

## Open Letter to African leaders

A call to action to protect public financing for education for an accelerated and sustainable economic recovery from the pandemic

Ahead of the Global Education Summit on July 28-29

### Your Excellencies,

President Uhuru Kenyatta, as a co-host with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the unprecedented high-level Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-2025, on July 28-29, made a [call to action to his fellow Heads of State to endorse his political statement](#) on education financing. The GPE replenishment will be a pivotal moment for the global community to come together to support quality education for all children and youth.

We appreciate your unwavering commitment to building a sustainable and prosperous continent.

Investment in human capital, including education, is the base upon which every nation thrives – eradicating poverty and fostering inclusive and sustained growth. It is the pathway to harness Africa's demographic dividend and transform African economies, including ensuring the success of flagship initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

We, the undersigned, urge you to commit to protecting education expenditure to pre-COVID levels, increasing domestic financing towards the 20% global benchmark and beyond, set policies that are inclusive, advance gender equality and leave no child behind, and ensure the efficient use of resources. It is critical that education is prioritized in public expenditure enabled by the freed-up funds and new liquidity from debt relief initiatives and a new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) when secured. It is also crucial that countries address critical spending inefficiencies. [The 2020 African Economic Outlook](#) highlighted Africa's low efficiency in public spending as a cause of the continent's lagging in education achievement.

It is also vital that countries reduce military spending to benefit [increased education spending, which has the potential to foster peace](#) and, in some cases, help address the grievances that lead to armed conflict. [African girls and women, in particular, are calling for action](#) to increase national budget allocations for education (and decrease that of militarization) to accelerate the development of quality, free and inclusive education at all levels, ensuring equal access for girls and boys. To echo the voice of [Aya Chebbi, AU Youth Envoy](#) 'To address security, leaders need to deal with the root issues. Militarization is only a response. It doesn't deal with prevention or transformation.' Young people want to see money being invested in what will really build a future for them and the next generation, including through strong and inclusive economies. Through prioritizing education investments, young people want you to build forward better.

There are two other areas where governments can take action that could transform the financing of education in the coming years. Firstly, ambitious action to increase domestic tax revenues in progressive

ways can generate sustainable resources for investment not only in education but also in health and other public services. Clear commitments to increase tax-to-GDP ratios through taxes on the wealthiest individuals and companies can dramatically transform the resources available for education. Secondly, governments can make clear commitments to resist any pressure for a premature return to austerity. The squeezing of public finances significantly affects education spending, perhaps most notably when constraints are placed on the overall public sector wage bill. Teachers are often the largest single group on the wage bill, so any cuts or freezes can disproportionately impact education spending. Investing in appropriate corruption tracking and mitigation mechanisms will also go a long way in ensuring all finances committed to education programs are utilized and accounted for as planned.

COVID-19 has led to the biggest education emergency in our lifetime. While the pandemic has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives on the continent today, it equally poses a significant threat to the future of millions of young people, particularly girls. In Africa, COVID merely exacerbated a pre-existing learning crisis. Prior to the pandemic, [87% of children in sub-Saharan Africa](#) could not read and understand a simple story by their 10th birthday. More than half of all school-aged children could not master basic secondary-level skills, including critical competencies such as literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

The disruption caused by COVID-19 has worsened this learning deficit. At the pandemic's peak, school closures impacted over 250 million children in Africa. Due to the pandemic, the number of out-of-school children and youth could now grow substantially for the first time in decades. We have also seen inequity and inequality grow because of the pandemic. Children who were already most at risk of being excluded from accessing quality education have been most affected. They have lost crucial school calendar years leading to a negative impact on their learning outcomes, period of stay in school and wellbeing. Girls, in particular, are likely to be disproportionately impacted, with an estimated [20 million school-aged girls at risk of dropping out](#) permanently and [10 million more marriages likely to occur by 2030](#) due to school closures, increased adolescent pregnancy, disruption to child marriage programming and economic instability. This lost potential is catastrophic, not only for individuals but for future economies and generations to come. It could compromise the future of our continent and our capacity to recover from the ravages caused by the pandemic.

To avoid turning the continent's learning crisis into a deep and long-lasting catastrophe, protecting and increasing investments in education is paramount. Our call to you is necessary because of the long history of underfunding the education sector in Africa. Between 2014 and 2018, sub-Saharan Africa governments spent an average of 17% of their expenditure on education- [below the 20% threshold recommended by UNESCO](#). With COVID-19, education budgets are at an even greater risk. Only 5 out of the 25 countries with data met the required funding. While we understand Africa's current financial difficulties, we cannot sacrifice today's crisis for a catastrophic future. Decisiveness by African leaders and collaboration with other world leaders is needed to protect funding for the education sector.

The upcoming Global Education Summit is an important opportunity to secure financial commitments and political will, prioritize education and set the trajectory for the future. Africa has a once-in-a-generation

opportunity to emerge from this crisis doing things differently - to build a more prosperous and equal future for ALL its children by transforming education and unlocking the Africa we want.

We call on you to endorse President Kenyatta's statement and to make bold and ambitious individual country commitments to protect and increase education expenditure, to expand domestic tax revenues in fair ways and to resist a premature return to austerity. Investment in education is key to an accelerated recovery and tangible progress in every nation, even in the face of an economic downturn.

If we are to eradicate poverty and hunger - improve health, develop a skilled workforce, protect our planet, advance gender equality, and build a more inclusive and peaceful society- we must empower every individual with access to quality education. That starts with improving how governments finance the education of their children and youth to deliver long-lasting transformation.

**Signed by:**

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

1. **Senator Dr Milgo Alice Chepkorir**, Chair of the Education Committee in the Senate of Kenya (Kenya)
2. **Hon. Dennitah Ghati MP**, Member of Parliament for Persons with Disabilities in the National Assembly of Kenya (Kenya)
3. **Senator Dr Gertrude Musuruve Inimah**, Nominated Senator representing Persons with Disabilities in the National Assembly of Kenya and Co-Chair of the International Parliamentary Network for Education (Kenya)
4. **Hon. Peter Kwasi Nortsu-Kotoe**, MP and ranking member of the Education Committee of the Parliament of Ghana (Ghana)
5. **Hon. Dr William Susuwele-Banda**, Member of the National Assembly of Malawi and former Minister of Education (Malawi)
6. **Senator Hafida Benchehida**, Senator in the Parliament of Algeria (Algeria)
7. **Hon. Agho Oliver Bamenju**, Member of the National Assembly of Cameroon (Cameroon)
8. **Hon. Prof. Julius O. Ihonvbere**, OON Chair of the House Committee on Basic Education & Services in the National Assembly of Nigeria; IPNEd Regional Representative for Africa (Nigeria)
9. **Hon. Deputy Boubacar Villiemmo Biaye**, General Manager of the Senegalese Parliamentary Network for the Promotion of Inclusive Education (REPSEI) (Senegal)
10. **Hon. Issa Mardo Djibir**, Chair of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development of the National Assembly in the National Assembly of Chad (Chad)
11. **Hon. Beatrice Adagala**, Member of the National Assembly of Kenya (Kenya)
12. **Hon. Hayat Bouffarrachen**, Member of the Parliament of Morocco (Morocco)
13. **Hon. Ibtissame Azzaoui**, Member of the Parliament of Morocco and IPNEd Regional Representative for Arab States (Morocco)

14. **Hon. Professor Geoffrey Lungwangwa** - Member of the National Assembly of Zambia and former Minister of Education (Zambia)

ORGANIZATIONS

ONE Campaign  
International Parliamentary Network for Education  
ActionAid  
Girls Not Brides  
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)  
Plan International  
Global Campaign for Education  
Global Campaign for Education  
Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA)  
YouthConnekt Africa  
Accountability Lab Nigeria  
Amplify Girls  
African Youth Commission  
Nala Feminist Collective  
Northern Network for Education Development (NNED), Ghana  
SADC Youth Council  
Imara Comoros  
Nashipai Maasai Community Projects, Kenya  
Embu County Youth Assembly, Kenya  
Global Health Youth Foundation  
Music for Youth Empowerment Movement, Kenya  
Tuwakuze Africa (Kenya)  
STRETCH Centre for Human Development  
Activate Action, Kenya  
Initiative for Pastoralists Communication (IPC), Ethiopia  
Greater Nigeria Initiative  
Nigeria Network of NGOs  
Socio Economic Research and Development Centre, Nigeria  
Ejonwanu Resources Nigeria  
Ugonma Foundation  
Voluntary Aid Initiative, Nigeria  
Agape Foundation for Literacy and Rural Development, Nigeria  
Sunshine Progressive Youth Alliance, Nigeria  
Connected Advocacy for Empowerment and Youth Development Initiative, Nigeria  
International Society of Comparative Education, Science and Technology (ISCEST-Nigeria)  
Enlightenment And Empowerment of Northern Women Initiative, Nigeria  
Society for the Improvement of Rural People (SIRP)

Lagos Civil Society Participation for Development  
Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All, Nigeria  
Anti-Corruption and Transparency Support Initiative (ACTSI)  
Foundation For Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development (FENRAD)  
New Era Educational and Charitable Support Foundation  
Crownrise Development Initiative  
Excellent Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS)  
Lawanti Educational Development Foundation  
Paradigm Leadership Support Initiative  
Cedars For Human Welfare Initiative  
Center for Peace Education and Community Development  
Eneme Development for Progress Initiative  
Michael Adedotun Oke Foundation  
Development Watch Network  
Open Arms Initiative for Sustainable Development (OPAISD)  
Enhancing Communities Action for Peace and Better Health Initiatives (e-CAPH) Nigeria  
Upline Centre for Development (UCD)  
Community Outreach for Development and Welfare Advocacy (CODWA) Nigeria  
Publish What You Pay (PWYP)  
Speak out for African initiative, Nigeria  
Human Rights and Conflicts Resolution Center HRCRC  
Center for Advocacy in Gender and Social Inclusion (CAGSI)  
Abraham's Children Foundation Nigeria  
Centre for Community Empowerment and Poverty Eradication (CCEPE)  
Centre for Development and Civic Education, Nigeria  
Community Safety Partnership, Nigeria  
Association of Professional for Family Health Empowerment and Community Development  
Keen and Care Initiative (KCI)  
Transparency and Economic Development Initiative TEDI  
Women With Disability Self Reliance Foundation  
Voice For Africa Development Initiative  
Humanity Family Foundation for Peace and Development (HUFFPED), Nigeria  
Birnikudu Progressive Forum (BPF), Nigeria  
Naretu Ntomonok CBO, Kenya  
Restoration of the dignity of Womanhood, Nigeria  
Education Coalition of Zimbabwe  
Education For All Campaign Network, The Gambia  
African Foundation for Environment and Development (AFED)  
Philomina Initiative for Development (PID), Nigeria  
Ground Zero Radio, Nigeria  
TransparencIT  
Grassroots Advocacy Centre for Economic Development (GRACED)

Gumel Youth Empowerment Association, Nigeria

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INDIVIDUALS- [Organizational and Youth Leaders here.](#)