. According to 2015 UNESCO Cyber VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) research, 73% of women have already been exposed to or have experienced some form of online violence. This underscores the urgent need to address online gender-based violence as a barrier to women's participation in tech.

In addressing the gender gap in digital skills education, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This involves developing inclusive policies, improving digital infrastructure, promoting STEM education for girls, and creating safe online spaces. The effort to bridge this gap is not merely a matter of equality but also an investment in Africa's capacity building/development and technological advancement.

One of the most striking economic implications of the gender gap in tech is the underutilisation of a significant portion of the workforce. Women represent a vast and largely untapped talent pool. Failure to harness the skills and creativity of women through technology skilling can hamper innovation and economic potential. This underscores the essential role of women and girls in shaping the digital future of the continent.

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN ACQUIRING TECH SKILLS

Socio-cultural norms further exacerbate the gender gap in digital skills education. Deep-seated stereotypes often dictate that

'Digital upskilling remains one of the most promising opportunities for women economic empowerment as the African Union puts plans in place towards educating an African fit for the 21st century'

technology and science-related fields are reserved for men.

As a result, girls are discouraged from pursuing STEM subjects and technical careers. This discouragement is vividly portrayed in studies like the UNESCO Science Report, which reveals the limited representation of women in STEM fields across the African continent. Also, African girls and women frequently face inequities in educational opportunities, particularly in STEM disciplines.

The World Bank's 'World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends' emphasises the need for quality education in science and technology as a prerequisite for digital skills. Unfortunately, girls often receive inferior access to these opportunities compared to their male counterparts, with factors such as time poverty, physiological obligation, and cultural norms playing a critical role (Makama, 2013). Financial constraints, particularly in disadvantaged areas, limit women's access to digital devices and internet services (Gillwald, Milek and Stork, 2010). As the digital age increasingly intertwines with economic activities, this divide hampers women's participation in various sectors, ranging from acquiring tech skills to getting tech job placements (Barasa and Kiiru, 2023).

WOMEN TECHSTERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME AND EDUCATING THE AFRICAN WOMAN FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Women Techsters Fellowship (WTF) is a programme under the Women Techsters initiative of Tech4Dev – a social enterprise focused on empowering communities through technology. The WTF programme is aimed at bridging the gender gap in technology by providing training, mentorship, and support to women interested in pursuing careers in technology and entrepreneurship.

The fellowship involves a structured programme where participants received hands-on training in various tech-related skills across various learning tracks. This includes product design (UI/UX); software development; cybersecurity; product management; blockchain; data science and AI; mixed reality and 3D; and mobile app development. This initiative has contributed to addressing challenges faced by women in acquiring tech skills through:

The disparity in fair gender representation in the African tech ecosystem is rooted in various factors, including:
•The absence of female role models in the tech sector, which perpetuates the belief that technology is not a viable career choice for women
• Safety concerns in the online space, including cyberbullying and harassment
•Women and girls are disproportionately affected by diverse socio-cultural and economic factors.

Figure 1
Digital skill applications and admissions received
▼▼

- **Women Skill Development and Training:** The fellowship provides structured and hands-on training programmes in relevant technology skills which directly address the challenge of limited access to formal tech education for women and equips them with practical skills needed in the tech industry.
- **Gender-Inclusive Learning Environment:** As many women face barriers or biases in male-dominated tech spaces, creating a women-focused fellowship helps to establish a supportive and inclusive learning environment crucial in overcoming the gender gap in technology.
- **Mentorship Opportunities:** The WTF incorporates mentorship programmes where women receive guidance from experienced professionals in the tech industry aimed at addressing the challenge of a lack of role models and mentors for women in technology.
- **Networking and Community Engagement:** Networking opportunities provided by the fellowship help women connect with like-minded individuals, professionals, and potential collaborators. This addresses the isolation and lack of networking opportunities that some women might face in the tech sector.
- **Career Support and Placement:** The WTF offers career support services, including job placement assistance. This directly addresses the challenge of

under-representation of women in tech roles by helping them secure positions in the industry.

WOMEN TECHSTERS FELLOWSHIP SUCCESS STORY

The Women Techsters Fellowship, from its inception in 2021, has evolved into a beacon of empowerment, breaking barriers, and creating pathways for women's technology skills development, and further providing beneficiaries with access to decent employment in tech across 22 African countries.

In 2021, the WTF impacted the lives of countless beneficiaries across five African countries, expanding to 10 additional African countries, and making further inroads into seven new countries by 2023. The WTF has received an overwhelming response, with 23 828 unique applications coming from aspiring women across diverse socio-economic backgrounds (see Figure 1). The high number of applications received underscored the immense demand and enthusiasm for a platform dedicated to empowering women in technology.

While it is worthy to note the demand for digital skills as an enabler of the 21st-century African woman, the capacity is low for digital skills providers to meet the demand. The need to increase funding from within Africa is encouraged as most donor funds are inflows received from the West.

Also worthy to note is the impact made by the fellowship on the knowledge and skills level as well as socio-economic lives of the participants. One of the testimonies received from a WTF alumnus reads as follows.

'Tech4Dev has played a pivotal role in propelling my career forward. Both the technical and soft skills training is unique, and I don't believe I could have received it elsewhere. And what's even more incredible is that they didn't stop at just training – they built a vibrant community that I'm forever grateful to be a part of,' says Toluwanimi Abioye, one of the WTF's 2023 cohort. 'I had the privilege to work alongside brilliant minds from all over Africa and soak in wisdom from global experts. It's been such a priceless experience.'

CONCLUSION

Digital skills are not just an optional addition to education in Africa, rather they are foundational to the continent's future success and resilience. ▶

APPLICATIONS ■ **ADMITTED**

Year	Applications	Admitted
2023/2024	7 846	2 267
2022/2023	11 099	1 467
2021/2023	4 883	338
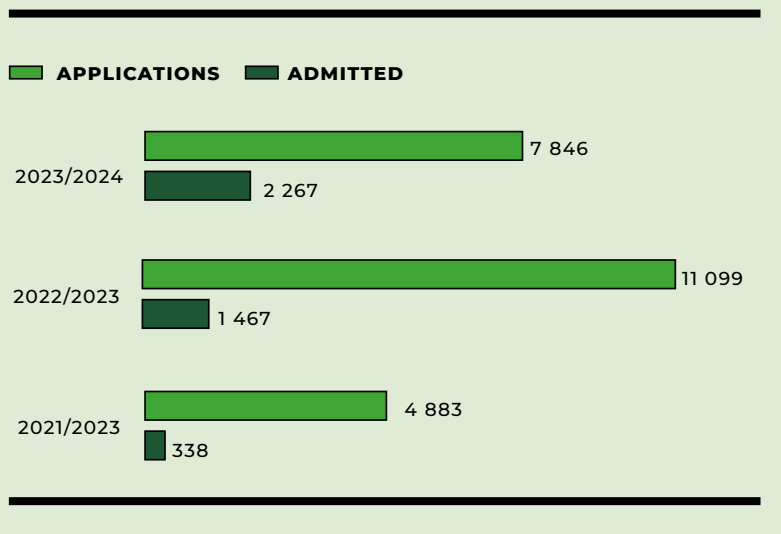
Beyond enhancing economic competitiveness, bridging the digital divide gap and preparing individuals for the evolving job markets, digital skills help foster innovation and entrepreneurship, expand access to services, contribute to sustainable development, and drive infrastructure development. As African education systems evolve, educators and all ecosystem players must prioritise the development of digital skills to empower African for the 21st century.

Investing in digital skilling initiatives like the Women Techsters Fellowship is an investment in the socio-economic fabric of the entire continent. By empowering African women in tech, we are not only fostering innovation and entrepreneurship but also creating a pathway to improve household income and drive significant growth in GDP across Africa.

We urge all stakeholders to allocate resources, provide mentorship and support networks to amplify the impact of programmes like Women Techsters. Donors also play a pivotal role by providing financial assistance to scale these initiatives and reach more women in diverse communities. Policymakers are also called upon to advocate for policies that encourage gender-inclusive tech education and workforce development.

There is need to unite and collaborate in our commitment to empowering African women in tech, ensuring that we build a future where technology knows no gender boundaries. Together, we can drive lasting change, not just for the tech industry but for the entire African continent. ■

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FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Communication lies at the core of the Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum's strategy to support the continent's youth

THE COALITION ON MEDIA AND EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AFRICA FORUM (CAFOR) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring education systems in Africa align with labour market needs, especially for the youth. CAFOR leverages the collective influence and resources of its members to enhance education and youth development, focusing on communication as a core element.

CAFOR's mission centres on promoting communication in education and youth development, with a particular emphasis on youth labour force participation and agricultural sector reform. Key strategies include:

- Creating a platform for the exchange of information on new technologies and innovations
- Advocating for good communication practices
- Building capacity for public debate
- Promoting policy measures for innovation engagement
- Sharing knowledge among experts and stakeholders
- Translating ideas into actionable projects
- Establishing meaningful multi-stakeholder partnerships.

CAFOR envisions becoming Africa's leading centre of excellence for communication in youth skills development, serving as a reference and facilitating agency for best practices in education for development. This involves advocacy, capacity building, analysis, research and documentation of best practices, focusing on equipping young people with the skills to meet modern challenges. CAFOR employs a six-pronged strategy to achieve its objectives:

- Facilitating research

- Strengthening stakeholder mobilisation and sensitisation
- Supporting capacity-building initiatives
- Advocating and lobbying
- Promoting partnerships and networking
- Supporting skills development in emergency and post-conflict situations.

CAFOR boasts a professional corps of more than 70 highly trained individuals from diverse fields, including scientists, technologists, social scientists, education specialists and more. These members support CAFOR's programmes across African Union Member States, leveraging their extensive experience and networks to enhance education and development efforts.

CAFOR has outlined 10 major projects for the next five years, totalling more than US$300 million. These projects aim to improve quality education, promote the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), develop digital schools, and address education in emergencies, among others.

CAFOR is shifting its focus to the African Union's Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS). This shift aims to leverage PAPS' resources to advance education, training and skills development for the youth, particularly in post-conflict settings. An upcoming MoU with PAPS will strengthen co-operation, focusing on youth skills development, research and capacity building.

CAFOR's unique approach stems from its grassroots origins and commitment to addressing Africa's educational and youth employment challenges. Born from the reflections of successful African citizens, CAFOR emphasises African ownership and proactive solutions to issues such as youth unemployment and gender discrepancies in the labour market.

CAFOR's distinctiveness lies in its focus on communication, aiming to ensure comprehensive and inclusive education planning and execution. This approach is a response to the African Union's call for stakeholder mobilisation to support CESA implementation, emphasising the critical role of communication in achieving well-managed and quality education systems in Africa.

Education and human capital formation in 21st-century Africa: A transformative social policy perspective

Lessons from Brazil and South Africa

*By **Newman Tekwa**, University of South Africa: SARChI in Social Policy (tekwanewman@gmail.com)*

Besides South Africa, the most industrialised African country, and barely a few others, large-scale industrial manufacturing is in a process of de-industrialisation. For Africa to grow to the next level, it is critical to examine the reasons why the continent does not seem able to gather momentum for rapid and widespread industrialisation, with many economies remaining at a subsistence level.

This is coupled with a relatively low level of digitalisation, and limited digital maturity and sophistication of much of the African population. Despite the availability of a large pool of labour, successful, sustained and competitive industrialisation in the 21st century requires a relatively educated and skilled workforce. This

represents an area where educational policies align with the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25), to develop key transformative social policy instruments that can be utilised as effective tools for industrial competitiveness and national development.

A society's ability to produce the goods and services it needs and wants is dependent on the exercise of the 'human capabilities' of its people. Human capital is defined as the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are developed and valued primarily for their economically productive potential; qualities of people and institutions that condition a society's capability selectively to adopt, adapt and improve technologies; and capabilities embodied in people not machines (Baptiste 2001; Abramovitz 1995; Hujo 2014).

How can African governments task their social policies for skills development in this digital era? What institutional arrangements are needed for collective provision of a pool of highly portable skills? Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions are argued to constitute powerful means of empowering people to develop their full capabilities and increase national productivity (Hujo 2014).

To what extent does the African Union Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education inform this imperative?

THE S-SYSTEM AND THE SETAS SYSTEM IN BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA

The S-System in Brazil is part of the broader Technical Vocational Education and Training landscape in the country, created progressively over the years aiming to prepare workers by supplying them with the skills needed in the
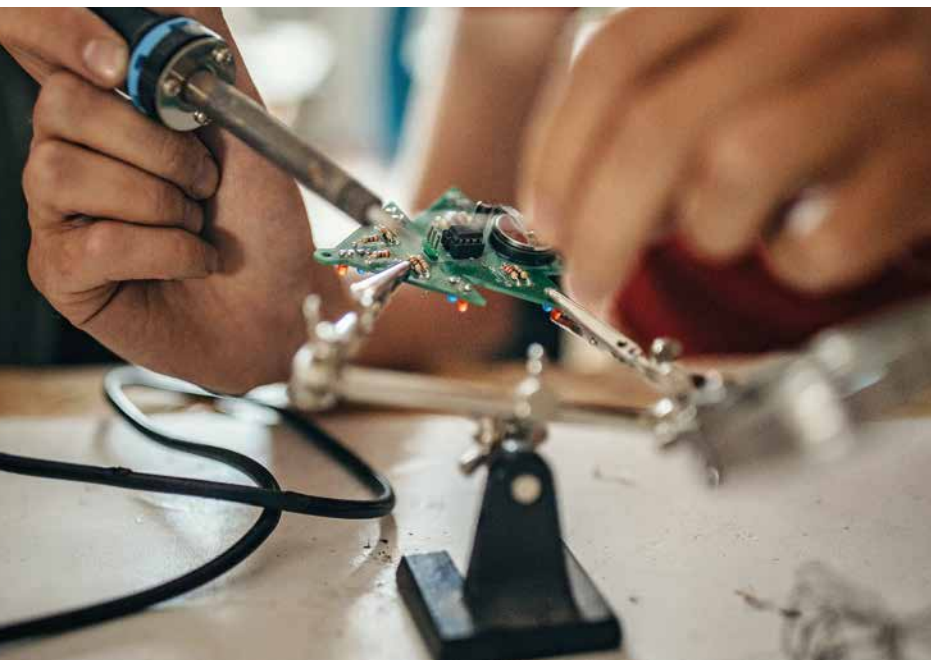
industry as well as other sectors of the economy (Barria and Klasen 2014:8).

The Brazilian S-System is a private non-profit organisation, managed and led by industrial associations and has been historically considered the leading institution providing professional skills contributing to school–work transition. Its financing mechanism proved to be a balance of market-driven components, through government regulation stipulating an industrial tax of 1% on all payrolls, alongside stable public funding.

The private industrial levy is collected by the National Institute of Social Security, with the levies and incomes going directly to training corporations (Barria and Klasen 2014:12). Various training institutions receive payroll contributions which vary according to the specific industries (Bulunga 2017).

To survive in a highly competitive global market, policy experts in South Africa agreed that the country required little short of a skills revolution, which led to the promulgation the Skills Development Act of 1998 (Lundall 2003:2). The Act led to the formation of the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) system, a vocational skills training system in South Africa with a mandate of developing sector skills plans; promoting learnership, internships; unit-based skills programmes and apprenticeships; and distributing the skills development levy paid by employers (OECD 2017:32). Covering every industry and occupation, each SETA is responsible for both the private and public sectors of the economy within their own sector.

The Skills Levies Act of 1999 made provision for the collection of 1% payroll levy for training from all firms in South Africa with an annual wage bill of at least ZAR500 000 paid to the National Revenue Fund, with 80% going to SETAs.

What key lessons can be drawn from these two skills development programmes to accelerate industrialisation, job creation and poverty reduction in Africa?

KEY LESSONS FOR AFRICA'S SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Four criteria are considered in this paper, namely market co-ordination and relevancy of skills training; promoting regional industrialisation and competitiveness; financing

'How can African governments task their social policies for skills development in this digital era?'

structure and allocation modalities; and the role of the state.

TVET Colleges market co-ordination for skills-relevancy training

Despite the S-System and the SETAs system both being skills-development programmes, a distinction can be made in terms of their market orientation, with a knock-on effect on skills relevancy and mismatch, as employer ownership of skills development programmes can be a key differentiator and competitive advantage for a country's skills base (Mehrotra 2017). Employer-ownership and demand-driven skills supply are a distinguishing marker of the S-System in Brazil; not comparable to its South African SETAs system.

The S-System takes the lead in managing skills development, which ensures better alignment of supply and demand of skills. Such employer-ownership and level of engagement are missing in the SETAs system of South Africa, resulting in stark labour market inequalities, not only by age but also by race and regions.

South Africa's SETAs have not made a significant impact towards the reduction of unemployment and poverty along with their associated racial gender and age disparities. This had gone hand in hand with the existence of qualification mismatches (OECD 2017:24).

Regional co-ordination for area-specific industrialisation

The S-System is distinct in terms of its level of decentralisation and governance structures. Unlike the SETAs system, not linked to skills training institutions, the S-System is organised at the national and state level as a non-profit organisation – financed, managed and led by industry. In terms of geographical distribution, the federal organisation of the S-System makes it present in all the 28 states of the country as ▶

reflected in the geographical distribution of training, in which opportunities for training are offered to those living in less-populated areas or less-advanced federal states (Barria and Kasen 2014:3).

Most importantly, within the federal states, the partnership between industry and training institutions allows the design of relevant regional training programmes tailored to specific regional skills demand. This identifying attribute of the S-System has had a positive impact on regional industrialisation, promoting a reduction in the speed of urbanisation and the formation of overpopulated cities, a key lesson for African countries, including South Africa.

Financing human capital formation

A commendable effort by the two governments is the institutionalisation of a skills development levy through Acts of Parliaments.

A distinguishing mark of the S-System is that the compulsory contribution as a percentage of payroll is used to fund directly the technical vocational education and training system, as the National Institute of Social Security pays the levy incomes directly to training corporations (Barria and Klasen 2014:12). This has facilitated funding and access to the system for poor students, facilitating entry and re-entry of people into the labour market as they adjust to the labour market demand, which may call for continuous training and re-training.

This funding is complemented by increasing government spending on vocational training via the establishment of adequate infrastructure, and the development of teachers, tools and methodologies for training, highlighting the collaboration of government, labour and business in skills training – with the government balancing the social equity goals for national development, and business focusing on enhancing productivity by ensuring that training needs are met (Bulunga 2017; Mehrotra 2017).

Public- and private-sector financial investment in skills development in South Africa has not produced the same results. Rather than the skills development levy used directly to support skills training institutions, as in the S-System, it was designed to incentivise employers to provide training opportunities at their workplaces, with little benefit to those out of employment (OECD 2017:48).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify the precise market co-ordination failures that hold up industrialisation.
2. Identify government co-ordination failures between stakeholders in skills training and development.
3. Decentralise, and adapt and promote regional industrialisation targeting selected industries that have the potential to create employment and/or innovation and technological learning, with positive spill-over effects to the national industrialisation objectives. ◾

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THE YEAR OF
EDUCATION
2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

A child without education is like a bird without wings

Empowering Africa's future: The imperative for integrating Social and Financial Education in national education systems

By **Kirsten Theuns**, Director of Programmes (kirsten.theuns@aflatoun.org); **Hillary Jephat Musarurwa**, Director of Monitoring and Evaluation (hillary.musarurwa@aflatoun.org); and **Mariama Fall**, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist (mariama@aflatoun.org). **Aflatoun International**, Amsterdam, The Netherlands www.aflatoun.org

This article explores the critical need for integrating Social and Financial Education (SFE) into the national education curricula across Africa. It discusses the efforts of Aflatoun International and its network partners in promoting financial education throughout the continent. The paper provides insights into successful implementation strategies in countries like Uganda, South Africa, Ghana and The Gambia, where financial education programmes have been successfully embedded into school curricula.

The article emphasises the necessity of developing context-specific curricula that cater to various population subgroups, and highlights the importance of collaborative efforts among governments, financial institutions, NGOs and community groups. A detailed case study from Uganda illustrates the integration of Aflatoun's curriculum in subjects such as English, physical education and entrepreneurship, focusing on themes like social responsibility, national unity, civic duties, socio-economic development, and self-employment skills.

The article concludes by underlining the significance of financial literacy in education systems for fostering sustainable development and economic prosperity in Africa, and the role of Aflatoun International in spearheading this transformational educational approach.

INTRODUCING SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EDUCATION

As Africa strides towards sustainable development and economic growth, one crucial element often overlooked is the integration

> **Financial literacy should not be taken for granted, and the urgency of its incorporation into the educational system is paramount. As Africa strives for economic prosperity, the integration of comprehensive social, financial and life skills education into national curricula emerges as a key element for sustainable development.**

of social, financial and life skills education into national curricula.

This integration is pivotal, aligning with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its vision for an empowered, youth-driven future.

Aflatoun International and its network partners have been at the forefront, advocating for the cause of financial education for all age groups across the continent. This article highlights the significance of improving SFE in Africa, offering recommendations based on a literature review and Aflatoun's work in the region, in alignment with international treaties, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Youth Charter and Agenda 2063.

For more than a decade, Aflatoun International, alongside civil society and African governments, has been actively working to integrate financial education into national school programmes and curricula. Recognising the importance of early exposure to financial concepts, Aflatoun promotes empowering youth to become informed financial decision-makers. This effort resonates with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasises youth empowerment and economic development.

Over the past decade, significant strides have been made in countries like Uganda, South Africa, Ghana, and The Gambia, where financial education programmes have been integrated into school curricula.

Governments, financial institutions, NGOs, and local community groups have collaborated to ensure that students at all levels acquire 21st-century skills, preparing them to be

as education levels, unemployment rates, and the real needs of the job market is crucial.

Furthermore, programmes must be designed to address diverse population subgroups based on factors like ethnicity, race, and rural or urban residence. This approach is in line with Agenda 2063, which advocates for inclusive and sustainable development across diverse African communities.

While progress is happening, a lack of co-ordination at a national level remains a challenge. Initiatives led by governments would benefit from greater involvement of non-profit organisations and vice versa.

Involvement of financial institutions is also important in order to increase services and products suitable for children and young people. By actively contributing to financial education initiatives, these institutions can assist in shaping a generation capable of managing their finances effectively as adults.

Overall, a more co-ordinated approach between stakeholders would enhance awareness, avoid resource duplication, and better address the specific needs of the population, echoing the collaborative spirit of the Agenda 2063.

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF SFE: THE CASE OF UGANDA

Uganda presents a compelling example of how Aflatoun's curricula have been integrated into its syllabi across different subjects, reflecting the goals of the African Union (AU) Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA16–25) in fostering comprehensive education systems.

The country has taken a significant step forward by planning to hold public exams for its standalone subject in 2024, highlighting its commitment to integrating SFE into its national education system.

INFUSION OF SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EDUCATION (SFE) IN UGANDA

English syllabus: This syllabus emphasises the development of social responsibilities, national unity, appreciation of cultural heritage, and understanding of civic duties. It aims to impart ethical values, personal and collective responsibility, and initiative.

Furthermore, it focuses on enabling students to develop knowledge about the emerging ▶

financially capable citizens. However, challenges persist, and continuous efforts are needed to ensure quality financial education reaches all children. Public policies specific to children and young people, encompassing financial education in various fields of study, are recommended to bridge existing gaps, in line with the AU's commitments to youth development.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Research shows that the effectiveness of financial education programs is contingent on considering the context of the target populations. Tailoring curricula to context factors such

needs of society and the economy, aligning with the AU's emphasis on cultural identity and heritage preservation.

Physical education syllabus: In addition to promoting physical health, this syllabus focuses on developing an understanding of the needs of society and the economy. It aims to provide comprehensive knowledge in innovative production and modern management methods relevant to socio-economic development. The syllabus also enables students to develop skills required for self-employment, problem-solving, information gathering and leadership, as obtained through games, sports, and other activities.

It instils positive attitudes towards productive work and community involvement, resonating with the AU's vision of a prosperous and self-reliant Africa.

STANDALONE SUBJECT: ENTREPRENEURSHIP SYLLABUS

Entrepreneurship syllabus: As a stand-alone subject, this syllabus incorporates aspects of social and economic needs, aiming to develop a holistic education for personal and national development. It emphasises the dignity of labour, positive attitudes towards lifelong learning, addressing the needs of various sectors like mining, tourism, and science.

It also focuses on equipping learners with skills to enhance their competitiveness in the global value chain and make informed choices. The syllabus integrates topics like health awareness, diversity and inclusion, socio-economic challenges, and citizenship, making them a core part of the curriculum, in line with the AU's emphasis on diverse and inclusive economic growth.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these syllabi incorporate social and financial education through various themes and subjects. They emphasise the importance of social responsibilities, economic understanding and personal development, aiming to prepare students not only academically but also as responsible and capable members of society.

Financial literacy should not be taken for granted, and the urgency of its incorporation into the educational system is paramount. Aflatoun and its partners are committed to transforming
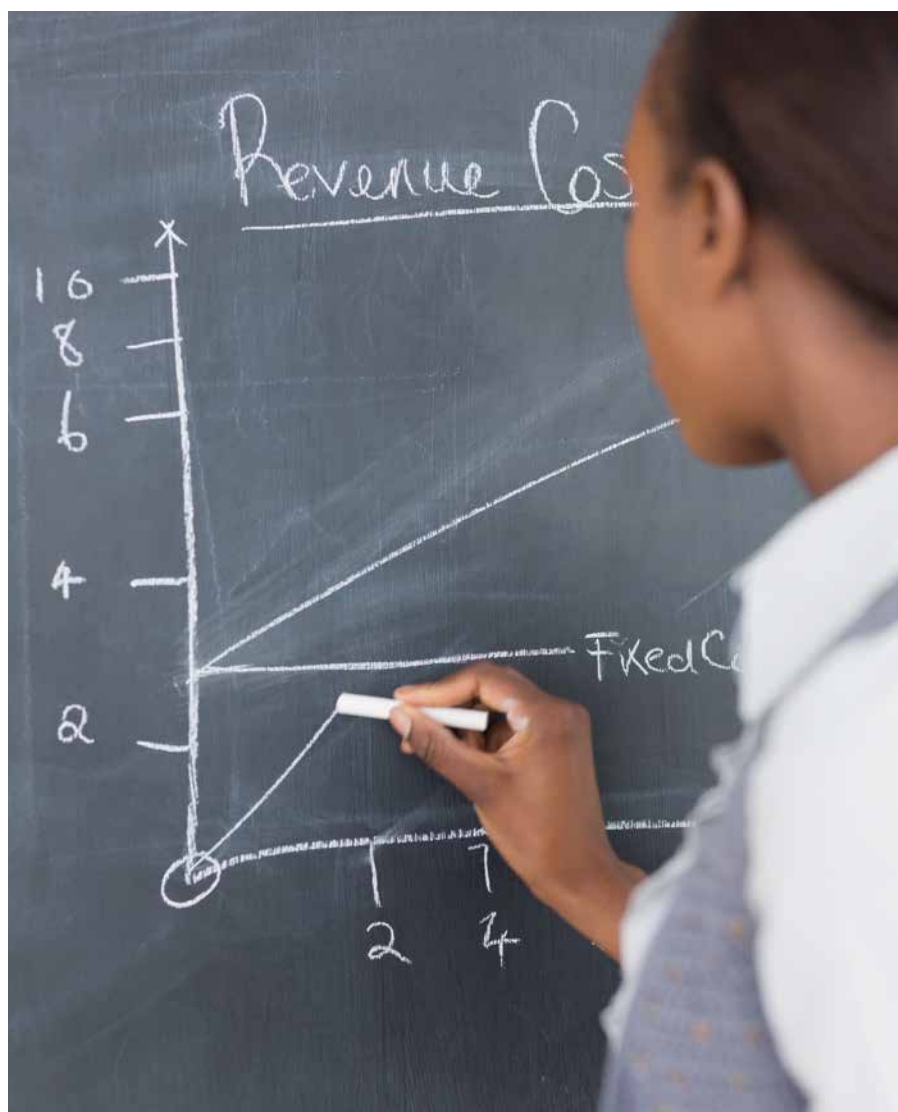
education in Africa by instilling social and financial skills, ensuring that the continent's youth is well-equipped for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

As Africa strives for economic prosperity, the integration of comprehensive social, financial, and life skills education into national curricula emerges as a key element for sustainable development. Aflatoun International's attempts – in collaboration with various stakeholders – show a commitment to building a financially literate generation capable of steering Africa towards a future of informed financial decisions and socio-economic growth, in tandem with the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063. ■

African Union

THE YEAR OF EDUCATION 2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

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The principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done.

JEAN PIAGET

Investigating the impact of Accelerated Education Programmes in Ghana: Empowering marginalised communities and fostering educational access

By **Dr James Adam** (james@associatesforchange.org) and **Dr Leslie Casely-Hayford**, Associates for Change (www.associatesforchange.org / info@associatesforchange.org)

Data shows that sub-Saharan Africa held over one-third of the world's 258.4 million out-of-school children (OOSC), with a disproportionate number being girls (Akyeampong et al, 2018; Antoninis, 2014). One in five children aged six to 11 in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to education, rising to one in three adolescents aged 12 to14. This number jumps to a staggering 60% in youth aged 15 to 17. These disparities cut across gender, economic status, ethnicity, and disability, perpetuating educational exclusion exacerbated by poverty, hunger, stigma, and limited resources in rural and urban settings.

As a result, three Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) also referred to as complementary basic education programmes in Ghana, have been driving transformative education pathways in some of Ghana's rural extreme poverty zones: namely Afrikids, Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Languages and Bible Translation (GILLBT), and School for Life (SFL). These NGOs were part of the Ghana Government's Complementary Basic Education programme, which reached over 290 037 learners across 60 districts in Northern Ghana (Casely-Hayford et al, 2021; Jordan et al, 2017) and the NGOs collectively enrolled 90 984 students (31.4%).

Impressively, these initiatives successfully transitioned 80 211 (81.2%) learners into formal education over a four-year period. AfriKids enrolled 16 657 learners, achieving a remarkable 96% transition rate to primary education, with most integrated into primary 3 between 2013 and 2021 (see Table 1).

School for Life enrolled 60 344 learners and achieved a transition rate of 85.9%, successfully transitioning 51 819 learners between 2010 and 2018 (see Table 2). GILLBT, enrolling 13 983 learners, transitioned an impressive 89.1%, equating to 12 463 learners moving into formal education (see Table 3).

Through their focused enrolment strategies and dedication to transitioning learners into formal schooling, these initiatives have significantly contributed to expanding educational opportunities for marginalised communities in these regions, particularly in fragile rural areas.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilised a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative

> **Accelerated Education Programmes have significantly increased enrolment and retention rates, notably supporting girls' transition into formal primary education, improving their learning outcomes (reading and numeracy), and strengthening their resilience for completion of basic education.**

and qualitative methodologies to assess the scale of out-of-school children and youth and evaluate the effectiveness of Alternative Education Programmes. Quantitative methods involved structured household interviews, and community and school-level checklists,aiming for robust data collection (Hartwell, 2006; UNESCO, 2019).

The sampling employed a multi-stage approach at regional, district, and community levels, focusing on areas exposed to AEP interventions. Systematic random sampling reduced bias in household surveys, while qualitative data, gathered through focus group discussions and key informant interviews with education officials, community leaders, and students, used non-probability sampling methods like purposive and convenience sampling (Krieger, et al, 1997). In all, 64 communities were surveyed, including 32 intervention and 32 non-intervention.

Quantitative data utilised household survey questionnaires aligned with global OOSC initiative dimensions, while eight additional tools enhanced data triangulation (Shah et al., 2017; Snyder, 2019).

Field enumerators underwent rigorous training on data-collection instruments and techniques, emphasising language proficiency, gender considerations, and research experience. Data analysis employed descriptive, narrative, and gender-based approaches. Quantitative data underwent cleaning and analysis using Excel and SPSS, enabling regional, gender, disability, and intervention status disaggregation.

FINDINGS

THE ROLE OF COMPLEMENTARY BASIC EDUCATION (CBE) PROGRAMME

The CBE programme has made remarkable strides in transforming the educational landscape for marginalised children. Established in 1995 as part of the School for Life model, this initiative primarily concentrated its efforts in the northern regions of the country, targeting out-of-school children.

Over its trajectory spanning from 1995 to 2020, the CBE programme displayed an impressive track record. By the end of its implementation, enrolment figures surpassed expectations, with over 533 000 learners benefiting from the initiative. ▶

'These initiatives have significantly contributed to expanding educational opportunities for marginalised communities'

Notably, more than 90% of these learners successfully transitioned into the formal education system, marking a pivotal success in addressing the barriers to education faced by disadvantaged OOSC (School for Life, 2021).

THE ROLE OF DONOR FUNDING

Multiple funding periods, including support from the Government of Ghana, Foreign Commonwealth Development Organisation (FCDO), USAID, DANIDA, and other partners, played a pivotal role in sustaining the CBE programme's momentum. The success of the CBE programme can be attributed to robust partnerships involving communities, private sector entities, NGOs, CSOs, development partners, and governmental support.

Collaborative efforts ensured the effective implementation of gender-sensitive strategies, surpassing targets set for female involvement in the programme. Female participation among learners reached an impressive 54.2%.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AMONG CBE AND NON-CBE STUDENTS

The final assessments revealed that while non-Complementary Basic Education students showed slightly more progress across all categories throughout the academic year, the CBE learners had notably higher scores at the end of the term (see Table 4). In English assessments, although the initial scores were similar between CBE (29.7%) and non-CBE students (29.9%), those in the CBE programme showed significant improvement in basic, advanced, and overall performance by the end of the term. This progress was particularly evident in advanced and overall scores.

Similarly, in numeracy assessments, CBE students performed better than non-CBE students at the end of the term, especially in advanced and overall numeracy, even though their starting scores were comparable in all areas. ▶

EDUCATION INNOVATOR CBE CYCLE	CBE CYCLE	ENROLMENT				TOTAL	TRANSITION				PERCENTAGE TRANSITIONED	
		BOYS	%	GIRLS	%		BOYS	%	GIRLS	%		%
AfriKids	1	822	58%	594	42%	1 416	552	51%	539	49%	1 091	77%
	2	1 083	46%	1 293	54%	2 376	994	45%	1 208	55%	2 202	93%
	3	2 739	49%	2 876	51%	5 615	2 699	49%	2 819	51%	5 518	98%
	4	2 273	46%	2 627	54%	4 900	2 234	46%	2 587	54%	4 821	98%
	5	965	41%	1 385	59%	2 350	945	41%	1 352	59%	2 297	98%
GRAND TOTAL		7 882	47%	8 775	53%	16 657	7 424	47%	8 505	53%	15 929	96%

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Table 1
Performance of AfriKids Complementary Basic Education (CBE)
Source: Afrikids Annual Report, 2020

▶▶
Table 2
**Performance of
School for Life CBE**
Source: School for
Life Data, 2021

EDUCATION INNOVATOR CBE CYCLE	CBE CYCLE	ENROLMENT				TOTAL	TRANSITION				PERCENTAGE TRANSITIONED	
		BOYS	%	GIRLS	%		BOYS	%	GIRLS	%		%
School for Life	2010	5 207	52%	4 793	48%	10 000	4 160	51%	3 978	49%	8 138	81%
	1	5 201	52%	4 799	48%	10 000	5 201	55%	4 202	45%	9 403	94%
	2	6 552	53%	5 738	47%	12 290	5 128	53%	4 636	47%	9 764	79%
	3	6 422	51%	6 282	49%	12 704	5 772	51%	5 448	49%	11 220	88%
	4	5 518	49%	5 832	51%	11 350	4 601	49%	4 812	51%	9 413	83%
	5	1 874	47%	2 126	53%	4 000	1 820	47%	2 061	53%	3 881	97%
GRAND TOTAL		30 774	51%	29 570	49%	60 344	26 682	51%	25 137	49%	51 819	86%

EDUCATION INNOVATOR CBE CYCLE	CBE CYCLE	ENROLMENT				TOTAL	TRANSITION				PERCENTAGE TRANSITIONED	
		BOYS	%	GIRLS	%		BOYS	%	GIRLS	%		%
GILLBT	1	745	45%	920	55%	1 665	616	43%	804	57%	1 420	85%
	2	3 200	49%	3 366	51%	6 566	2 907	49%	3 018	51%	5 925	90%
	3	2 000	50%	2 008	50%	4 008	1 750	50%	1 722	50%	3 472	87%
	4	530	52%	487	48%	1 017	460	50%	459	50%	919	90%
	5	366	50%	361	50%	727	366	50%	361	50%	727	100%
GRAND TOTAL		6 841	49%	7 142	51%	13 983	6 099	49%	6 364	51%	12 463	89%

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Table 3
Performance of Ghana Institute of Linguistics (GILLBT) CBE
Source: GILLBT Data, 2021

▶▶
Table 4
Learning outcomes among AEP learners and non–AEP learners in Ghana.
Source: Department for International Development (2019)

COMPONENT SCORES	CBE			NON-CBE		
	BASELINE MEAN PERCENT SCORE	ENDLINE MEAN PERCENT SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE (% POINTS)	BASELINE MEAN PERCENT SCORE	ENDLINE MEAN PERCENT SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE (% POINTS)
Local language						
Basic local language	19.5	46.2	26.7	14.3	43	28.7
Advanced local language	26.2	57.7	31.5	18.4	53.3	34.9*
Overall local language	26	55.7	29.6	20.2	51.9	31.7
ENGLISH						
Basic English	24.6	55.4	30.8	22.6	51.9	29.3
Advanced English	30.4	66	35.6*	31.8	64.1	32.2
Overall English	27.7	63	33.3*	29.9	60.1	30.2
NUMERACY						
Basic numeracy	46.2	76.4	30.2	45.1	73.3	28.2
Advanced numeracy	42.6	75.8	33.2*	42.7	72.7	30
Overall numeracy	45	76.2	31.2*	44.2	73.1	28.8

*p <0.05; **p <0.01; *** p <0.001

CONCLUSION

Accelerated Education Programmes have significantly increased enrolment and retention rates, notably supporting girls' transition into formal primary education, improving their learning outcomes (reading and numeracy) and strengthening their resilience for basic education completion. However, donor fund attrition has hampered government and education innovators in their efforts to sustain and scale up CBE programmes in rural and deprived communities of Ghana. The lack of funds to continue to implement CBE across all rural communities of northern Ghana hinders children from deprived areas from seamless entry into formal schooling.

Addressing these barriers requires concerted multi-stakeholder efforts from governmental agencies and the donor community. The findings from the studies suggest that rural communities should establish community-driven accelerated education programmes with locally based financial support mechanisms, collaborating with governmental agencies and NGOs to alleviate financial barriers impeding children's transition into formal schooling. This could include community funds, scholarships, or subsidised educational resources to ensure affordability for families facing economic challenges. Such initiatives should specifically target vulnerable groups particularly girls. ■

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ECOWAS REGIONAL COMPETITION AUTHORITY

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ERCA Executive Director

Pursuant to the broader context of promoting trade, investment, innovation and sustainable economic growth, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a Regional Competition Framework as an invaluable complement to regional initiatives such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, the Common External Tariff and the ECOWAS Investment Policy, which have culminated into the establishment of the Community Competition Rules and the creation of the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA).

This was done with the view to strengthening the monitoring systems for a free market and enabling all stakeholders to reap the full benefits of regional trade, thereby ensuring the development of regional value chains, sustained growth and consumer welfare.

Against this backdrop, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government adopted in December 2008 the Supplementary Acts A/SA.1/12/08 and A/SA.2/12/08 on the Community Competition Rules and their application within ECOWAS; and the establishment, powers and operation of the ERCA respectively.

The establishment of a regional competition framework is aimed at promoting economic integration within the ECOWAS region and to considerably stimulate regional economic growth by the effective implementation of the Community Competition Rules.

In general, the objectives of competition policy are to encourage a free and open market; guarantee fair and equitable conditions of competition for all market players; promote optimal allocation of resources; maximise consumer protection; and to ensure transparency and fairness in regulatory procedures.

The ERCA is the competent authority to represent the region in matters of competition and consumer protection. Its activities were officially launched in January 2019 in Banjul, the Gambia, the country hosting its headquarters.

The ERCA is responsible for implementing the ECOWAS competition rules, including:
• Monitoring the commercial activities within the common market
• Preventing and eliminating anti-competitive agreements and behaviour that amounts to the abuse of a dominant position

its operational objectives and the implementation of regional competition policy.

These include supplementary acts, regulations, enabling rules and manuals of procedures on the technical and decision-making bodies of the ERCA and their operation; the procedures governing the investigation, decision-making, sanctioning and compensation processes, as well as collaboration with the competent national authorities; mergers and acquisitions review; and the leniency and immunity rules and procedures.

In line with its mandate, ECOWAS – through the ERCA – has provided the region with a legal framework for consumer protection.

The Directive A/Dir.2/07/23 on consumer protection in ECOWAS, adopted in July 2023, has the general objective of establishing a regional harmonised framework for the protection of consumers and the promotion of their rights and interests within the ECOWAS region.

The directive also provides for a mechanism for collaboration between the ERCA, the bodies responsible for consumer protection in Member States and consumer protection stakeholders in the ECOWAS region.

In the interest of free and fair play for all economic actors, any natural or legal person may refer any violation of the Community Competition Rules and consumer rights to the ERCA.

These referral procedures are facilitated through the complaints management platform on the digitalised ERCA Competition Information System, which records and streamlines the receipt and processing of complaints, accessible via its website: www.erca-arcc.org.

• Carrying out investigations on its own initiative or on referral in connection with the conduct of commercial activities in the common market

• Co-operating with the national and regional competition authorities. Since commencing operations, the ERCA has developed foundational legal texts that are better suited to

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More investment in climate–change literacy will keep Agenda 2063 on course

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A climate change-illiterate African is an African who is unfit for the 21st century. Cognisant of the impact and implications of climate change on the continent's complex social, economic, and (geo)political[1] realities; the continent's persisting challenges with some aspects of basic education[2]; and that the number of Africans aged younger than 25 years – currently estimated to be 750 million – is projected to rise to more than 1 billion by 2050, Africa must prioritise the climate change-education of its children and young people in order to actualise Africa's Agenda 2063[3].

If this is not done with urgency and focus, a critical mass of climate change-illiterate individuals will emerge on the continent. Such individuals will likely derail the Agenda 2063 or transform it into a mirage; they would become liabilities to the Africa We Want. Neither of these is a desirable outcome.

It is not lost on Africa that, in the foreseeable future, its young population will become its most significant demographic. History scholar Edward Paice has observed that 'each year during the 2020s [this decade], more than 25 million young Africans will reach the age of 15 [years] and be defined as "working age"'[4].

Africa will rely on this population to secure peace, drive prosperity, and engage authoritatively with other actors in the global arena. However, an emerging working force that is not fully, uniformly and consistently educated for sustainability is of little value to Africa's aspirations and prospects to become the continent of the future. It becomes apparent, looking at Africa's demographic trends and issues of concern, that Africa underutilises its young people when tackling pressing challenges bedevilling the continent. Climate change, which is increasingly spotlighting education on the continent, is one of these issues.

A CRITICAL AND UNDERUTILISED RESOURCE

The complexity of climate change, which scholars, world leaders and the political elite have described variously as, inter alia, a 'wicked problem', 'threat multiplier', 'crisis', 'the greatest challenge of our time', and 'global phenomenon with diverse local consequences', could explain this underutilisation.

Climate change, like COVID-19, is increasingly disrupting all levels of education. However, unlike COVID-19 – which was a once-off, public health emergency – climate change's disruption of education is continuous, and multi-sectoral. Last year is a case in point. In November 2023, Somalia, Ethiopia (in the Oromia and Somalia regions), and Kenya (in 38 of 47 counties) reportedly experienced widespread flooding attributed to El Níño. Flood waters killed more than 100 individuals in Kenya; ditto in Somalia. Floods also killed thousands of livestock; destroyed thousands of hectares of farmland; and damaged infrastructure, including educational institutions. Many of these institutions will need to be rebuilt or rehabilitated before in-person learning resumes.

Prior to the said flooding, several African countries experienced severe drought and famine[5]. Food prices increased and school feeding programmes became untenable. Many learners became truant or dropped out of school. Education has suffered in this drought/flooding cycle[6]. Such disruptions are occurring on the back of incomplete post-COVID-19 recovery. As younger individuals are considered to have limited comprehension of

climate change compared to older individuals, the latter also tend to be more active in the climate change space.

The burden of responsibility for climate change is another factor of the said under-utilisation. Most of Africa's young people are, or will be, born into a climate change-afflicted world. Arguably, older generations – through their actions and inactions – bear comparatively more responsibility for climate change than younger ones. In this youth-heavy continent, if efforts to prevent the globe from warming any further and within a limit of 1.5°C limit fail, climate change will impact Africa's under-25s the most.

Individuals in this demographic are either already suffering from the negative effects and impact of extreme ecological events, or feeling the weight of the responsibility of being the continent's carriers of hope for a climate-adapted future[7]. Investing in their climate-change literacy will produce sustainability agents who will help to achieve Agenda 2063.

RAISING AFRICA'S SUSTAINABILITY AGENTS

A 2021 United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) study on education and climate change readiness found that exposure to negative ecological events increases the likelihood of climate change content being included in national curriculum. 'The countries most likely to include climate change content are those in regions most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, as opposed to those largely responsible for the emissions causing climate change.'[8]

Many African countries are ecologically fragile and vulnerable to climate change impacts[9]. Evidently, as Africa contributes the least to global warming but is most impacted by extreme ecological events, AU Member States should be as or more invested in the climate-change literacy of their citizens as in Agenda 2063. Achieving this depends in part on the competence of Member States' teaching fraternity.

UNESCO notes gaps in teacher competence and confidence in educating for sustainability. Nearly 95% of teachers participating in a survey on education and climate change believed that it is important or very important to teach about the severity of climate change and its effects. However, fewer than 40% of them were confident teaching it. Only about one-third of them felt able to properly explain the effects of climate change on their region or locality.

UNESCO found that about 40% of teachers are confident in teaching the cognitive dimensions of climate change, but only about one-fifth can properly explain how to take [climate] action. If this evidence base is anything to go ▶

'Young people's understanding or lack thereof of climate change science and knowledge has no bearing on climate change itself; actively empowering children and young people to mitigate [and adapt to] climate change does.'
– Fernando Reimers

by, there is still some ground to cover to attain climate-change literacy on the continent.

UNESCO's findings are consistent with those of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which looked at awareness and optimism of 15-year-olds in OECD countries regarding key sustainability issues, such as global warming, gender equality, economic deprivation, and (forced) migration found an inclusion-agency discordance[10].

Young people are not entirely ignorant about the environment and climate change. On the contrary, the OECD found that they are aware of related topics such as deforestation, pollu-tion (of land, air and water), and the use of genetically modified organisms. While school leaders noted the inclusion of these issues in school curricula, students reported limited agency to tackle the same. The OECD found that 78% of respondents reported that 'looking after the global environment was important' to them. Some 58% of the respondents said 'I can do something about the problem of the world'. In summary, teachers and learners in UNESCO and OECD countries, which includes African countries, are aware of climate change

but have limited capacity to effectively employ what they know for meaningful and impactful climate action.

African states have already taken some steps – singly and collectively – to improve their education on climate issues and some have taken steps to educate its citizens. They have created more early childhood education centres, trained more teachers, and supported food-for-school initiatives to bolster school enrolment, attendance and completion rates – all with the view of education as a human right, factor of peace, and catalyst of sustainable development[11]. However, making basic education accessible to children and young people, and maintaining high levels of literacy – consistently, with limited resources and com-peting needs and priorities – are not mean feats. The said steps are thus commendable.

The results of AU Member States' investment in this regard have been mixed though. Overall, the continent lags behind in educational attain-ments, and in some cases, sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the learning poverty rate post-COVID-19 is upwards of 85%[12]. In raising sustainability agents from among its

> **'The countries most likely to include climate change content are those in regions most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, as opposed to those largely responsible for the emissions causing climate change'**

under-25-year-olds, the continent also needs to invest more in the kind of education that is removed from basic and rote education, to learning that is specialised and transformational. By necessity, this 'new' education will build on basic education initiatives; be framed on responsive knowledge and learning; and concurrently utilise interdisciplinary, whole-of-school and whole-of-society approaches.

It will also consider variations in the composition and distribution of the young demographic on the continent, and in the type, severity and impact of climate change in different countries and regions of the continent.

ON THE HORIZON

There are two main ways to jump-start and establish climate-change literacy in Africa. With the AU's Year of Education coming on the back of a tumultuous 2023 (ecologically speaking), it is time for the AU to organise a continent-wide Climate Change Book Fair, in 2024. The Fair will help appraise the continent's climate change-literary landscape (which will bridge AU20's cultural efforts with the educational focus); showcase related works; and facilitate ideas exchange, networking and partnerships for enhanced climate change and environmental education. The Fair will also complement other initiatives that the AU, in collaboration with AU Member States, and partners (such as UNESCO and OECD, for example), will be holding throughout the year.

Literary works could be themed by climate-change topics, or by language (anglophone, francophone, among others), regional blocs or genre.

Another way is for the AU to employ insights gathered from the year and Fair to help AU Member States update their Agenda 2063 National Development Priorities and other key instruments that are silent on climate change. Encouragement and support (financially and through capacity building and knowledge exchange) for Member States to invest in climate change education at all levels will be catalytic.

The AU could deploy emerging sustainability agents strategically – as role models and community and/or continental champions – to advance Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030 and its goals relating to quality education, climate action, and partnership for goals. While the AU's focus will understandably be on the under-25s, intergenerational, multi-actor engagements should not be overlooked. ■

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Investing in girls and women: A priority for Africa, and the importance of role models

Achieving gender parity and equity in education is a strategic objective of the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA). This article documents some of the benefits of better education for girls. It also discusses some of the policies that could help improve educational outcomes for girls, including the role of female teachers and school principals and the importance of other role models more generally.

By **Prudence Ngwenya**, Director, Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, African Union Commission (nonkululekon@africa-union.org); **Simone Yankey-Ouattara**, Acting Co-ordinator, African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (yankey-ouattaras@africa-union.org); and **Quentin Wodon**, Director, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (q.wodon@unesco.org)

A key strategic objective of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–25 (CESA 16–25)[1] is to accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity in education. This matters, as Africa continues to lag behind the rest of the world in girls' educational attainment, in part because of high levels of child marriage and early childbearing. This was noted in a 2018 joint African Union and World Bank report[2].

The study is being updated and expanded by the African Union's International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) and UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA). The new report will make the case for investing in girls' education and share insights on best practices to do so.

WHY THE IMPORTANCE IN INVESTING IN GIRLS AND WOMEN?

In economic terms, the changing wealth of nations is the set of assets that enables countries to produce future income. This wealth can be measured as the sum of natural capital, produced capital, and human capital (the value today of the future earnings of the labour force), plus a residual category called net foreign assets[3]. Human capital wealth accounts for two-thirds of wealth in Africa, a much larger share than natural and produced capital.

> **Female teachers and heads of schools are associated with better learning outcomes. They can also serve as role models for girls to remain in school. Unfortunately, in many African countries, only a small minority of teachers at the secondary level and heads of schools are women. More needs to be done to attract women into teaching.**

Unfortunately, in part because of a lack of education for girls and the low participation of girls in educational tracks such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) – associated with higher incomes in adulthood – women earn much less than men. Achieving gender equality in and through education could increase human capital wealth substantially, thereby improving standards of living and reducing poverty.

Girls' education also has other benefits. Girls who drop out of school early are more likely to marry or have children early, before they may be physically and emotionally ready. This may affect their health and that of their children. Children of mothers younger than 18 face higher risks of dying by age five and being malnourished. They may also do poorly in school. Other risks associated with a lack of education include intimate partner violence and a lack of decision-making ability for women in their household.

Better educational opportunities for girls may also enable them to manage their fertility better, leading to lower population growth and the benefits from the demographic dividend.

Fundamentally, a lack of education disempowers women and girls in ways that deprive them of their basic rights.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

While many interventions can make

a difference for girls' education, the role of teachers is key. Lack of learning in school drives girls to drop out of school. IICBA research suggests that female teachers and heads of schools are associated with better learning outcomes. They can also serve as role models for girls to remain in school.

Unfortunately, in many African countries, only a small minority of teachers at the secondary level and heads of schools are women. More needs to be done to attract women into teaching. Apart from teachers, other women can also serve as role models for girls and encourage them to stay in school.

Studies have been done to identify actions that can be taken. The Women, Gender and Youth (WGYD) Directorate of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the IICBA analysed data from Afrobarometer on the willingness of populations to pay higher taxes to invest in youth; what the priorities

for investments should be; and how the performance of governments has evolved over time. In addition, interviews of youth, defined by the African Union (AU) as persons aged 15 to 35 years of age, were also conducted to gain insights. The focus was on youth who have been exemplary in service to others, especially in education.

Some of the exemplary young women interviewed for their work in promoting skills development and training include:

Emmanuella Luanda Musafiri is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo who lives in the Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda. A Youth Representative for UNHCR's Global Youth Advisory Council, she founded Tumaini for Refugee Women to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in the settlement.

Among other initiatives, she started a tailoring and handcraft programme, created a saving and ▶

loans groups, came up with a youth counselling programme, and managed to create a safe learning space lab with 11 desktop computers, three laptops, and a 40-inch flat screen where youths can learn computer literacy and other skills.

Jocelyne Kirezi from Rwanda works as a researcher for VVOB, an organisation dedicated to improving the quality of education especially in Africa. She currently leads research related to school leadership, monitoring, and evaluating the effects and impact of VVOB's programmes.

As she explains, school leadership is crucial because it directly impacts the quality of education. Effective school leadership ensures that teachers are well supported, resources are utilised optimally, and the learning environment is conducive for students. By focusing on school leadership, we can improve educational outcomes, address disparities, and create a stronger foundation for Africa's development.

Olga Tusala Katembo is a permanent volunteer of the International Movement ATD Fourth World in the Central African Republic. ATD is an organisation with an outstanding track record in working with the extreme poor and giving them a voice.

She works on education but has gone further to work on initiatives that improve the well-being of persons living in low-income neighbourhoods; and by working with local leaders,

such as area chiefs, she has helped find collective solutions for poor families through donations that support families to improve their well-being.

Rossette Kyakyo founded the Slum Youth Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (SYRADO) in Kampala, Uganda. SYRADO works with youth in slum communities to improve their livelihoods. It integrates actions in economic empowerment; sexual and reproductive health rights; the prevention of gender-based violence; climate-change mitigation and environmental protection; and mental health and emergency relief to support adolescent girls, young mothers, and other vulnerable youth.

Growing up as an orphan Kyako funded her studies after high school. She welcomed the help she received and decided to do the same for others, especially youth living in slum conditions, by equipping them with employable skills. Rossette considers it her calling and life's purpose to support slum youth in reaching their full potential.

Zigwai Tagwai promotes active citizenship in governance processes in Nigeria. She is one of 41 youths who participated in a 10-week Legislative Internship Programme, implemented with support from the European Union. The internship aimed at building understanding of the functions and operations of the Nigerian Legislature.

She is also working on a community-development project, building the capacity of stakeholders (traditional leaders, clergy, representatives of youth associations, unions, educational institutions, public officials, and civil society organisations) for peace building strategies and citizen participation in budget formulation and implementation within her local government area in Kaduna state.

These few stories illustrate the massive potential of girls and young women, through better education, to transform Africa. Investing in girls and women's education is truly one of the best investments countries can make. ∎

> **'Achieving gender equality in and through education could increase human capital wealth substantially, thereby improving standards of living and reducing poverty'**

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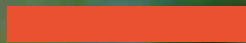
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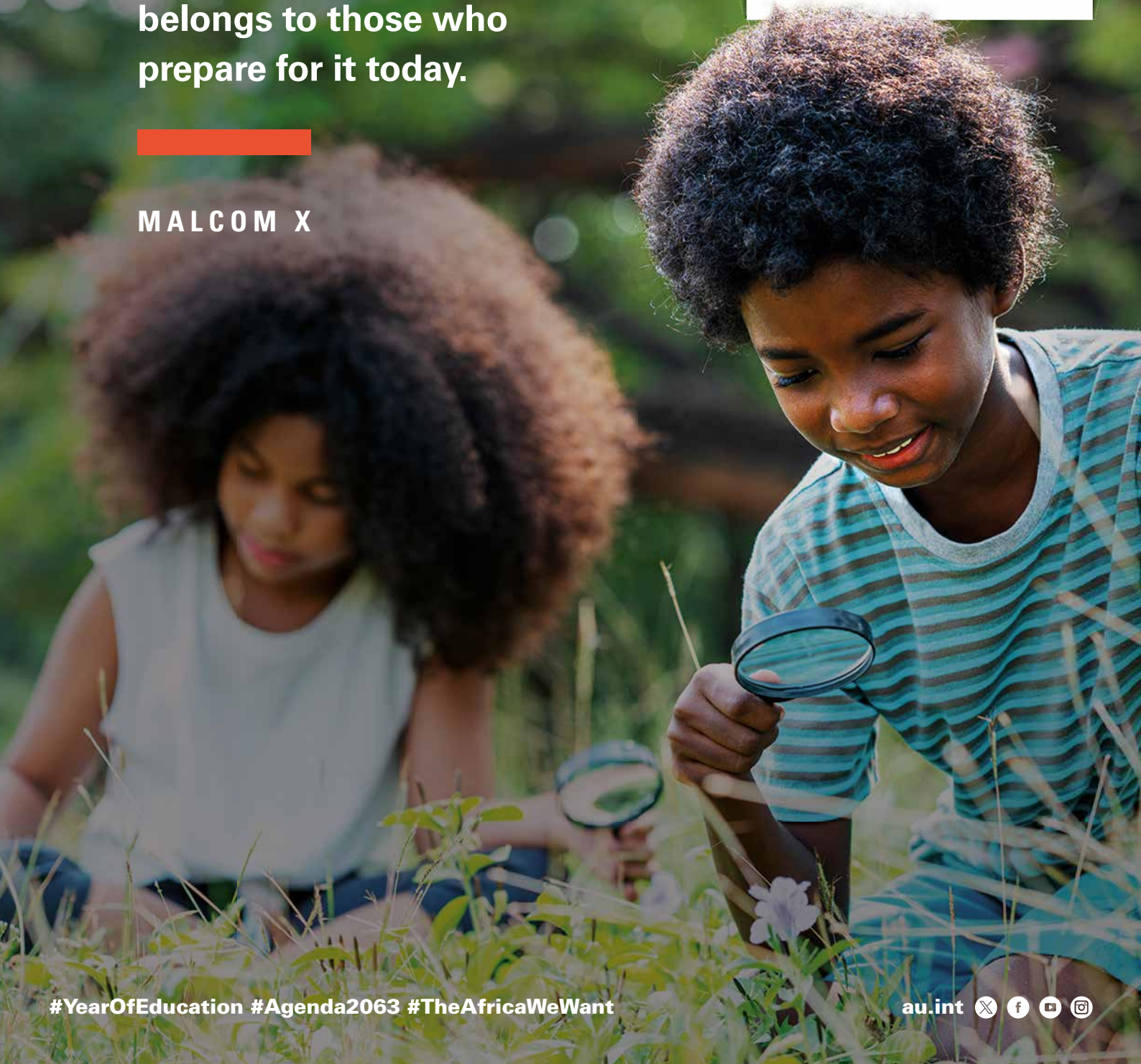
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A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read

MARK TWAIN

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**If you think
education is
expensive, try
ignorance.**

Algeria's digital education revolution: A pillar to train African leaders for the 21st century

By **Hamidi Sihem Ikram**, *Doctoral student, Université Oran2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran- Algeria(ikramsihem01@gmail.com)*

This article explores educational transformation in Algeria, highlighting the bold digital reforms that make Algeria a pioneer in creating modern African education. Looking at educational challenges in Africa, including unequal access and the need for 21st-century skills-based education, the article details Algeria's policy responses. These responses include innovative initiatives, such as equitable access to education, the integration of educational technologies, and the widespread use of touchscreen tablets.

Positive outcomes – such as an increase in enrolment rates, widespread adoption of technology in education, international certifications, and equitable connectivity – testify to the significant impact of ongoing reforms.

In addition, the article highlights the alignment of Algerian reforms with the African Union's educational vision, emphasising the incorporation of African values, regional collaboration, and commitment to inclusion and equity.

Africa, rich in diversity and potential, is at a crossroads in the 21st century. To thrive in an era of complex challenges and unprecedented opportunities, it is imperative to prepare future generations for the dynamic reality that lies ahead. Education is emerging as the critical catalyst for this preparation, with nations such as Algeria at the forefront of educational transformation.

Algeria, steeped in its history and shaped by its diversity, has embarked on a bold metamorphosis of its education system. The vision that guides this transformation is clear: to forge learners who are not only able to meet the challenges of the 21st century but also to shape them. Delving into the Algerian educational experience, we discover a vibrant array of digital reforms that position Algeria as a pioneer in creating an African education fit for the 21st century.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO SHAPE A BRIGHT FUTURE

Africa, despite its wealth and potential, faces a myriad of educational challenges in the 21st century. Among these, unequal access to education remains one of the most worrying barriers. Disparities exist between rural and urban areas, creating an educational gap that threatens to deprive some of Africa's youth of vital opportunities.

Another crucial challenge is the adequacy of education to the demands of the 21st century. Traditional skills, while essential, need to be complemented by education focused on 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. This evolution is imperative to prepare learners to navigate an ever-changing world, shaped by technology and innovation.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN ALGERIA AS A RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

Algeria, aware of these challenges, has undertaken bold educational reforms to meet

> **'At the heart of this revolution is the belief that every student, no matter where they are, deserves equal access to educational opportunities'**

Traditional skills, while essential, need to be complemented by education focused on 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. This evolution is imperative to prepare learners to navigate an ever-changing world, shaped by technology and innovation.

the specific needs of the 21st century. In addressing unequal access, the country has implemented initiatives to ensure equitable access to education, particularly in rural areas.

This manifests itself through innovative programmes, such as the provision of modern educational infrastructure and the expansion of digital educational resources.

In terms of adapting to 21st-century skills, Algeria is actively integrating digital elements into its education system. Training programmes have been introduced to equip teachers with the necessary skills, while the introduction of educational technologies, such as the use of touchscreen tablets, aims to prepare learners for a future where digital literacy is crucial.

By examining the reforms in Algeria, we thus discover a strategic response to contemporary educational challenges, illustrating a strong commitment to the creation of a modern and inclusive African education.

Algeria has undertaken significant technological advancements in its education system, shaping learners' readiness for the challenges of the 21st century. Among these innovative initiatives, the introduction of touchscreen tablets in primary schools stands out as a bold step. These touchscreen tablets are not just technological gadgets, but rather educational tools designed to transform the learning experience. They ease the burden on school bags, provide instant access to a variety of digital educational resources, and boost student engagement through interactive teaching methods.

By embracing these technologies, Algeria seeks to create a generation of learners who are not only familiar with technology, but also know how to use it in an educational and constructive way.

At the same time, digital school-management platforms play a key role in modernising education administration. From online registration to real-time communication between different stakeholders, these platforms enhance the transparency and efficiency of the education system. They help create an environment where information flows smoothly, thus promoting better co-ordination between schools, teachers and parents.

The pilot digital schools, initiated in response to the global COVID-19 crisis, represent another facet of technological advances in Algeria.

These institutions are becoming experimental laboratories to perfect new teaching methods, emphasising the creative use of technology to facilitate distance learning.

Overall, these technological advances are not simply cosmetic additions to the educational landscape, but essential components for shaping 21st century citizens. They prepare learners for a world where digital skills are as crucial as mastering the fundamentals, opening up new opportunities and horizons for Algerian youth.

Educational reforms in Algeria have already begun to produce significant results, demonstrating the positive impact on educational outcomes and learners' readiness for the 21st century.

ENROLMENT RATE ON THE RISE

Since the implementation of the reforms, the enrolment rate in primary education has seen a remarkable increase, reaching nearly 98%. This statistic highlights the effectiveness of efforts to ensure equitable access to education for all citizens, regardless of their geographical location.

WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

The digital transformation of education in Algeria revolves around pioneering reforms aimed at modernising educational practices and preparing learners for the demands of the 21st century. These reforms, supported by evidence, guide the education sector towards a future where technology plays a central role in the learning experience.

INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

The ICDL (International Computer Driving Licence) certification has been a resounding success, with 110 training institutions being certified. These certifications provide learners with formal validation of their IT skills, strengthening their professional profile on the global stage.

EQUITABLE CONNECTIVITY

The effort to provide universal access to high-speed internet in educational institutions has significantly reduced the disparities in access between rural and urban areas. Statistics show a noticeable increase in ▶

connectivity in previously disadvantaged regions, ensuring that all learners benefit from online educational resources.

FORGING A BRIGHT DIGITAL FUTURE

Algeria is on the cusp of a revolutionary educational era, where technology is emerging as the catalyst for transformation. By combining a strategic vision, innovative reforms and close collaboration between all actors, the country can create a truly modern educational environment, preparing its learners for the dynamic challenges of the contemporary world. The successful implementation of the proposed recommendations will help ensure that the digital transformation of education in Algeria is not only effective but also sustainable.

At the heart of this revolution is the belief that every student, no matter where they are, deserves equal access to educational opportunities, forging a bright digital future for Algerian youth.

Despite this significant progress, challenges remain, underscoring the need for an inclusive and collaborative approach. Raising awareness and involving all stakeholders, from education authorities to parents, remains essential to ensure widespread buy-in to the vision of digital transformation. Awareness-raising initiatives in all public spaces, highlighting the benefits and necessity of digital transformation, are needed to build popular support.

Another crucial challenge is the financial aspect of this transformation. Having a robust financing strategy in place is imperative to ensure the sustainability and continued development of the digital transformation of the education system. This requires close collaboration between government institutions, the private sector and civil society.

Education in Africa is guided by a common vision defined by the African Union, seeking to achieve holistic educational goals. Reforms in Algeria fit harmoniously into this continental vision, contributing significantly to the achievement of Africa's broader educational goals.

Algeria is shaping a generation of 21st-century individuals with the skills to thrive in an ever-changing world. ▪

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An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest

**B E N
F R A N K L I N**

Leadership, education and training as we move towards the Year of Education in Africa

An overview of leadership issues affecting contemporary education in Africa

By **Dr Lawalley Cole**, *Executive Director, Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum (CAFOR)*

Africa faces numerous challenges, including poverty, poor infrastructure, population growth, climate change and conflict between identity groups. To address these issues, Africa needs intelligent leaders who understand the changing global landscape and can effectively respond to challenges and opportunities.

These leaders must be educated, skilled and experienced in value knowledge and information. They must also be committed to promoting African perspectives on democracy and good governance, and understand economic development strategies that align with African socio-cultural realities.

Additionally, leaders must recognise the importance of generational linkages and develop synergy between generations.

Over the past four decades, Africa has experienced significant economic and political transformations, transitioning from state-led to private sector-led approaches, and from military rule to democratic governance.

Two types of leaders are needed to drive these transformations: functional and political. Functional leaders ensure the efficient performance of institutions, while political leaders mobilise and organise talent, expertise, and experience in executing necessary operations.

However, both types of leaders require training and education to fully understand governance issues and the societal context in which they operate.

Education plays a crucial role in developing influential leaders in Africa. Political leaders need training in the contemporary political environment, where knowledge and information are vital for effective policy implementation. Africa is evolving and must respond effectively to global challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. Policymakers need relevant information and knowledge to make informed decisions and influence governance.

Leaders must understand the economic, social, political and global issues they face to be efficient and effective in their roles. They must also comprehend the principles of good governance and the actions that can lead to poor management in their societies. Both functional and political leaders require lifelong education and training in a rapidly changing global environment to respond to the needs and demands of their institutions.

THE TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT

The Transforming Education Summit (TES) was held in September 2022 at the UN headquarters in New York to address the global education crisis and transform education in a rapidly changing world. The summit focused on equity and inclusion, quality and educational relevance. The TES had four specific objectives:

- National and international commitments to transform education

'Education should focus on preparing future leaders and equipping learners with the necessary skills while addressing the education financing gap'

- Greater public engagement and support for transforming education
- Generating a report to document the knowledge and agreements generated by participants for future action
- Discussing the financing of education to prioritise shared goals.

The summit utilised a focused, inclusive process and concentrated on three intersecting themes – national consultations for developing a shared vision, commitment and alignment of action; thematic action tracks to accelerate progress on education as part of the Agenda 2030; and financing of education to generate shared goals and broker knowledge.

The TES resulted in several initiatives, including establishing a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession, a Global Youth Initiative, and a renewed focus on disability inclusion in education. The International Financing Facility for Education was also established to generate financial resources for lower-middle-income nations.

Education should focus on preparing future leaders and equipping learners with the necessary skills while addressing the education financing gap. The TES had significant partner involvement, resulting in national commitments from 133 Member States. It presented guiding principles for education and implemented global initiatives to address education crises and promote sustainable education.

The International Financing Facility for Education strengthened the case for more investment in education, and the involvement of young leaders reinforced the global movement to improve education. The High-Level Steering Committee will integrate summit outcomes into SDG4 co-ordination efforts, and a follow-up plan was endorsed.

Addressing the education financing gap in Africa requires mobilising more resources, increasing efficiency and equity, and improving education financing data. The TES focused on transforming education globally and addressing the education financing gap in Africa. It also resulted in various initiatives and a follow-up plan to improve education and help countries build upon previous commitments and prioritise lifelong learning for all.

Leaders from the African Union (AU) met and established a common position to focus on preparing children for the future and promoting stronger partnerships on the continent. AU Member States and partners have a follow-up plan built upon five pillars, including incorporating national commitments into existing programmes; maintaining the global momentum from the summit; and implementing a Global Youth Initiative.

Overall, the TES provided a comprehensive framework for guiding principles for education in the 21st century and generated initiatives and a follow-up plan for subsequent actions.

THE AFRICAN UNION PERSPECTIVES FOR TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Africa's Agenda 2063 is a development framework that identifies the various strategies to make Africa a prosperous continent with high-quality growth and employment opportunities for all. It is rooted in pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, acknowledging the need to address past injustices and make Africa a global player in the 21st century.

Successfully executing Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals requires a harmonised framework that aligns both agendas to achieve coherent and impactful results.

Africa needs visionary and determined leadership, investment in education, science, technology, research and innovation to achieve ▶

its vision, and a favourable environment for private sector development. The AU has developed various youth development policies and programmes to promote youth participation, protect their rights, and ensure they contribute to the continent's growth and development.

These initiatives focus on education and skills development, youth employment and entrepreneurship, governance, peace and security, youth health and agriculture, climate change, and environment-related concerns.

However, there are challenges to realising Agenda 2063. Many African economies remain fragile, and infrastructure needs to be developed. Poverty rates and inequality are high, with six of the 10-most unequal countries in the world located in Africa. Food security, harnessing natural resources, and human and financial capital are also significant challenges. Additionally, Africa's demographic challenge poses a need to create employment opportunities and provide everyone with the skills to join the workforce. With a rapidly growing population, Africa must ensure that its education and vocational training systems equip young people with the necessary skills for productive employment.

Agenda 2063 recognises education as a fundamental human right and highlights the importance of providing free and compulsory primary education. It also emphasises the need to prioritise the development of skills in traditional professions and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This phenomenon is crucial to support Africa's rapidly changing economies and meet the demands of the private sector.

To achieve the development goals of Agenda 2063, Africa needs to prioritise investing in its people through education. This acquisition includes improving access to education, enhancing the quality of education, and ensuring that the skills taught align with the job market's needs.

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The AU has outlined an agenda for transforming education in Africa to achieve its vision. This agenda includes working towards the AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), advocating for education to be the AU's theme of the year in 2024, with the aim of reimagining education models needed for the 21st century, and increasing financing for education in line with international benchmarks.

The AU theme for 2024 should focus on building resilient education systems that prioritise access, inclusivity, and quality. The priorities would involve implementing system-wide transformative strategies; fostering multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships, and leveraging technology to enhance learning. Efforts will be made to address critical issues such as early childhood education, gender disparities, and the incorporation of STEM education.

YOUTH AND TRAINING FOR THE JOB MARKET IN AFRICA

One of the key challenges in Africa is youth unemployment, particularly of women. The continent has a rapidly growing young population, and it is essential to provide young people with the education, skills training and opportunities they need to secure good jobs.

This factor requires a shift in educational policies to align with workforce demands and equip young people with the necessary knowledge and skills.

African youth desire more opportunities to acquire relevant skills; support for out-of-school children and youth; a sense of purpose and agency; a focus on conflict-affected areas; and consideration of the importance of teachers, access to technology and online safety in education.

'These leaders must understand the changing global landscape, have a sound knowledge of governance systems, and value education and lifelong learning'

The AU DOTSS framework – which stands for digital connectivity; online and offline learning; teachers as facilitators and motivators of learning; safety online and in schools; and skills-focused learning – is being utilised to address these concerns and respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

African youth require commitment from education-sector actors to implement the framework and engage young people as partners in transforming education.

CAFOR – A KEY PARTNER OF THE AU IN EFFORTS TO BUILD SOLID PARTNERSHIPS, ENSURE RESPONSIBILITY AND SECURE SOLUTIONS

The Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum (CAFOR) aims to collaborate with various stakeholders, including policymakers, academia, students and development partners, to create an open forum for exchanging ideas, sharing best practices, staying updated on cutting-edge research and working towards a new learning ecosystem.

CAFOR leverages the principles of collaboration and consultation to streamline its processes and achieve its objectives effectively and efficiently.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the AU and CAFOR aims to enhance the integration of continental and global policy agendas, such as Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and specific AU educational instruments – such as the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024); the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25); and the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) – into sectoral and country-level strategies for Africa's development.

CAFOR advocates for implementation of the Agenda 2063 flagship initiative of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to support skills and employability among young people. CAFOR also works closely with other organisations to support the continent's education, science, technology, innovation and youth skills development agenda.

CAFOR has secured partnerships with numerous countries and agencies globally, showing interest in supporting the agreed-upon areas of work in Africa. CAFOR has also welcomed new members at the country level, increasing the number of African countries active in CAFOR to over 30. The remaining countries are expected to join CAFOR's programmes in 2025, eventually including all 55 AU Member States.

CAFOR is working on enhancing partnerships with African-based organisations, including youth-led organisations. It has signed MOUs with three youth-led organisations in Ethiopia and has a working relationship with Youth Advocates of Ghana.

CAFOR and its members also participate in numerous local and international activities, including conferences, seminars, workshops, and discussion forums focused on the education sector and employment.

CAFOR aims to provide a platform for exchanging information and practices on new technologies and innovations among experts in government ministries, civil society organisations, the media, youth and communities. It aims to sensitise and mobilise stakeholders on good communication practices; build capacity among media professionals and other stakeholders; advocate for policy changes to create an enabling environment for youth to engage in innovative enterprises; translate ideas into action on the ground; promote multi-stakeholder partnerships; undertake advocacy and lobbying, and collaborate with various partners to improve communication; develop education systems; and achieve CESA and SDGs with a focus on youth.

To achieve these objectives, CAFOR has identified strategic activities, such as facilitating research, stakeholder mobilisation and sensitisation, capacity-building initiatives, support for skills development, emergency ▶

and post-conflict situations, lobbying and advocacy efforts, and fostering collaborations and mentoring.

CAFOR will focus on investing in science and technology, collaborating with educational institutions, working with bilateral, multilateral and non-traditional partners, engaging the private sector and civil society organisations, and supporting programmes for women in technical and scientific fields.

Building STI capacity in Africa requires political will, government commitments, collaboration, and effective co-ordination with various stakeholders. To achieve its goals, CAFOR developed a five-year plan with a proposed minimum annual operational budget of US$15 million. The 10 projects identified in the plan for the next five years have an estimated budget of US$350 million.

CAFOR is organising working sessions to support the AU's innovative practices in transforming African education, focusing on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) implementation to enhance African youth advancement and employment opportunities. These sessions aim to develop and implement transformational strategies for African education and recovery from COVID-19, and build resilience and transformation. For the 2024 theme, 'Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century', CAFOR will collaborate with the AU and its partners to structure the theme around sub-themes covering the entire range of education and skills development, from early childhood development to tertiary and vocational education. CAFOR will emphasise the role of teachers as agents of transformation and ensure their support and empowerment.

CAFOR's vision is to collaborate with stakeholders, leverage partnerships and implement strategic activities to create a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing practices, and developing innovative solutions to improve African education, science, technology and skills development.

Through its efforts, CAFOR aims to contribute to achieving Africa's development goals and the well-being of its youth.

CONCLUSION

Africa needs intelligent, educated and skilled leaders committed to addressing the continent's challenges. These leaders must understand the changing global landscape, have a sound knowledge of governance systems, and value education and lifelong learning.

They must also be able to mobilise and organise talent effectively and work collaboratively with other stakeholders. By investing in the development of capable leaders, Africa can navigate the challenges it faces and seize the opportunities for sustainable development in the coming decades.

Realising Agenda 2063 requires addressing Africa's many challenges, investing in critical sectors, and promoting youth development. By harmonising Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals, Africa can achieve a prosperous and transformed continent that provides economic opportunities for all its people. Therefore, investing in people through education is crucial for achieving the goals of Agenda 2063. This acquisition requires improving education access, quality and relevance, particularly in STEM fields; and addressing challenges such as youth unemployment and gender disparities.

The AU and its partners, including CAFOR, are working towards transforming education in Africa through strategic initiatives and partnerships, that set a path towards effective education leadership, fostering sustainable development and growth across the continent and focusing on building resilient education systems that meet the needs of the 21st century. ■

African Union

THE YEAR OF EDUCATION
2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

"
The best teachers are those who show you where to look but don't tell you what to see.

#YearOfEducation #Agenda2063 #TheAfricaWeWant

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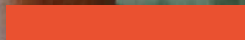
Learning from the best: Insights from winners of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Awards

Teachers are the key to provide quality education for all, as recognised in the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa. The African Union (AU) encourages countries to recognise their outstanding teachers and awards up to 10 prizes annually under its Continental Best Teacher Award. This article provides insights and words of wisdom from the winners of the 2023 edition of the award.

*By **Sophia Ndemutila Ashipala**, Head of Education, Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Commission (ashipalaS@africa-union.org); and **Quentin Wodon**, Director, UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (q.wodon@unesco.org)*

The Best Teacher Awards are a great way to recognise outstanding teachers. The awards can raise the appreciation of teachers while demonstrating that hard work and innovation can make a difference for learners. The African Union instituted the Continental Best Teacher Award in 2019. Teacher awards are important to celebrate the unique contribution that teachers make to their students, their communities and societies. Member States are encouraged to create their own national awards and can use guidance issued for the Continental Best Teacher Award for that purpose[1]. Several countries in West Africa, including Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, have already done so.

In October 2023, eight teachers won the annual African Union Continental Best Teacher Award. The awards were presented at an event organised by the African Union Commission (AUC) Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) and UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) for the Teacher Development Cluster under the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–25[2].

The event, which was held on World Teachers' Day (October 5), saw the winners hailing from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa receive a prize of US$10 000 each. The process for the selection was rigorous, with first a selection at the level of individual countries, and then a panel of experts suggesting the final awardees.

The AUC ESTI Department and IICBA interviewed all winners of the awards to benefit from their insights[3].

Great teachers are passionate about their job and find it highly rewarding. **Ms. Vasiliki Viki Mpompolas**, an English teacher from South Africa, put it best with her advice for other teachers: 'Take it one breath at a time… Do not let the bad days overshadow the good and remember why you started in the first place. Very few people have the opportunity to touch so many lives in their lifetime. When you go home, unwind and assess your day. You can almost always recall a moment in the day when one of your learners came up to you and gave you a hug, or a sweet, or a "I love you, Ma'am", or "you're the best, Ma'am".'

However, the perception of the profession is not as good as it should be, contributing to a shortage of qualified teachers in many countries. Several winners of the award mentioned that they were advised by friends and relatives not to become teachers.

At the end of his interview, **Mr. Nundraj Goindo**, a Design and Technology teacher from Mauritius, was asked to share something personal about himself. 'After completing secondary school, I remember having asked somebody what other qualifications were needed to become a teacher. That person responded: "Don't become a teacher." But this advice did not have any effect on me,' he said. 'I followed my own convictions, my passion,

> **The African Union instituted the Continental Best Teacher Awards in 2019. Teacher awards are important to celebrate the unique contribution that teachers make to their students, their communities and societies.**

my truth. It is said that we are happy in a life that resembles us. As a teacher, I can live my passion every day.'

Another insight is that digital technologies provide great new opportunities as **Ms. Adeola Adefemi**, an English teacher from Nigeria, explained it. 'If I could reflect on my teaching career and make one change, it would be to adapt and integrate technology into my teaching methods earlier. Embracing educational technology can enhance the learning experience, engage students on different levels, and better prepare them for the digital world.'

But whatever tools teachers use, teaching must be engaging for students, including by showing them how what they learn can be put in practice and contribute to sustainable development. **Ms. Rosemary Bosibori Onyancha**, a Computer and Business Studies teacher from Kenya, noted that 'one of our

proudest accomplishments has been achieving a 100% return of girls to school after the pandemic, in part because access to remote learning was possible, including via mobile phones. Another high point was students coming up with a glider using carton boxes making them recyclable, reusable and reducing wastage. This is a practical action in the Sustainable Development Goals. As I reflect on my journey, my enthusiasm remains unwavering'.

Mr. Bismark Kwame Tunu, a Chemistry teacher from Ghana, also emphasised the importance of practical applications while also emphasising the need for collaboration among teachers. 'Looking back, I wish I had collaborated more with other teachers and schools to train students in acquiring soft skills. The lack of industrial visitation also made lessons abstract, so I wish to send my students to industry sites where they can relate what is ▶
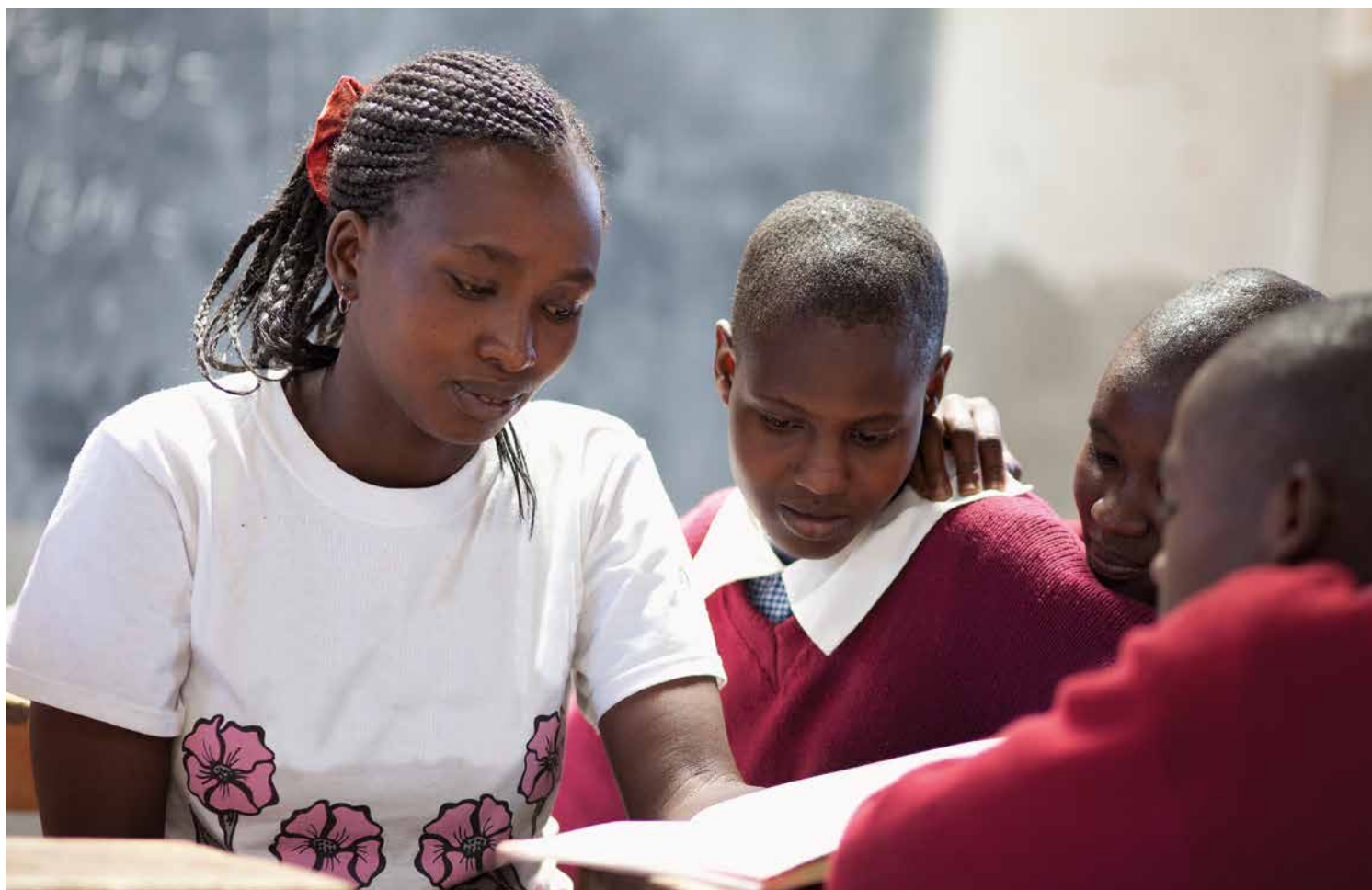
being taught. I wish I could have created even more of an environment to emulate the industrial application of concepts taught.'

Many teachers are deeply devoted to ensuring access to education for all, including the poor. A great example is that of **Mr. James Zimba**, a Mathematics and Science teacher from Malawi. 'I am from a poor family background. I attended my primary school in a rural setting with no role models apart from my teachers and other civil servants. No wonder I am a teacher! When I joined the college, I had a lot of fear, knowing that my secondary school background was not [as good as that of others, but] our performance was the same. From this time, I built my courage. I had one thing in focus – to ensure that my students benefit from my experience of a poor background but making it possible to achieve high in education.'

In terms of how to teach so that children learn better, another quote from Goindo is illustrative. 'As a teacher, I have learnt that developing good relationships with students is a fundamental factor. When students know that you care about them and want them to succeed, they are more motivated and engaged. This means creating a classroom where students feel free and do not hesitate to ask for help.

'It is important to develop a climate of trust and mutual respect. Responding to varied abilities is also essential because school is a place where intelligence is multiple. Providing different learning opportunities to meet the needs of all learners is key to success. Technology can also be a powerful tool for empowering students, but it is important to use it well.'

Additional advice on how to teach to improve student learning was provided by **Ms. Laila El Baghazaou**, an English teacher from Morocco. 'I used to focus on examinations and grades more that the process of learning because the students are haunted by exams at the end of the school year. Recently, I started to convince my students to focus on the process of learning because it will help them with their examinations more than concentrating on the examination itself.'

Mr. Sid El Moctar Yadali, a Sciences teacher from Mauritania, also provided advice to fellow teachers. 'I advise my fellow teachers to devote themselves to their work, to be present on time, to prepare lessons before presenting them, to create a certain atmosphere of

The process for the selection was rigorous, with first a selection at the level of individual countries, and then a panel of experts suggesting the final awardees

emulation – even healthy competition – in class, and to spend time on exams.'

On a lighter side, he also shared a funny anecdote. 'One day one of my students asked me if it was possible to punish a person for something they didn't do. I told him no, of course. The student was very happy and replied: "Okay, I didn't do my homework".'

Teaching is a demanding but rewarding endeavour. It is also one of the most important professions for societies' development. The insights provided by the winners of the 2023 Continental Best Teacher Award are not only valuable, but also an inspiration for the future of education in Africa. ■

WINNERS OF THE AFRICAN UNION BEST TEACHER AWARDS 2022–2023

2023 Winners
Ms. Vasiliki Viki Mpompolas (South Africa)
Mr. Nundraj Goindo (Mauritius)
Ms. Adeola Adefemi (Nigeria)
Ms. Rosemary Bosibori Onyancha (Kenya)
Mr. Bismark Kwame Tunu (Ghana)
Mr. James Zimba (Malawi)
Ms. Laila El Baghazaou (Morocco)
Mr. Sid El Moctar Yadali (Mauritania)

2022 Winners
Mr. Innocent Masanja (Uganda)
Mrs. Roseline V. Akinyi Omollo Musau (Kenya)
Ms. Pride Nomvula Magiga (Zimbabwe)
Mr. Mkhonta Mfanimpela Eric (Eswatini)
Mr. Moussa Sore (Burkina Faso)
Ms. Charrald Bibi Kolevi (Ghana)
Mrs. Jacinta Vinel Abeso (Equatoria Guinea)
Mr. Alexandre Arnaud Abomo (Cameroon)
Mr. Yahya Sidi Sarr (Mauritania)
Mrs. Samia Briki (Tunisia)

PRESENTING THE 2023 WINNERS OF THE BEST TEACHER AWARDS

Vasiliki
Viki Mpompolas,
South Africa

Nundraj Goindo,
Mauritius

Adeola Adefemi,
Nigeria

Rosemary
Bosibori Onyancha,
Kenya

Bismark
Kwame Tunu,
Ghana

James Zimba,
Malawi

Laila El Baghazaou,
Morocco

Sid El Moctar Yadali,
Mauritania

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3. The interviews are available at https://www.iicba.unesco.org/en/node/35.

The Algerian vocational education and training system 'for an inclusive and professional future'

By **Saad Ferahta**, *Director of Studies and Cooperation, Ministry of Vocational Education and Training, Algeria (decmfep-at@mfep.gov.dz)*

The vocational education and training sector in Algeria is one of the three segments of the national education and training system (Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Ministry of Vocational Education and Education).

It is an important strategic sector in the economic and social development of the country, with the following objectives:

- Ensuring the training of a qualified workforce, meeting the requirements and needs of the labour market
- Training, reskilling, upskilling and retraining workers through continuing education
- Promoting special segments of the population with a view to their socio-professional integration.

This sector is currently made up of a network of more than 1 224 training establishments, of the following typology:

- Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Centre 'CFPA' training for qualification levels from I to IV (CFPS, CAP, CMP, BT)
- INSFP and INSFP annexes, training for Level V (BTS)
- IEP, training for obtaining the DEP1 and DEP2.

There are also 807 training institutions representing private training institutions. These vocational training and education institutions provide training through three main modes (face-to-face, apprenticeship and distance learning), as well as various mechanisms set up by the education ministries to meet different socio-economic needs.

The training institutions have more than 20 000 teachers, who oversee a flow of more than 600 000 trainees, apprentices and students, according to different modes, types and organisations providing training in 495 specialties, aiming to obtain one of the five diplomas in their chosen area, and 165 for certificates of professional qualifications, belonging to 23 professional branches, listed in the 2019 edition of the Nomenclature of Branches and Specialties of the Vocational Education and Training Sector.

The vocational education and training sector also has several types of support institutions, such as the institutions of the 'pedagogical engineering network', made up of six IFEPs, located in the east, west, centre and south (Annaba, Sétif, Ouargla, Médéa, Sidi-Bel-Abbès and Algiers) and one INFEP, in Algiers, which ensures the animation and coordination of this network.

> **This same network of institutions is also responsible for one of the most fundamental and priority missions, included in the current and future action plans of the education sector, namely the training of human resources and the upgrading of skills**

TRAINING STRUCTURES BY TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT AND NUMBER OF TRAINEES AND APPRENTICES

TRAINING INSTITUTIONS					NUMBER OF INTERNS, STUDENTS AND APPRENTICES	BED CAPACITY	PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS
INSFP	CFPA	ANNEXES	IEP	CFPAHP			
171	835	190	17	5	600 000	66 025	806

These establishments in the network, considered to be the heart of the system, are responsible for, among other things, pedagogical engineering, consisting of the preparation of all technical and pedagogical documentation for all trades and levels of qualification.

This same network of institutions is also responsible for one of the most fundamental and priority missions, included in the current and future action plans of the education sector, namely the training of human resources and the upgrading of skills.

This important mission, which falls within the competence of the institutions in the network, is commonly referred to as 'training engineering'.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE YEAR 2023
VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND INCLUSION

According to the provisions of Executive Decree No. 03–87 of 3 March 2003, establishing the powers of the Minister of Vocational Education and Training, the Minister may, if necessary, create any type or system of training that can guarantee equal access to vocational education and training.

To this end, the vocational education and training sector is working to take care of all social categories and to provide them with training that can help them to enter working life. Among the measures put in place are: ▶

The development of local training (rural areas)

Since 1997, the sector has set up a system that helps people who are furthest from cities, living in rural areas that are sometimes difficult to access, which can discourage young people from going to school.

This system of 'training in rural areas' allows young people in rural areas, and particularly young girls, to have the same opportunities in vocational training as young people in urban areas, by offering them training in line with their education levels and respecting the particularities of these regions.

In addition, this approach, carried out jointly with the various local actors (heads of APCs, Dairas, associations) in order to make available premises that can be used as classrooms, has made it possible to train a considerable number of young people. For example, between 2018 and 2022, at least 44 905 young people from these regions were trained.

This training system has proved to be effective by bringing training closer to young people and, above all, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

> **The training contributes to their socialisation by strengthening their sense of belonging to a nation and a state that listens to all segments of the populations, particularly those who find themselves in fragile situations for various reasons**

Training for people with physical disabilities

Vocational training for disabled persons is organised through the opening of integrated, special and seconded sections at national level.

Five specialised regional centres for the disabled with a total capacity of 1 000 pedagogical places and 480 boarding places are located in the provinces of Algiers, Boumerdès, Laghouat, Relizane and Skikda. Additional specialised establishments in two provinces of the south (Touggourt and Beni Abbès), will reinforce the five establishments already existing for the next professional intake.

Training of high-risk young people

Within the framework of a partnership with the Ministry of Employment and National Solidarity, the vocational training sector is also involved in the development and strengthening of the training offered to high-risk young people through rehabilitation and assistance centres, guidance and education services in open environments (SOEMO) and reception centres.

Prison Training

The prison population is not neglected in terms of training at the level of penitentiary establishments. In consultation with the Algerian Ministry of Justice, the sector makes it possible to train annually a workforce of nearly 15 000 learners who are predominantly young people.

Literacy – Qualifications

This system, which is based on the fundamental principle of equal access to education and training, has a two-fold objective:
- To ensure their literacy and consequently their socialisation by giving them the fundamentals of education and citizenship
- To give a qualification in a field of activity where it is proven that there is a high probability of integration.

The goals of the scheme are to:
- Take care of the uneducated segments of the population through training, leading to a qualification likely to ensure economic autonomy
- Contribute to the fight against the exclusion of vulnerable populations, especially young people living in isolated localities, and thus reduce poverty in these areas
- Broaden the sector's training offerings through the identification of highly employable

vocational qualifications for young people freed from illiteracy

• Establish an itinerary that reconciles literacy and the acquisition of skills in a professional environment or in a training institution.

The training is organised in two cycles. The first cycle aims to provide the participants with useful functional knowledge, and the second cycle aims to provide the learners with qualifications that will enable them to better integrate into working life.

The training contributes to their socialisation by strengthening their sense of belonging to a nation and a state that listens to all segments of the populations, particularly those who find themselves in fragile situations for various reasons.

'Unemployment benefit' training

Instituted by decision of the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the unemployment benefit 'enshrines the social character of the State to support and accompany the fringe of unemployed first-time jobseekers without income, by ensuring them the minimum of a decent life through an income likely to meet their basic needs, during the job search phase'.

Executive Decree No. 22–70 of 10 February 2022 sets the conditions, modalities and amount of unemployment benefits, and how the commitments of beneficiaries, beneficiaries of unemployment benefit can benefit from training provided in vocational training and education institutions aimed at improving their employability to enable them to enter the labour market.

Unemployed first-time jobseekers and prisoners, and beneficiaries of the unemployment benefit who meet the profiles required in the job offer, may benefit from short-term training, depending on the programme and the resources of the training establishments, in particular in occupations with a shortage in the labour market, at vocational training and education establishments, during which they will continue to receive the unemployment benefit. ◼

Promoting access to education by putting an end to period poverty

By **Doreen Apollos**, Senior Communication Officer, Information and Communication Directorate, AU Commission

Did you know that menstrual health and hygiene is a human right? Poor menstrual hygiene caused by a lack of education, persisting taboos and stigma, limited access to hygienic menstrual products, and poor sanitation infrastructure undermines the educational opportunities, health and overall social status of females around the world. As a result, millions of women and girls globally are kept from reaching their full potential (World Bank).

Access to basic facilities, such as toilets, handwashing facilities and information, go a long way to break the barriers that exacerbate period poverty. Girls of reproductive age undergo the biological and healthy process of menstruation every month. Yet as normal as the process is, millions of girls across the African continent are subjected to stigma and discrimination over menstruation. This points out the urgency for mass education, sensitisation, and advocacy for enhanced understanding that menstruation should not be a red line that continues to be a barrier for women and girls, but a line drawn to end period poverty, shame and stigma.

Period poverty is the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, toilets, handwashing facilities, waste-management, privacy, and menstrual hygiene education. During adolescence, girls experience several changes, including their physique and the start of the menstruation period. During menstruation, girls need to change their sanitary products regularly – three to four times a day – and maintain bodily hygiene by bathing daily with soap and water.

The lack of these provisions exposes girls to indignity, health risks, gender-based violence, and a trail of issues that continue to rob girls of their rights.

At this tender age, these biological changes tend to take a toll on girls, consequently affecting their academic performance and participation in school activities. As the African Union spotlights education as the Theme of the Year 2024, the focus includes efforts to address the period poverty that continues to hinder the girl-child from attaining academic excellence and life-long development skills, thereby widening the gap on gender inequalities.

To adequately address the challenges towards inclusive and sustainable solutions, understanding and appreciating the risks of inaction is critical.

Here are three key things you need to know about period poverty.

1. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In Africa, every month millions of girls do not attend school or participate in school activities due to period shame, stigma and poverty. Most of those who are able to attend school face the indignity of lack of sufficient, safe and hygienic menstrual health facilities and provisions.

Menstrual pain and bodily discomfort equally affect the concentration and participation of girls in academic and the school's extra-curricular activities. These disruptions have long-term consequences on the education performance of girls that can subsequently negatively affect their socio-economic standing in life in the long term.

2. HEALTH RISKS

As inaction on period poverty persists, many girls continue to be exposed to health risks due to poor menstrual hygiene. The lack of affordable and safe menstrual hygiene products forces the girls to settle for unhealthy alternatives, such as the use of old pieces of clothes and paper, which pose significant reproductive health risks, such as urinary tract infections.

This exposure can lead to infertility and birth complications in the long term. Several reports indicate that lack of access to clean hand-

> There is an urgent need to stop the business culture of profiting off of products used by women by employing gender-based price discrimination, also known as the 'PinkTax'. This is when goods and services intended for, or marketed to, women and girls cost more than similar items marketed to men and boys, or where products only used by women – such as sanitary products, and which are a basic necessity – are priced out of the reach of women and girls.

washing facilities can also lead to the spread of infections such as Hepatitis B and thrush. These issues compound the burden on families as they bear the costs of treating the infections.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN

Misconceptions, such as the notion that periods make girls unclean, and the uncivilised behaviour of period shaming and teasing girls during that time of the month, have negative mental effects on the girls. As an adolescent, the fear of staining clothes and seats, or discharging odour, can make girls anxious, uncomfortable, and embarrassed about a normal biological process, thereby affecting their self-esteem and leaving a psychological burden on them, which can have a long-term effect on their socialisation.

The three issues above do not comprehensively cover the risks of period poverty; however, they do spotlight some of the common issues girls are exposed to daily. To normalise menstruation and promote healthy habits at home, schools and the community, here is a starter-pack of actionable, sustainable interventions to address the indignity of the period poverty.

SUSTAINABLE INTERVENTIONS
TAX RELIEF AND NATIONAL POLICIES

States must develop and enact comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights policies that address gender inequalities holistically. Such policies must include the removal of tax on menstrual hygiene products.

Tax relief is particularly important for poor families, who often must make the sacrifice of meeting other basic needs such as food purchases, in place of sanitary towels. Africa has been in the forefront of getting rid of the 'pink tax'.

For example, in 2004, Kenya became the first country in the world to remove tax on period products. In 2016 it went further to remove tax on raw materials used to manufacture sanitary pads. Kenyan amended the Basic Education Act to guarantee the provision of free, sufficient and quality sanitary towels to every girl child registered and enrolled in a public basic education institution who has reached puberty, and the provision of a safe and environmentally sound mechanism for disposal of the sanitary towels.

▼ ▼

The United Nations Population Fund is helping to provide reusable sanitary pads to girls and women in The Gambia. To find out more about the initiative, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=POPoJfD96f4

SCAN TO WATCH

The Kenyan government has also established a Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy.

In 2019, South Africa scrapped the 15% value-added tax on sanitary pads and announced the availability of free sanitary towels in public schools. Other countries that have taken action to reduce or remove tax on sanitary products include Namibia, Botswana, ▶

Zambia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi, Rwanda and Mauritius.

POVERTY REDUCTION
Poverty-reduction strategies should empower families to engage in meaningful and productive economic activities that allow them to provide for their families. This would address the challenge of exploitation where reports indicate that girls are lured to engage in illicit activities and affairs for money to purchase sanitary towels.

INCREASED INVESTMENTS IN FACILITIES
Through investments by the governments, or through public-private partnerships, we can address the facilities deficits and expand the provision of basic needs such as clean toilets, handwashing kits and waste-disposal facilities, particularly in schools with dilapidated facilities. These efforts could be complemented with government-led efforts for menstrual hygiene product distribution in schools.

This would reduce the rate of school absenteeism for millions of girls who miss school during their menstruation days. Special

'Schools that have female-friendly facilities and incorporate information on menstruation into the curriculum for both girls and boys can reduce stigma and contribute to better education and health outcomes.'
(World Bank, 2022)

attention should be given to girls who are disabled and those in crisis, such as internally displaced persons and refugees.

EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE
Many adolescent girls have inadequate knowledge on the menstrual cycle and its management. Creating safe spaces that allow girls to speak freely about their experiences and access comprehensive sex education, information and counselling on sexual and reproductive health builds the girls' confidence and attitudes toward their bodies, deconstructing the stigma and shame associated with menstruation.

ADVOCACY FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE
Advocacy is important to address the knowledge gap that perpetuates retrogressive and discriminatory socio-cultural practices and norms that deem women and girls as impure during the menstrual period. Sensitisation and education on harmful practices, misinformation and negative cultural beliefs must be an ongoing exercise to normalise menstruation

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GLOBAL ACTION TO ELIMINATE PERIOD POVERTY: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has four broad approaches to promoting and improving menstrual health around the world.

▶ **Supplies and safe bathrooms.** In 2017, 484 000 dignity kits, containing pads, soap and underwear, were distributed in 18 countries affected by humanitarian emergencies. The UNFPA also helps to improve the safety in displacement camps, distributing flashlights and installing solar lights in bathing areas.

▶ **Promoting menstrual health information and skills-building.** Projects include teaching girls to make reusable menstrual pads and raising awareness about menstrual cups.

▶ **Improving education and information.** Through its youth programmes and comprehensive sexuality education efforts, the UNFPA helps both boys and girls understand that menstruation is healthy and normal.

▶ **Supporting national health systems.** Efforts include promoting menstrual health and providing treatment to girls and women suffering from menstrual disorders. The agency also procures reproductive health commodities that can be useful for treating menstruation-related disorders.
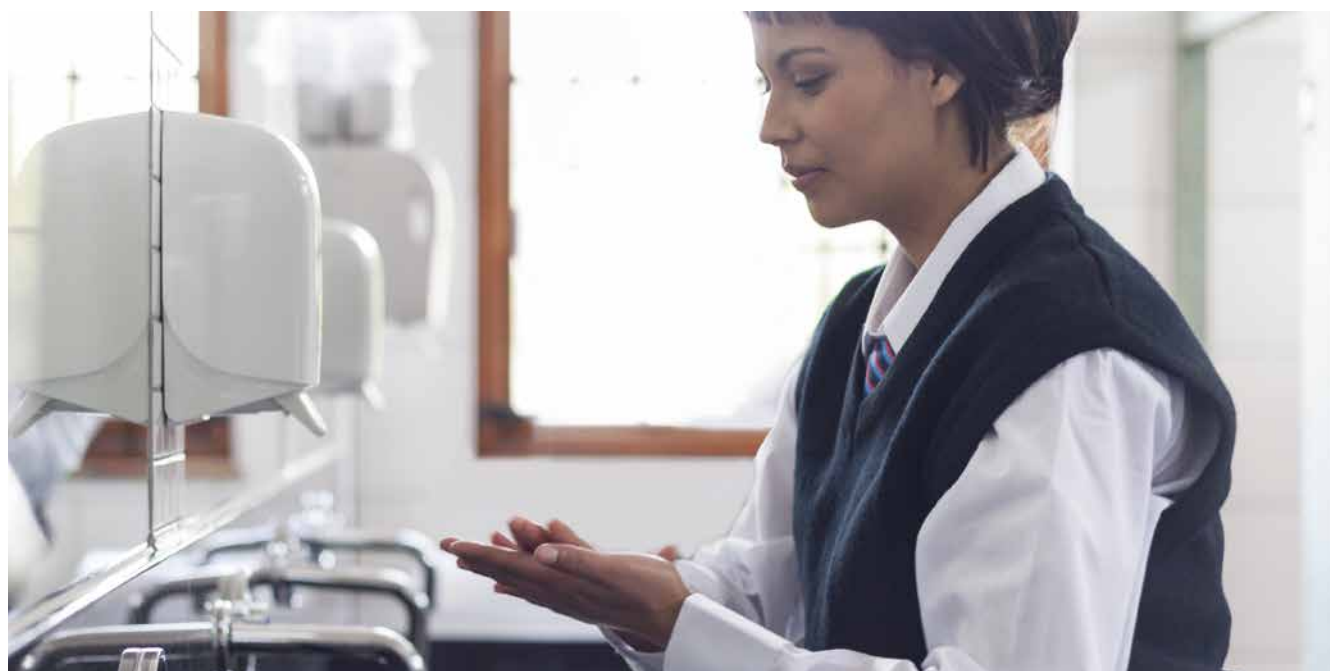
and promote healthy habits at home and school, and in the community.

DONATE

As advocacy for more action to address the existing and emerging challenges of period poverty continues, donation of sanitary products, such as pads and underwear, can bridge the gap and lift the burden of vulnerability, essentially, having an impact on improved girls' school attendance, grades and overall participation in the school's extra-curricular activities.

DATA COLLECTION

To ensure interventions are well informed, documentation and access to data on the number of girls affected by period poverty, its rounded effects and the impact of existing interventions must be prioritised. Evidence-based interventions must be supported by effective reporting, monitoring and evaluation

mechanisms to inform policy formulation and implementation, designing of interventions, and allocating resources where they are needed for efficiency and impact.

CONCLUSION

Safeguarding the rights of girls is paramount. Every intervention purposed towards a conducive ecosystem that supports menstrual health and hygiene – and one that addresses the challenges of period poverty – goes a long way to mend the indignity experienced in a natural and biological hormonal process each girl undergoes in life.

Creating spaces that allow for discussions and actions to raise awareness on menstrual health and hygiene at every level is needed. Advocacy for change towards the full realisation of safe menstrual hygiene management is an individual and collective responsibility. The goal is not to cross the red line. ∎

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NHFC

MAKING A BIG IMPACT IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING MARKET

The National Housing Finance Corporation continues to provide innovative and cost-effective solutions for South Africa's low-to-middle income households

Social housing project, Cape Town

The National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC) was established by South Africa's national Department of Human Settlements as a development finance institution in 1996, with the principal mandate of broadening access to affordable housing finance for low- and middle-income households earning between ZAR800 and ZAR22 000.

The NHFC provides wholesale funding in the affordable housing market mainly to social housing institutions (SHIs); other delivery agents (ODAs); non-banking retail intermediaries; privately owned property developers; construction companies; investors; micro-finance institution; and co-operative finance institutions, community-based organisations and housing co-operatives.

It also provides loans and other forms of wholesale funding (equity and quasi equity to certain niche businesses that are in the affordable housing market). For the end-user the NHFC provides grant funding to those who want to own a house for the first time. The NHFC provides the following products.

SOCIAL HOUSING FINANCE

Social housing, by definition, is subsidised rental accommodation that is managed by SHIs, ODAs, the Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA), and provincial Human Settlements Departments in conjunction with local municipalities.

The NHFC provides top-up funding of approximately 30% as secured debt, the balance of which is provided for by the SHRA to accredited SHIs and ODAs that qualify for consolidated capital grants to complete the project. Social housing projects are aimed at providing subsidised rental housing to accommodate the low- to middle-income rental market sector.

BRIDGING SUBSIDY HOUSING FINANCE

Subsidy bridging finance is a project or development finance product that offers a short-term revolving facility. The term is typically taken out over a period of around 60 days to bridge contractor's cash flows between the service provider and pending payment by the respective employer.

BRIDGING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The NHFC provides project development finance to developers involved in building affordable housing for sale to the low- to middle-income group. This is short-term development finance for the purpose of servicing sites, and the construction of top structures – either free-standing or sectional title.

Loans are provided to developers that are actively involved in providing affordable housing for the affordable housing market.

PRIVATE RENTAL

Private rental is a project/development finance programme that enables properties owned by landlords to be developed/refurbished for purposes of leasing to tenants. The NHFC provides medium- to long-term debt funding to such property practitioners (developers/landlords) to refurbish existing buildings or for green-field housing developments.

INCREMENTAL HOUSING FINANCE

The NHFC offers wholesale funding in the form of structured loans to retail finance intermediaries that are on-lending to qualifying low- and middle-income homeowners to improve their housing condition on an incremental/gradual basis.

Acceptable end-user loan usage includes building a new house, house extension, fixed improvement to a house, connecting to utilities (water, sewerage and electricity), energy-efficient retrofits (including solar energy, insulation and other energy innovations), water harvesting, fencing and productive housing.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS: EQUITY AND QUASI EQUITY INVESTMENTS

NHFC Corporate Finance works closely with private investors, developers and housing development agencies and fund managers to leverage private sector and development funders to finance and create affordable housing that caters to the market the NHFC serves. Capital is deployed in the form of equity and quasi equity – in other words, ordinary shares, shareholders loan, junior debt, preference shares and mezzanine debt.

GENERIC LENDING CRITERIA FOR A CREDIT FACILITY

The borrowing entity must be a registered legal entity; equity contribution is required and determined on a case-by-case basis to enable acceptable gearing levels; the proposed development must address the core NHFC mandate, and the project must be financially viable.

For social housing, the project must be located in a restructuring zone, and the borrowing entity must be a registered legal entity or a non-profit company, and an accredited SHI or ODA for social housing.

For subsidy housing, the contractor must have been awarded a contract by the employer.

For incremental housing, the applicant must be registered as a credit provider with the National Credit Regulator for incremental housing.

FIRST HOME FINANCE

South African citizens and legal residents earning between ZAR3 501 and ZAR22 000 often find it difficult to receive mortgage finance, yet through the NHFC's First Home Finance programme, this is now possible. The NHFC was tasked to manage this programme as a funded mandate. First Home Finance allows qualifying beneficiaries to reduce the initial mortgage loan amount or augment the shortfall between the qualifying loan and the total house price, bringing the eventual home loan instalment to an affordable amount over the loan-repayment period.

First Home Finance can be used for the following:
- To buy an already-built house
- To buy a housing stand, but which must be connected to municipal services/off-the-grid sources, and zoned for housing
- To pay for the building of a house
- To pay for the building of a house on a stand that is part of an IRDP project
- To buy or build a house on a stand
- To pay for house-buying costs (such as a conveyancing fee, transfer fee, deposit, NHBRC enrolment fee, and so on).

Depending on the applicant's gross monthly income, their once-off first home finance qualifying amount may vary between ZAR38 878.35 and ZAR169 264.60, as defined in the First Home Finance Scheme Quantum.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The NHFC supports the development of project and programme management capacity and enhances service delivery in the human settlements sector. Programme-management services are offered to provincial and local authorities that are experiencing challenges with projects that cannot be completed successfully. Support to these entities includes the provision of management tools and systems that can help support each project's personnel.

Furthermore, the NHFC – through this programme – develops emerging contractors by imparting skills such as efficient business management, technical construction knowledge, and construction financial management – and it also assists them to access funding. These enterprises/contractors are nurtured until they are fully sustainable. ∎

NATIONAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION SOC LTD.

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Quality of education and training in Africa has been a learning experience: Why the AU aims for a moonshot in 2024

By **Doreen Apollos**, Senior Communications Officer, Information and Communication Directorate, African Union

In recent years, educational development in Africa has registered notable gains in the number of children and young people accessing schooling at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Governments have invested heavily in the schooling and training of African children and youth and articulated strategic policy frameworks and plans to achieve accessible, dynamic and relevant educational development.

This has led to improvements in several areas such as equitable and inclusive access to education; equity and gender equality; the quality of teachers and teaching; educational quality and learning outcomes; science, technology and skills development; education geared towards sustainable development and global citizenship; youth and adult literacy; skills and competencies for life and work; financing education, enhanced governance and partnerships; and education in crisis situations.

The holistic approach to have every African child is school has yielded commendable results, as seen in the African Union's Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, implemented across Member States, which has resulted in keeping millions of children in school. In 2013, 38.4 million children received school meals across Africa. Member States, over time, have increased the investment in domestic financing for school to an average of

45% in 2022, and this has translated into an increased coverage and scale of school feeding programmes in Africa, with 65.9 million children receiving school meals daily and an increase of 72% as compared to 2013. Post the COVID-19 pandemic, by 2022, 89% of the AU Member States had adopted the school meals policy, compared to 68% in 2020.

The multisectoral benefits of Home-Grown School Feeding extend far beyond improving the health, nutrition and education of children, demonstrating the nexus between the education sector and socio-economic development.

When procured locally, school meals build local food production economies and help to contribute to stable markets, boosting local food systems. On average, for every 100 000 learners fed, 757 direct jobs (mostly as cooks and caterers) were created in 33 countries in 2022.

Despite the significant progress made in Africa over the past two decades – in terms of access, completion and quality of basic education, disparities persist within and between countries. Learning achievement remains low in many parts of Africa. Girls, children from the poorest backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children on the move – such as those forcibly displaced – face difficulties in realising their right to education.

Limitations also continue to exist in teacher development in Africa, with recurrent teacher shortages coupled with a lack of professional development opportunities, and low status and working conditions. Data shows that Africa has a shortage of 17 million teachers; globally, a gap of 44 million has been recorded. Further, recent statistics show that nearly 100 million children of school-going age are out of school in Africa.

This population is prone to all kinds of social vulnerabilities. For children in schools, it is estimated that nine out of 10 cannot read and understand a simple text at the age of 10. This has led to 90% of the learning poverty rate, which is the highest in the world.

Multiple, protracted emergencies have gravely impacted on educational provision, including increased attacks on schools. There is an urgent need to strengthen peace education and cultivate a culture of peace and tolerance at all levels of education – formal, informal and non-formal. These systemic challenges range from early childhood education, through primary and secondary education, technical and vocational education and training, to tertiary and higher education levels. In most Member States, technical and vocational education and training policies are not well adjusted to align to the ever-evolving job markets, thereby creating a wide mismatch between the acquired skills and job opportunities.

ENHANCING CONTINENTAL COHERENCE IN EDUCATION

To achieve the Aspirations and Goals in Africa's development framework – Agenda 2063 – the African Union developed continental education and training benchmarks articulated in the 10-year Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016–2025). The CESA seeks to enhance coherence and integration in the development of the various sub-sectors into a holistic system that addresses the needs of imparting knowledge, skills and values required for a systematic response to the socioeconomic demands for development in the 21st century.

The strategy advocates for enhanced articulation of education and learning in both upstream or downstream and in terms of complementarity at all levels.

Further, the strategy is directed in a way that allows education and training systems to fully shed the weight of the colonial legacies.

Africa's comprehensive 10-year continental education strategy has, over the years, provided guidelines for a qualitative system of education and training to provide the continent with efficient human resources adapted to African core values, and therefore capable of achieving the vision and ambitions of Agenda 2063.

The push has been to reorient Africa's education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, regional, and continental levels.

The strategy lays emphasis and weight on the responsibility of governments to define the education system, including technical and vocational education, as a coherent single set made up of different parts: preschool, primary, secondary, Technical and Vocational Training and Education (TVET) and higher education.

The coherence is critical for the success of national and regional integration as it holistically addresses issues of demand and supply ▶

Some 65.9 million children receive school meals across Africa – a 72% increase compared to the baseline year of 2013, when 38.4 million children received school meals.

of skills, employability, capacity building, self-employment, retraining, versatility and continuous learning.

The development of the continental strategy was guided by several principles that broadly address the need for:

1. Knowledge societies called for by Agenda 2063 are driven by skilled human capital
2. Holistic, inclusive and equitable education, with good conditions for lifelong learning as a prerequisite for sustainable development
3. Good governance, leadership and accountability in education management as paramount factors
4. Harmonised education and training systems, which are essential for the realisation of intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional co-operation
5. Quality and relevant education, training and research as core factors for scientific and technological innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship
6. A healthy mind in a healthy body – physically and socio-psychologically fit and well-fed learners.

The strategy is also complemented by other continental strategies that promote holistic learning such as the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA–2024), which places science, technology and innovation at the epicentre of Africa's socio-economic development and growth, and the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Educational and Training, which seeks to foster youth employment.

The African Union Theme of the Year 2024's focus on education, demonstrates the importance the continent has placed on education. The theme, 'Educate an African fit for the 21st century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, life-long, quality, and relevant learning in Africa', will offer an opportunity for the continent to take stock of the progress made in the education and training sectors, the existing and emerging challenges, as well as implement the short- and long-term strategies necessary to enhance the quality of learning in Africa.

The Theme of the Year 2024 demonstrates the importance accorded to ensuring quality and relevant education, and recognition that investing in education is one the most effective ways of achieving the goals envisioned in Africa's Agenda 2063, as education is pivotal in reducing poverty and improving livelihoods, reducing gender inequalities and promoting inclusive socioeconomic development.

Furthermore, education is also associated with more peaceful communities, greater civic engagement and stronger democracies.

Recent reviews of education on the continent show that over the past 10 years, African Governments have undertaken a wide range of programmes and policy-level efforts to ensure that no child is left behind in terms of access to education. There have been substantial efforts on the continent to ensure access, completion and quality of basic education for all.

Overall, the proportion of out-of-school children has decreased. The completion rates have improved in primary and lower secondary education, as well as the access to and the participation in TVET. There is also noticeable progress in access to pre-primary education and adult literacy and lifelong learning.

The Theme of the Year underscores the relevance of education and its impact on all other aspects of human-capital development. The large population of young people in Africa is a powerful source of economic growth and progress, provided they receive quality education and skills for the 21st century job opportunities.

The theme demonstrates the commitment by leaders and stakeholders in the education sector to achieve the 12 strategic objectives in the CESA for holistic improvements in the education sector, namely:

- Revitalise the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education
- Build, rehabilitate and preserve education infrastructure, and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, to expand access to quality education
- Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems
- Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonisation processes across all levels for national and regional integration
- Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity
- Launch comprehensive and effective literacy programmes across the continent to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy
- Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels, and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems

'The urgency to realise its prosperity can be achieved only if the continent invests in the education and training of the youth'

- Strengthen the science and maths curricula in youth training and disseminate scientific knowledge and culture in society
- Revitalise and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness
- Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups
- Improve management of the education system, as well build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication and use
- Enhance synergy among stakeholders to facilitate and support activities resulting from the implementation of CESA 16–25.

2024 promises more concerted actions in the entire education and skills development spectrum from early childhood education and development through to tertiary and vocational education and life-long learning.

The focus on development and implementation of effective, long-lasting, system-wide transformational strategies for education in Africa, and addressing the constrained education financing landscape, holds the promise of a better educated people.

While other regions of the world are shouldering the burden of ageing populations, Africa has the world's youngest demographic. If it invests in education and training to develop the potential of its youth, Africa is poised to become one of the most dynamic and productive global economies. The urgency to realise its prosperity can be achieved only if the continent invests in the education and training of the youth. ◼

To learn more about the work of the African Union to promote quality education in Africa, led by the African Union Commission Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, visit

WWW.AU.INT/EN/ESTI

African Union

THE YEAR OF EDUCATION
2024

Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

" Education costs money, but then so does ignorance

CLAUS MOSER

IGNORANCE ←

KNOWLEDGE →

#YearOfEducation #Agenda2063 #TheAfricaWeWant

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THE YEAR OF EDUCATION
2024
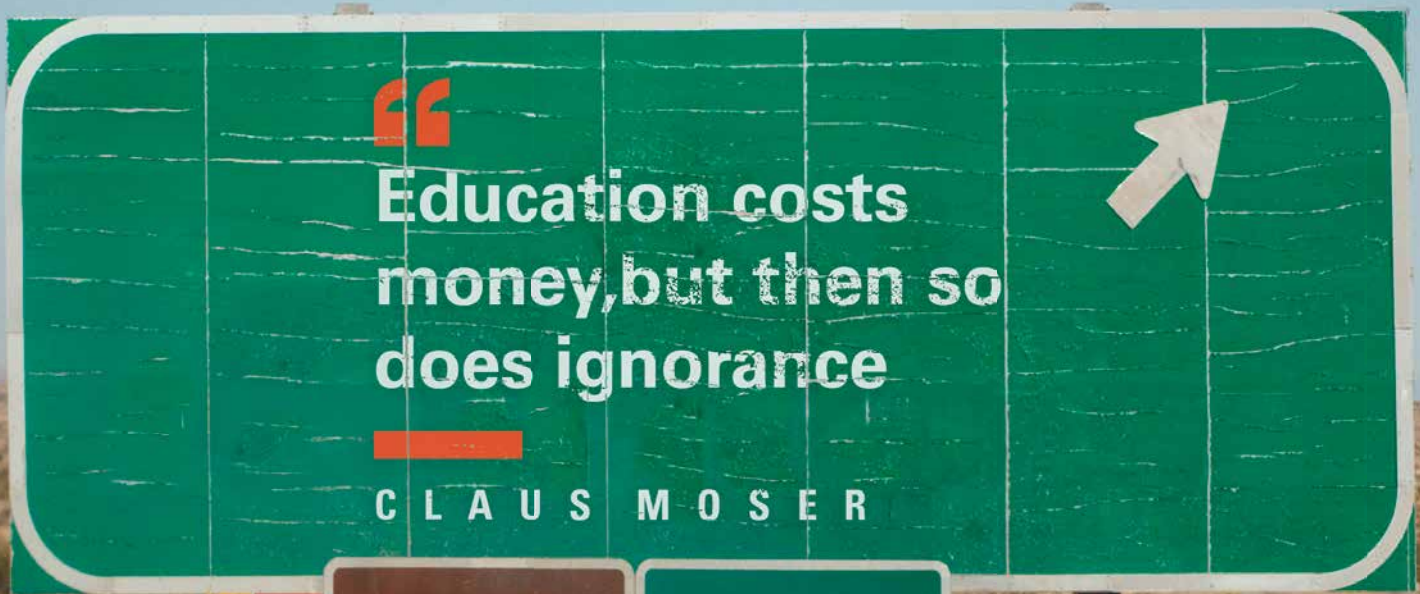
Educate an African fit for the 21st Century:
Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa

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Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.

MARGARET MEAD

Research and Education Networks: Overcoming barriers to education on the African continent

*By **Silvia Fiore**, Communications Manager, GÉANT (silvia.fiore@geant.org); and **Leïla Dekkar**, Project Manager, GÉANT (leila.dekkar@geant.org)*

African education and research communities are still among the least connected in the academic world. In this context, African Research and Education Networks (RENs) stand out as instrumental players in promoting inclusive and equal access to digital education to regional and national RENs in the continent.

They provide high-quality internet connectivity and dedicated ICT services to their member universities at more affordable rates, as well as enable global collaborations. Their work for more equitable access to digital infrastructuresnot only contributes directly to the achievement of SDG 4 and Agenda 2063, but it also has a multiplier effect on all Sustainable Development Goals. This was recognised by the 2022 Digital Education Strategy of the African Union, which has set the objective of establishing sustainable national RENs across AU member states by 2027.

Reflecting on 2024 as the Year of Education, it is crucial to recognise that RENs will continue to be fundamental in ensuring equality in access to inclusive educational opportunities for all Africans. Further to setting the context and introducing the role of RENs in Africa, this paper provides examples of their indisputable contributions to the continent's educational landscape.

Despite recent developments and progress in ICT infrastructure – especially through the deployment of international undersea cables circling Africa – tertiary education and research institutions in Africa are still among the least connected in the academic world, particularly in landlocked countries and islands.

Overall, African education and research communities suffer from very low internet-penetration levels and very high connectivity prices, a situation compounded by the presence of some telecoms monopolies and,

> **Overall, African education and research communities suffer from very low internet penetration levels and very high connectivity prices, and institutions often resort to consuming the connectivity they can afford rather than the connectivity that they need.**

sometimes, complex regulatory frameworks. These factors translate into a general disconnectedness of the continent from the global digital economy and all its opportunities. Institutions often resort to consuming the connectivity they can afford rather than the connectivity that they need.

In this context, African RENs play a key part in addressing the problem. Regional RENs and national RENs believe that infrastructure cannot be leapfrogged. As education and learning has become more and more digitally driven, RENs stand out more than ever as instrumental players in promoting an inclusive and equal access to digital education to all Africans.

WHAT ARE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORKS?

RENs are unique not-for-profit organisations that are dedicated to supporting the needs of the research and education communities within their own region or country. They are present in over 100 countries in the world and differ from ISPs due to their membership structure and not-for-profit nature. Their primary focus is to provide higher education institutions and research centres with high-quality network connectivity and related ICT services.

However, many RENs go beyond this and provide expertise and support on many other technologies and service areas, enabling students and researchers to access educational resources, collaborate with their peers around the world, and conduct research that would have been impossible otherwise.

National RENs have been operating in the African continent since the late 1980s, when African universities and research centres joined forces to address the need for global connectivity, journal databases and other online

resources. During that period, Africa was connected via satellite and prices were prohibitive. This was also in response to a general continental move towards the liberalisation of the telecoms sector.

As national and regional RENs started taking root in Africa, they acted as a connectivity-buying club, and soon institutions were benefiting from the economies of scale, and prices dropped significantly. Today, for example, large universities in East and Southern Africa can access global connectivity via fibre at less than US$20 per Mbps/month.

As stated in the African Union's Digital Education Strategy 2022, RENs now have pan-African political recognition as instrumental players in accelerating the adoption of digital technologies on the continent, and digitally empowering all citizens.

With the strategy setting the objective of establishing sustainable RENs across AU Member States by 2027, the contributions of RENs towards the achievement of SDG 4 and Agenda 2063 are indisputable.

CONNECTING ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

The global internet connectivity network created between the pan-European regional network GÉANT and the regional RENs in Africa – the UbuntuNet Alliance for research and education networking in East and Southern Africa, WACREN in West and Central Africa, and ASREN in North Africa – is trans-border infrastructure that is resilient, sustainable and reliable. It facilitates the contribution Africa's national RENs make to education and human well-being on an international level but, more specifically, to the upgrading of the technological capabilities of the local communities by facilitating innovation, prioritising affordability and promoting inclusion.

By leveraging economies of scale made possible by regional and national RENs, national RENs are able to provide internet connectivity to their member universities at more affordable rates, better than private-sector players. Even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic, RENs became the lifeline for many research ▶

> '**Their primary focus is to provide higher education institutions and research centres with high-quality network connectivity and related ICT services**'

and education institutions across Africa, as they provided alternative options to the normal learning approach.

A good example is the Research and Education Network of Uganda (RENU), which continues to upgrade its eduroam infrastructure not only to increase access to the internet for research and education institutions, but also to connect airports, cafes and bus stops.

Eduroam is the secure, world-wide roaming access service developed for the international research and education community to address the increasing need for fast and secure internet connection everywhere. It was launched two decades ago in several European countries, and is now available in 106 territories worldwide, of which 17 are in Africa.

In 2022, over 27 million students on the continent accessed eduroam.

In September 2020, RENU started deploying metro eduroam across Uganda, providing off-campus Wi-Fi connection to users who could not visit their university campus. As of November 2023, the service has reached 358 hotspots countrywide. Building on its success, in September 2022 RENU launched eduroam on the Go, a pocket-size routing device that enables researchers and university staff to connect to eduroam full-time, and not only from a few fixed locations. Both innovations work with the same authentication infrastructure as eduroam, so the features of security and gratuity for the users remain unchanged.

Similarly, the Tertiary Education and Research Network of South Africa (TENET), after installing eduroam in 57 of Cape Town's public libraries, also deployed the service to hospitals and public airports.

In West Africa, GARNET in Ghana has connected hotels outside of the university campuses, and over 240 000 members of the academic community are using eduroam.

BEYOND CONNECTIVITY

Once a student is connected to the internet, the question then arises about what kind of services they now have access to that leverage the availability of the internet. Students need to be able to follow online courses, access digital libraries and resources, join trainings, download study materials, and upload their assignments. With these needs in mind, RENs like ZAMREN in Zambia, TENET in South Africa, SLREN in Sierra Leone, MARWAN in Morocco and CCK in Tunisia offered free access to video-conferencing tools, and platforms for Learning Management Systems, to their member institutions, to help lecturers and students sustain teaching, ensuring learning continued across the continent during the pandemic.

By giving students equal opportunities to connect and have access to material and training, RENs are providing them with the prospect of better education and employment opportunities. Ranging from ICT workshops and capacity-building tutorials – like the Campus Technology Internship Programme (CTIP) run by Eko-Konnect in Nigeria – to hackathons for young girls – like ICT4Girls also in Nigeria, or the first UbuntuNet Alliance Women Hackathon 2023 – these and other training courses that RENs run contribute to the employability of the local university graduates, aiming to bridge the gap between today's advanced computing and networking technologies in the continent's higher education community.

DIGITAL EDUCATION STRATEGY AND THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL RENS

The European Union has provided significant funding support to all the activities mentioned above via the AfricaConnect project. Now in its third phase, AfricaConnect3 is implemented by the three African RENs – the UbuntuNet Alliance for research and education networking, WACREN and ASREN – and GÉANT. Currently, over 5 million Africans in more than 1 900 institutions of higher learning across 38 national RENs have benefited from the project in different ways.

The African RENs have been acting as advocates by lobbying with policymakers, government bodies and funding agencies in support of policies that align with Agenda 2063. In 2022, the AfricaConnect3 project partners contributed to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) through meetings and by reviewing documents.

The Digital Education Strategy establishes a framework for the digitalisation and acceleration of adoption of digital technologies for education in Africa, including the development, strengthening and sustainability of national RENs across AU Member States, and mentions the African RENs as partners to provide expertise and experience in implementing the national RENs objective. The lack of political recognition and support had long hindered the progress of the national RENs on the continent.

With the strategy, national and regional RENs now have the political support to develop and implement a national REN roadmap to promote improved e-research infrastructure and inclusive platforms for collaborations and exchange experiences.

BEYOND EDUCATION: THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Supporting RENs is essential but not a finality in itself. Their contribution to SDG 4, Agenda 2063 and CESA and their support for more inclusive access to digital infrastructure across the continent has a multiplier effect on many other areas and all Sustainable Development Goals. From providing students and learners with the necessary connectivity to access vital learning material, empowering female figures in the science and research fields, equipping communities with the necessary skills to increase employability, to improving local digital infrastructure and fostering global partnerships. These are just some of the examples of the impact and value of African RENs on the wider African research and education community.

Reflecting on 2024 as the Year of Education, it is of the utmost importance to recognise that national and regional RENs present an excellent promise of accomplishing significant progress in the achievement of SDG 4, and have proved fundamental to ensure equality in access inclusive educational opportunities. ■

ADVANCING MINING INTERESTS:
THE EVOLUTION AND IMPACT OF THE SENEGAL CHAMBER OF MINES (CDMS)

CHAMBRE DES MINES
SENEGAL

Chamber members, from left to right: El Hadji Seck, Maty N'Dome Kébé, Ousmane Mbaye, Aminata Ly Faye, Hamidou Sow, Rokhaya Sall Mbaye and Alioune Sarr

'THE CDMS IS IN THE PROCESS OF INFUSING ITS ACTION WITH A NEW DYNAMIC THAT WILL ENABLE IT TO BETTER ADDRESS THE ACTUAL ISSUES WITHIN THE SENEGALESE MINING SECTOR'

Ousmane Mbaye,
President of the
Senegal Chamber
of Mines

Established on 5 June 2013, the Senegal Chamber of Mines (CDMS) is a private non-profit association, bringing together around thirty members (national and international mining companies, providers of goods and services), active in the mining sector in Senegal.

The CDMS aims at promoting and protecting mining investments in the country, and encouraging the development of a dynamic and structured mining sector. Its main mandate is to defend the common interests of its members and, where appropriate, to act as their privileged interlocutor with public institutions and civil and professional organisations.

CDMS governance is essentially based on three bodies: a General Assembly – the organisation's supreme body – a Board of Directors and a Secretariat-General.

With the election of Mr Ousmane Mbaye as its new Chairman in July 2023, the CDMS is in the process of infusing its action with a new dynamic that will enable it to better address the actual issues within the Senegalese mining sector.

Defend operators' interests more vigorously, relaunch the CDMS membership policy, make the organisation's activities better known to public authorities, balance the relationship between operators and host communities, resolutely tackle environmental, CSR and local content issues, etc.

These are just some of the key elements of the new strategic action plan drawn up by the new management team.

Although the challenges remain considerable, CMDS remains more determined than ever to make its contribution to building a dynamic and sustainable Senegalese mining sector.

The sector still makes a modest socio-economic contribution, despite considerable geological potential and real growth prospects. In 2021, mining and quarrying contributed nearly 200 billion CFA francs to the state budget, according to the 2021 Report of the local branch of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

More generally, over the same period, the extractive industries (mining and hydrocarbons) accounted for almost 5% of national GDP. As part of the Emerging Senegal Plan, the mining sector is one of the six priority areas considered as growth accelerators. But to achieve this, it must first meet the challenges of transforming its production locally into high-value-added finished products, and of stepping up its industrial development, as well as meeting the challenge of promoting Local Content activities more vigorously.

These are the keys to generating strong, inclusive growth and more sustainable jobs. The CDMS understands this perfectly and has made it the compass for its action.

School feeding: The missing link in realising high school retention and completion rates and better learning outcomes in Uganda's universal primary and secondary education programmes

By **Mugoya Musa**, *Programme Officer, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (mugoyamusah@gmail.com)*

Article 11 (1) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, recognises the right of every child to education. Article 11 (3) of the Charter further requires African states to take all appropriate measures to achieve the full realisation of children's right to education and, in particular, provide free and compulsory basic education; encourage the development of secondary education in its different forms and to progressively make it free and accessible to all; and take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rate.

Sustained investment in universal early childhood development and basic education directly contributes to the continent's over-arching vision, under Agenda 2063, to develop Africa's human capital as its most precious resource. Long before the adoption of Agenda 2063, the Government of Uganda had commenced the implementation of state-funded education programmes, such as universal primary and secondary education, in 1997 and 2007 respectively.

As a country, Uganda has made significant strides in achieving access to equitable and affordable education. Uganda's National Planning Authority (NPA), in its Issue Paper on Uganda's Education Reforms – submitted to the Education Policy Review Commission in 2022 – presents both successes and challenges in the implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) programmes.

At the primary level, enrolment significantly increased from 2.5 million learners in 1996 to 10.8 million learners in 2019/20. There has also been a significant impact in other areas. Teacher: pupil ratio improved from 1:48 in 2010 to 1:43 in 2018/19, and the classroom to pupil ratio from 1:60 in 2010 to 1:46 in 2018/19. At the secondary level, enrolment has increased to 2 million learners in 2018/19 from 1.2 million in 2010.

However, the challenge lies in ensuring high school retention, completion rates and upholding the quality of education, and enhancing learning outcomes. Only 40% of learners who enrol in Primary 1 (P1) complete Primary 7 (P7), and about 20% (approximately 2.5 million) of school-age children are still left out of school.

In addition, according to the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE), proficiency in mathematics and literacy levels for learners in Primary 3 and 6 has stagnated, at only 50%, for many years. At secondary, only

> **'Uganda has made significant strides in achieving access to equitable and affordable education'**

32% of students eligible to enrol in secondary education are in school. Less than 50% of all learners in secondary fail to reach the expected proficiency in science subjects. These challenges are attributed to a number of factors but are not limited to hunger, due to the absence of school feeding programmes in school, which breeds school absenteeism and poor learning outcomes.

School feeding programmes provide education and economic benefits. Children are able to enrol and concentrate in school. For instance, the NPA has estimated that the introduction of school feeding would increase enrolment in primary schools by 10%. It also enhances the rural agricultural economy by widening the market base for agricultural products. Therefore, school feeding has a high rate of return on investment.

The World Food Programme estimates that for every US$1 invested in school feeding, there is a guaranteed return of US$20 through human capital and the local economy.

In Uganda, the first national school feeding programme was implemented, after the 1979 war, in all schools in the country. This was implemented by the Government of Uganda and the World Food Programme.

The initiative first prioritised the Karamoja sub-region because of its high levels of vulnerability and poor social and economic

indicators; mainly the low enrolments compared to other parts of the country.

Currently, there is no national school feeding programme in schools. Nevertheless, development partners have continued supporting the implementation of school feeding programmes in vulnerable communities such as Karamoja as a way of incentivising learners to enrol and stay in school.

According to Section 5 (2) (a) of the Education Act, school feeding in UPE and USE schools is the responsibility of parents or guardians.

In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Sports issued the 'Guidelines on School Feeding and Nutrition Intervention Programmes: for Use in Universal Primary Education and Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) School Systems'. The implementation of these guidelines is premised on school feeding programmes in schools being parent-led initiatives in the form of contributing cash to either the school management committees or board of governors, to buy food or provide food items for their children.

In early 2018, the First Lady and Minister for Education and Sports, Janet Kataha Museveni, launched nationwide campaigns to sensitise the masses, especially parents and guardians of pupils, on the importance of feeding children while in school, and their duty to provide food ▶

to that end. However, the majority of learners in UPE and USE schools are still not receiving meals at school.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), Uganda's economy is largely agrarian, with 68% of the country's working population engaged in the agricultural sector. The implementation of parent-led school feeding programmes has been derailed by unstable nature-based agriculture and high levels of poverty. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in the National Budget Speech for FY2018/19, indicated that over the past 25 years, the agricultural sector has experienced a low rate of growth at less than 2%. In its 2021 Uganda National Household Survey 2019/2020, UBOS approximated that 3.5 million (39%) households in Uganda to be in the subsistence economy, with 62% of these households engaged mainly in subsistence agriculture; 24% mainly engaged in income-generating activities; 12% earning a wage/salary; and 2% not working at all.

Particularly, the low levels of agricultural production are attributed to the high level of the sector's dependence on nature, with any slight change in climate leading to a catastrophe in production – even for households that have graduated from subsistence agriculture – and hunger for those still in subsistence production.

Despite the President emphasising the growth of the service industry, which is a good strategy for economic growth and alleviating poverty, the remuneration of the workers remains low and, in many cases, exploitative. An analysis of the average salary income, by UBOS, used the median income that is not affected by outliers, considered the very wide variations in the earnings, and representes low salary/income earnings.

In 2021, the median earning for an employee in Uganda was UGX200 000 (US$52.823), with males earning more (UGX250 000 / US$66.0292) than their female counterparts (UGX120 000 / US$31.694). Also, employees in urban areas earned more than double (UGX300 000 / US$79.235) that employees in rural areas earned (UGX130 000 / US$33.538). Additionally, employees in the public sector earned more (UGX510 000 / US$134.699) than those in the private sector (UGX150 000 / US$39.617).

With such low levels of earnings among the population, both in the agriculture and service

'The educational and economic benefits that the country can derive from the programme are enormous in the short, medium and long term'

industries, households are not in a position to sustain a parent-led school feeding programme at the moment. The solution, therefore, lies in state-funded school feeding programmes in all UPE and USE schools.

For instance, in primary schools, the NPA has estimated that a daily unit for school feeding costs UGX1 220 (US$0.322), to cover the cost of food, at UGX700 (US$0.1848); associated staff costs, at UGX80 (0.0211); associated transport and logistics, at UGX140 (0.037); associated capital costs, at UGX100 (US$0.0264); and running costs, UGX200 (US$0.0528). Further, this would necessitate an annual unit cost of UGX219 600 (US$ 58) per pupil per year for an average of 180 calendar school days, and an overall annual expenditure of UGX1 756 billion (US$463.79 million) on school feeding of about 8 million pupils.

Currently, Uganda is investing more than UGX3 trillion in UPE and USE programmes. An additional UGX1 756 billion (US$463.79 million) for the school feeding programme for 8 million learners in primary school might appear high but it is vital to ensure maximum return on investment for the current spending.

The educational and economic benefits that the country can derive from the programme are enormous in the short, medium and long term. Since the NPA has already conducted a cost analysis of the basic unit cost required to feed each learner, the Government of Uganda can commence on phased financing and implementation of school feeding programmes.

The focus will be on the poorest regions of the country, especially the eastern and northern regions, which have also – over the years – recorded the poorest grades in both primary and secondary national examinations. Thereafter the implementation of the programme can be rolled out across the country. ■

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Since we don't know with any certainty what specific aptitudes today's students will need tomorrow, we need to ensure they have the critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that extend beyond any one technology or program

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Strengthening resilience in education systems against disasters and emergencies in Africa

*By **Maryanne Muriuki**, Communications Analyst – Disaster Risk Reduction, African Union Commission (mariannie91@gmail.com and muriukim@africa-union.org)*

For decades, Africa has battled with natural hazards, such as drought, floods, tropical cyclones and fires, which sometimes resulted in disasters and complex emergencies. In their devastating paths, disasters have not spared education systems and infrastructure either. They have resulted in the loss of lives, damage to infrastructure and interruption of school calendars. This article discusses the global and continental policy instruments in place, and how institutions at all levels can incorporate them to enhance resilient African educational systems.

The 21st century presents both opportunities and challenges for Africa and Africans. Since the turn of the third millennium and the 21st century, Africa has experienced extremes – wherein on the one hand, there is a burst of technological advancements, and on the other, the erosion of these developmental gains caused by the impact of disaster events.

The 2024 Theme of 'Educate an African fit for the 21st century: building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality and relevant learning in Africa' comes at an opportune time as the continent continues to rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic and various disasters that have had a massive impact on Africa societies and communities.

IMPACTS OF DISASTERS ON EDUCATION

The African continent has battled with natural hazards for decades, which have increasingly interacted with other factors, such as risk and vulnerable conditions, which have sometimes resulted in disasters and complex emergencies. Disaster impacts are vast, including crop failure due to severe drought, and floods that can wash away entire harvests and fertile soils. These, in turn, hurt agriculture and food security, and can trigger malnutrition in the affected community or society, including among school-going children.

Furthermore, schools and other learning institutions are often among the first locations that displaced persons will run to for shelter during disasters and emergencies. Increasingly, these institutions are also not spared by disasters unless the structures are resilient and able to withstand the strong impacts of these events.

Across the African continent, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the school calendar, with approximately 327 million students – from pre-primary to secondary education – being affected by school closures at some point between March 2020 and September 2021. Of those, 148 million lost more than 50% of classroom instruction time in 2020 and 14.6 million in 2021 (UNESCO, 2021).

In 2023, Cyclone Freddy made landfall and caused devastation in Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi. The African Union Commission (AUC), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a joint assessment mission to the three countries and recorded significant damage to school structures, and noted that

> **'Africa needs to strengthen its resilience to the impacts of disasters within the education sector'**

IMAGE: GALLO/GETTY IMAGES

makeshift facilities were erected to provide temporary education facilities, such as the Early Childhood Development (ECD) structure in Quelimane, Mozambique.

POLICY INSTRUMENTS ON EDUCATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

At the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6 to 8 July 2004, African leaders noted the work done towards developing the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, and mandated the AU Commission and the then New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat (now the African Union Development Agency – AUDA-NEPAD) to work closely with partners to develop a programme of work that will enable Member States to use the strategy as a framework for integrating disaster risk-reduction into national development processes implementation. One of the objectives of this strategy was to enhance knowledge management for disaster risk reduction.

2015 was a significant year, with the global adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, of which Number 4 focuses on quality education. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was also adopted in 2015, and African Union Member States

developed an Africa Programme of Action (PoA) to implement the Sendai Framework on the continent, which was endorsed by the AU Heads of State and Government at the 28th Extraordinary Summit, held in 2017.

The Sendai Framework has seven targets, and Target D aims to 'substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030'.

The goal of the Africa Programme of Action is to 'prevent new – and reduce existing – disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience'.

The Africa Programme of Action has five additional targets, among which are to 'substantially increase the number of countries with disaster risk reduction in their educational systems at all levels, as stand-alone curriculum and integrated into different curricula', and to 'substantially increase the number of regional networks or partnerships for knowledge management and capacity ▶

> **The Africa Programme of Action – for implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – aims, among other things, to 'substantially increase the number of countries with disaster risk reduction in their educational systems at all levels, as standalone curriculum and integrated into different curricula'.**

development, including specialised regional centres and networks'.

The 1st Africa Biennial Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2018) and second Biennial Report, covering 2019 to 2020, on the Programme of Action for implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, noted difficulties experienced in reporting on the Sendai Framework's Target D by most AU Member States. These difficulties were attributed to a lack of data collection and reporting capacity, and impediments in data sharing among government departments.

Progress has been seen in some areas in the integration of disaster risk reduction into education systems, with tertiary institutions showing the most improvement. However, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in primary and secondary school curricula remains a significant concern.

The second Africa Biennial Report showed proactivity in the research and academic sector. These include the Partners Enhancing Resilience for People Exposed to Risks (PERIPERI U) and the Southern Africa Society for Disaster Reduction (SASDiR).

MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE

2023 was the mid-point towards 2030 when most of these frameworks will expire. The next seven years present an opportunity to accelerate actions towards building resilience in all sectors, including education.

The AUC has developed various instruments aimed at recovery. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the AU Heads of State and Government adopted, in 2022, the COVID-19 Recovery

> **'Progress has been seen in some areas in the integration of disaster risk reduction into education systems, with tertiary institutions showing the most improvement'**

Framework for Africa, which provides recovery strategies, including on human development and steps towards gaining ground on lost education. Investing in digital literacy in the medium to long term is highlighted as critical.

The AUC is also urged to encourage and monitor progress on allocating national education budgets under the AU commitment of 20%.

Development efforts need to be inclusive of at-most-risk groups. Africa, being a youthful continent, must engage its young population in localising the policy instruments that have developed. These groups need to be empowered to not only participate in the formulation of resilience policies, but also in implementing, following up, and reviewing the policies and strategies. The youth can also play a vital role in imparting life-saving skills among school-going children. These skills might prove crucial should emergency and disaster events happen.

The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance subscribes to the principle of all citizens' access to education and culture. Introducing African languages into the education curricula provided an opportunity for sharing best practices in disaster risk reduction and management with the current and future generations.

The culture of resilience can then be strengthened, contributing to lifelong, inclusive, quality and relevant learning.

All stakeholders should galvanise local and international partnerships towards reconstructing and rehabilitating school infrastructure. These activities include ensuring that the construction of the structures follows building codes. With Africa being the world's fastest-urbanising continent, it probably means that more educational institutions will be built and located in urban areas. While the continent works towards having an Africa Urban Resilience Programme, there is a need to ensure that all development is risk-informed to minimise disaster impacts on society.

Therefore, Africa needs to strengthen its resilience to the impacts of disasters within the education sector. Substantial reduction of damages to infrastructure and educational facilities would significantly contribute to its aspiration to be a 'strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner', as envisioned in Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. ∎

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If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people."

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TOGETHER FOR AFRICA

BADEA is committed to enhancing economic, financial and technical collaboration between the Arab and African regions, fostering the embodiment of solidarity

The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, BADEA, is a multilateral development bank (MDB) created by 18 members of the League of Arab States, with an assigned mission to promote economic development and foster co-operation between the African continent and the Arab region through investment and trade.

Operational since 1975, the bank committed more than US$12 billion to more than 700 development projects, of which approximately 70% went to public-sector financing and 30% to private-sector and trade finance. However, the bank's development footprint has grown much further by leveraging its membership with the Arab Coordination Group (ACG) to crowd more investment from sister institutions.

The ACG encompasses the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, BADEA, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the OPEC Fund for International Development, the Qatar Fund for Development, and the Saudi Fund for Development. The bank has also taken some equity with other development finance institutions – including the Africa Finance Corporation, Afreximbank, the Development Bank of the Central African States, and the Trade and Development Bank (TDB) – thereby expanding its impact.

Under BADEA 2030, its strategic framework, the bank's areas of intervention revolve around four pillars: infrastructure; private and trade

finance; agricultural value-chains, SMEs with a particular emphasis on women and youth entrepreneurship. Capacity development comes in as a cross-cutting pillar.

BADEA 2030 aligns not only with national development priorities but also with governments' commitments to the Global Agenda 2030, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Agenda 2063 of the AU – 'the Africa we want'.

BADEA AND THE AFRICAN AGENDA 2063

The bank strongly believes in the synergy of stakeholders and works with a wide range of these to respond to development needs as per the continent's development agenda. BADEA has substantially contributed to regional integration through infrastructure financing to ease the movement of people and goods. In fact, BADEA has co-financed numerous transport infrastructures, including 12 000-plus kilometres of roads; seaports; and more than 44 airports.

Examples of funded airport projects include the renovation of Seychelles International Airport; the rehabilitation of Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (home to Ethiopian Airlines and the headquarters of the AU); the upgrading of Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Botswana; the rehabilitation of Banjul International Airport in the Gambia; and the construction of the Praia International Airport in Cape Verde.

BADEA has a remarkable track record in financing roads. The majority of such infrastructure enables landlocked countries to access seaports via neighbouring countries and connects rural production areas to consumption centres within countries. Examples include the bridge connecting Benin and Togo on the Mono river and Philippe-Yacé (Pont de Jacqueville) in Côte d'Ivoire.

Furthermore, BADEA promotes both intra-Africa trade as well as Arab-Africa trade with a set of deliberate financial instruments, ranging from trade to project financing. The bank has also joined efforts with other MDBs to support the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, not only through trade financing but also via infrastructure. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa is currently under consideration with partners.

Synergy from stakeholders has been instrumental in responding to COVID-19, when the bank joined forces with sister institutions from the Arab Coordination Group and other MDBs including Afreximbank, TDB, AFC, BOAD, BDEAC, AGF, FAGACE and FSA, to ensure the continent had access to the necessary equipment and material to fight the pandemic and ensure a recovery.

With the ACG, the bank committed US$1 billion of the US$10 billion mobilised by the ACG to contribute to food security, which was threatened by disruption in the global and regional supply chains following the COVID-19 pandemic and, to some extent, by the Russian-Ukraine conflict.

In conjunction with COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, the ACG also made a US$24 billion climate action pledge. In November 2023, on the sidelines of the Saudi-Arab-African Economic Conference held in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the ACG pledged to mobilise US$50 billion for sustainable development in Africa, to support more resilient infrastructure and inclusive societies.

LOOKING AHEAD

The magnitude of development challenges is such that a multi-stakeholder approach and innovative financing are key.

Rated Aa2 and AA with Positive Outlook by Moody's and S&P Global respectively, and AAA with Stable Outlook by the Japan Credit Rating agency, BADEA has confidently approached the international financial market to mobilise resources at competitive rates to support the continent's development agenda. The oversubscribed first ever social bond issued on 18 January 2024 has come to corroborate the confidence and even the huge potential to tap into more innovative development financing instruments. Its January EUR500 million benchmark social bond amounted to more than EUR1.2 billion from over 50 high-quality investors, including central banks and official institutions from more than 27 countries in four continents, an impressive performance as a first experience in the international capital markets.

The bank's board of governors approved an increase of the capital to US$20 billion, setting the motion for the bank to increase its developmental impact and contribute to fill in the development-financing gap in Africa.

BADEA has placed MSMEs at the core of its strategy and has been pushing for collaborative action to address MSMEs' key challenges through the Africa MSMEs Global Coalition.

BADEA is committed to working relentlessly to crowd-in private investment from the Arab region to the African continent.

The bank is also tasked with mobilising funding for the proposed Joint Africa-Arab Projects, an initiative of the AU and the League of Arab States.

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Addressing the out-of-school challenge in Africa: Evidence from Nigeria's accelerated education programmes

*By **A. Adedeji** and **K. Bahago**, Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (www.cseaafrica.org)*

This article delves into the landscape of education in Africa, highlighting progress, persistent challenges and strategic approaches to reshaping educational systems. The piece acknowledges the significant efforts made by African Governments to improve education access, completion and quality at various levels. The text highlights critical indicators that indicate potential challenges despite initial progress. The issue of out-of-school children, learning poverty and the urgent need for millions of teachers by 2030 are significant issues. Moreover, the article emphasises the pivotal role of regional and global co-ordination frameworks like the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and UN

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 in addressing these challenges. It emphasises how crucial peer learning, evidence-based policies and monitoring systems are.

The article further explores the potential and progress of implementing Africa Union (AU) decisions in education. It aligns with the principles outlined in Africa's Agenda 2063 and relevant AU treaties, focusing on initiatives at institutional, national and continental levels.

Additionally, it sheds light on the significance of celebrating the African Day of School Feeding and its impact on education and community development. The article incorporates key AU documents, including CESA 16–25, Agenda 2063, treaties and strategic frameworks like the AU Continental TVET Strategy and initiatives for gender equality to support its arguments and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing access to quality education for all children remains a global priority. The global population of out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) is 258 million (UIS Factsheet, 2019). For Nigeria, this number is currently estimated at 10.5 million, which is the highest in the world (UNICEF, 2022). While various initiatives have been implemented to increase access to education over the years, OOSCY numbers remain disturbingly high.

Given this worrisome trend, the Nigerian Government is revamping its initiatives with new education innovations such as accelerated education programmes (AEPs). AEPs have been instrumental in addressing the OOSCY challenge in Borno State, Nigeria, where there are significant supply and demand barriers to education.

The barriers circumvented through AEPs include the problems of distance, insecurity, poverty, early marriage and religious prejudice towards formal education, among others. In effect, there has been a reduction in the number of OOSCY since the advent of AEPs in the communities where it was implemented (CSEA, 2022).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A UNESCO report reveals that in sub-Saharan Africa, more than 20% of children aged six to 11, over 33% of youth aged 12 to 14, and nearly 60% of those aged 15 to 17 are not attending school. The region faces challenges in delivering equitable, high-quality and affordable education, exacerbated by gender, economic status, ethnicity and disability disparities.

These inequalities in educational access and learning outcomes are intrinsically linked to the widespread poverty in East, West and Southern African countries.

UNICEF reports that students from impoverished rural and informal urban areas face numerous challenges such as hunger, social stigma and internal exclusion. Given this worrisome trend, stakeholders are investing in accelerated education innovations such as AEPs, which are mainly donor driven.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this exercise involved a mixed-method approach that employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods in investigating the magnitude of OOSCY, the effectiveness of AEPs, and in the political-economic analysis of AEPs, in addressing OOSCY in Nigeria. The survey questionnaire was developed for the quantitative inquiry, while interview instruments were developed for key informant interviews and focal group discussions to capture qualitative data.

The mixed-method approach enables the triangulation of findings from data generated via both approaches. Several categories of ▶

'Accelerated education programmes have been instrumental in addressing out-of-school children and youth. Barriers circumvented through AEPs include the problems of distance, insecurity, poverty, early marriage, and religious prejudice towards formal education'

profiles were studied at the national, sub-national and community levels.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

AEPs have significantly tackled OOSCY challenges, enhancing learning outcomes, facilitating transitions to formal education and promoting success in the workplace. On a broader scale, there is a noticeable reduction in the number of OOSCY in communities and districts that have supported AEP programmes at scale. Evaluation of learning outcomes shows that AEP learners retain the academic skills acquired during the programme.

AEP graduates in school demonstrate superior competencies in English literacy compared to non-AEP learners, and a notably higher proportion of AEP graduates exhibit proficiency in numeracy (number recognition 20–100) compared to non-AEP graduates. The performance of AEP beneficiaries in the workforce is also impressive.

The impact of AEPs extends to the families of the beneficiaries, with AEP recipients capable of teaching their younger siblings the concepts learnt. AEP contributes to parents' awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls. Beyond academic gains, AEP beneficiaries also acquire valuable social skills, including awareness of their right to education, interpersonal skills and personal hygiene. Persisting challenges include hunger, long-distance travel and bullying among students, possibly due to trauma from past conflict experiences.

Despite challenges, AEP learners are increasingly expressing noble professional goals, such as those in medicine, law, teaching, aviation, engineering, accounting, the military and social work. Due to financial constraints, some AEP graduates went straight to work in a variety of occupations. Males and females engage in different types of work in the world of work, with females more typically engaging in small-scale companies, such as cap-making and soap production, while males generally engage in artisanal works.

Graduates are better equipped to use reading and numeracy abilities acquired through AEP in their enterprises, assisting with communication

and calculations. Many people in employment use the vocational skills they obtained at the AEP to supplement their income.

Although many opted to join the workforce after their AEP, several still aspire to return to formal education later in life, aiming for white-collar careers, but some still drop out.

Girls often drop out due to reasons attributed to lower emphasis on girl's education and early marriage practices. An OOSCY mapping study indicates a higher number of children who have never attended school compared to those who dropped out, with boys exhibiting better retention than girls.

Demand and supply barriers contribute to school dropout, with boys showing better retention. Factors like lack of materials, distance to schools and poor infrastructure contribute to these issues.

SCALABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY OF AEP APPROACHES

Ensuring the scalability and adaptability of AEPs is crucial for effectively addressing the OOSCY challenge in Nigeria, especially considering the proven effectiveness of this educational innovation. Various stakeholders, such as donors, Government, civil society organisations, schools and communities, all play pivotal roles in the successful implementation of AEP, even though the investment in these programmes is donor-led. The Government is actively addressing OOSCY through basic education initiatives, but there is a lack of specific policies, budget allocations and dedicated institutions for AEP sustainability. The lack of support in Nigeria is attributed to a limited understanding of the positive impact of AEPs on reducing OOSCY.

However, policymakers are gaining a better understanding of alternative education innovations through increased evidence-building and awareness efforts.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's Government has made efforts in AEPs to reduce OOSCY, but limited policies, budget allocations and dedicated institutions remain. This is attributed to policymakers' limited understanding of the positive impact of AEPs in tackling the challenges related to OOSCY.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council and PLAN International are collaborating on a curriculum specifically designed for AEPs at the national level. Sub-nationally, an enabling environment has been established for donor agencies to implement the education innovations in collaboration with local NGOs, enhancing the effectiveness of these interventions and building the capacity of local NGOs.

The State Agency of Mass Education, at the sub-national level, supports donor agencies in mainstreaming AEP beneficiaries into formal education. Communities also contribute to the success of AEPs, offering support in cash or kind and creating a favourable environment for intervention. Ultimately, by making significant investments into developing and sustaining effective AEPs, Governments can enhance quality education and provide a foundation for learning and society to thrive, reducing the risk of increased criminal activity and insecurity within Borno state and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent advocacy and awareness campaigns are crucial for informing policymakers about the effectiveness of AEPs in addressing the challenge of out-of-school children and youth, and garnering support from all stakeholders for their integral role in sustainable development.

In order to adequately tackle the issue of OOSCY in Nigeria, it is crucial for the Government to formalise AEPs by establishing dedicated policies, institutions and budget allocations tailored specifically to the success of AEPs.

Effective collaboration among stakeholders – including Governments, donor agencies, educational entities and community leaders, is crucial in addressing the challenge of out-of-school children in Nigeria. ■

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The sustainability nexus between non–governmental organisations and access to education

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This paper looks at the relationship between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and education. Emphasising the toolbox nature of education, it discusses NGOs' impact in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, where challenges like socio-economic disparities, security issues and insufficient funding hinder education access.

The paper showcases some innovative approaches by NGOs, citing examples – such as Slum2School Africa and Bridge International Academies Nigeria, which address educational disparities through targeted programmes and community involvement.

The authors highlight the role of collaboration between NGOs and governmental initiatives for enhanced impact, with an emphasis on community ownership.

The importance of trust for the sustainability of NGO-led initiatives is also stressed, and a forward-looking perspective explores scalability and sustainability of NGO-led initiatives. The authors conclude the paper by advocating for a multi-stakeholder strategic planning process aligned with the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025 (CESA 16–25).

INTRODUCTION

Education is the toolbox for achieving the global sustainability agenda. Education can empower vulnerable populations with life-long skills that help to reduce income inequality and accelerate the ending of world poverty.

NGOs are key development partners in promoting education development. They are non-profit, voluntary citizens' groups that are organised on a local, national or international level, usually not affiliated with any government, to provide services or advocate for a public policy. Through resource mobilisation, local and international NGOs are responsible for most of the informal and non-formal education development in Africa.

Educational curricula and institutional infrastructure required to meet the training needs of learners are areas that can benefit from collaborations with NGOs.

In addition, NGOs help to drive participation and accountability in governance mechanisms for education service delivery. By facilitating community discussions, NGOs involve communities in decision-making activities that help improve education.

The success of NGO projects has been attributed to their innovation, flexibility, responsiveness and inclusiveness. By running small, local pilot programmes in specific locations, NGOs are able to identify problems and experiment with a variety of innovative solutions to tackle problems in education systems.

Less bureaucracy in their decision-making structure, strong social capital and goodwill among grassroots stakeholders, and their ability to intervene in expensive/hard-to-reach areas or marginal populations in a cost-effective manner shine as the unique advantages NGOs possess in providing access to education.

Despite their successes, NGOs face some challenges in sustaining education interventions – namely the lack of clear vision and strategy for the bigger picture in the future; credibility and legitimacy concerns for partnership development; inadequate or lack of mechanisms to sustain initiatives; lack of structure to ensure continuous funding; lack of clear policy or guidelines on alternative approaches to basic education; and low participation of ministries of education in NGO-led education.

> NGOs face some challenges in sustaining education interventions, including the lack of clear vision and strategy for the bigger picture in the future; credibility and legitimacy concerns for partnership development; inadequate or lack of mechanisms to sustain initiatives; lack of structure to ensure continuous funding; lack of clear policy or guidelines on alternative approaches to basic education; and low participation of ministries of education in NGO-led education.

NGOs AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NIGERIA

NGOs in Nigeria encounter a myriad of challenges in their endeavours to enhance education access, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of the educational landscape. Despite the official policy of free and mandatory primary education, approximately 10.2 million children at the primary level are not enrolled in school.

The attendance rate for primary school is only 61% among six- to 11-year-olds, and merely 35.6% of children aged 36 to 59 months participate in early childhood education.

In Nigeria's north region, the situation is even more discouraging, with a net atten- dance rate of 53%.

Advancements in certain aspects of educational development have sped up since 2000, leading to increased enrolment and completion rates. However, the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) reveals persistent disparities in educational outcomes, as disadvantaged children continue to lag behind more privileged peers.

One significant challenge is the pervasive socio-economic disparities that hinder equal access to education. Children from marginalised communities, including those in rural areas and urban slums, face obstacles, such as limited infrastructure, insufficient resources and cultural barriers, making it challenging for NGOs to reach these vulnerable populations effectively. Additionally, the volatile security situation in certain regions of Nigeria poses a substantial obstacle.

Instances of conflict and insecurity can disrupt educational activities, threatening the safety of students, teachers and NGO personnel. This dynamic environment requires NGOs to implement flexible and adaptive strategies to navigate and mitigate the impact of security challenges.

Furthermore, insufficient funding remains a persistent challenge. Many NGOs struggle to secure sustainable financial support, hindering the scalability and long-term impact of their interventions. This financial constraint affects the implementation of comprehensive pro- grammes that address various aspects of education access, from infrastructure development to teacher training.

Despite these challenges, there exist substantial opportunities for collaboration and improvement through synergies between NGOs and governmental initiatives. The World Bank's involvement in the education sector, especially in projects where local stakeholders played a significant role, provides valuable insights, emphasising the importance of community ownership in project success. Insights gained from previous initiatives should guide future strategies in the ongoing reform and development of education in Nigeria.

Collaborative efforts can leverage the strengths of all stakeholders to enhance overall impact. For instance, NGOs can complement governmental initiatives by providing targeted interventions in specific regions or communities where the government's reach may be limited. This echoes Strategic Objective 5's (SO 5) action area (AA) of the African Union's CESA 16–25, which seeks to 'develop relevant interventions to address constraints of access and success at all levels'.

Capacity-building initiatives for local com- munities and the establishment of sustainable models for community involvement are other areas where NGOs and the government can collaborate effectively, as empowering com- munities to take ownership of educational initiatives enhances the likelihood of long- term success and impact. ▶

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES BY NGOs: THE NIGERIAN EXAMPLE

In Nigeria, long-standing concerns about educational disparities, encompassing issues such as restricted access, inadequate resources and socio-economic inequalities, have prompted a notable focus on addressing these challenges. NGOs have emerged as pivotal entities, deploying innovative strategies to bridge educational divides and adapt to the dynamic educational landscape.

An example of NGO impact is exemplified by Slum2School Africa. This NGO is dedicated to equipping young individuals in slums with quality education, entrepreneurial skills and psycho-social support to reach their full potential and become social reformers. Through initiatives like tailored training programmes, seminars, financial support for children facing challenges in affording school fees, academic scholarships, and feeding underserved children, Slum2School Africa has effectively reached a remarkable 653 662 children.

Similarly, Bridge International Academies Nigeria implemented approaches to support education access, such as matching sponsors with pupils in urgent need of sponsorship, wherein disadvantaged pupils are supported with tuition for an academic year, learning materials and uniform, or in other areas of need. They have successfully co-established quality schools in underserved communities, garnering recognition from the Nigerian Government, which has granted permission for the operation of over 300 schools nationwide.

Promoting inclusivity is a key focus for these NGOs, evident in targeted programmes addressing gender-based disparities. Initiatives, such as the provision of scholarships and mentorship programmes for girls, actively contribute to cultivating a more equitable and inclusive education system. NGOs' role in advocating for social fairness and equity is helpful in creating a sustainable impact of education interventions. Leveraging their social capital with a wide group of stakeholders, NGOs can draw the attention of influential stakeholders to systemic issues such as inequality of opportunities faced by boys and girls.

The NGOs mentioned above have adeptly navigated challenges within the educational sector by aligning with the evolving needs of the community. Slum2School Africa's school-feeding initiative echoes CESA 16–25's SO 2 AA to 'ensure harmonious development of the body'. Both initiatives are strongly in line with CESA 16–25's SO 5.

LOOKING AHEAD: SCALABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NGO-LED INITIATIVES

NGO-led initiatives need trust between the NGO and government stakeholders to be sustained over time. This is important, as evidence suggests that the involvement of NGOs in successful NGO-led initiatives reduces (and their role changes) over the lifetime of the initiative. Given that the obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the right to education falls on governments, it is logical, therefore, that the scalability of NGO-led education initiatives would largely be influenced by how strong the initiative is anchored within government institutions/frameworks as the initiative progresses.

Although the responsibility for the ownership, domestication and implementation of CESA 16–25 is ministers of education, NGOs could consider conceiving education actions at the local, decentralised level, where government capacity to regulate the activities of NGOs is more feasible, to derive legitimacy and state co-operation for national support.

'Education can empower vulnerable populations with life–long skills that help to reduce income inequality and accelerate the ending of world poverty'

A sustainable NGO-led education intervention requires back-casting from the shared vision of a sustainable future to the present day to identify and assess the potential challenges and failure nodes of the initiative. Implementing a robust, multi-stakeholder information-gathering exercise during the conception phase of education interventions is a prerequisite to building resilient education systems for inclusive learning. The process or framework that determines who is present in this creative brainstorming phase – strategic planning for sustainability – is the epicentre for real

education transformation, as it ensures that the interests of all represented stakeholders, including the underserved, are aligned from the outset. This is in line with CESA 16–25's SO 12, which seeks to 'jointly identify and develop strategic initiatives'.

To conclude, NGOs are not the silver bullet to sustainability issues around access to education. Although they are usually not affiliated with any government, NGOs require the contribution of government stakeholders to scale and sustain education initiatives.

Community ownership and government involvement in projects is key to enhancing long-term success and impact of NGO-led education interventions. Through education initiatives, the advocacy function of NGOs can also help offer other co-benefits, like gender equality. Achieving this requires quality interactions between the formal sector, informal sector and NGOs – highlighting the critical role of a multi-stakeholder strategic planning process in advancing CESA 16–25 strategy for Africa, to build 'resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality and relevant learning in Africa'. ■

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Integrating flipped classroom technology in the Algerian education system since the COVID-19 pandemic crisis

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Rapid technological developments, such as the integration of New Information and Communication Technology (NICT) into daily life, particularly social networks, leads to an evolution in the daily life of the entire population. Within the Algerian educational system, various approaches that use traditional technologies and which follow a skills-based approach have been the norm.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the fore the limits of existing technologies for education. This has been addressed through the integration of NICT in schools, which were able to relaunch teaching by integrating the concept of flipped lessons.

This research work lies in an in-depth study of the inverted classroom and has the main objective of highlighting the educational methods and technologies, and the effectiveness, of the inverted classroom as a component of distance education.

The study examines approaches applied from the skills-based method, the advantages and disadvantages of the flipped classroom, and evaluates the flipped classroom effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional methods of formal education are no longer sufficient to meet complex social demands driven by people seeking alternative ways to access education, frequent career changes, and the constant struggle to balance competing needs in life, work, and education (Zhang et al., 2019).

Forced distance learning; increased use of technology, coupled with rapidly developing modern software and platforms; and emerging new educational strategies and directions have relegated traditional education forms to the background, giving way to new methods.

Algerian schools have, on their part, also undergone several educational approaches (Bouzidi, 2022a), from classic teaching methods to the adoption of new approaches, including the skill-based approach (Ammouden, 2018), whose limitations became evident with the COVID-19 pandemic; and later the integration of NICT (Bouzidi, 2022a), (Bouzidi, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2022R), which enabled schools to revive learning through the integration of the concept of flipped lessons, which was able to record new levels of student performance.

The efficiency of the inverted classroom in the education system was widely studied as education around the world shifted to the online format during COVID-19. Many studies investigated the efficiency of introducing flipped lessons in the education system.

Whereas this concept has long existed in the education system, in recent years, it received increasing consideration by educators around the world (Eroglu & Yuksel, 2020). The inverted lesson successfully complements the distance-education system by allowing learners to use all the modern technological possibilities, unlimited access to information, and to study anywhere, at any time (Urfa, 2018). The learner moves from a passive 'assimilator'

> '**Learners can study them on their own and spend time in class discussing, doing creative work, and asking questions of the teacher**'

	TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM	FLIPPED CLASSROOM
SCHOOL	Teacher instructs at school	Teacher facilitates student collaboration
HOME	Student completes assignment	Student watches teacher instruction
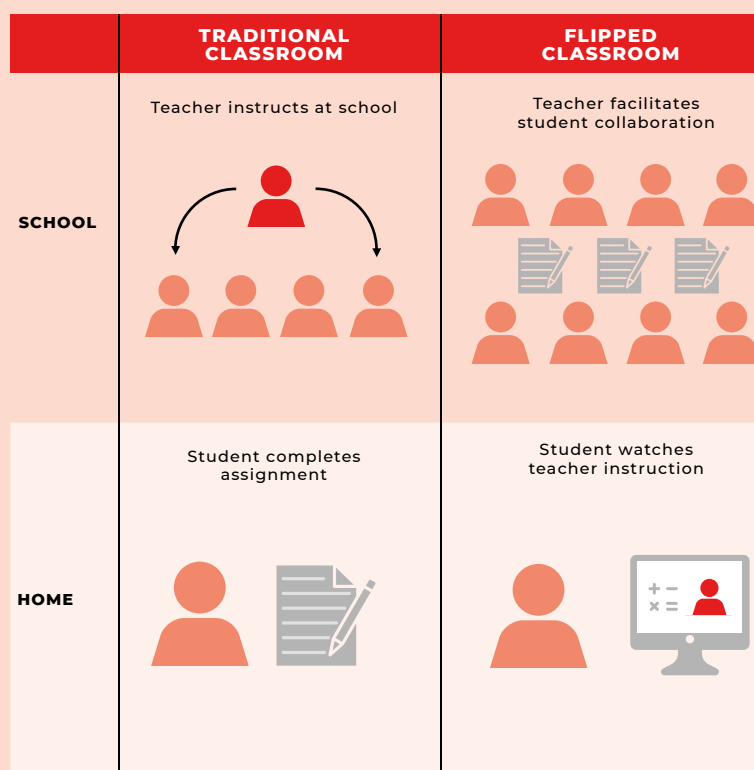
of information to an active researcher. Knowledge is no longer given in a finished, analysed and structured form (Schneider & Council, 2021), changing the essence of modern education.

The learner is required to study many sources, compare them, form an opinion, and sometimes engage in a discussion with peers, who formed a different opinion based on the same information. At the same time, the educator ceases to be a 'sage on stage', and becomes a guide, an adviser and a person capable of suggesting the right path and resolving the dispute (Voronina, 2018).

Distance learning, which has become an integral part of modern education (Baggaley, 2015), requires teachers to use efficient practices for supporting learners and developing positive learner-teacher relationships to encourage their motivation and engagement (Lai, 2017). With the shift to distance learning, education researchers noticed a significant

decrease in learner attendance of online courses, likely due to learners' loss of motivation due to an abrupt and unexpected shift from face-to-face to online meetings (Rotellar & Cain, 2016). Some educators' insufficient technology skills and knowledge may mean that they are not able to competently record and develop course material.

Academic success is directly linked to teaching methods and techniques, preparing and correctly using suitable educational materials, as well as introducing appropriate educational technologies (Polat & Karabatak, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly accelerated integrating technology into the lives of learners and teachers.

TOWARDS A FLIPPED CLASSROOM-BASED APPROACH

An inverted classroom combines in-class (online or offline) activities and those outside the classroom. Direct learning takes place ▶

Figure 1
How the flipped classroom method differs from the traditional model

outside the classroom, often using NICT, while interactive learning is in the classroom (Cui and Coleman, 2020). The most important aspects of this approach are:

- Disseminating theoretical knowledge among learners through video and audio materials
- Assignments and projects designed for consolidating acquired knowledge and developing learners' creative thinking, that is, learning at a higher level
- For in-class activities to be successful, learners must prepare by studying preliminary material (Kaya, 2021).

FLIPPED CLASSROOM FEATURES

The most important feature of the inverted classroom is taking into account the individual learners' characteristics. The flipped classroom will suit both those who prefer to learn at a slower pace and those who are used to learning quickly.

FLIPPED CLASSROOM ADVANTAGES

It is an alternative for those who cannot attend classes (Eroglu & Yuksel, 2020). Each learner can learn new material at their own individual

In the flipped learning model, knowledge is no longer given in a finished, analysed and structured form; rather the learner is required to study many sources, compare them, form an opinion and engage with peers who may have a different opinion based on the same information. The educator's role is changed from 'sage on stage' and to that of a guide and adviser.

pace and watch the video multiple times. Learners can study in any location and at any time. With the inverted classroom model, there is no need to spend class time explaining the basics. Learners can study them on their own and spend time in class discussing, doing creative work, and asking questions of the teacher (Sagır & Sakar, 2017).

Benefits of the flipped classroom include individualised learning; the ability to catch up with those who are absent; increased personal responsibility for their education; increased motivation; development of creative abilities; the ability to save and archive material; and the change of the role of the educator to a more user-friendly model, increasing the contact time between teacher and student. The possibility of learning anywhere and at any time makes this model an educational advancement (Campillo-Ferrer & Miralles-Martínez, 2021).

FLIPPED CLASSROOM DISADVANTAGES

The inverted classroom has some disadvantages, such as:

- The inability to know whether learners have already learnt the proposed subjects

- An acute technological need
- The difficulty of independently mastering the material for those who are not accustomed to learning
- The inability to ask questions while studying material (Yildirim & Kiray, 2016)
- Classes may be uninteresting
- Students ignore video materials
- A passive approach
- Insufficient technological resources
- Inability to teach practical things online
- Insufficient time to produce materials, etc. (Goksu & Duran, 2020)
- Lack of technical support (Talley & Scherer, 2013).

FLIPPED CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS

Effective operation of the inverted classroom requires sufficient motivation and awareness on the part of learners. Some researchers found that without learner goodwill, the model will not work properly, as learners may come to class unprepared or look at the preliminary document just before the lesson begins (Jonathan, 2021). In this case, learners will not have enough knowledge to participate in discussions.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

This paper highlights the experience of Algeria with the rapid integration of new technologies in education and the limitations arising from the pandemic crisis.

With the integration of inverted courses, Algerian schools are starting to come back to life. The next step would be to evaluate the integration and effectiveness of the flipped schooling approach. ■

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Transforming education in Africa through accelerated education and girls-focused programmes: Progress, challenges and strategies – the case of Sierra Leone

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Efforts by successive governments to achieve education for all Sierra Leonean children and youth have not been achieved, and the UIS 2018 database, for instance, reports that there were 624 292, 608 717 and 719 750 out-of-school children (OOSC) in Sierra Leone in the years 2015, 2017 and 2018 respectively.

It is increasingly evident that enrolling out-of-school children is not only a moral obligation but a productive investment. Countries, regardless of the seriousness of their OOSC challenges, suffer a far greater loss from maintaining OOSC than they would from increasing public spending to enrol those children in primary school (UNESCO, 2014 as cited in Martins, 2015).

It is important that the government of Sierra Leone explore other avenues to improve the OOSC situation. This paper suggests that accelerated education programmes (AEPs) are a necessary and context-relevant intervention to reduce the growing numbers of out of school children in Sierra Leone and West Africa.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sierra Leone's children face significant obstacles in obtaining quality education, enhanced retention in school and attaining completion of secondary school. Poverty, gender discrimination, long distances to schools, a perceived low value placed on education, and negative social norms and practices (such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy) exacerbate these factors. Several thousands of children in Sierra Leone do not complete primary school or transition from primary to junior secondary school (JSS).

Primary school completion rates stand at 64%, JSS graduation rates at 44% and SSS graduation rates at 22%.

METHODOLOGY

This article is a synthesis of primary research undertaken under the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange/Global Partnership for Education and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on accelerated education and girls-focused programmes. The research utilised mixed-method approaches, and sampling was based on exposure to an AEP, either by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Save the Children Fund, focusing on intervention regions and districts – Pujehun (south), Kambia and Port Loko (north-west region).

'In Sierra Leone, AEPs and girls-focused programmes have been recognised as crucial innovations to educate out-of-school children, and bridge rural-urban education gaps'

The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education's (MBSSE) innovations in those districts were also examined.

All localities in the three districts for the study were largely rural, with high levels of deprivation and poverty, and which had an active presence of AEPs over the last five to 10 years.

To ensure comparability, the studies were undertaken in intervention and non-intervention areas, together with students who were exposed to AEPs and those who were not.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The OOSC mapping, which involved 2 992 children aged four to 17, found that 2 299 (76%) were 'currently and fully in school', 30 (1%) were 'sometimes in school', 295 (10%) had 'dropped out of school', and 368 (12%) children had 'never attended' formal school, with the 'never attending' population constituting the highest proportion of children who had never attended primary school and providing the justification for AEP interventions.

Six hundred and sixty-three (22.2%) of the children had never attended school or had dropped out of school, constituting the OOSC population. The study also found out that 1 431 (62%) of the 2 299 students who were in school at the time of the research were at risk of dropping out because they had repeated classes frequently, were over-aged or not regularly in school.

Challenges affecting OOSC can be differentiated between supply-side barriers and demand-side barriers. Supply-side barriers encompass the lack of local schools, inadequate infrastructure and inadequately trained teachers, while demand-side barriers involve economic constraints, social norms and negative attitudes towards formal education from both students and parents.

In Sierra Leone, AEPs and girls-focused programmes (GFPS) have been recognised as crucial innovations to educate out-of-school children, and bridge rural-urban education gaps (AEWG, 2020). Save the Children implements an AEP model condensing six years of primary education into three, emphasising foundational literacy and numeracy, while the MBSSE operates a catch-up model for pregnant girls, offering primary school-level education in literacy, numeracy, science and social studies.

Additionally, BRAC's Girls Empowerment model combines accelerated education components with income generation, reproductive health knowledge and peer learning. An effectiveness study, which forms part of the IDRC research package, sought to investigate what AEPs and GFPS could do to address the OOSC situation, and to assess how beneficiaries of these programmes have fared after the intervention. Two hundred and forty-five beneficiaries who had transitioned to JSS, and 167 in the world of work, participated in the study.

The findings indicate that AEPs cover essential costs in education, which could otherwise not be borne by parents in rural communities, such as school bags, shoes, uniforms and learning materials.

AEPs also offer a more conducive learning environment, especially for pregnant girls and young mothers, because the AEP environment is perceived as being more friendly and free of corporal punishment.

Teaching methods, such as the use of play-based learning and the local language, create a more conducive environment for beneficiaries to learn. AEP teachers are more likely to make home visits to address absenteeism.

Performance on SEGRA tests is comparable between junior secondary school AEP and non-AEP beneficiaries, with AEP students exhibiting higher completion rates at the JSS level due to their determination to utilise a second chance at schooling, and the AEP's influence in emphasising the importance of education, leading to increased interest in transitioning to further education.

'When I joined the programme, I realised that I can become a bank manager. In the past, my aspiration was limited and my thought was about early marriage and pregnancy,' according to an AEP beneficiary in Kambia.

The results suggest that AEPs play a significant role in assisting the government in addressing the OOSC situation. Despite a compressed curriculum, AEPs can produce students whose academic performance is comparable to those in the formal education system, potentially reducing costs associated with primary education by shortening the duration.

However, a political economic analysis of AEPs undertaken to understand the landscape ▶

for uptake of AEPs, including by the Government of Sierra Leone, reveals their heavy reliance on donors, leading to a short-lived nature of activities limited by funding, often spanning only three or four cycles. The short-term nature of the funding indicates that few OOSC benefit from their programmes.

Despite standardised curricula developed with input from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and various stakeholders, the absence of government financial support for AEPs and the yet-to-be-implemented OOSC strategy indicate challenges in sustaining and expanding these programmes. Communities and parents have hitherto provided classroom space for the AEPs, but have not contributed much towards the financing of the programmes. As such, when AEPs fold up, programmes are not sustained, despite their success.

The political economic analysis indicates communities' willingness to contribute agricultural produce to support facilitators; contribute funds to village savings and loan schemes; conduct advocacy on the importance of education for OOSC and the girl child; and appeal to philanthropists to support with training centres and materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sustained budget from the MBSSE for OOSC strategy roll-out with close collaboration and implementation by non-state actors working in the extreme poverty and remote rural areas where formal schools are limited by resourcing
- A proportion of government's budget for education be set aside yearly to sustain AEPs targeting the most vulnerable children, between ages eight to 15 years. A sustained AEP, coupled with the implementation of

existing policies like radical inclusion, will help reduce the number of OOSC
- Strengthen data-management systems on OOSC in the country, providing records on their numbers, training centres and the NGOs/CSOs implementing AEP, so that donors willing to intervene have a proper idea of the situation.

CONCLUSION

Addressing the out-of-school children situation in Sierra Leone requires a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach, emphasising that the government alone cannot adequately tackle the crisis.

Engaging the entire country, including community members, local councils and philanthropists, is essential to overcome short-term donor funding reductions and create conditions for sustainable education innovations. Without such comprehensive involvement, the potential contribution of Sierra Leone's populace to national development is at risk of being significantly reduced. ◼

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The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS ROTERODAMUS

#YearOfEducation #Agenda2063 #TheAfricaWeWant

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No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated

NELSON MANDELA

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Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of Freedom, Democracy and Sustainable human development

KOFI ANNAN

What does the Year of Education imply for the African continent?

*By **Dr. Rita Bissoonauth**, Director of UNESCO LO to African Union and UNEC*

This is the first time in the history of the African Union (AU) that the theme of the year is focusing on education. One might ask why it has taken so long to bring such an important sector at the level of Heads of States and Governments. But, better late than never, as the saying goes. It is only through education that we can build our youths' necessary skills to respond the challenges of the 21st century. This is in line with Africa's Agenda 2063's goal of well-educated and skilled citizens under-pinned by science, technology and innovation, and the UN SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education, including lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with a median age of 19.7 years. By 2050, Africa will have 1.25 billion people aged 15 to 64, comprising over 30% of the workforce worldwide (McKinsey, 2023)[1]. This represents a huge potential for economic growth and social transformation, but our young people need to be equipped with the right skills and opportunities to become productive and innova-tive entrepreneurs, and respond adequately to the needs of the job labour market.

But what does the Year of Education mean for all the citizens of the continent? This year provides a unique opportunity to elevate education to the top of the global political agenda and to mobilise action by sowing the seeds to transform education in a world seeing the rise of artificial intelligence. It presents a transformative opportunity for the continent, building on the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) , Agenda 2063, as well as SDG 4, and existing human rights agreements. It will enable the empowerment of individuals by fostering knowledge-based societies, and address pressing issues like climate change.

Despite some progress, particularly in access to basic education – evidenced by the rate of

**Figure 1
Africa will add 796 million people to the global workforce and be home to the largest and youngest population by 2050.
Source: McKinsey Global Institute**
▼▼

out-of-school children being divided almost in half between 2020 and 2022 – the number of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa has practically not changed, while the primary-school age population has almost doubled over the same period. Considerable challenges to achieving SDG 4 and CESA 16–25 persist in terms of quality and equity.

The COVID-19 crisis has led to learning loss and reduced fiscal space for education spending. The learning crisis is particularly worrying – nine out of 10 children in sub-Saharan Africa are unable to read or under-stand a simple text by the age of 10[2].

However, there has been substantial efforts within the continent to ensure access, completion and quality of basic education for all, such as increased access to pre-primary education, adult literacy and lifelong learning. Over the past decade, African governments

WORKING-AGE (15–64) POPULATION

	2020	2050	CHANGE
AFRICA	753M	1.549B	+796M
INDIA	928M	1.111B	+183M
CHINA	1.035B	855M	-180M
EUROPE	969M	814M	-156M
NORTH AMERICA	480M	519M	+39M
LATIN AMERICA	439M	488M	+49M

have undertaken a wide range of programmes and policy efforts to ensure that no child is left behind in accessing education (UNESCO, 2023)[3].

Unfortunately, education in our countries is often limited mostly to increasing access, and not enough attention is given to quality education, especially learning outcomes. Despite all efforts made, there still remains a huge amount of work to accomplish to bring the continent closer to the education goals of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

Education still remains poorly underfunded on our continent. As policymakers, we need to explore other areas such as public resources, external aid, and innovative funding for improved financing in the years to come.

WHAT SHOULD MEMBER STATES FOCUS ON DURING THIS YEAR OF EDUCATION?

In order for AU Member States to harness Africa's growing demographic dividend in the continent, they should focus on the following areas, to ensure that African youth can better respond to the needs of the emerging job labour markets.

FINANCING OF EDUCATION

More investment needs to be given to education systems. The financing gap in sub-Saharan Africa, to meet SDG 4 goals, is around US$70 billion a year[4]. Aid to education has fallen in many countries, putting greater responsibilities on governments to provide adequate domestic financing for education to ensure continuity of learning.

It is imperative to find additional and alternative resources to improve the financing of education and meet the goals of both Education 2030 and Agenda 2063.

Many African Member States have increased their budget base allocated to education, diversified additional tax revenues to finance education, enhanced the fight against waste and fraud in the payment of salaries, and even reduced bottlenecks in public procurement systems.

Furthermore, African Union Member States must commit to spend at least 20% of national budgets on education over the next five years. These commitments are a crucial shield against learning losses resulting from the economic impact of COVID-19. As a global education

community, we must build on this political ambition to mobilise more and better domestic financing, and tackle the unfinished business of getting all children, especially girls, in school and learning.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

At a time when we are talking of leaving no one behind, we should not forget about learners affected by humanitarian situations. In times of conflicts, education is on the front line, often as one of the first services to be disrupted, and among the last to restart. When schools are closed, learners – especially girls and young women – face risks, such as sexual abuse, exploitation, and recruitment, and are more prone to child marriage and child labour.

Education in emergencies is critically underfunded, withan average of less than 3% of humanitarian aid[5]. New data suggests that children in crisis-affected countries may acquire foundational skills six times slower than children in non-emergencies. ▶

With displacement now averaging a decade or longer, inclusion in national education systems can help host governments guarantee continuity of learning, build social cohesion, and give refugees the tools to rebuild their lives. It is only by empowering refugees in the society that host countries can reap the economic benefits.

Furthermore, UNESCO's Qualifications Passport for Refugees increases access for refugees and vulnerable migrants to higher education through the recognition of prior learning and qualifications.

GENDER EQUALITY

Despite progress, a staggering 122 million girls remain out of school globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 88 young women complete secondary education for every 100 young men. Nine of the 10 countries with the highest out-of-school rates for girls are in sub-Saharan Africa, the 10th country being Afghanistan. In eight of these 10 countries, at least 50% of school-age girls are not in school[6].

What are the benefits of investing in girls' education? Globally, the loss in human capital due to gender inequalities is estimated to be around US$160 trillion, which is about twice the value of global GDP. Educating girls has a huge societal impact. It enhances women's agency and their decision-making. It increases their living standards. It has benefits for the health and nutrition of their children.

Education can help end child marriage and early and unintended pregnancy. It also increases women's access to decent work and sparks economic development.

GREENING EDUCATION

The African continent has not been spared by the impact of climate change; it is confronted with rising temperatures and rising sea levels, characterised by unprecedented flooding and changing rainfall patterns resulting in droughts, famine and wide-scale destruction

'It is imperative to find additional and alternative resources to improve the financing of education and meet the goals of both Education 2030 and Agenda 2063'

of livelihoods. Young Africans are on the front line of climate challenge.

Their future is threatened by the ongoing disruptions. They need to be made more aware of social and environmental issues, as they are the ones who can make a difference by helping to make our societies more resilient and eco-responsible.

Curricula should encompass climate-related issues such as UNESCO's Greening Education, which enables learners of all ages to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Africa is firmly committed to transforming its education. To achieve the ideal of a prosperous, peaceful and integrated Africa, there is a need to take the necessary measures to ensure that all citizens fully participate in the development process. Education is one the cornerstones towards achieving this objective.

This is a year when we can make a difference and leave no child/learner behind, so that we reach the goal of a prosperous Africa with sustainable livelihoods for our younger generation. This is not possible without peace and education. It is thus crucial that all actors work together to achieve quicker and better results. ■

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Everyone who remembers his own education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system

SIDNEY HOOK

African Union Institutions implementing the continent's education agenda

The Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI), within the African Union Commission, has the overall responsibility of developing and harmonising policies and programmes within Africa's education and training sectors, to ensure that the continent achieves the goals of inclusive growth and sustainable development, and achieving Agenda 2063.

ESTI's mandate is guided by several key strategies, including the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA); the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA); and African Space Policy and Strategy. The Department leads the implementation of several Agenda 2063 flagship initiatives including the Pan African Virtual and e-university (PAVeU) and the Africa Outer Space Strategy.

ESTI oversees the following technical institutions – Scientific, Technical and Research

Commission (STRC); African Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI); International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA); Pan African Institute for Education for Development (IPED)/African Observatory for Education; and the Pan African University (PAU).

PAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY (PAU)

The Pan African University (PAU) aims to:
- Establish continental institutions that promote high-quality training, research and innovation within Africa
- Ensure a steady nurturing of new ideas and a continuous injection of highly skilled human resources to meet the developmental needs of the continent.

The University is a network of post-graduate (master's and doctoral) teaching and research institutions within selected high-quality universities in the five geographic regions of Africa. It promotes student mobility in Africa and facilitates intra-regional networking for academic researchers.

Its guiding principles include academic freedom; autonomy and accountability; quality assurance; promotion of African integration through the mobility of students and academic and administrative staff; and the development of collaborative research linked to the challenges facing the African continent.

The University comprises five thematic institutes, namely:
- Institute for Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation (PAUSTI), hosted by the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya (East Africa)
- Institute for Life and Earth Sciences (including Health and Agriculture) (PAULESI), hosted by the University of Ibadan in Nigeria (West Africa)
- Institute for Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS), hosted by the University of Yaoundé II in Cameroon (Central Africa)

'The Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, within the African Union Commission, has the overall responsibility of developing and harmonising policies and programmes within Africa's education and training sectors'

- Institute for Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change) (PAUWES), hosted by the University of Tlemcen in Algeria (North Africa)
- Institute for Space Sciences (PAUSS), to be hosted by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in South Africa (Southern Africa).

The University offers 26 masters' and 11 PhD programmes in 40 developmental fields of study. Students are awarded joint degrees from PAU and the host universities.

PAU students are admitted on a competitive basis from all African countries, with no more than 20% from the host country, and with gender balance taken into consideration. PAU has admitted over 3 000 students since 2012 from 50 AU States.

Full scholarships are offered and include an agreement with the African Union Commission (AUC) that recipients will work in Africa upon the completion of their studies for at least the same length of time as their scholarship. More than 2 500 scholarships have been awarded since the creation of PAU, of which 1 000 have been awarded to young African women. PAU is based in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

AFRICAN UNION/INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN AFRICA (AU/CIEFFA)

AU/CIEFFA's mission is to ensure that African women are fully empowered in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights and opportunities, and are able to fight against all forms of gender-based discrimination and inequality.

The AU/CIEFFA works closely with AU Member States and governments, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, development partners and youth to achieve the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and Agenda 2063 with regards to girls' and women's education in Africa.

AU/CIEFFA's third strategic plan (2021–25) comprises four strategic axes – gender-responsive education policies; curriculum reform and teacher education; science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) and skills development; and education in emergency and humanitarian contexts. AU/CIEFFA is based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

PAN AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (IPED)/AFRICAN OBSERVATORY FOR EDUCATION

The African Union's Pan African Institute for Education for Development (IPED) is charged with functioning as Africa's Education Observatory. Its aims to promote quality, responsive and inclusive education development in Africa by ensuring a robust and functional Education Management Information System (EMIS) and sound knowledge-based planning.

IPED is charged with supporting AU Member States to strengthen their national EMIS systems and enhance data collection using technology for effective monitoring and reporting. The institution also maintains the African Union Education Data Centre (AU-EDC), which will serve as a repository of education data to facilitate analysis and reporting by IPED.

IPED's programmes and activities include training and capacity building; research and policy analysis; statistics and indicator development; and monitoring and evaluation of AU education frameworks and strategies. IPED is based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

AFRICAN UNION SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND RESEARCH COMMISSION (AU–STRC)

The African Union Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU–STRC) is mandated to implement the AU Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), in ▶

co-ordination with relevant stakeholders; promote intra-African research activities; identify new and comparative priority areas for research; and popularise the scientific and technological research culture in Africa.

The AU–STRC's programmes and activities include STISA 2024 implementation and the African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) Strategic Plan 2022–28; capacity building of scientists and technologists; science, technology and innovation (STI) for youth empowerment and wealth creation; STI for climate change; green innovation strategy development and implementation for Africa; African Pharmacopoeia series; African Union Network of Sciences platform; Gender and Women in Science programme; and the Inclusive and Social Innovation for Economic Prosperity programme. AU-STRC is based in Abuja, Nigeria.

AFRICAN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL (ASRIC)

The African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) serves as a continental platform to mobilise African research excellence and innovation. It also serves to provide a platform for dialogue and a voice of the scientific community in building and sustaining the continental research-policy nexus. The aim is to address Africa's socio-economic development challenges while implementing the overarching continental framework of Agenda 2063, the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) and the ASRIC Strategic Plan 2022–28.

ASRIC programmes and projects include a scholarship scheme; diaspora engagement; and flagship projects such as Hepatitis-Free Village; African Disaster Mitigation Research Centre; Fighting Stunting in Africa: Waging War on Malnutrition and Pollution; Corona Viruses' Diagnostic and Treatment for All; and Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture. ASRIC is based in Abuja, Nigeria.

AFRICAN OBSERVATORY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (AOSTI)

The African Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) aims to measure science, technology and innovation (STI) in
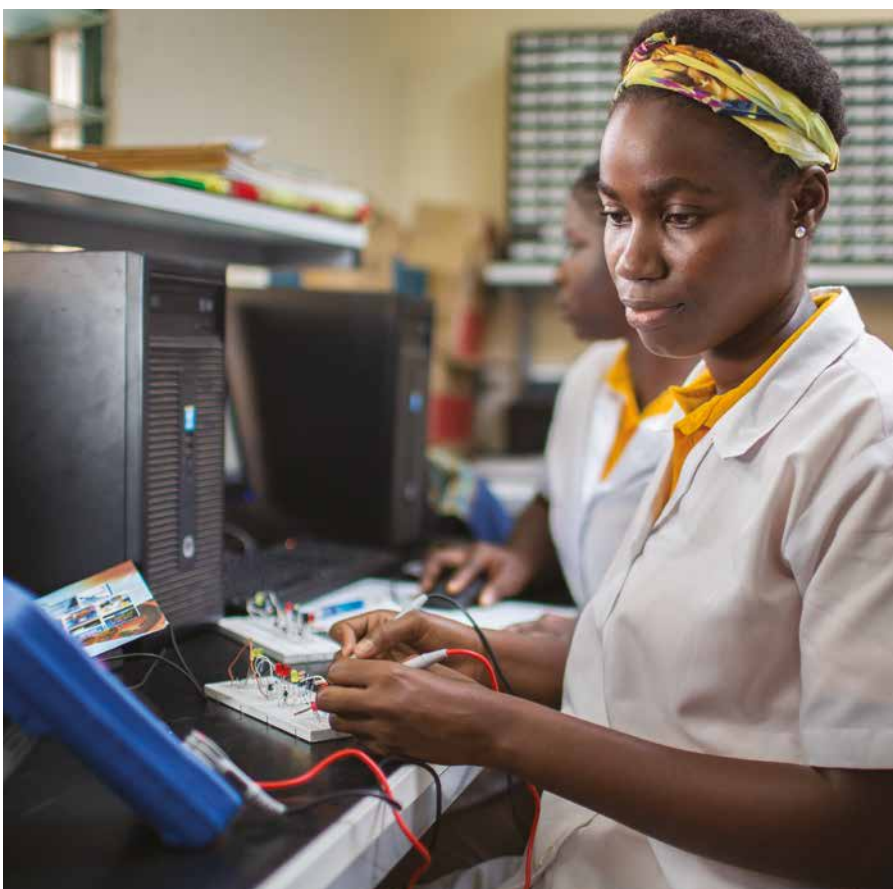
Download the AU Handbook from to learn more about the educational institutions of the African Union.

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD

Africa in order to promote the use of STI in supporting evidence-based decision-making for sustainable development in Africa. AOSTI is mandated to champion evidence-based policymaking in Africa by serving as the continental repository for STI data and statistics and as a source of policy analysis.

AOSTI's role also includes monitoring and evaluating the African Union's STI policy implementation; supporting Member States in managing and using STI statistical information in accordance with the African Charter on Statistics; assisting Member States in mapping their STI capabilities to address development challenges; strengthening national capacities for STI policy formulation, evaluation and review, as well as technology foresight and prospecting; providing Member State decision-makers with up-to-date information on global scientific and technological trends; and promoting and strengthening regional and international cooperation. AOSTI is based in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. ■

SANEDI

POWER PLAY

Dr Karen Surridge, project manager for renewable energy and cleaner fossil fuels at SANEDI, on the benefits and opportunities green hydrogen presents

Green hydrogen holds the potential to help South Africa meet its 2050 target of reaching net zero

Hydrogen fuel-cell technology was invented in 1839, but it had to wait until the 1960s for NASA to put it to commercial use. Today, much of the world is pinning its energy-transition hopes on green hydrogen as a fuel source. Why is this important for South Africa? The reasons are many, varied and compelling.

Hydrogen is an energy carrier that can be used to generate electricity either indirectly by generating heat through combustion or directly through an electrochemical process that takes place in a fuel cell.

Hydrogen is not in itself green or renewable energy because its production process is electricity-intensive. Therefore, green hydrogen is produced using electricity from any renewable energy source, for instance wind, solar, hydro and so on.

South Africa should focus on green hydrogen, firstly, because it is a technology that can help the country achieve net-zero carbon status by the 2050 target date, and South Africa already has a well-developed expertise in the Fischer-Tropsch technology.

Secondly, and as important, are the opportunities to industrialise the economy that green hydrogen can create. South Africa is home to some of the most important raw materials needed to produce it. Combining these resources and the anticipated local demand for green hydrogen creates an opportunity to establish manufacturing plants for the components needed to build renewable energy plants and produce green hydrogen.

Local manufacturing creates jobs, energy self-sufficiency and security, as well as export opportunities – all needed to ensure a just energy transition that delivers tangible socio-economic benefits to all South Africans.

Global demand for hydrogen reached an estimated 90 million tons in 2020 and is expected to grow to between 500 million and 680 million tons by 2050. The export market will account for 100 million to 180 million tons. South Africa is actively exploring and developing its green-hydrogen industry to tap into this substantial growth potential.

Infrastructure SA identified 19 green-hydrogen projects worth more than ZAR300 billion. The IDC secured EUR23 million in German grant funds to support the development of South Africa's green-hydrogen economy, help accelerate the country's transition to renewable energy, and be a major exporter of green ammonia (a carrier of green hydrogen) to Europe and the Far East.

It is an exciting and inspiring goal for South Africa to grow into a significant supplier of the raw materials, technology and product the world needs to clean up its energy act. ■

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The African Union Digital Education Strategy

The African Union Digital Education Strategy for Africa aims to harness digital technologies to achieve the strategic objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa, namely revitalising the teaching profession; improving learning outcomes; inclusion and equity; adult literacy; promoting TVET for employability and expansion of tertiary education; research and innovation; and providing all citizens with the digital com- petencies and skills needed to thrive in the digital age. The African Union Digital Education Strategy proposes the need for:

1. ***Digital technology appropriation in education –*** accelerating the adoption of digital technologies for teaching, learning, research, assessment and administration.
2. ***Education in digital technology for digitally empowered citizens/***

To download the factsheet on the AU Digital Education Strategy,

SCAN HERE

for the digital economy and society **–** strengthening digital literacy and skills for all, especially for teachers and students.
3. ***Building the capacity of AU Member States*** in digital infrastructure (networks and devices) for digital education.

Building digital infrastructure is a critical building block of the Digital Education Strategy, which proposes five strategic action areas for promoting digital infrastructure for the educa- tion sector, namely:
- Africa broadband network acceleration and e-rate initiative
- Africa learning space initiative
- Public-private sector-driven device access scheme for students and staff
- Sustainable NREN initiative
- Africa school and Campus Network initiative. ∎

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It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading

KATHERINE PATERSON

THINGS FALL APART
Chinua Achebe

Woman at Point Zero
Nawal El Saadawi

GOD'S BITS of WOOD
Sembene Ousmane

The Lion & The Jewel
Wole Soyinka

CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY
Alan Paton

So Long a Letter
Mariama Bâ

The African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award for Scientific Excellence

The prestigious African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award was launched in 2008. The Award was launched with the goal of recognising, awarding and honouring outstanding African scientists who are excelling in their fields for their scientific achievements, discoveries and innovations.

The African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award is given to scientists in two sectors – Life and Earth Science; Basic Science, Technology and Innovation.

The Award raises the profile of the science and technology sector in the African Union Member States, and Africa as a whole, thus contributing to the continent' sustainable development and the delivery of Africa's Agenda 2063.

The African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award programme is implemented in three levels and awarded to nationals of the African Union Member States who are eligible to participate in these Awards:

1. The Continental Award is open to all African scientists and is the highest level of the programme. It is implemented by the African Union Commission. The two successful winners of the award each receive US$100 000, which is often awarded during a key AU occasion, such as the annual Assembly of Heads of States and Government Summit.
2. The Regional Award is implemented in partnership with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It aims to promote the participation of African women in science, technology and innovation. The two winners per region receive a prize of US$20 000 each.

▶▶

'We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people; by the number of children in school, and by the quality of their education'

KWAME NKRUMAH
PAN AFRICANIST AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

To find out more about the African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award for Scientific Excellence, contact the Department of Education, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission, email

ESTI-REGISTRY@ AFRICA-UNION.ORG
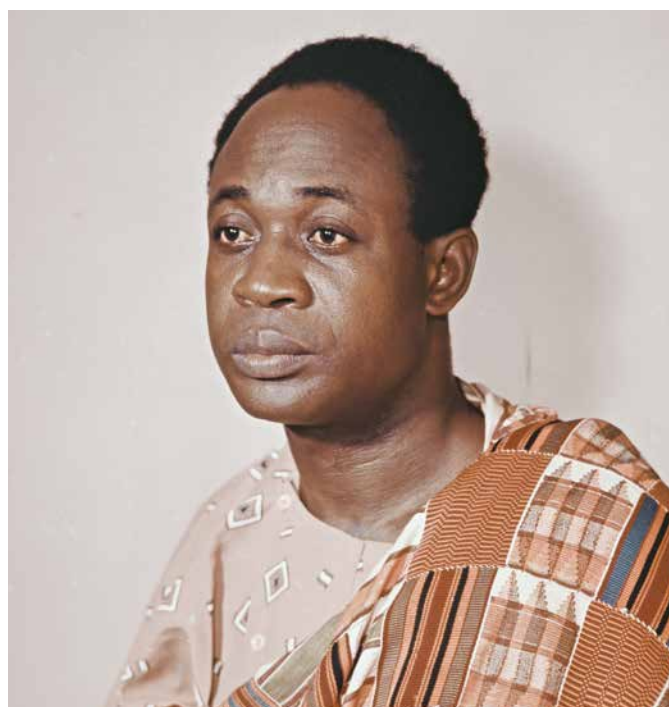
3. The National Young Scientists Award is implemented by Member States that have signed an Implementation Agreement with the AU Commission. At the national level, the programme is implemented through the National Academy of Science or National Research Councils.

To learn more about the African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award for Scientific Excellence, contact the Department of Education, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission. ◼

The African Union Media Fellowship gains traction with the launch of the second cohort

Championing balanced narratives about Africa by Africans

African storytellers utilise media to inform, educate and empower citizens; bridge knowledge gaps; and drive positive change. They facilitate information flow, public dialogue and active participation, fostering a more democratic, inclusive and empowered Africa. Media and citizen engagement interconnect to shape communities and promote societal transformation. Their storytelling platforms create spaces for communities to connect, exchange ideas and shape the transformative trajectory of African societies, aligning with the aspirations of Agenda 2063 to create a prosperous, integrated and united continent.

The African Union Media Fellowship (AUMF) was officially launched in April 2022 with a call to the public that resulted in 800 applications from across Africa and the diaspora, and 15 successful applicants were selected to join the first cohort of the AUMF.

In 2023 the 2nd Cohort of the AUMF was launched with a robust response, reflected in an overwhelming volume of over 6 000 applications submitted on the online portal from across the continent and the diaspora. These submissions stand as testament to the AUMF's resonating objectives and the foundational work undertaken by the journalists and content creators who participated in the 1st Cohort of the AUMF, to showcase African stories and the work of the AU, as well as to popularise the outstanding opportunities and learning gained from the AUMF.

Twenty-one successful applicants were selected as Fellows in the 2nd cohort of the AUMF.

The AU Media Fellows have a common need to promote new narratives about Africa, narratives that are balanced and reflect the realities of the continent from an African perspective, and challenge the stereotypes that are often labelled as 'an accurate' portrayal of Africa and Africans but heavily weighted towards reinforcing the long-held and existing negative stereotypes.

The AUMF advocates for journalism and content creation that is generated by Africans, so that the stories told not only portray the successes of the continent but also draw attention to the challenges, and how Africans are rising up and identifying opportunities that lead to African-led solutions for African problems.

The Fellows participating in the 2nd Cohort of the AUMF will enhance the promotion of Africa's Agenda 2063 goals and aspirations by focusing on the seven key thematic areas prioritised for the AUMF 2023–2024 programme, namely:

- ***Gender and Women Empowerment:*** Promoting efforts towards the Economic and Financial Inclusion of African Women (Agenda 2063 Aspiration 6, AU Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (GEWE); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); and the AU Constitutive Act
- ***Advancing Trade, Investment and Industrialisation:*** Promoting efforts towards Africa's economic integration. This is in line with the 2023 AU Theme of the Year – Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation (Agenda 2063 Aspirations 1 and 2)
- ***Culture and Creative Industries & Sports Development in Africa:*** Through

African
Union

A Flagship Project of
Agenda
2063 The Africa
We Want

Agenda 2063, this envisions vibrant cultural expressions, thriving creative industries and enhanced sports infrastructure for sustainable development (Agenda 2063 Aspiration 5)

- **Agricultural Development, Environmental Protection and Climate Action:** Advancing agriculture and agri-business through sustainable environment management for a sustainable and resilient future (Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1 and Agenda 2063 Continental programme – CAADP)
- **Governance and Democracy in Africa:** Actively promoting good governance through transparency, accountability,and the rule of law and strengthening democratic institutions for inclusive and sustainable development (Agenda 2063 Aspiration 2, 3 and 4)
- **Transforming Africa through Digital Innovation:** Referencing the AU's Africa's Digital Transformation Strategy – Positioning Africa for the 4th Industrial Revolution; Agenda 2063 Flagship Project PIDA and Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, promoting digital inclusion and other data policy frameworks (Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1)
- **Regional Integration and Economic Co-operation:** Advancing a unified Africa through free movement, fostering economic collaboration and sustainable development for shared prosperity (Agenda 2063 Aspirations 2 and 7, Flagship Projects on African Passport and Free Movement of Persons).

THE 2ND COHORT OF AU MEDIA FELLOWS

MELISSA BABIL, MOZAMBIQUE
Melissa Babil is a distinguished filmmaker and photographer. Her expertise in the realm of visual storytelling has been meticulously cultivated through training at the esteemed Academy for Young Creatives in Film and Television Production in Lusaka and the renowned New York Film Academy. Melissa's dedication to her craft is evident in her work, which continues to captivate audiences with its creative prowess.

DÁMASO ALONSO ESONO NSUE EYANG, EQUATORIAL GUINEA
Dámaso is a seasoned journalist with extensive experience, specialising in the comprehensive coverage of social and political issues. Throughout his distinguished career, he has demonstrated a remarkable ability to delve deep into complex topics, providing in-depth insights and analysis that inform and engage his audience. ▶

MOHAMED MOHAMUD, SOMALIA

Mohamed is an avid blogger with a decade of experience, sharing his insights and knowledge with a global audience. His expertise, unique perspective and passion for history and Somalia have culminated in the publication of two books dedicated to unravelling the rich and complex history of the nation. His contributions have earned him recognition on the international stage, with prominent features in various global media outlets.

YASMINE BOULDJEDRI, ALGERIA

Yasmine is a dedicated science journalist and podcaster with over a decade of experience, and her journalistic journey has evolved significantly over the last three years, as she has developed a strong passion for climate journalism. This newfound interest has led her to explore and report on critical environmental issues, aiming to raise awareness and drive positive change.

JAN WILLEM BORNMAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Jan is an accomplished journalist with a decade of extensive experience in reporting politics, governance, humanitarian and migration issues, across the continent. His unwavering passion lies in the art of storytelling, as he strives to share people's stories with utmost empathy and compassion.

KELETSO THOBEGA, BOTSWANA

Keletso is an award-winning freelance development journalist, specialising in climate change, energy, health, gender, and environmental reporting. Her exceptional work has garnered recognition and been featured in prominent continental and international publications. Keletso is steadfast in her dedication to raising awareness and promoting a deeper understanding of the region's development initiatives on a global scale.

NOBANTU MODISE, ZAMBIA

Nobantu is an experienced multidisciplinary creative professional with over a decade of expertise in the media industry. She currently holds the esteemed position of Editor-in-Chief of her own publication and is an accomplished podcaster. Nobantu is a passionate Sustainability Communication enthusiast, focusing on reporting a wide range of topics to promote awareness and understanding.

TUYEIMO HAIDULA, NAMIBIA

Tuyeimo is a seasoned journalist with valuable experience working with reputable media houses. Her strengths lie in investigative journalism, where she has honed her skills over the years. Tuyeimo's passionate about solutions-based narrative journalism. She is dedicated to telling stories that showcase how individuals and communities are actively working towards solving various challenges.

HEVI JOEL KOMLAN SENAM, TOGO

Hevi is the passionate content creator behind Culture On The Move, an informative media platform dedicated to connecting artists and cultural professionals with valuable opportunities. With a proven track record of championing cultural diversity, Hevi is driven by a compelling mission to harness culture for sustainable development and amplify the voices of underrepresented communities.

WAKINI NJOGU, KENYA

Wakini is a thematic content creator and journalist with a deep-seated passion for reporting on gender and digital rights. With a wealth of experience in the field, she continues to be a prominent voice in journalism, unwavering in her commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. Wakini's dedication to shedding light on critical issues has earned them respect and recognition in the world of media. ▶

MAURICE THANTAN, BENIN

Maurice is a dedicated journalist working at the Benin Broadcasting and Television Office (ORTB), the nation's public service audiovisual media outlet. Additionally, he serves as the local correspondent for the esteemed pan-African magazine, Jeune Afrique. With a remarkable blogging journey spanning 15 years, Maurice's focus lies in reporting on democratic governance in Africa. His commitment to shedding light on these vital topics is testament to his dedication and passion for journalism.

MERIYEM KOKAINA, MOROCCO

Meriyem is the founder of 'Au Pays du Baobab,' a dedicated platform for celebrating African literature and history through the works of African authors and intellectuals. Her unwavering passion for promoting African culture and narratives has driven her to actively pursue a unique and transformative opportunity.

JACQUELINE SEGAHUNGU, BURUNDI

Jacqueline is a versatile professional, serving as a journalist, researcher, reporter and producer for both local and international media outlets. Her passion lies in uncovering and sharing international development stories, harnessing the potential of emerging digital technologies to create a tangible impact in communities. Jacqueline is dedicated to bringing these important narratives to the forefront, fostering understanding and driving positive change.

RONALD MUSOKE, UGANDA

With over a decade of journalism experience, Robert has consistently delivered distinguished reporting on a wide range of critical themes. His coverage extends to areas including the environment, energy, the climate crisis, health, education, agriculture, trade, regional integration, the humanitarian crisis, as well as diplomacy and international relations.

PRINCE BUBACARR AMINATA SANKANU, THE GAMBIA

Prince is a veteran journalist with extensive experience reporting on governance for both local and continental media outlets. In addition to his journalism career, he is also a media scholar and currently holds a position in the government as the deputy spokesperson.

CASIMIR LOUIS DAVID, MAURITIUS

Casimir is a passionate and committed journalist with an unwavering commitment to achieving excellence in every report. He is driven by the desire to contribute to the promotion of the African continent, offering a unique perspective that reflects the diverse narratives of Africa. Casimir's passion extends to critical issues such as the environment and climate change, the agriculture and fishing sector, as well as arts and culture.

JIBI MOSES DANIEL, SOUTH SUDAN

Jibi is a seasoned career journalist, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to his role as Managing Editor and Fact Checker in South Sudan. With a keen eye for detail and a commitment to journalistic integrity, he diligently reports on governance matters throughout the African continent. His dedication to providing accurate and insightful coverage contributes significantly to informed discourse on critical issues.

ADESEWA OLOFINKO, NIGERIA

Adesewa is a thematic content creator with a strong foundation in journalism, combining her passion for storytelling with a keen understanding of journalistic principles. Her blog (Black Lady Writers) serves as a dedicated platform focused on illuminating and celebrating women's development stories, providing valuable insights and perspectives on this vital subject. Through her work, Adesewa seeks to empower and inspire, fostering a deeper understanding of the journeys, challenges and achievements of women in various spheres of life. ▶

MOUTTASEM MAHMOUD ALBARODI, EGYPT

Mouttasem, a committed science writer, possesses a deep-rooted passion for issues related to health and climate. Through his writing, he tackles the crucial and timely subject of Climate Health Resilience. Mouttasem's work goes beyond the surface, delving into the complex interplay between climate change and its multifaceted effects on public health.

RIM BEN KHALIFE, TUNISA

Rim Ben Khalifa is a freelance environmental journalist, podcaster and political communication adviser from Tunisia with over a decade of experience in the field. She holds two master's degrees, one in Political Science and another in Political Communication. Rim has held diverse roles in the media industry and currently hosts and produces an environmental podcast for Al-Mayadeen. Driven by her passion for investigative journalism and dedication to addressing pivotal societal issues, Rim continues to make significant contributions to environmental journalism and political communication.

WILLIAM CHISOMO, MALAWI

William Chisomo Kumwembe is a seasoned business journalist from Malawi with over 14 years of experience. He is currently the Business News Editor at Times Media Group in Blantyre, where he leads a team responsible for creating in-depth content across various media channels, including radio, TV and online platforms. William has a rich career history, having worked at The Guardian Newspaper and Zodiak Broadcasting Station. Recognised for his exceptional skills and dedication, he has been honoured with three awards from MISA-Malawi in the Financial and ICT reporting categories. In addition to his journalistic achievements, William holds the esteemed position of Chairperson of the Media Committee on Construction in Malawi. ▶

THE AUMF MENTORS – ELEVATING THE SKILLS OF JOURNALISTS AND CONTENT CREATORS

Key to the AU Media Fellowship journey is access to industry professionals and experts who act as mentors and support the Fellows throughout the programme.

The objective of the mentorship within the AUMF programme is to provide guidance, support and expertise to the Fellows, helping them enhance their skills, knowledge and professional growth. Mentors play a critical role in shaping the Fellows' understanding of the media landscape, providing industry insights, and fostering a collaborative and supportive environment.

The AUMF Mentors consist of accomplished individuals who have impacted the African media industry, and provide diverse perspectives and skills. They share a common goal of promoting African voices and combating disinformation. Through their efforts, they have assisted organisations and individuals in effectively conveying their stories, resulting in improved attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about the vast potential and opportunities within the African continent.

The period of mentorship spans the duration of the Fellowship, typically lasting for 12 months. The specific responsibilities of the mentors include:

- Mentoring and providing guidance to the assigned Fellow(s) based on their areas of expertise and experience
- Assisting the Fellows in setting clear goals and objectives for their Fellowship projects
- Conducting regular virtual or in-person meetings with the Fellows to discuss their progress, challenges and provide feedback
- Sharing industry insights, best practices and practical advice to help the Fellows navigate the media landscape
- Offering constructive feedback and guidance on the Fellows' project deliverables; ensuring quality and relevance
- Encouraging networking opportunities and facilitating connections with relevant industry professionals and stakeholders
- Supporting the Fellows in developing their professional skills, including research, storytelling techniques, emerging technologies, and effective communication techniques
- Monitoring the Fellows' progress and providing timely recommendations for improvement
- Participating in mentorship training and workshops organised by the AU Media Fellowship programme, as required.

THE MENTORS OF THE 2ND AUMF COHORT

CHAACHA MWITA

Chaacha Mwita is a board member and a former Managing Editor at Standard Group Limited, one of the oldest media entities on the continent. With a track record marked by strong management and communication skills, Chaacha's professional background and expertise make for an impressive CV. His contributions and leadership within the organisation have undoubtedly played a significant role in its success.

www.standardmedia.co.ke

ASMA ABIDI

Asma Abidi is an experienced media practitioner with an extensive training background that spans both global and continental perspectives. This unique blend of practical experience and diverse training equips her with a well-rounded skill set and a nuanced understanding of the media landscape.

DAVID MUKHOLI

David Mukholi is the Managing Editor at New Vision Management, equipped with robust management skills and the visionary initiative of launching the 'Let's Talk Journalism' mentoring programme. This programme is dedicated to guiding and nurturing the talents of Vision Group journalists, providing them with opportunities for professional growth and development within the organisation. Through 'Let's Talk Journalism', David fosters a culture of continuous learning and excellence, ensuring that the team continues to thrive in the field of journalism.

www.visiongroup.co.ug

BENON HERBERT –

Benon Herbert is the Africa Editor at Global Investigative Journalism Network, bringing with him a wealth of experience in editing and radio production. His expertise in these domains contributes significantly to the organisation's mission of promoting investigative journalism and fostering a culture of excellence in storytelling.

https://gijn.org ▶

TULANANA BOHELA

Tulanana Bohela co-founded the Ona Stories Group, a storytelling and extended reality production company. It includes Ona Kesho, a lab for the future of storytelling technologies, and the Ona Stories Expert Network. Tulanana's work helps organisations and individuals find and tell their stories in the most compelling manner for greater impact, including long-form documentary and journalism productions and pioneering work in East African virtual and augmented reality.
www.onastories.com

A SPECIAL MENTION TO THE MENTORS OF THE AUMF 1ST COHORT

SIMON ALLISON

Simon Allison the editor-in-chief and co-founder of The Continent, Africa's most widely distributed weekly newspaper. The Continent was founded in 2020 and is designed to be read and shared on mobile messaging platforms, while combating disinformation on these platforms. It won the 2020 Africa Digital Media Awards for Best News Service and has been credited with promoting a more informed society through its hard-hitting public-interest journalism. The impact and effectiveness of The Continent's revolutionary distribution model have been recognised in coverage by AFP, RFI, the Nieman Lab, and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, among others.
www.thecontinent.org

NATASHA KIMANI

Natasha Kimani is the former Head of Partnerships and Research at Africa No Filter, one of the organisations working to promote balanced narratives about Africa. With a background in law, Natasha's passion for communication has led her into the communication field, where she is passionate about amplifying African voices and believes that shifting harmful narratives will lead to increased positive attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about the endless possibilities, and opportunities within the continent.
http://africanofilter.com

AU MEDIA FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME – SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2022–2024

The AU Media Fellowship is unlocking the power of information in today's digital world by providing media professionals with an unprecedented opportunity to explore new and emerging technologies through the AUMF.

NETWORKING, MEDIA TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Fellows attended regional and international conferences, including the Annual African Media Convention in Lusaka, Zambia; the annual Global Media Forum (GMF) in Bonn, Germany, and undertook six-months training conducted by Deutsche Welle (DW) Academy; 'Design Thinking' boot camp delivered by the Hasso-Plattner-Institute; mobile production journalism; UNESCO Development journalism training; and Media Lab Sessions in Addis Ababa, Berlin, Johannesburg, and Cape Town.

STUDY TOURS

- African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where Fellows were addressed by the leadership of the AUC as well as AU Institutions based in Ethiopia, including the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), and the AU Pan African Veterinary and Vaccines Centre (AU-PANVAC). In addition, the Fellows attended the Annual AU Summit (Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the Executive Council), and met with AU partners.
- Germany – Berlin and Bonn, where Fellows engaged with members of the German Bundestag, including the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Culture and Media, Katrin Budde, and representatives from the Bundestag Media, and the Bundespresseamt Federal Office for Press and Media. They also had a session at the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society.
- Brussels, Belgium: The Fellows were scheduled to visit the European Union Parliament in June 2024, which was an opportune time during the EU parliamentary elections.
- Johannesburg, South Africa: The AUM Fellows were hosted and held discussions with leadership of AU Organs based in South Africa, including the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD); the Pan-African Parliament (PAP); the African Risk Capacity Group (ARC); and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The AUMF were also hosted by Regional and International Media Organisations, as well as Government Institutions, including the South African Government Communications and Information System (GCSI), Multichoice Africa, Habari Media, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Africa's largest national / public broadcaster, where they were hosted by the Office of the Director General; and Brand South Africa, which also facilitated informative historical tours of to Constitution Hill, and the Apartheid Museum and Prison.
- Accra, Ghana: The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat and had an opportunity during the tour to meet the African Union Sports Council (AUSC) on the sidelines of the 13th Edition of the African Games held in March 2024. ▶

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The AU Media Fellows were hosted by the Embassy of Germany in South African Head of German-South African Development Co-operation and the Head of Media for the German Embassy.

The Fellows were also hosted by the Regional Directors of the US Africa Regional Media Hub, which is under the Department of State of the United States and based at the US Embassy in South Africa.

In Addis Ababa the AU Media Fellows were hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister as well as the Ambassador of the Unites States to Ethiopia and AU. The Fellows were hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister of the GIZ Office to the African Union, where they were hosted by the visiting State Minister for Germany, Ms Katja Keul and Mr. Franz Von Weizsaecker, Head of DataCipation.

Additionally, they engaged with the EU liaison office to the African Union as part of their study tour.

During the visits, the Fellows were familiarised with the intricacies of managing international communication across borders, and the role of public diplomacy initiatives as a tool for effective multilateral engagement and defining narratives, and the importance of including and elevating African voices in global conversations and the role of media in promoting good governance.

ACADEMIA

The University of Witwatersrand (Wits) Centre for Journalism in South Africa hosted the AU Media Fellows for training and panel sessions on various topics related to the media sector, creating linkages between academia/think tanks and industry.

THE FUTURE OF MEDIA – ROUNDTABLE EVENT SERIES

These are public roundtable sessions that encourage discourse between actors in the public-policy place, development partners, private sector, African media, and academia.

The Roundtable series, which have been held in Berlin, Addis Ababa and Johannesburg, have covered various topics, including Fostering Equitable Revenue Sharing by Tech Giants: Cultivating Sustainability and Viability for African Media and Content ; AI-Driven Journalism: Enhancing Accountability and Amplifying Minority Voices in Africa; The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the potential to transform the African continent with emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Data Science, Robotics and Blockchain; The AU Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020–2030 and Media's Role in Advocacy for Policy Implementation, and how to establish and maintain partnerships between media and policymakers; The Role of Multilateral Institutions in Promoting Development Journalism, and how the AU and its partners are working with media to upskill media to create citizen-focused reporting in the digital age to enable a well-informed citizen to drive policy implementation in line with African Union mandates; The Future of Journalism Education in Africa (The Genesis of Journalism Education in Africa: from colonial media to state media to free media and social media; and 'How can journalism maintain its relevancy: The emergence of new media, technology, practitioners and needs for fit for purpose journalism education'.

Other major events that the AU Media Fellows have participated include the 1st Africa Climate Summit in Kenya, COP27 in Egypt; the AU Summit on Industrialisation and Economic Diversification in Niger; the 13th Edition of the Africa Games in Ghana; and the Intra African Trade Fair in Egypt. ◼

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"

Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are

MASON COOLEY

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Progress on implementation of the African Union Theme of the Year 2023 on Acceleration of AfCFTA implementation

THE GUIDED TRADE INITIATIVE

The AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative (GTI) was launched on 7th October 2022 as a solutions-based approach to kickstarting commercially meaningful trade under the AfCFTA preferences. The GTI takes practical steps towards the facilitation of trade under the AfCFTA through direct engagement with key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors of State Parties. Through the GTI, State Parties are encouraged to support the private sector in taking advantage of the GTI in order to boost intra-African trade.

The overall objectives of the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative (GTI):

1. Demonstrate the efficiency of the legal framework of the AfCFTA instruments
2. Obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the legal and institutional national systems in the participating countries
3. Test the readiness of the private sector to participate in trade under the AfCFTA
4. Identify possible future interventions to increase intra-African trade and maximise the benefits of the AfCFTA.

TRADE IN GOODS

At the launch of the GTI in 2022, there were seven participating countries, namely Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Tanzania, with over 100 potential trades under the AfCFTA preferences in Trade in Goods, such as coffee, ceramic tiles, dried fruits, tea and processed meat, among others.

In 2023 and in line with the African Union Theme of the Year on 'Acceleration of Implementation of the AfCFTA', the scope of the GTI was expanded in both product and country coverage across the five AU regions to the current total of 31 State Parties. The State Parties participating in GTI as at the end of 2023, and with whom the AfCFTA Secretariat has ongoing stakeholder engagements, are shown in Figure 1.

These engagements identified a number of products for trade under the GTI, including honey, meat, fish and poultry and their products; beverages; tea; coffee; dairy products; milling (flour and maize meal); processed food products, textiles; fabric and clothing; bio pesticides; mineral and chemical fertilisers; plastic-based products; and flowers.

Significant developments within the expanded GTI initiative included the issuance of the first AfCFTA Certificate of Origin (CoO) by the United Republic of Tanzania for a shipment of coffee to Algeria; Tunisia's AfCFTA Certificates of Origin for chemical products and resin exported to Cameroon; and more State Parties placed at an advantage to start trading, such as Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa.

TRADE IN SERVICES

In 2023, the AfCFTA Secretariat commenced work on the development of the expansion of GTI to include Guided Trade in Services, as opposed to just Goods. The Secretariat developed a detailed programme of stakeholder engagements, capacity building workshops and meetings of the national committees on the Guided Trade Initiative to materialise the benefits of the commencement of trade under the AfCFTA, and to introduce the concept of AfCFTA Trading Companies.

The overall objective of including trade in services in the GTI in the priority sectors, such as business, communication, financial services,

transport and tourism services, is to fast-track the implementation of commitments in the adopted schedules of specific commitments, and facilitate the start of Trade in Services under the AfCFTA Regime. Trade in services in GTI will entail:

- *Facilitating early implementation:* Ensuring the commitments outlined in the adopted schedules of specific commitments are swiftly and effectively implemented by AfCFTA State Parties, enabling the timely commencement of trade in services under the AfCFTA

- *Promoting Investment:* Attracting foreign and domestic investments in service sectors by showing new market openings and working with the State Parties to develop an environment conducive for investment, under the transparency market access commitments under the schedules

- *Capacity Building:* Support and enhance the capacity of both State Parties and the private sector to implement the commitments and leverage the opportunities under the AfCFTA Trade regime

- *Stakeholder Engagement:* Facilitate dialogue and collaboration between Governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to ensure that the interests and concerns of all relevant parties are considered in the implementation of services trade commitments

- *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation of progress in implementing of the AfCFTA Trade in Services, to ensure the actualisation of the objectives under the Agreement, and identification of future areas of convergence.

Various activities have been undertaken towards achieving the above. These include:

- Plenary meetings of the Committee on Guided Trade in Services to discuss the way forward and general activities of the initiative

- State Party and Secretariat meetings, in order to provide targeted and specific technical and administrative support to assist State Parties and their stakeholders

- A practical guide to provide a simplified guideline to service providers and the
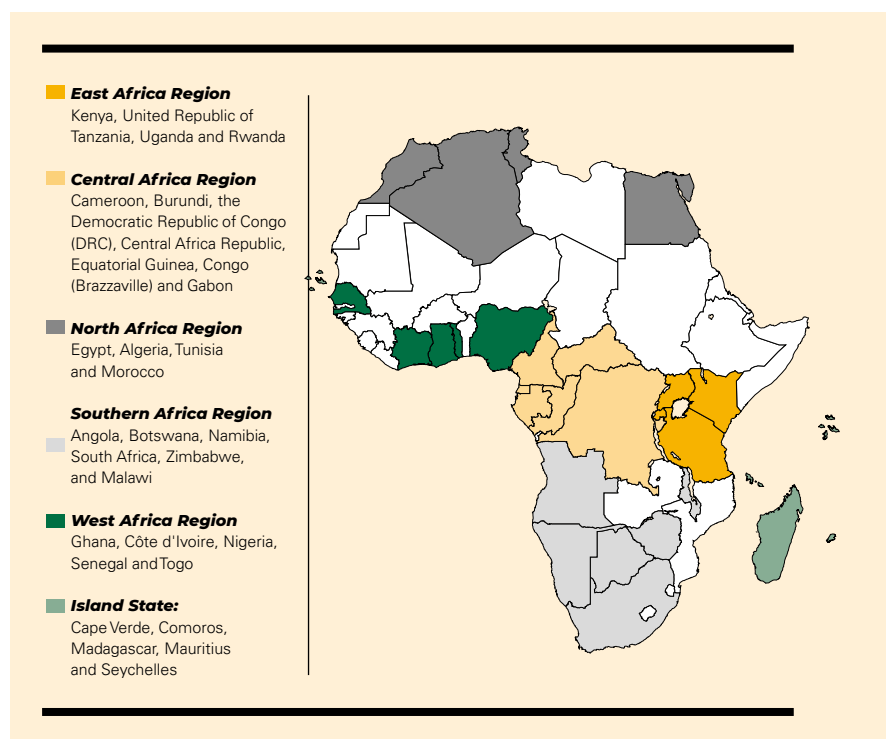
private-sector stakeholder communities in getting a deeper and more practical understanding of the AfCFTA trade in services negotiations and the Protocol on Trade in Services

- Bilateral meetings between State Parties and stakeholders to outline the areas of interest and way forward to start trading

- Summary of schedules to provide the commitments in a simplified and practical way to assist in reading the schedules, by outlining the market access openings and requirements

- Tracking of services data, wherein the AfCFTA Secretariat developed a country form to assist State Parties in organising and capturing data and interests from their stakeholders, to provide a basis for assessing whether the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services is being implemented successfully

- Sector and market analysis, which looked at the economic, trade and market elements of the service sectors of the State Parties in the GTI in Services ▶

East Africa Region
Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda

Central Africa Region
Cameroon, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central Africa Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon

North Africa Region
Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco

Southern Africa Region
Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi

West Africa Region
Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo

Island State:
Cape Verde, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles

▲▲
Figure 1:
State Parties participating in the Guided Trade Initiative

- Organising Trade in Services forums and programmes on sector-specific issues to assist in identifying the obstacles to the implementation of continental policies, as well as effectively monitor and evaluate the execution of such policies.

WHAT NEXT FOR THE GUIDED TRADE INITIATIVE?

As a key instrument to drive trade on the continent and, therefore, give impetus to regional integration, the Guided Trade Initiative has identified key action points for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA. These include:

- The need for the establishment of a centralised AfCFTA National Implementation or Co-ordination office
- The importance of gazetting the Provisional Schedules of Tariff Concessions according to national law
- The need for Member States to conclude on the negotiations on Exclusion and Sensitive products (Categories B and C)
- The potential for Africa to expand products traded beyond coffee, tea, etc. captured within the initial stage of GTI
- The establishment of AfCFTA Trading Companies, which will serve as intermediaries or trade aggregators for SMEs to stimulate and facilitate intra-African trade, both in volume and diversity of products under the AfCFTA preferences, and in addition, reduce the costs of SMEs in trading across borders
- The need to encourage more countries to participate in the GTI, whose ultimate goal is to materialise trading amongst State Parties in accordance with the agreement establishing the AfCFTA
- Positioning the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative as a gateway to encourage continuous, commercially meaningful trade under the AfCFTA, resulting in increased opportunities for SMEs, youth and women in trade, and ultimately establishing sustainable and inclusive economic development.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF AfCFTA PROTOCOLS AND OPERATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in goods represents a key driver in boosting intra-Africa trade by making provisions that ensure there are transparent, clear and predictable criteria for determining eligibility for preferential treatment in the AfCFTA.

The principal objective of this Protocol is to create a liberalised market and facilitate market access for trade in goods in accordance with Article 3 of the AfCFTA Agreement.

Through the Protocol on Trade in Goods, a procedural guide – and rules and modalities for trade in goods – are established, with provisions covering nine annexes, namely Schedules of Tariff Concessions; Rules of Origin; Customs Co-operation; Trade Facilitation; Non-Tariff Barriers; Technical Barriers to Trade; Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards; Transit and Transport Facilitation; and Trade Remedies. These constitute crucial elements that have implications for actual trade in goods.

The Protocol on Trade in Goods is set to promote industrialisation on the continent, as it will require the establishment of cross-border value chains in various sectors, thereby promoting a larger and more sophisticated range of investments. By promoting industrialisation, enhanced intra-African trade in goods will also promote employment, social advancement and consumer choice. And, in time, enhanced intra-African trade would promote social and economic development across Africa for a robust single African market.

AfCFTA RULES OF ORIGIN

In February 2022, the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union endorsed the additional provisions and definitions on Annex 2 and the adoption of the Rules of Origin Manual by the 18th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Niamey in November. The 11th Meeting of the Council of Ministers concluded the Ministerial regulations on the treatment of products from special economic zones (SEZ) or arrangements, which has been adopted by the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, which was held in February 2023.

The outcomes of various meetings enabled the conclusion of some tariff lines on the textiles sector and automotive sector, and the completion of 92.3% agreed Rules of Origin.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA Rules of Origin, the AfCFTA Secretariat aims to initiate the process of the adoption of the consolidated Annex 2, taking

RULES OF ORIGIN
MANUAL
VOLUME 1.0 (JULY 2022)
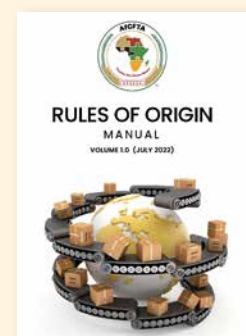
The AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual provides detailed information for determining the origin status of goods traded within the AfCFTA, including the application and adxministration of rules used to determine origin status, and any institutional framework that is necessary for implementation.

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into consideration the additional provisions and definitions, new provisions handled by the Rules of Origin Manual, and the Ministerial regulations on SEZ.

In addition, the Secretariat will ensure the alignment of Appendix IV on Rules of Origin to HS 2022, as most of the State Parties and Regional Economic Communities have migrated to the new version of the HS Nomenclature.

AfCFTA ONLINE MECHANISM FOR REPORTING, MONITORING AND ELIMINATING NON-TARIFF BARRIERS

The AfCFTA Secretariat has conducted capacity-building workshops on Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) to enhance Member States' and Regional Economic Communities' (RECs) capacities, and raise awareness of the AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) Online Reporting tool, which enables Member States to report NTBs encountered when trading on the continent.

The AfCFTA Secretariat is also working on the African Continental Technical Regulatory Framework with the Pan African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI). Harmonisation of standards, technical regulations, SPS measures and conformity assessment procedures in the AfCFTA are among the prioritised areas of work.

AfCFTA PROTOCOL ON COMPETITION POLICY

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the AfCFTA Protocol on Competition Policy at their 36th Summit, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 18 February 2023. The Protocol on Competition Policy will complement efforts at National and Regional levels to make markets function more efficiently, promote innovation, industrialisation and competitiveness, and level the playing field for business.

The Protocol on Competition Policy will also contribute to boosting intra-African trade by removing obstacles to cross-border trade due to anti-competitive business practices (cartels, abuse of dominant position, anti-competitive market concentration, etc.) and ensure that gains expected by businesses and consumers from the liberalisation of trade in goods and services are not negated.

The AfCFTA Secretariat, in co-operation with the RECs' Competition Authorities, undertakes capacity-building workshops on competition policy and law, with the view to enhancing

members' capacities, raising awareness of the Competition Protocol and encouraging ratification by AfCFTA State Parties.

AfCFTA PROTOCOL ON TRADE IN SERVICES

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services plays a pivotal role in achieving the goals of facilitating intra-African trade by enabling the seamless flow of services across borders. It has the potential to drive economic growth on the continent – generating new job opportunities – and unprecedented levels of market access, as well as pave the way for innovation and efficiency improvements. Crucially, the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services is a catalyst for levelling the playing field, offering businesses of all sizes – from start-ups to established enterprises – an equitable platform to participate in the continental market.

The Protocol on Trade in Services seeks to create a Single African Services Market through the progressive liberalisation of five priority sectors in the first round of negotiations, which have been identified as key drivers of economic growth and integration. These are business; communication; financial; transport; and tourism services.

Notable milestones under the Trade in Services Protocol include the adoption of 22 State Party schedules during the 18th Extraordinary Summit of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in November 2022 in Niamey, Niger; forming the legal foundation for the establishment of a parallel initiative on Guided Trade Initiative on Services ▶

'The Guided Trade Initiative takes practical steps towards the facilitation of trade under the AfCFTA through direct engagement with key stakeholders'

(GTIS), to fast-track the start of trading under the AfCFTA; the development of a practical guide on the Protocol on Trade in Services, to provide service providers and private-sector stakeholders with comprehensive and user-friendly insights into the AfCFTA trade in services negotiations and the Protocol on Trade in Services; progress in the development of regulatory frameworks for key sectors, including financial, communication, and transport services; and capacity-building efforts on essential elements of regulatory frameworks for financial and communication services have been drafted.

AfCFTA PROTOCOL ON INVESTMENT

The Protocol on Investment was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in

54 African Union Member States have signed the agreement establishing the AfCFTA (Eritrea is still expected to sign the Agreement), and 47 have ratified the treaty.

February 2023 (Assembly/AU/Dec.854(XXXVI). The Protocol is a binding legal instrument designed to promote, facilitate and protect investors and investments that foster sustainable development at the continental level, and ensure the attainment of the broader objectives of Africa's Agenda 2063. To create awareness of the Protocol on Investment, and to engage in discussions on investment for development, the AfCFTA Secretariat organised several stakeholder meetings throughout the year across the continent.

AfCFTA PROTOCOL ON DIGITAL TRADE

The AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade provides a framework around which intra-African digital trade is conducted. With the digital revolution becoming a reality more than ever before, it

was critical to have a legal parameter regulating the digital sphere within the regime of the AfCFTA Agreement. Negotiations on the Protocol are still ongoing, and the Committee on Digital Trade has held several meetings to negotiate the Draft Protocol on Digital Trade. The AfCFTA State and non-State Parties reached a consensus on most provisions of the Draft Protocol on Digital Trade.

The AfCFTA Secretariat organised several capacity-building sessions to support the negotiations of the Draft Protocol on Digital Trade, based on the specific needs of State and non-State Parties. The Secretariat also supported State Parties during their national consultations on the Draft Protocol on Digital Trade.

THE AfCFTA PROTOCOL ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

The negotiations on the AfCFTA Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) have been concluded, and the IPR Protocol was adopted during the 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in February 2023.

By promoting innovation, creativity and competitiveness, intellectual property (IP) has become a critical component of modern economies and regional economic integration. The adoption of the IPR Protocol represents a milestone in IPR governance in Africa as it sets the ground for the establishment of a coherent IPR regime on the continent that would support intra-African trade.

The Protocol is expected to advance Africa's interests related to IP, promote the protection of African innovation and creativity, and address the legal and institutional fragmentation by promoting a coherent IPR regime on the continent. It will provide for harmonised approaches to key IP issues of interest for Africa that are not adequately covered under multilateral treaties, as well as contribute to a continental value-chain development and integration.

More specifically, the IPR Protocol will advance Africa's public health and industrial development imperatives, and create a conducive environment for business by reducing policy and regulatory costs. It will advance the objectives envisioned under the AfCFTA Agreement – to facilitate intra-African trade, promote inclusive growth and development, industrial development, and enhance the competitiveness of African economies – and ensures the attainment of the broader objectives of Africa's Agenda 2063.

AfCFTA ADJUSTMENT FUND

The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund was launched in March 2023, with the signing of the Fund Management Agreement. The Fund houses US$1 billion out of the required $10 billion. The Fund is hosted in Rwanda.

BOOSTING INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

The automotive sector in Africa represents a substantial market, with a demand of approximately US$32 billion annually, predominantly satisfied by imports of used vehicles. The intra-African trade in this sector is currently less than 1%, indicating a significant opportunity for local production and supply to meet the demand, thereby scaling intra-Africa trade and creating employment opportunities. The growth of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and local production accentuates the potential for developing affordable alternative vehicles.

The AfCFTA Secretariat, Afreximbank and the African Association of Automotive Manufacturers (AAAM) are actively engaging with countries that are home to automotive manufacturing and assembling plants, and those interested in component manufacturing, to support through the review or development of automotive policies and financial support, with Afreximbank availing a facility of US$1 billion to support the industry.

Significant achievements have been made, including the following:

- **Launch of the African Automotive Strategy:** In February 2023, the Council of Ministers of Trade launched the African Automotive Strategy. This strategy is a pivotal initiative aimed at fostering the development and growth of the automotive sector within Africa, focusing on enhancing local production, reducing reliance on imports, and promoting intra-African trade in the automotive sector.

- **Establishment of the Automotive Task Force:** Subsequent to the launch of the African Automotive Strategy, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the AfCFTA Automotive Task Force, which is mandated to guide the implementation of the African Automotive Strategy and to make ▶

policy proposals to the Council of Ministers. The establishment of this task force is a significant step towards structured and co-ordinated efforts in realising the objectives of the African Automotive Strategy.

- **Continental Study on Component Manufacturing Opportunities:** A comprehensive study has been initiated to explore opportunities in component manufacturing. This study is crucial for identifying potential areas for investment and development in component manufacturing within the continent, which is essential for the growth and sustainability of the automotive sector in Africa.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with African Association of Automotive Manufacturers:** A three-year MoU has been signed between the AfCFTA Secretariat and the AAAM, forming a strategic partnership aimed at fostering collaboration and joint initiatives to promote the development of the automotive sector in Africa.
- **Ministerial Retreat and Progress on Rules of Origin:** The AfCFTA Secretariat organised a Ministerial Retreat in May 2023, hosted by the Government of Kenya, to deliberate on the Rules of Origin, to enable value-chain development in support of industrialisation. This retreat provided a platform for State Parties and industry to align their strategies and policies to support the development of the automotive sector. The Council of Ministers made significant progress by adopting the Automotive Chapter Rule (87) and two tariff lines (8702 and 8709).

CUSTOMS AND TRADE FACILITATION

Customs and trade facilitation is essential for bolstering intra-African trade and focusing on the entire ecosystem of trade facilitation challenges. From the point of entry of goods to their final destination, the AfCFTA Secretariat aims to create a seamless trade environment. This approach not only ensures the efficient movement of goods across borders, but also underpins the broader vision of economic integration, prosperity and sustainable development within the continent.

The corridor strategy encapsulates this vision, emphasising a holistic approach that transcends individual country boundaries, and addresses trade challenges along entire corridors involving multiple trading nations in Africa.
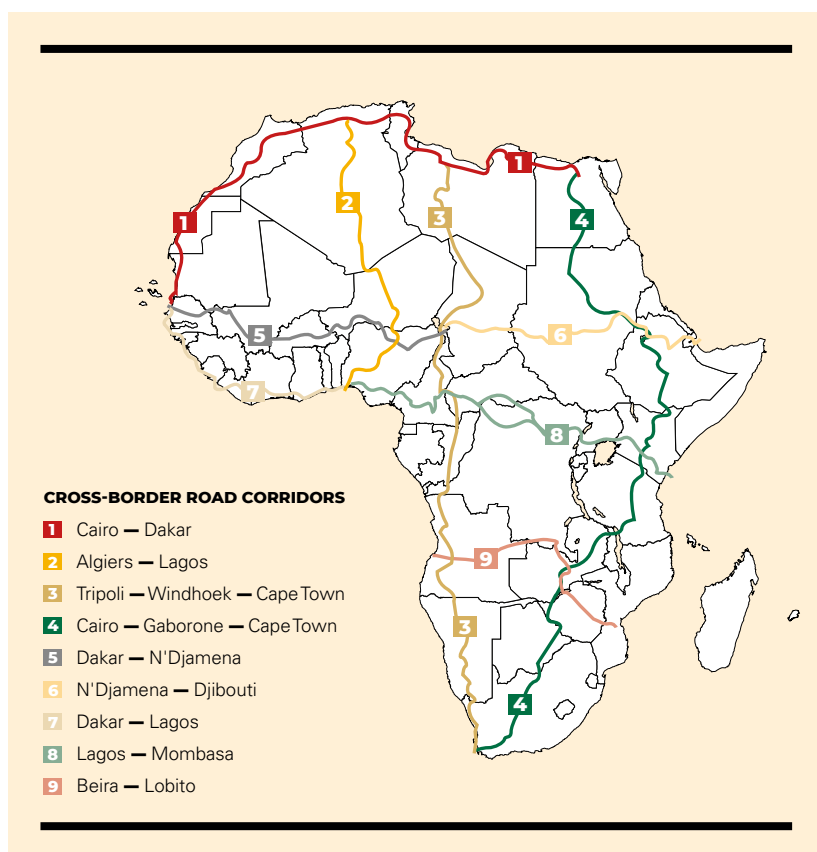
Achievements made on customs and trade facilitation include corridor assessments; the development of databases of customs focal points; the development of an e-tariff book; the development of a Single Bond Guarantee; engaging women at border points; and the organisation of a trade facilitation conference on transport and logistics.

CORRIDOR ASSESSMENTS

The AfCFTA Secretariat adopted a corridor approach to tackle trade-facilitation challenges, ensuring a holistic view of the entire ecosystem of trade facilitation. Five major trade corridors were assessed, starting with the Abidjan–Lagos corridor, crossing four borders and engaging with governance institutions.

A roadmap for interventions based on identified challenges was developed, categorised into infrastructure, systems and co-ordination, as per Figure 2.

Figure 2: AfCFTA Cross–Border Corridors ▼▼

CROSS-BORDER ROAD CORRIDORS

1 Cairo — Dakar
2 Algiers — Lagos
3 Tripoli — Windhoek — Cape Town
4 Cairo — Gaborone — Cape Town
5 Dakar — N'Djamena
6 N'Djamena — Djibouti
7 Dakar — Lagos
8 Lagos — Mombasa
9 Beira — Lobito

DATABASE OF CUSTOMS FOCAL POINTS

The AfCFTA Secretariat established a comprehensive database of customs focal points to facilitate communication and problem-solving. Key partnerships in this endeavour include collaborations with JICA, the World Customs Organisation, and the United States to enhance trade facilitation; and working with the World Customs Organisation on various projects, including the AfCFTA Tariff book and the migration to HS 2022.

E-TARIFF BOOK

The AfCFTA Tariff book, a digital product that provides tariffs of the participating AU Member States, was developed to aid in operationalising trade facilitation.

SINGLE BOND GUARANTEE

The AfCFTA Secretariat commenced work on a single bond guarantee to facilitate the movement of goods in transit between countries, eliminating the need for multiple bonds which significantly increase expenses and delays.

ENGAGEMENT WITH WOMEN AT BORDERS

Various engagements with women at border points were undertaken by the AfCFTA Secretariat. The women consulted included traders and truck drivers, in order to get first-hand feedback on the challenges faced and identify the requirements that should be implemented to facilitate cross-border trade.

TRADE FACILITATION CONFERENCE

An AfCFTA Trade Facilitation Conference on Transport and Logistics was organised to identify key issues and solutions in the realm of trade facilitation.

To ensure the initiatives and strategies on Customs and Trade facilitation are sustainable and effective, the AfCFTA Secretariat intends to undertake several activities, including:

- Continuously engaging with Member States to remind them of their commitments, assess their state of preparedness and address challenges
- Expanding and refining the Corridor Strategy to include more regions and address specific challenges unique to each corridor
- Enhancing collaboration with global

e-Tariff Book

The AfCFTA e-tariff book is an invaluable resource that ensures that tariff concession schedules are accessible to Trade and Customs Authorities to facilitate trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area.

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organisations such as JICA and the US Chamber of Commerce
- Addressing specific challenges, such as energy provision at border posts and leveraging technology to streamline trade processes, ensuring seamless communication between different customs systems
- Continuing the engagement with stakeholders, especially women and traders at the borders, to ensure their needs and challenges are addressed
- Ensuring that lessons learnt from one corridor are replicated in others, avoiding the need to 'reinvent the wheel'.

PRIVATE-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

The establishment of a single integrated African market is a significant step forward for the African private sector, which is predominantly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). With an estimated 85–95 million SMEs, the sector is pivotal to the African economy, contributing to about 80% of private-sector employment. Their growth is vital for inclusive growth on the continent, and crucial for the realisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area's objectives.

However, the African private sector has historically encountered challenges, such as high trade barriers, logistics costs and multiple regulatory frameworks. The implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement has ignited hope among the business community, given its potential to unlock the continent's full economic potential.

THE AfCFTA BUSINESS FORUM

The inaugural AfCFTA Business Forum was held in April 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa, under the patronage of the Government of the Republic of South Africa.

The event brought together more than 1 000 delegates from over 63 countries from across the African continent and the wider globe, ranging from Heads of State; Senior Government Officials; CEOs of financial development institutions; leaders of industry; SMEs; regional and continental business councils; business-support organisations; investment promotion agencies; academia; women and youth entrepreneurs; as well as investors. The conference focused on key priority sectors, such as agriculture; transport and logistics; ▶

pharmaceuticals; automotive; and digital economy and payments, among others.

The next edition of the AfCFTA Business Forum is scheduled to be held in the Q2 2024 under the name 'Biashara Afrika'.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

The AfCFTA Secretariat collaborated with the WEF to engage the international business community, through the Forum Friends, for the AfCFTA initiative, which has led to focused interventions, from setting agendas to developing a Private Sector Action Plan. Both institutions are working closely together to facilitate the execution of projects using tools such as the AfCFTA Private Sector Engagement Plan, and the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)

The AfCFTA Secretariat's partnership with the ITC focuses on building the competitiveness of MSMEs. Through the collaboration, stakeholder events have been convened, the AfCFTA Glossary was launched, and business-support organisations across Africa have been mapped. The ITC has also delivered training programmes, like 'How to Export under the AfCFTA', benefiting numerous African entrepreneurs.

US-AFRICA BUSINESS CENTRE

The AfCFTA Secretariat is collaborating with the US Chamber of Commerce, through the US-Africa Business Centre, to expand trade and investment between Africa and the US under the AfCFTA regime. This partnership seeks to educate US companies about the AfCFTA and its potential to reshape trade and investment in Africa.

AFROCHAMPIONS

The AfCFTA Secretariat has partnered with the AfroChampions Organisation to promote regional integration through initiatives like the AfCFTA Caravan Initiative and the AfCFTA Hub. The hub serves as a unified electronic gateway connecting various platforms into one continental digital ecosystem, streamlining processes for SMEs.

PARTNERSHIP WITH REGIONAL AFRICAN BANKS

The AfCFTA Secretariat has partnered with Equity Bank and UBA to support SMEs. These collaborations aim to ensure effective private-sector engagement in the AfCFTA and influence policy across Governments and civil society.

BUSINESS-SUPPORT ORGANISATION (BSO) PLATFORM ESTABLISHMENT

The AfCFTA Secretariat established a BSO platform to provide information on the implementation of the Private Sector Engagement Strategy, especially concerning SMEs and businesses led by women and youth. In

H.E. Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General of the AfCTFA Secretariat ▼▼

addition, the BSO Platform is a key tool that can be used by Africa's existing BSOs for direct engagement on the AfCFTA.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AfCFTA SME SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The AfCFTA Secretariat plans to establish the AfCFTA SME Support Programme, and aims to mobilise an initial funding of up to US$2 billion. This programme will provide trade finance solutions and capacity-building assistance to SMEs and financial institutions lending to SMEs. The programme will focus on increasing access to finance for SMEs, capability building, and establishing a one-stop shop for SME support, including a continent-wide digital marketplace.

AGRICULTURE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Africa – with its rich history of producing and exporting raw materials and commodities – faces a significant trade deficit, with food products accounting for a substantial portion of its import bill. This reliance on imports exposes the continent to external shocks and results in the loss of millions of jobs.

COCOA VALUE CHAINS

The AfCFTA Secretariat has been instrumental in supporting the Government of Ghana in the development of cocoa value chains. This includes fostering technological support and financing for cocoa processing to meet regional market demands under the AfCFTA implementation. Collaborative meetings between the Government of Ghana, the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and Afreximbank have been facilitated to ensure the successful implementation of a US$86.7 million credit facility for the Cocoa Processing Company of Ghana.

DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

The AfCFTA Secretariat, through its partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, established a Private Sector Unit (PSU) within the AfCFTA Secretariat. The PSU unit aims to scale production and trade in five prioritised agricultural value chains, including grains, oilseeds, fish, meat and selected cash crops.

COMMON AFRICA AGRO-PARKS PROGRAMME

The Common Africa Agro-Parks Programme stands as a beacon of hope for Africa's agricultural renaissance, aiming to harness the continent's vast production potential while rectifying its prevailing trade imbalances. Recognising the critical importance of local production, this initiative seeks to diminish Africa's dependence on food imports, thereby shielding its economies from external shocks, and rejuvenating millions of latent job opportunities. At the heart of this programme lies a commitment to uplift the continent's most vulnerable groups, including women, youth ▶

FAR LEFT:
Prof. Benedict O. Oramah, President of Afreximbank
FAR RIGHT:
H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, former President of the Republic of Niger and champion of the AfCFTA

▼▼

and MSMEs, ensuring they play a pivotal role in shaping Africa's agricultural future.

To realise the vision of the programme, the AfCFTA Secretariat collaborates with a consortium of partners and institutions to drive initiatives in scaling production and trade in priority agricultural value chains. The collaboration with the Government of Ghana, COCOBOD and Afreximbank exemplifies the kind of strategic partnerships that are being forged to ensure the programme's success.

Furthermore, international organisations, like the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), have shown their support, emphasising the global significance and potential impact of this initiative.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE GHANA COCOA BOARD AND BUHLER GROUP

The AfCFTA Secretariat leads the implementation of this MOU, which focuses on co-operation in processing technology enhancement and investments. Similar MOUs were also established with the Ghana Cocoa Processing Company and Abaso Cocoa Processing Company.

DEVELOPMENT OF A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR FISHERIES/BLUE ECONOMY IN THE AfCFTA MARKET

The AfCFTA Secretariat launched a consultancy service to assess the state of small-scale fisheries in select African countries. The initiative aims to develop a regulatory framework for fisheries trade in Africa; advocate for a Fisheries Protocol for Africa under the AfCFTA; and conduct a detailed value-chain analysis of the fishery sector.

MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR AGRO-INDUSTRY PROJECT IN ZIMBABWE

The AfCFTA Secretariat facilitated an investment mission to Zimbabwe, with the goal of building consensus towards sustainable agro-industry development. This collaboration is expected to significantly reduce grain losses in Zimbabwe, positioning the country as a net exporter of grains in the future.

PROMOTING WOMEN AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE AFCFTA
AfCFTA WOMEN AND YOUTH IN TRADE CONSULTATIONS

This initiative serves as a platform for meaningful engagement, enabling African youth to voice their concerns, aspirations and suggestions regarding the development of the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. Through regional workshops and online surveys, the consultations have facilitated an inclusive dialogue that captures the diverse perspectives of young Africans in trade from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

AfCFTA YOUTH SYMPOSIUM

The AfCFTA Secretariat, in partnership with the Zambian Government, hosted the inaugural AfCFTA Youth Symposium, themed 'Igniting the Future for Youth in Trade', in August 2023. The event drew over 1 000 participants and served as a melting pot of ideas – with youth entrepreneurs, policymakers and financial institutions converging to discuss the future of youth in trade and to gather actionable recommendations for the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade.

Highlights included a showcase of 'Made in Africa' products by young entrepreneurs; eight insightful panels on topics ranging from the role of the AfCFTA in promoting peace to the nexus between the creative industry and the AfCFTA; and the dynamic Africa Youth Trade Debate Challenge, where universities across Africa debated the pivotal AfCFTA Women and Youth Protocol, as well as a Youth Townhall Session with the AfCFTA Secretary-General.

The symposium championed youth voices in shaping policies, facilitated knowledge sharing, led to youth-driven policy recommendations, provided networking opportunities, and equipped the youth with skills and knowledge about the AfCFTA Agreement and its protocols.

The event culminated in the establishment of the Youth Taskforce Committee, advocating for youth perspectives in the AfCFTA policy-making processes, signalling that the youth are not just the future but also the present – ready to shape the trajectory of trade in Africa.

AfCFTA WOMEN CONFERENCE

The AfCFTA Conference on Women and Youth, held from 12 to 14 September 2022 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was a monumental event that emphasised the integral roles women and youth play in the African trade landscape. Organised by the AfCFTA Secretariat, in partnership with the Tanzanian Government and championed by H.E. Samia Suluhu Hassan, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, the conference attracted over 500 participants.

This gathering saw the presence of African Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other high-ranking officials, women and youth entrepreneurs, representatives from financial institutions, policymakers and development partners. Themed 'Women and Youth: The Engine of AfCFTA Trade in Africa', the event served as a dynamic platform for in-depth discussions on the perspectives of women and youth in trade. The primary aim was to formulate policy proposals for the draft Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade, and to devise actionable solutions that would empower these demographics to harness the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA.

Discussions on key topics were held, including leadership; financial inclusion; the creative industry; digital trade solutions; informal cross-border trade; and industrial linkages. Over 100 exhibitors showcased 'Made in Africa' products, emphasising the entrepreneurial spirit of African women and youth.

The conference adopted the Dar es Salaam Declaration for Action on Women and Youth in Trade on 14 September 2022. This declaration underscores the strategic interventions needed to bolster the capacities of women and youth in trade – offering a roadmap for the negotiations of the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade, and suggesting areas where AfCFTA State Parties and partners can make impactful contributions.

The AfCFTA Secretariat intends to implement several initiatives that will enhance the participation of women and youth in trade, including the following:

- Establishing an AfCFTA Youth-led task force Committee that will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the AfCFTA Youth Symposium
- Ensuring increased youth representation in decision-making bodies related to trade and economic development within participating countries – this could include creating quotas or specific seats for young people on National and Regional Trade Committees, ensuring their voices are heard in policy-making processes
- Developing youth in trade-focused initiatives and programmes (such as entrepreneurship training programmes), access to finance schemes, or mentorship opportunities specifically targeted at young entrepreneurs and business owners
- Conducting regular progress reviews and evaluations
- Foster partnerships with youth-led organisations
- Develop targeted awareness campaigns to educate young people about the opportunities and benefits of the AfCFTA. ◼
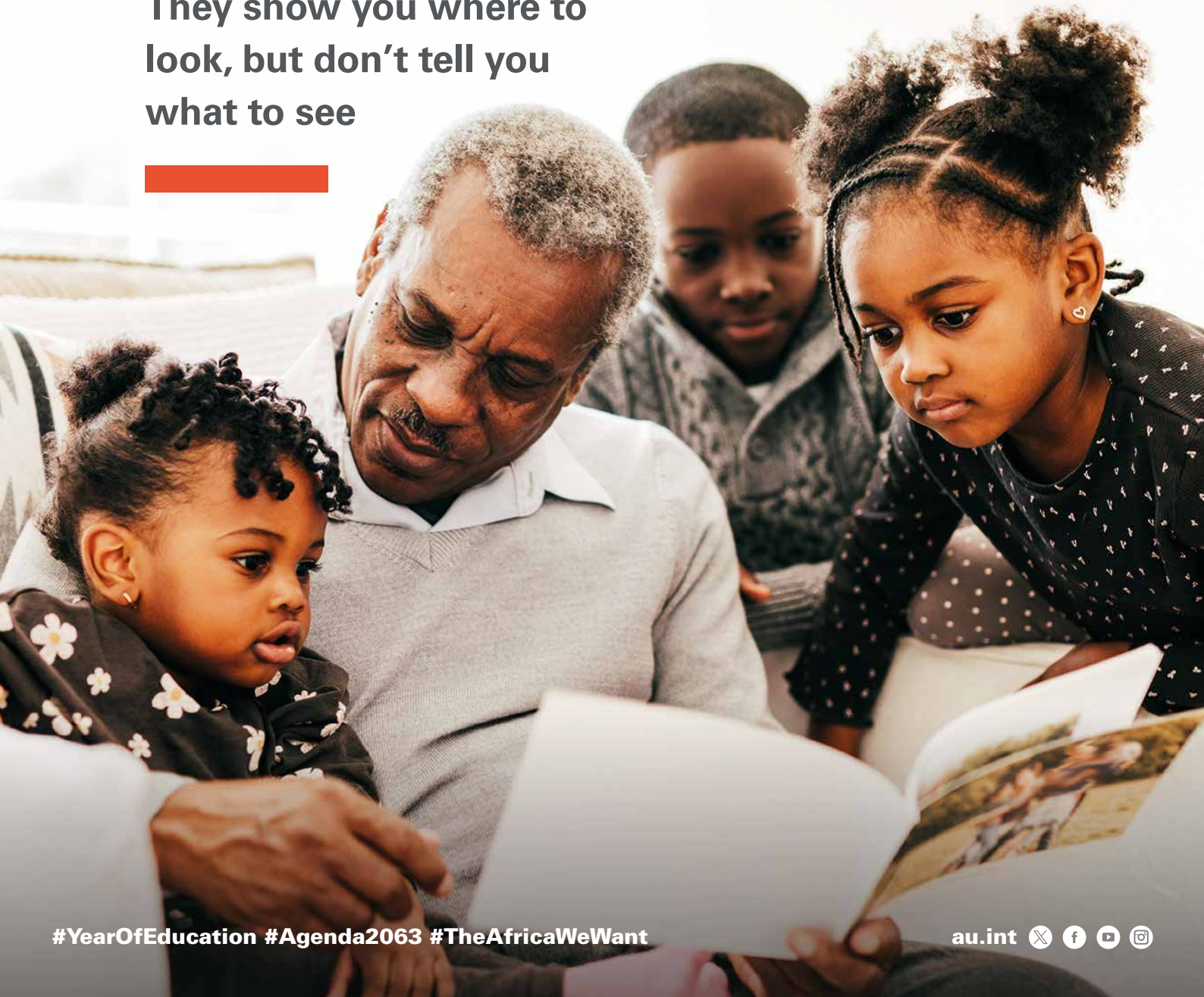
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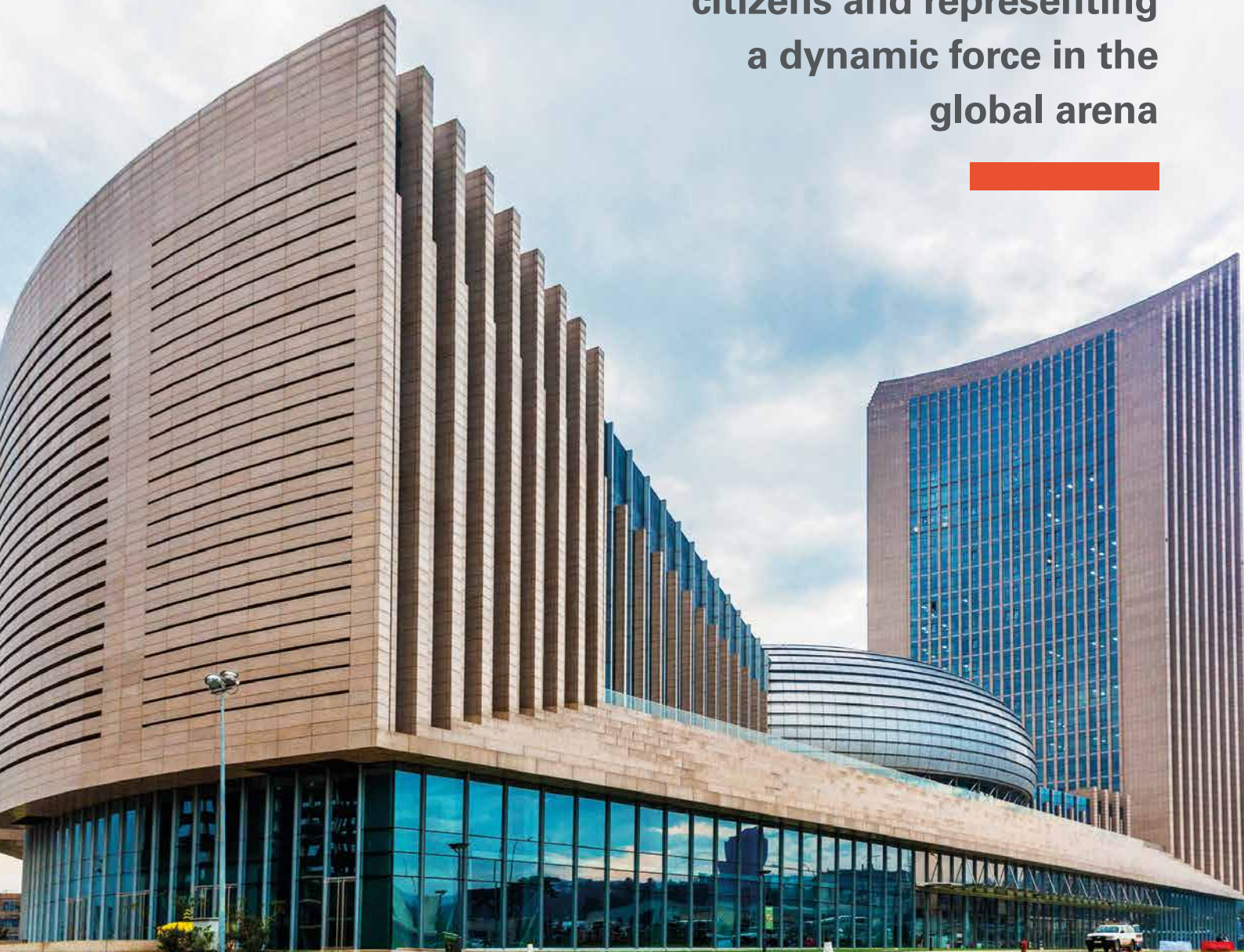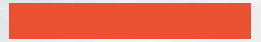
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