

Educating & Skilling Africa

Listening to Educators and Learners in the African Year of Education

Volume 1 (2024), Issue 1

Celebrating Great Teachers and Inspiring Youths



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The Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department at the African Union coordinates the AU programmes on human resource development, education, science, technology and promoting the youth development agenda. Key roles include: Promoting research and publication on science and technology; Promoting cooperation among member states on education and training; Encouraging youth participation in the integration of the continent; Implementing the Agenda 2063 initiatives for African Virtual and E-University and the Africa Outer Space Strategy; Implementation of continental educational policies and strategies such as the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA), and TVET Continental Strategy, and the AU School Feeding initiative.

The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), a category 1 UNESCO institute, is based in Addis Ababa. Founded in 1999, it aims to inform education policies, strengthen teacher professional development, and build capacity in education institutions, including Ministries of Education. To provide innovative solutions and scale-up efforts to improve educational outcomes in Africa, IICBA works with a range of partners, including the African Union, UN agencies, other international organizations, development banks, bilateral donors, foundations, teacher organizations, school networks, and non-profits.

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Editorial

Celebrating Great Teachers and Inspiring Youths



Sophia Ndemutilla Ashipala
Head for Education, African
Union Commission.



Quentin Wodon
Director, UNESCO
International Institute for
Capacity Building in Africa.

The African Union (AU) has designated 2024 as the Year of Education. The Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department at the AU and UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) are launching a new magazine entitled "Educating and Skilling Africa". The subtitle of the publication is "Listening to Educators and Learners in the African Year of Education." The plan is to initially produce four issues of the magazine in 2024, assess the initiative by the end of the year, and pursue the publication beyond 2024 if the initiative is deemed successful. The magazine is published with support from the European Union's Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa.

By listening to those who are working hard every day on the ground to make a difference, a principal aim of the magazine will be to share insights on what works to improve lifelong educational opportunities for Africa's population, and especially children and youth. The theme for the AU Year of Education is to "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa." Since the adoption of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), progress has been achieved in many African countries towards ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting

lifelong learning opportunities for all. Still, much more remains to be done.

This first issue of the magazine includes a foreword by the AU Commissioner for ESTI, H.E. Professor Mohammed Belhocine, and a brief summary of the first Africa Teachers Report jointly produced by IICBA and the African Union's International Center for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) on the role of teachers and school leaders in educating girls and ending child marriage.

The magazine also includes interviews with the 2023 winners of the African Union Continental Best Teacher Award. The awards were announced at an event jointly organized by the African Union Commission and UNESCO IICBA for World Teachers' Day on October 5, 2023. Winners hail from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa. The process for the selection of these teachers was rigorous, first with a selection at the level of individual countries, and then with a panel of experts recommending final awardees.

We need to recognize great teachers, whether at the continental, regional, country, or local level. They are the key to ensure that Africans of all ages have the knowledge and skills they need to thrive. But we also need to listen to what they have to say. Each of the award winners interviewed in this issue was asked a similar set of question: what are some of the challenges teachers face today and what can be done to overcome them?; what are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize to improve learning among students?; How does teacher professional development work in your country and what could be done to improve it?; what could be done to facilitate the work of teachers and give them the tools they need in their work?; what practical advice do you have for other teachers?; and looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

The responses provided by the teachers are both inspiring and instructive. Teaching is hard work, but it is also rewarding work. Great teachers recognize that very few other professions provide an opportunity to touch so many lives for the better. This motivates them to do their best. A few of the teachers interviewed note that friends and relatives at times discouraged them from joining the profession, which may contribute to the teacher shortages observed in many countries, but they also say they did not regret their decision to become teachers. Teaching is their passion.

What can be done to improve teaching? Our interviewees suggest a range of strategies, including integrating technology into teaching methods to be able to prepare students for the digital world, showing to students how what they learn can be put into practice, improving collaboration among teachers, and ensuring that opportunities are also provided to vulnerable children and those in poverty. These award-winning teachers also tell us that it is important to develop a climate of trust and mutual respect and focus on the process of learning rather than examinations.

A second set of interviews in this first issue of the magazine were conducted with youths, defined by the African Union as individuals from 15 to 35 years of age. Youths account for over a third of Africa's population and their represent the future. Together with the Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate of the African Union Commission, eight outstanding youths leading initiatives in service to others were interviewed to celebrate Africa Youth Day on November 1.

Each of these youths has a great story to tell. One is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo who helps others acquire skills in her refugee settlement in Uganda. Another is based in Rwanda and works for a nonprofit aiming to

strengthen school leadership in Africa. A third works with another nonprofit to support families living in extreme poverty in the Central African Republic. A fourth created an association in Senegal to help young girls and women acquire digital skills. A fifth works in the slums of Kampala with youths to improve their livelihood. A sixth promotes active citizenship in governance processes in Nigeria. The last two interviewees are an artist and film maker and the founder of an organization helping youths explore future careers. Many other outstanding youths could have been interviewed, but these eight change makers illustrate the potential of youths to transform Africa.

As mentioned earlier, one of the aims of this magazine will be to listen to those at the frontline on what works to improve lifelong educational opportunities for Africa's population. This will be done mostly through interviews. Another aim will be to share through short essays additional insights on key issues face by education systems in Africa, and what can be done to overcome these challenges. This issue includes short essays, some of which are reproduced from UNESCO IICBA's blog, discussing among other issues related to inclusive education – how to reach children with disabilities; ending violence in schools and promoting mental health; strengthening the teaching profession; learning from the poor as our teachers; and educating girls and ending child marriage and early childbearing.

We hope that you will enjoy the interviews and essays included in this issue . Please do not hesitate to share comments or suggestions on what we should cover in this magazine in the future. You can do so by sending us an email at info.iicba@unesco.org.

Thank you.

Foreword

Renewing Our Commitment to Transforming Education for the African Union's Year of Education



H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine

Commissioner
Department of Education, Science, Technology,
and Innovation (ESTI)

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

Nelson Mandela

"Give them the ducation which will train their heads to refuse the wretchedness of mind and skill their hands to develop the resources of Africa."

Julius Nyerere

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I present to you the inaugural issue of the Teacher Magazine. I am honoured, as the Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation of the African Union, to introduce this Magazine dedicated to celebrating the invaluable role of teachers and their impact on education in Africa.

Education has long been recognized as a fundamental pillar for the development and progress of any nation. It is through quality education that individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to build a brighter

future for themselves and their communities. Therefore, it is only fitting that the African Union has chosen Education as the theme of the year 2024 with the specific message: **"Educating an African Citizen Fit for the 21st Century: Creating Resilient Education Systems for Greater Access to Inclusive, Sustainable, Quality and Appropriate Learning in Africa"**.

At present, we face critical challenges in the realization of universal primary and secondary education by 2030. Despite significant progress made over the years, four main indicators are sounding the alarm bells, as they highlight the depth of the education crisis on the African continent. A significant percentage of children and young people in the official age bracket for various levels of education are not enrolled in schools. This number has reached the alarming global estimate of 98 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, at around 20% of the school-age population. In addition, the proportion of children who cannot read and comprehend a simple text by the age of 10 has probably worsened after the pandemic and is estimated at 90%. This means, 9 out of 10 children cannot read and comprehend a simple text by the age of 10.

This is where teachers play a pivotal role. Teachers are the key drivers of effective learning and transformation. They possess the ability to inspire, guide, and empower young minds, shaping them into responsible, resilient, and innovative individuals. In one of his poems, a famous Egyptian poet wrote:

*"Stand-up for the teacher and show him your respect
The teacher is almost a prophet*

Do you know more honourable or noble than the one who builds and nurtures souls and minds?"

Yet, Africa still needs an estimated number of 15 to 17 million more teachers to achieve universal

primary and secondary education by 2030 – the target date for the MDGs. And for those who are working, because of different crises, their status has deteriorated significantly during the last decades.

Investing in teachers is investing in the future of Africa, and this calls for the prioritization of teacher development. It requires that teachers have the necessary skills, resources, and support to deliver quality education to all. This means providing them with continuous professional development opportunities, improving working conditions, and offering competitive salaries and incentives. The AU highlighted these imperatives in its Continental Teacher Instruments, including the *Continental Guidelines for the Teaching Profession*; *Continental Framework of Standards and Competences for the Teaching Profession*; and *Continental Teacher Qualification Framework for Teacher Quality, Comparability, and International Mobility*.

It is heart-warming that the teaching profession is regaining global attention, thanks to the commitment of the UN SG who commissioned a high-level group to prepare a report and recommendations to rehabilitate the teaching profession. The recently released report could be downloaded here: https://www.ilo.org/global/industries-and-sectors/education/WCMS_912921/lang--en/index.htm.

The recommendations therein, in addition to our continental frameworks, could inspire all of us, starting with member states, to address the concerns and prepare the ground for attracting

and retaining a highly qualified teaching workforce that is passionate about its profession and dedicated to shaping the minds of our future leaders.

This Magazine will serve as a timely platform to highlight best practices, share innovative teaching strategies, and provide resources to support the professional growth of teachers. It will serve as a conduit for collaboration, enabling educators from different regions and countries to exchange ideas and experience. It will showcase the transformative power of education and the significant impact teachers can have on the lives of their students.

I encourage all educators, policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in the field of education to read and contribute to this magazine as a tool for inspiration, reflection, and advocacy. We need to work together, hand in hand, to overcome the challenges we face and ensure that no child is left behind. By prioritizing the noble profession of teaching, we can build a prosperous and inclusive Africa where every child has access to quality education.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the launch of the Teacher Magazine, especially the dedicated team of writers, editors, and designers from UNESCO-IICBA, who have worked tirelessly to bring this vision to life. I also express my sincere appreciation to UNESCO-IICBA, for its recognition of the importance of investing in education and empowering teachers.



Highlights from the Africa Teachers Report on Girls' Education

On January 31, 2024, the first study in the Africa Teachers Reports Series on educating girls and ending child marriage was released at an event in Brussels at the European Union under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union on educating girls and ending child marriage. The study was jointly prepared by UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa and the Africa Union's International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa. With 2024 earmarked as the African Union's year of education, the event at the European Union aimed to foster dialogue, share research, and drive actionable outcomes. It also served as an opportunity to showcase the European Union's Global Gateway Flagship Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa, a €100 million investment from the European Union budget with contributions from France, Finland, and Belgium. The Africa Teachers Reports Series is produced by UNESCO IICBA and funded under a grant from the European Union as part of its Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa.

Key Findings

While nine in ten girls complete their primary education and over three in four complete their lower secondary education globally, the proportions remain much lower in sub-Saharan Africa, where just over two-thirds of girls (69 percent versus 73 percent for boys) complete their primary education and four in ten (43 percent versus 46 percent for boys) complete lower secondary education according to the latest available data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (included in the World Development Indicators). More needs to be done to improve educational opportunities for girls in Africa, which would help end child marriage and boost countries' economic development. Gender imbalances in education and beyond (including in occupational choice and more broadly agency) result in part from deep-seated biases and discrimination against women, which percolate to education. It is essential to reduce inequality both in and through education, acknowledging that education has a key role to play in reducing broader gender inequalities in societies. The first part of this study updates and expands for a much larger number of countries a previous investment case on the benefits of educating girls and ending child marriage in Africa, while the second part looks at the role of teachers and school leaders in improving learning outcomes and educational attainment for girls. Topics discussed include the importance of having more female teachers and especially school leaders and adopting gender-sensitive approaches in the classroom such as gender-responsive pedagogy, while also preventing gender-based violence in schools. The study was prepared by a team at UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) in partnership with the African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA).

Part I: Investment Case

The first part of the study looks at the benefits of educating girls and ending child marriage, building on a previous study at the World Bank, also in collaboration with AU/CIEFFA¹. Educating girls could have large positive impacts on many development outcomes, including (1) earnings and standards of living; (2) child marriage and early

childbearing; (3) fertility and population growth; (4) health, nutrition, and well-being; (5) agency and decision-making; and (6) social capital and institutions. Key findings for this study are based on a much larger set of African countries, household surveys, and other data include the following:

- Gains in earnings are substantial especially with a secondary education. Women with primary education earn more than those with no education, but women with secondary education earn more than twice as much. The gains with tertiary education are even larger.
- Each additional year of secondary education could reduce the risk for girls of marrying as a child and having a child before 18. Universal secondary education could virtually end child marriage and reduce early childbearing by up to three-fourths. By contrast, primary education in most countries does not lead to large reductions in child marriage and early childbearing.
- Universal secondary education and ending child marriage could reduce total fertility (the number of children women have over their lifetime) nationally by a third on average across countries, reducing population growth and enabling countries to benefit from the demographic dividend.
- Universal secondary education could also have health benefits, including (i) increasing women's knowledge of HIV/AIDS by one-tenth; (ii) increasing women's decision-making for their own healthcare by a fourth; (iii) reducing under-five mortality by a third; and (iv) reducing under-five stunting by a fifth. Other benefits include among others a reduction in intimate partner violence.
- Universal secondary education could also increase women's decision-making in the household by one-fifth and the likelihood that children would be registered at birth by over a fourth.
- While primary schooling is necessary, it is not sufficient. For most indicators or domains of potential impacts, gains associated with educational attainment tend to be substantial only with secondary education or higher. Secondary education is also needed to help end child marriage.
- Gender inequality, starting with inequality in and through education, is massive, with women accounting for only about a third of lifetime labor market earnings in sub-Saharan Africa. The

¹ See Wodon, Q., C. Male, C. Montenegro, H. Nguyen, and A. Onagoruwa. 2018. *Educating Girls and Ending Child Marriage: A Priority for Africa*, Washington, DC: The World Bank. The 2018 study was prepared for the African Union Second African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage organized in Ghana. It was also co-sponsored by AU/CIEFFA.

gap between men and women in human capital wealth (the value today of the future earnings of the labor force) is estimated at US\$ 4.0 trillion in 2018 value. Reducing gender inequality, including through education, could dramatically improve countries' development prospects.

- Overall, while educating girls and ending child marriage is the right thing to do, it is also a smart economic investment. This statement is not new, but the contribution of the first part of the study is to provide estimates of the benefits of educating and ending child marriage in Africa for a much larger number of countries and with more recent data than done previously.

Part II: Role of Teachers and School Leaders

The second part of the study focuses on the role of teachers and school leaders in educating girls and ending child marriage. The analysis follows a simple argument. To improve girls' education and end child marriage, the literature tends to emphasize economic incentives for adolescent girls to remain in school. This is certainly needed, but we should also note that (1) Lack of foundational learning is a key factor leading to drop-out in primary and lower-secondary school; (2) Teachers and school leaders are key to improving foundational learning, although new approaches are needed for pedagogy in the classroom and for training teachers and school leaders; and (3) Nationally, professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders are also required. These three steps in the argument call for investing in teachers and school leaders, especially women, to educate girls and end child marriage. Targeted interventions for adolescent girls are needed, but in many countries they tend to reach only a small share of girls still in school at that age; by contrast, improving foundational learning would benefit a larger share of girls (and boys) and could also make sense from a cost-benefit point of view, leading to higher educational attainment. Part II of this study provides empirical analysis to test the validity of this argument focusing on West Africa, a region with low educational attainment and high rates of child marriage, although findings are likely to also be relevant for other regions. Key findings are as follows:

- According to parental responses to household surveys, lack of learning in school for their children may account for over 40 percent of girls

and boys dropping out of primary school (data for 10 francophone countries). It also accounts for more than a third of students dropping out at the lower secondary level. Improving learning could therefore reduce dropout and increase educational attainment substantially for girls and boys alike.

- To improve learning, reviews from impact evaluations and analysis of student assessment data suggest that teachers and school leaders are key. Yet new approaches are needed for professional development, including through structured pedagogy and training emphasizing practice. Teachers must also be better educated: household surveys for 10 francophone countries suggest that only one-third of teachers in primary schools have a post-secondary diploma.
- Female teachers and especially school leaders improve student learning according to the 2019 round of PASEC and other data. Yet less than a fifth of teachers at the secondary level are women in many countries. The proportion of female school leaders is also low. Better opportunities must be given to women teachers and school leaders, which would bring additional benefits apart from gains in learning as women may serve as role models for girls and also tend to remain in teaching or school leadership for a longer period of time, thus reducing pressures from teacher shortages.
- Better professional standards and competencies frameworks are also needed for teachers and school leaders, including to make the profession more attractive and ensure that teaching and school leadership are gender-sensitive. Many countries have not yet treated teaching as a career and lack clear definitions of competencies needed at different levels. Guidance for Member States is available from the African Union to strengthen the profession.
- Making the teaching profession more attractive may require better wages and benefits in some (but not all) countries, especially for women who often lag behind men in pay. But programs to increase teacher job satisfaction matter too. This includes mental health and psycho-social support for teachers, especially in contexts of emergencies. Teachers must also be trained in gender-responsive pedagogy and the prevention of gender-based violence in schools, so that schools become safer and more welcoming for girls.

Conclusion

Investing in teachers and school leaders is key to promoting educational opportunities for girls and ending child marriage, thereby also reducing gender inequality in and through education. Low educational attainment for girls and child marriage are profoundly detrimental for girls, but also for their children and families, their communities, and societies. Interventions targeting adolescent girls

are needed, but so are investments in teachers and school leaders to end the learning crisis that leads to drop-outs, resulting in low educational attainment, a higher prevalence of child marriage, and early childbearing for girls. Increasing investments in girls' education yields large economic and social benefits apart from being the right thing to do. This should start with enhancing foundational learning through better teaching and school leadership, and proven gender-sensitive approaches in and around schools.

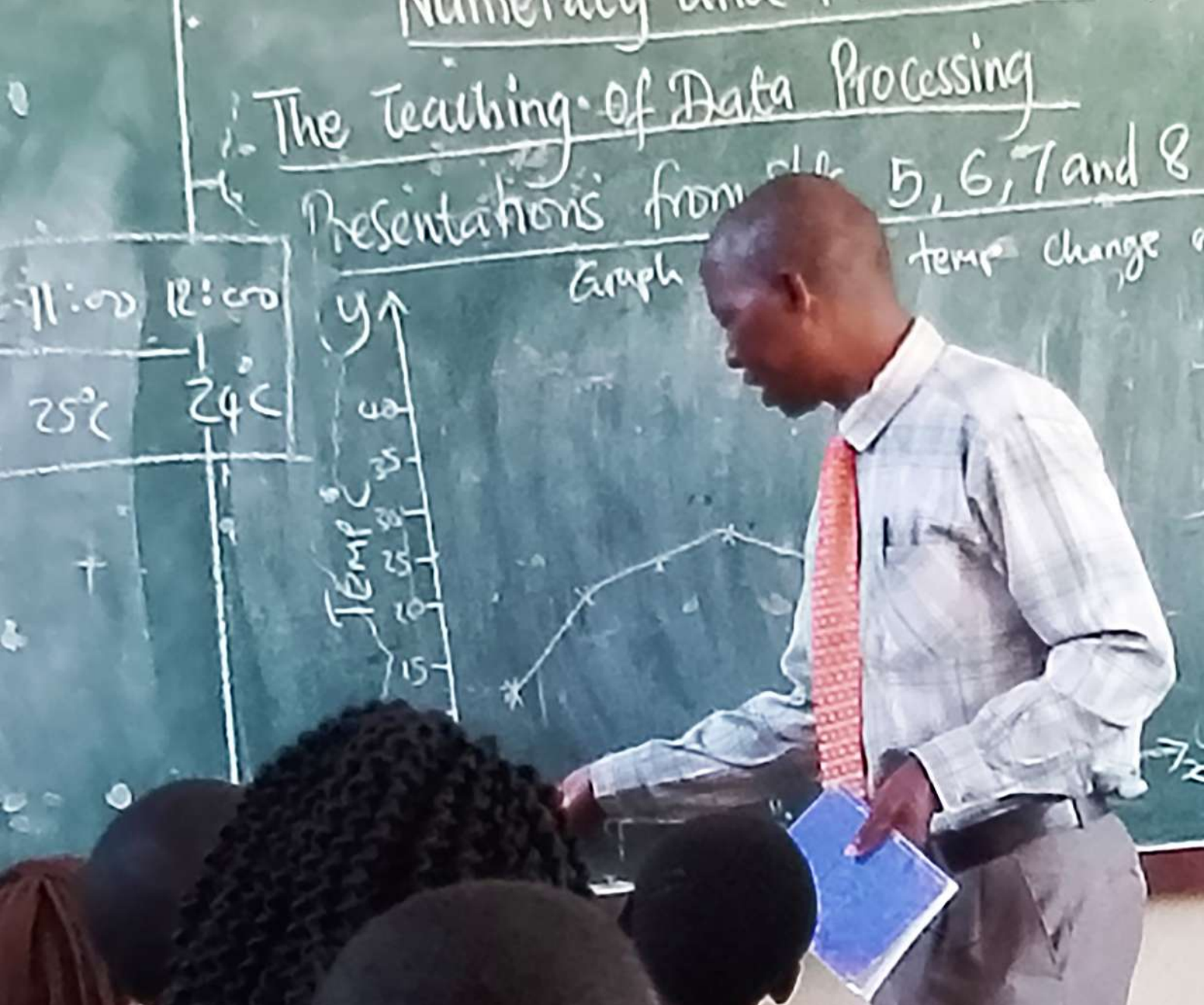
Background to the Africa Teachers Reports Series

With support from the European Union under its Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa, the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) is launching a new Africa Teachers Reports Series with this first report on *Educating Girls and Ending Child Marriage in Africa: Investment Case and the Role of Teachers and School Leaders*. Reports in the Series will be published as IICBA Studies and will be freely available for download on IICBA's website. The reports will have two main objectives: (1) Analyzing issues affecting teachers, school leaders, and learners in Africa; and (2) Exploring the role of teachers and school leaders in improving educational outcomes for learners on the continent.

The reports in the Series will be evidence-based and relatively short (target for core text at 40 to 50 pages plus annexes and endnotes). They will focus on issues of interest to the African Union and its Member States. The aim will be to publish one report per year, although in the first year (2024) more reports may be published in the context of the declaration by the African Union of 2024 as the Year of Education. The specific theme for the year adopted by the African Union is *"Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa."* UNESCO IICBA intends to work closely with the African Union and other African organizations in preparing and disseminating reports in this Series, including through the Teacher Development Cluster for which IICBA serves as a secretariat under the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-25. In preparing the reports, IICBA will also aim to consult and collaborate with other UNESCO teams and Institutes, national and international agencies, civil society organizations, and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 hosted by UNESCO, also known as the Teacher Task Force.

The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), a category 1 UNESCO institute, is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It informs education policies, strengthens teacher professional development, and builds capacity in education institutions, including Ministries of Education. Founded in 1999, IICBA is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2024, which is also the African Union's Year of Education. To provide innovative solutions and scale-up efforts to improve educational outcomes in Africa, IICBA works with a range of partners, including the African Union, UN agencies, other international organizations, development banks, bilateral donors, foundations, teacher organizations, school networks, and non-profits. In 2023, IICBA adopted a new strategic plan with the aim of strengthening research and policy dialogue to inform capacity building. The launch of the Africa Teachers Reports Series is part of that effort.

This first report in the Series is co-published with the African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA), a specialized institution of the African Union since 2004. AU/CIEFFA has been established under the Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation at the African Union Commission to coordinate the promotion of girls and women's education in Africa, with a view of achieving their economic, social, and cultural empowerment. The Centre works closely with AU Member States and government, civil society, and international partners to implement its programs and activities and maintains a specific working relationship with UNESCO to ensure a strong partnership in the implementation of its programs. The Centre is based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.



Voices from Great Teachers

Best Teacher Awards recognize outstanding teachers. These awards can raise the appreciation of teachers in society while demonstrating that hard work and innovation by teachers makes a difference. The African Union Commission instituted the Continental Best Teacher Award in 2019. Winners receive cash gifts and are celebrated. The Award is important to celebrate the unique contribution that teachers make to their students, their communities, and societies. The African Union Commission and UNESCO IICBA, the coordinating agency for the Teacher Development Cluster under the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025, encourage countries that have not yet done so to create national (as well as regional and local) teacher awards. This series of interviews shares insights from the winners of the 2023 Continental Best Teacher Award.

Interview with

Laila El Baghazaou

Winner of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Laila El Baghazaoui. I am a high school teacher and a PhD student. I received an international school award from the British Council for my work on different projects, connecting my colleagues and my school with other schools around the world. For example, I facilitated a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) for Integrating Critical Thinking Skills into the Exploration of Culture in an English as a Foreign Language setting. I was selected by the Ministry of Education as one of the innovative teachers during the school year 2018-2019. One of my initiatives was the program of Global Nomad Groups for four years. Thanks to this program my students could connect with other students from the United States. They shared their stories, values, and pictures. They learned to stop stereotypes and prejudices and promote mutual understanding. I have also worked on fighting drugs in my school in collaboration with a school from Taiwan within the framework of the iEARN (International Education and Resource Network) organization. I also won an Africa scholarship from IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English) to attend the international conference in UK. Right now, I am a TCLP Arabic teacher at Washington Latin Public School. I have been chosen by the Moroccan Ministry of Education along with the American Council to take part in this program. It is sponsored by the United States Department of State. I have also written three articles (two about teaching and one about cross cultural studies) and I have given different workshops and participated in national and international conferences.



Q: What do you teach, at what level, and where?

I teach English to high school students at Charif Elidrissi High School Benslimane in Morocco. Now I am a TCLP Arabic teacher at Washington Latin PCS for one school year.

Q: For how long have you been a teacher, and what motivated you to become one?

I have been teaching for about 12 years. One of my motivations to becoming a teacher is the love of making a change in the lives of people, especially young ones who are struggling to find their way. Teachers are supposed to be the light at the end of the tunnel. They are the role models of their students. For this reason, we make them see the future clearly and help them with their choices. We make them believe in their skills. I love to see the rewarding results at the end of the school year with my students. It is because of this fruitful result that I love my job. I feel I am a life changer and not only an educator.



Q: What are you most passionate about in your teaching?

I am passionate about connecting classroom projects. I love to connect my students with other students around the world. I think that through connecting classroom projects, students start to think globally and act locally. Each time I implement a connecting classroom project, I feel that my students gain new knowledge and start to see the world from a totally different perspective. They like knowing about other students' cultures and way of thinking. It is thanks to these virtual exchanges that my students start to think critically and believe in their dreams. They see new experiences from other students that motivate them and help them go forward and believe in their personal and educational projects.

Q: What are some of the challenges teachers face today, and what can be done to overcome these challenges?

Teachers all around the world face many different challenges, however African teachers often contend with a unique set of obstacles that can

make their job very hard. Among these challenges, there is a lack of resources like copying machines and video projectors. Students can't afford printing papers outside the school, so teachers use the available resources to do their job. Besides, some teachers are teaching in bad conditions. They may need to travel from an area far away to another to teach students, because there are no available houses for them to live in near the school. They suffer a lot to get to the places where they work. To overcome these challenges, governments should equip classes with video projectors and provide free printing paper for both students and teachers. Furthermore, they need to build employer-provided housing for teachers to improve their living conditions.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize and what could be done to empower them to do so?

There are many opportunities that teachers could seize. For instance, they could take part in national and international organizations that provide in-service training like IATEFL I mentioned earlier or TESOL (International Association, formerly Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). Teachers should update their knowledge through taking part in different workshops and conferences. They can take part in connecting classroom projects which can be found in the iEARN organization platform and Global Nomad Group platform. Also, they can take part in MOOCs. This provides professional development opportunities for teachers with different specialties. The courses can be self-paced or taken over a limited time.





Q: You have been recognized as an outstanding teacher. What practical advice do you have for other teachers?

The advice that I could give to teachers is ‘determination is the key to success.’ Teachers need to be determined if they start any project. When I begin any project, I just can’t stop. It is true that we struggle sometimes, but we go forward to the end. I also advise teachers to fall in love with their ideas and dreams. No one will believe in your project if you don’t believe in it yourself. Give value to your materials and your ideas, be determined, and love what you are doing

Q: Looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

There is nothing that could be done differently because we learn from our mistakes. I used to give much importance to examinations. Right now, I focus on the process of learning and not on grades. Sometimes, I use projects as a way of assessment instead of a written exam to motivate my students. This is the one thing that I could have done differently in the past. I used to focus on examinations and grades more than 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.

Q: What does being recognized for the Award mean to you? Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

Being recognized for the Award means ‘the hard work pays off’. This revives my intrinsic motivation to do my best in my classroom and in my school.

It helps me move forward and make a change in my students’ lives as well as in my community. Recently, I moved to Washington Latin Public School to teach Arabic for one school year. I could not adjust to the new culture. I was about to quit the program, but when I received the news about the Award I withdrew my decision and started a new beginning with a very optimistic view. The Continental Best Teacher Award means a lot to me.

Q: Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

I plan to buy video projectors and computers for English language classes to facilitate the process of learning and teaching the English language in my school, especially as we have about 1,500 students in our school. I will provide English books for students who need financial support. They will need to bring them back at the end of the school year for other students to benefit from the books.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

I love hiking and climbing mountains. I started this hobby in 2018. In the beginning, I didn’t know if I could make it to the summit. I just wanted to enjoy the journey and stop when I feel tired. I figured out that I could reach my goal with determination and some patience. It is true that I could be slow in climbing. However, I have never given up. I could always reach the summit whatever it took me. I started with the 2nd highest summit in Africa, Toubkal. But I have never told my mother about my journeys because she is always against climbing mountains!

Interview with

Adeola Adefemi

Winner of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

I am a public school teacher known for my contributions to advancing quality education and creating safe learning environments. As the founder of Girls Allowed Hub, Every Child Counts Club, and the convener of the Secure Your Future Campaign, I am committed to empowering students and fostering their success. My mentorship has resulted in students excelling in over 150 local and international competitions. I have been listed as one of the 100 Change Makers in Nigeria and recognized as a multi-award-winning educator, honored with the JCI Outstanding Young Person in Nigeria Award and currently holding the title of Overall Best Teacher in Lagos and Nigeria. I also received the Inspirational Teacher of the Year Award and was distinguished in 2021 as one of the Top 50 Teachers in the World by the Global Teacher Prize. I have also contributed to academic discourse and presented papers at conferences and summits. Additionally, I am an avid reader and scriptwriter, having written and directed over 50 plays and poems. One of my works was performed during the Lagos at 50 celebrations. I have a thirst for knowledge and an unwavering commitment to continuous professional growth and expertise in my field.

Q: What do you teach, at what level, and where?

I teach English as a second language to secondary senior school students in Nigeria, primarily focusing on language.



Q: For how long have you been a teacher, and what motivated you to become one? What are you most passionate about in your teaching?

I have been teaching for over 10 years. About twelve years ago, while on a national youth service in a school in the Northern part of Nigeria, I was almost lynched by school children between the age of seven and ten for dressing against their religious belief. Growing up in a multiethnic and multi-religious country like Nigeria, I had viewed violence as a norm, having witnessed numerous cases of tribal-cleansings, insurgencies, and general state of unrest, but I had never seen children act so violently. It was at that point and during my remaining months in the school that I realized how inequalities and poorly designed educational policies in a diverse country can lead to the escalation of crises. Childhood can be a site for peace or violence, it is only dependent on the seeds we choose to water. I choose the side of the promotion of peace through education and that



was what motivated me to go back to school to earn my PGD because I knew there was a gap for me to fill and fill it fast.

Q: What are some of the challenges teachers face today, and what can be done to overcome these challenges?

Teachers encounter numerous challenges that hinder the quality of education. One of these challenges is overpopulated classrooms which are now prevalent, with too many students for a single teacher to manage effectively. This overcrowding limits personalized attention to students, impacting the overall quality of education. Moreover, the teaching profession is experiencing a brain drain, as talented educators seek opportunities abroad due to low salaries and limited career prospects within the education sector. This brain drain results in a shortage of experienced and motivated teachers, further compromising education quality as those left are demoralized. In addition, insufficient funding for education leads to a lack of teaching materials, outdated facilities, and inadequate teacher training programs, hindering both teachers' effectiveness and students' learning experiences.

To address these challenges comprehensively, the government should take several key steps.

First, policies should be enacted to reduce class sizes, ensuring a better student-teacher ratio for improved individualized attention. Second, increasing teacher salaries can make the teaching profession more appealing and help retain talented educators. Third, a crucial step is allocating more funding to the education sector to enhance infrastructure, provide modern teaching materials, and support teacher training and professional development. By prioritizing these measures, Nigeria can strengthen its education system, retain skilled teachers, and ensure a high-quality education for its students.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize and what could be done to empower them to do so?

Teachers have several opportunities they can seize to enhance their impact in the education sector. Firstly, professional development is crucial; teachers should engage in ongoing training to stay updated with the latest teaching methods, technologies, and educational trends. This includes attending workshops and conferences to gain new insights and skills. Also, specialization is a valuable avenue for teachers. Becoming subject matter experts in specific areas can lead to opportunities for consulting, writing textbooks, or offering specialized online courses. Moreover, teachers should consider seizing virtual and onsite scholarships for educators, which can support their expertise development. Participating in international teacher exchange programs or collaborating with educators from different parts of the world can bring global perspectives to the classroom, enhancing their teaching methods and broadening their horizons.

To empower teachers to seize these opportunities, several steps can be taken. Firstly, the government and ministries should invest in professional development, providing funding and support for continuous teacher training and development programs, including scholarships and opportunities for attending workshops and conferences. In addition, recognizing and rewarding outstanding teachers with incentives, awards, or promotions can motivate them and inspire others. Besides, ensuring that teachers have access to necessary teaching materials, technology, and resources is crucial to facilitate



innovation in the classroom. Lastly, offering leadership training and mentorship programs can prepare teachers for leadership roles within the education system, while promoting international collaboration and exchanges can broaden their horizons and bring diverse perspectives to their teaching. By providing teachers with the support, resources, recognition, and opportunities for professional development, they can seize these various avenues for growth and play a more influential role in shaping the future of education.

Q: You have been recognized as an outstanding teacher. What practical advice do you have for other teachers?

I would advise fellow educators to maintain a deep passion for their students. It is crucial to keep that genuine care for their growth and well-being as the driving force behind your teaching. Focus on your passion for teaching, and accolades will naturally follow as a result of your dedication. Furthermore, I recommend fostering a spirit of collaboration. Work closely with your fellow teachers and, equally importantly, with your students. Learning often thrives in a collaborative environment, and sharing insights and experiences can lead to innovative teaching methods and heightened student engagement. Additionally, I believe in the importance of being a problem solver rather than a complainer. Challenges are inevitable, but they also present opportunities for success. Address these challenges proactively, seeking creative solutions

that benefit both you and your students. Lastly, commit to never stopping your own learning journey. The educational landscape is constantly evolving, and staying updated with new teaching techniques, technologies, and educational trends is vital for providing the best learning experiences for your students.

Q: Looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

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. By incorporating technology sooner, I could have made my teaching more dynamic and prepared my students even more effectively for the challenges of the 21st century. However, I also recognize the importance of continually evolving and adapting, and I am committed to staying at the forefront of educational technology to provide the best possible learning experiences for my students in the future.

Q: What does being recognized for the Award mean to you?

Being recognized for the African Union Continental Best Teacher Award holds immense significance to me. It is a testament to the dedication, passion, and hard work I have

invested in the field of education. This recognition validates my commitment to providing quality education and underscores the importance of the work educators do in shaping the future of our continent. It is not just a personal achievement but also a recognition of the collective efforts of educators striving to make a positive impact on the lives of African students.

Q: Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

As for my plans following this recognition, I am deeply motivated to use it as a platform to further promote quality education. This Award serves as a powerful tool to raise awareness about the importance of education, particularly in underserved communities. I intend to collaborate with educational organizations, policymakers, and fellow educators to advocate for improved resources, teacher training, and innovative teaching methods. Moreover, I aim to inspire other educators to continue their pursuit of excellence and to empower students to become lifelong learners who contribute positively to their communities and the continent as a whole. This recognition is a responsibility I gladly embrace in the ongoing mission to enhance the educational landscape in Africa.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

I vividly recall a time in my life when I had reservations about becoming a teacher. Initially, I held the misconception that teaching might not be as professionally respected as other career paths. I hesitated, questioning whether it would offer the intellectual challenge and recognition that I sought in my chosen profession. However, as I embarked on my teaching journey and spent time in the classroom, my perspective underwent a profound transformation. I realized the immense impact that educators can have on shaping young minds, inspiring curiosity, and fostering a love for learning. Witnessing the growth of my students and the positive changes I could bring to their lives became incredibly rewarding. Over time, my initial doubts gave way to a deep passion for teaching, an unwavering commitment to my students' success, and a profound appreciation for the invaluable role of educators in society. In the classroom, I found not just a profession, but a purpose, and in teaching, I discovered that the greatest achievements are the ones etched in the minds and hearts of students.



Interview with

James Zimba

Winner of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

I am James Kamuzgange Zimba from Malawi. I am 54 years old. I work with the Ministry of Education as a lecturer at Karonga Teacher Training College. I have a Bachelor of Education (Primary) which I got in 2008 at Domasi College of Education within Malawi. I got employment with the Malawi Government in the Ministry of Education as a Primary School Teacher. I taught in Primary School until 2004 then I upgraded to become a lecturer in 2008, and since then I have been training primary school teachers.

Q: What do you teach, at what level, and where?

I teach Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Education Foundation Studies at Karonga Teacher Training College.

Q: For how long have you been a teacher, and what motivated you to become one? What are you most passionate about in your teaching?

I have been a teacher since 1995. At first I joined teaching as one would wish to be employed, but gradually I started getting motivated by the value of being a teacher. The major motivation is the contribution a teacher makes towards any profession in the world. As a teacher, I am passionate in a number of areas but I would like to share four: (i) The subject matter: I am interested in and knowledgeable about the subject I am teaching – I am able to share my enthusiasm for the subjects I teach with my students; (ii) The



students: I care about my students' success and well-being – I invest in helping my students learn and grow; (iii) Learning: I am passionate about the learning process – I am constantly looking for new ways to help my students learn effectively; (iv) Making a difference: I am passionate about making a difference in the lives of my students – I want to help my students reach their full potential.

Q: What are some of the challenges teachers face today, and what can be done to overcome these challenges?

There are many challenges teachers face today in Africa: (i) Class sizes in Africa are often very large, making it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to students; (ii) Schools often lack basic resources such as textbooks, pens, and paper – This can make it difficult for teachers to provide effective instruction; (iii) Teachers in Africa are often underpaid and overworked – they may also have to work in difficult conditions, such as classrooms without electricity or running water;



(iv) Teachers in Africa also often have limited access to professional development opportunities – this can make it difficult for them to stay up-to-date on the latest teaching methods and research; (v) Violence in schools is another problem in many parts of Africa - this can create a hostile learning environment for students and teachers alike. In addition to these general challenges, teachers in Africa may also face specific challenges depending on the country or region in which they work. For example, teachers in conflict-affected areas may have to deal with the additional challenges of teaching in a dangerous environment.

To overcome these challenges, we need to: (i) reduce class sizes – this would allow teachers to give more individual attention to students; (ii)

Increase investment in education – this would provide schools with the resources they need to provide effective instruction; (iii) Improve working conditions for teachers – this includes paying teachers a fair salary and providing them with adequate support; (iv) Provide professional development opportunities for teachers – this would help teachers to stay up-to-date on the latest teaching methods and research; and (v) Address violence in schools – this includes creating a safe and supportive learning environment for students and teachers alike.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize and what could be done to empower them to do so?

I could mention a few opportunities: (i) Teach at international schools: International schools are growing in popularity in Africa, as many parents are looking for a high-quality education for their children. Teachers at international schools often earn competitive salaries and have access to professional development opportunities; (ii) Start their own teaching business: Teachers can start their own teaching business by tutoring students, teaching online courses, or developing educational materials. This can be a great way to earn extra income or even build a full-time business; (iii) Get involved in educational reform: Teachers can play a leading role in educational reform in Africa. They can advocate for better pay and working conditions, develop new teaching methods, and support teachers in underserved areas.

How to empower teachers in Africa? Several options related to what I already said come to mind: (i) Provide professional development opportunities: teachers need access to professional development opportunities to stay up to date on the latest teaching methods and technologies. Governments and educational organizations can provide these opportunities through workshops, conferences, and online courses; (ii) Invest in educational resources: schools need to have adequate resources, such as textbooks, computers, and other teaching materials, for teachers to be effective. Governments and educational organizations can invest in these resources to ensure that all students have access to a quality education; (iii)

Pay teachers a fair salary: teachers deserve to be paid a fair salary for their work. Governments and educational organizations need to invest in teacher salaries to attract and retain qualified teachers; and (iv) Reduce teacher workload: teachers often must work long hours and juggle multiple tasks. Governments and educational organizations can reduce teacher workload by providing them with more support staff and by streamlining administrative tasks.

Q: You have been recognized as an outstanding teacher. What practical advice do you have for other teachers?

Several priorities come to mind: (i) Build relationships with your students. This is the foundation for a successful classroom environment. They need to get to know their students' interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Show them that they care about them and that they are there to help them succeed; (ii) Create a positive and supportive learning environment. This means creating a space where students feel safe to take risks, ask questions, and make mistakes. It also means fostering a sense of community and respect in the classroom; (iii) Differentiate your instruction. Not all students learn in the same way. Outstanding teachers use a variety of teaching methods and materials to reach all learners; (iv) Provide clear and concise instructions. Students need to know what is expected of them. Make sure the instructions are easy to understand and follow; (v) Give timely and specific feedback. Feedback is essential for student learning. Outstanding teachers provide students with regular feedback on their progress and help them to identify areas where students need to improve; (vi) Be flexible and adaptable. Things don't always go according to plan in the classroom. Outstanding teachers can adapt their lessons and teaching methods on the fly; (vii) Take care of yourself. Teaching can be a demanding job. It is important to take care of your own physical and mental health. Make sure you are getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, and exercising regularly; (viii) Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are many resources available to teachers, including colleagues, administrators, and professional development workshops; (ix) Celebrate your successes. Teaching is a

challenging but rewarding profession. Take the time to celebrate your accomplishments, both big and small; and (x) Never give up on your students. All students deserve the opportunity to succeed. Outstanding teachers believe in their students and never give up on them, no matter what.

Q: Looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

I would have put even more emphasis on (i) Getting to know my students. This includes understanding their individual learning styles, needs, and interests. I can use this information to create more effective and engaging lessons; (ii) Using a variety of teaching methods. Students learn in different ways, so it is important to use a variety of teaching methods to reach all learners. This could include lectures, discussions, group work, hands-on activities, and projects and any additional new methods; (iii) Providing opportunities for feedback. Students need to know how they are doing to improve. I would provide feedback through written comments, one-on-one meetings, and class discussions; (iv) Creating a positive learning environment. Students are more likely to learn in a classroom where they feel safe and respected. I would try to create a positive learning environment by being supportive, encouraging, and respectful of all students; and (v) Using technology to enhance learning. There are many ways to use technology to enhance learning, such as using educational apps and websites, creating online learning experiences, and using technology to facilitate collaboration and communication. This opportunity is coming late in my professional life.

Q: What does being recognized for the Award mean to you?

To me it is an opportunity to realize that what I may feel as little, others have acknowledged to be a great contribution to my students and the education system in my country. In addition to that, the recognition is giving me more enthusiasm in my profession. I have also noted the importance of dedication and consultation in terms of knowledge sharing with my fellow teachers.

Q: Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

The recognition to me is an opportunity to encourage my colleagues in the college and my students to keep on improving our teaching skills to make many learners benefit from us. I am passionate to promote hands-on learning for my students. This will make them acquire firsthand knowledge and skills from my lessons.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

I am from a poor family background. I attended my primary school in the rural setting with no possible motivating exposure to role models apart from my teachers and other civil servants working in my home area. No wonder I am a teacher! I went to a school that was critically understaffed almost all the years I went to primary school. I never made it to a secondary school. Instead, I joined a correspondence school where I got my Junior Secondary School Certificate and Senior Secondary School Certificates.

I again never made it to university. I joined teaching and I thought of upgrading as a teacher. I sat again for one course which I did

not learn during the time I was studying my Junior and Senior secondary course because the correspondence school was not offering the course. This was the Physics and Chemistry course. But my best subjects were skewed towards sciences in the university. So I did the course through correspondence mode again, and I managed to pass with a credit. After this I applied for upgrading where I was considered to do Mathematics Education under Bachelor of Education Primary at Domasi College of Education. When I joined the college, I had a lot of fear knowing that my secondary school background was not good as compared to those who went to conventional secondary schools. By the time we were completing first year, I realized that our performance was equally the same. From this time, I built my courage. By the time I finished the course, I was one of the five students who got their degrees with credit.

When I joined Teacher Education, I had one thing in focus. This was to ensure that my student benefit from my experience of a poor background but making it possible to achieve high in education. My teaching practices mostly focus on helping my students to realize their potential.



Interview with

Vasiliki Viki Mpompolas

Winner of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Vasiliki Viki Mpompolas. I am a teacher from Technical High School situated in a small mining town called Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province. I began teaching at this wonderful school 11 years ago and I am happy to say that I am still here, thriving and flourishing. I was appointed as the Departmental Head for English Home and First Additional Language in 2022 and thus far it has been equally a challenging and rewarding experience. I am obsessed with my learners who I refer to as “my babies.”

Q: What do you teach, at what level, and where?

I teach English Home and First Additional Language at Technical High School Kimberley and have taught in both the GET (General Education and Training – Grades 8 and 9) and FET (Further Education and Training – Grade 10, 11 and 12) phase. I am currently teaching Grades 10 through 12.

Q: For how long have you been a teacher, and what motivated you to become one?

I have been a teacher for 12 years. My teaching journey has been interesting to say the least. It has not been without its fair share of trials and tribulations. After completing a degree in Public Administration at The University of the Free State, (after many degree changes along the way) I was ready to enter the “real world”, but something was missing. My heart was just not in it and after many years, the quiet voice within me subtly urging



me to follow my passion and become a teacher grew to a thunderous roar, making it almost impossible to ignore. I was hesitant to admit that I always wanted to become a teacher due to a plethora of reasons ranging from societal and school pressures to the unfortunate stereotypical views which sadly, always seem to accompany the teaching profession (such as “there is no future in teaching,” “you have so much more potential than this” and the most common “there is no money in teaching”).

Before I could begin this journey however, tragedy struck on January 31, 2007, a date that will forever be etched in my memory and which changed the entire trajectory of my life. My beloved father, my biggest supporter and the one true love of my life, was brutally murdered. Life as I knew it ceased to exist and my world was completely wrenched. The plans and dreams I had, were shattered. After this devastating loss and much introspection, the brevity of life became vividly clear to me. I decided that there was no point in settling for a life that



was less than I deserved and that being truly happy and content and living a life of passion and purpose was more important than anything else in the world. With the support of my incredibly brave, amazing, strong mother, I embarked on my teaching journey and applied to complete my Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). It has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. Upon stepping into my first lecture on the first day of the first semester, I knew that I was finally exactly where I was meant to be. Everything just “clicked” and this is where my love affair with teaching began. After completing my PGCE, I decided to continue with my studies and completed my Honors degree in Educational Psychology specializing in Remedial Teaching with distinction.

Q: What are you most passionate about in your teaching?

Without a shadow of a doubt – my learners, they are my life. They teach me way more than I can ever teach them. Coming in at a very close second is language, as I believe that it not only forms the basis of a learner’s academic success, but it

is also imperative to ensuring that well-rounded, insightful, articulate, open-minded, competent, and contributing South African citizens are produced. Language is a vital part of human connection. It is an important tool used to shape our thoughts, ideas, and emotions and reveal them to others in a manner that everyone can understand and relate to. A common language is a symbol of social solidarity. It helps to create cultural ties, friendships, and relationships. It has the power to build societies and is what makes us human. Much of what learners learn is language. They learn to read and write, and they learn the discourse of academic disciplines in all their respective subjects as well. As a third-generation South African Greek citizen and the daughter and granddaughter of Greek immigrants, the appreciation and preservation of culture and tradition is something very near and dear to my heart. I am a firm believer that one of the chief ways to truly value our own unique cultures and identities is through language. I encourage my learners daily to embrace their cultures and traditions and to be proud of them.

Q: What are some of the challenges teachers face today, and what can be done to overcome these challenges?

On a personal level, being a language teacher at a technical school to learners whose Home Language is not English comes with a plethora of challenges. Most of the learners I teach also have a much greater interest and affinity for the technical field than they do for language, which involves poetry and literature, every technical child’s worst nightmare! Therefore, to not only gain but sustain their interest and get them excited about English, I have to regularly employ a variety of often “unorthodox” techniques.

On a general level, in South Africa, many of our teachers are truly struggling. Lack of knowledge and training for educators, inadequate infrastructure of the country, lack of resources and funding, unrealistic expectations and pressure from school administrators, socio-economic issues such as poverty, gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, and lawlessness to name but a few, are just some of the challenges faced by teachers on a daily basis. Sadly, it is very difficult to provide solutions to these problems. We have to be realistic. In a



perfect world, assistance and support from the government in every aspect is required to alleviate these issues. However, it is easier said than done. Teachers need to support one another and school principals and management teams also have a responsibility to support their teachers where the government is found lacking.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize and what could be done to empower them to do so?

To seize opportunities, more opportunities need to be created and provided for teachers to flourish and empower themselves, which I believe is not happening at the rate that it should be. In South Africa, I was fortunate enough to be nominated for the National Teachers Awards last year and was blessed to have attained first position in the category "Excellence in Secondary School Teaching." This was an incredible opportunity for me to network and meet incredible teachers from across the country who I learned so much from. I truly wish this opportunity could be given to all teachers who are equally if not more deserving than I am. It truly opens so many doors for you and enhances your teaching and confidence. More of these types of initiatives should be developed and introduced, including workshops, studying opportunities to enhance skills, etc. to elevate the status of teachers.

Q: You have been recognized as an outstanding teacher. What practical advice do you have for other teachers?

Take it one breath at a time. This is a thankless job, yes, but at the same time, the most rewarding. Do not let the bad days overshadow the good and remember why you started in the first place. Despite all the challenges faced by teachers every day, I still believe that this is the best profession in the world. Very few people have the opportunity

to touch so many lives in their lifetime. It is a true blessing and a privilege that we too often overlook due to the endless administration, politics, and bureaucratic red tape, parental involvement (or lack thereof), unruly learners... The list is endless.

Ultimately, 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," "Thank you for the lesson, Ma'am," "Thank you for seeing me, Ma'am," "Thank you listening, Ma'am" or, "You're the best, Ma'am." We often overlook these moments and shrug them off as trivial, but I can guarantee you, not many other professions are blessed enough to experience unconditional love like we do.

Rest! Easier said than done, I know. Trust me, I know! Ask for help: you do not have to do everything on your own. Do not take on too much, get comfortable and be confident with saying "no" when you feel overwhelmed. Find your school tribe and lean on them in times of strife and be their support during their difficult times. You cannot do this alone. As far as you can, make sure your planning and preparation is done well in advance to avoid added stress and pressure.

Q: Looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

I have very few regrets and honestly do not think I would do anything differently. Every challenge and obstacle has made me the teacher I am today. I do not believe I would be where I am today without these difficulties. I only wish I had the courage to follow my dreams earlier so that I could have had much more time with even more incredible kids. I would also be kinder and gentler to myself.



Q: What does being recognized for the Award mean to you? Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

Words will never be adequate to describe what this award means to me. I am so thankful for this wonderful opportunity. It is an experience of a lifetime and an incredible honor to even be nominated among these wonderful teachers who are doing such fantastic, inspiring work in their communities. This is truly one of the greatest highlights of my career thus far. To be recognized for the work I do has just given me more confidence, belief, passion, drive, and encouragement to continue “fighting the good fight,” to elevate the status of teachers in Africa and to create so much more awareness and recognition of the indispensable role they play in shaping the continent and society as a whole. I honestly do not know how I will do this yet, but I truly hope that this will open doors for me to assist in promoting the teaching profession in some way and to encourage and support teachers and remind them of their value and worth. I am ready for a new challenge. I know that I am still a relatively young teacher, with so much more to learn and that there are incredible teachers out there, with so much more experience and expertise and so many more amazing awards and impressive accolades to their name. But what I might lack in experience, I make up for in passion, drive, ambition, resilience, tenacity, and a hunger to learn and know more, and most importantly, an absolute obsession for my children.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

If I may, I would like to share two anecdotes with you.

One of my most special achievements is Mr. Raymond Mophosho. This amazing gentleman will always hold the most special place in my heart as he is one of my “original babies.” He was in my class the first year I ever started teaching and today, Mr. Mophosho is my colleague and neighbor at Technical High School where he is currently teaching Mathematics and Natural Sciences and it must be noted that he has also made it through to the Provincial Round of the National Teaching Awards for 2023! I would like to believe that the

bond we created from the time he was a young boy assisted him in some way in becoming the wonderful man he is today. His potential was so evident that I made it my mission to push him and provide him with as many opportunities as I could to stimulate him intellectually and challenge him academically and creatively – but also, to instill in him the gift of being of service to others and giving back to his community. I was honored to be the guest speaker at the District Awards Ceremony of the National Teaching Awards in June this year where my darling Raymond took home Top Honors. Raymond came first in the category “Excellence in Natural Science GET Phase.” I was also so thrilled that I could hand over his award to him. Talk about a “full circle moment!” He later went on to win the Provincial round and represented the Northern Cape Province at Nationals. I am a proud Mama indeed!

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, I am a South African Greek citizen and my culture and its warm, rich traditions and customs as well as my mother tongue are something that I am immensely proud of. Sharing this with my learners and instilling a love and pride for their own beautifully diverse and unique cultures and languages is something that I value the most. I am equally as proud of being a South African and I feel that it is my duty and obligation to promote, elevate, and champion children of color who historically were marginalized in the most cruel, reprehensible ways. I have a responsibility to learn from them and foster mutual respect and understanding. To illustrate this, I have included a picture of a gift given to me by one of my learners for my birthday – the Greek national anthem, written in almost perfect Greek. To say this moved me to tears would be an understatement. The fact that he took the time to research it and meticulously write it out is something I will never forget – this kind and thoughtful gesture meant so much to me.



Interview with

Bismark Kwame Tunu

Winner of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Bismark Kwame Tunu from Abesewa in the Ashanti region of Ghana. I was born and brought up in Kumasi. I went to school at Martyrs of Uganda Preparatory School and proceeded to Ghana Armed Forces Senior High Technical School (SHTS) where I read General Science. All three of my degrees were earned in Ghana: A Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from the University of Cape Coast, a Master of Philosophy in Chemical Pathology from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education from Valley View University. I currently serve as a Chemistry teacher at Opoku Ware School where I help my learners grasp abstract concepts by connecting them to their local surroundings. In 2021, I was awarded as the National Best Senior High School (SHS) teacher at the Ghana Teacher Prize Awards. I have made contributions beyond the classroom. My love of experiential learning led me to assist my former school, Bosome SHTS, to establish a science laboratory, which has reduced the burden of teachers and students travelling to other schools for practical lessons. As a biomedical scientist who volunteers on the weekends, I have also contributed to improving healthcare delivery in the Bosome Freho area by utilizing my understanding of laboratory science to help the health directorate set up the first medical laboratory unit at the district's health center. My hobbies include reading, farming, and research especially in simple projects that can have a contribution into chemistry.



Q: What do you teach, at what level, and where?

I teach Chemistry at the Senior High School (SHS). I have taught all levels in SHS (that is year 1, 2, and 3). My teaching career has taken me to two regions in Ghana. I was first posted to Nsawkaw State SHS which is found in a predominantly rural district in the Bono region where a majority of the population are farmers. The school had a population of about 1,000 students with a high incidence of absenteeism. I was later transferred to Bosome SHTS which is also found in a predominantly rural district in the Ashanti region. The student population within the school was about 1,200 with less than 100 students reading General Science. I was later transferred to Opoku Ware School within the urban centers of Ashanti region. The current population of the school is around 4,000 students with a majority reading General Science.



Q: For how long have you been a teacher, and what motivated you to become one?

I have seven years of imparting knowledge as a professional teacher. My love for teaching started when I was nine years old when my mom who is a teacher explained the purpose of a marking scheme to me. I love to lead group discussions on challenging concepts. During my mandatory national service, I was posted to South Suntreso Government Hospital in Kumasi as an intern biomedical scientist, but I took up the task to explain the concepts and principles of the various tests to students who came on attachment. This helped bridge the gap between what was taught in school and how to link this practically in the laboratory. I decided to join the profession I so much admire just before I finished my post-graduate studies. So, I sat for a recruitment examination conducted by Ghana Education Service in 2016, passed the exams and was posted to Nsawkaw State SHS where I started teaching. I have enjoyed teaching ever since.

Q: What are you most passionate about in your teaching?

I am passionate about the practical application of concepts with the use of project-based learning. It is my passion that SHS graduates will have employable skills that can contribute to the economy of the nation. My philosophy in life is “See it big, keep it simple.” So, I plan to integrate at least one simple project of production into my lessons which can be replicated by students when they go home on vacation. So far, I have been able to use simple projects like the production of candles, powdered soap, liquid soap, shower gel, disinfectants, and fresh yoghurt in my lessons. I am still researching on other projects that can conveniently fit into the contents of the syllabus.

Q: What are some of the challenges teachers face today, and what can be done to overcome these challenges?

There are challenges everywhere but teachers believe in the value of philanthropism. Good teachers are not merely motivated by external incentives. They care mostly about their core duty of imparting knowledge. Our values are to see others do good and climb up the academic ladder into great professions. Yet in chasing excellence for our students, some issues get in our way. These include inadequate laboratory infrastructure in our schools. Some schools do not have a permanent building dedicated as a laboratory. Others use one laboratory for all the elective science subjects. Some have separate laboratories for different subjects but are not adequately resourced. Almost all schools have outgrown their capacity over the years in their quest of fulfilling SDG goal 4 and the establishment of the free SHS policy. Voluntary donations from well-meaning individuals and organizations would help. Teachers can also learn some simple ways of improvisation that can compensate for shortages. To reduce shortage of apparatuses made of glass



because of breakages, manufacturers could think about making similar apparatuses in plastic.

Another challenge has to do with accommodation issues in most of our schools. The ratio of teachers on campus to students is very low, which prevents proper supervision, leading some students and community members to indulge in deviant behaviors. Successive governments have done well in putting up infrastructures (like classrooms, assembly halls, dining halls, etc.) in our schools but I will plead with them as well as philanthropists to pay attention to getting more teachers on our campuses (through teacher housing) for proper supervision and to keep our future leaders in check.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize and what could be done to empower them to do so?

As teachers in Ghana, there are enormous opportunities available to us. The first I would like to touch on is the possibility of professional development. Continuous learning is crucial for teachers. We need continuous learning through workshops, seminars, and online courses to enhance our teaching skills and stay abreast of educational trends (in terms of pedagogies, assessment strategies, and modes of delivery). I must commend the Ministry for the institution of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) sessions in schools. Various activities and knowledge that are mostly paid for as part of top-up courses in higher institutions are included in PLC sessions which are currently being enrolled in all SHS/SHTS nationwide. These PLC sessions provide a platform for all teachers in a particular school to meet and share best practices and brainstorm on innovative ways to improve teaching and learning that will drive student achievement.

Teachers serve as role models in the community in several ways, thereby influencing and shaping the lives of their students and even the broader society. In the course of executing our mandate we are provided with young and fragile students from different backgrounds. We have to inculcate values and virtues in those students aside from academics, for them to become responsible citizens in future. The spirit of hard work, passion for the job, innovation, empathy, and kindness should be well emulated in class. Mentorship

programs can be established where experienced and successful teachers can mentor newer and inexperienced teachers. Such programs will help new teachers to learn and get answers to personal questions by engaging with experienced teachers and role models. New teachers can gain valuable insights into effective teaching practices and positive community involvement that way.

Last but not the least is the availability of free online resources at the fingertips of teachers. Teachers can seize the opportunity of free online resources to enhance their teaching and improve the learning experience for their students. Understanding the learning objectives and the diversity in the classroom helps teachers to effectively search for relevant online resources. To improve subsequent teaching, teachers can create and keep a collection of relevant educational websites, videos, animations, interactive simulations, and eBooks in an e-drive so they can access this material over and over at their convenience. Teachers can as well engage with online communities, for a, and social media groups where teachers and educational leaders interact to share ideas, opportunities, resources, and best practices. This can be made easier when the Ministry creates a national databank for the various subjects where teachers can access information using their credentials to enhance their teaching.

Q: You have been recognized as an outstanding teacher. What practical advice do you have for other teachers?

Effective planning of lessons is a fundamental aspect of successful teaching. This requires making room for diverse learning styles in the



classroom and making frantic efforts to provide support for all students to achieve the learning objectives of lessons taught in class. Through effective planning of lessons, teachers should prepare and utilize appropriate teaching and learning materials to enhance their teaching. Hard work and determination pay.

Q: Looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

Looking back, I wish I had collaborated more with other teachers and schools to help train a wider number of students in acquiring soft skills that could keep them at home while waiting for their results or during vacations. The lack of industrial visitation also made the lessons very abstract, so I wish to send my students to industry sites where they can relate what is being taught in the class to its practical application. Or better still, I wish I could have created even more of an environment to emulate the industrial application of concepts taught in class.

Q: What does being recognized for the Award mean to you? Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

Being recognized across the continent as a Best Teacher means a lot to me. I plan to use this recognition to reach out to a wider number of students through interactive teaching pedagogies that demystifies the notion of the abstract nature of Chemistry.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

In 2019 when I stepped into Bosome SHTS I had to replace a very hardworking teacher who was also

going on transfer from the school. He was so dear to them that they didn't recognize the good in me. So, I told myself, I am not here to prove myself or compete for attention but to do my best to lift the image of the school. In my first year in the school, I told my head of department that I would like to do all my practical lessons in the school. He was so excited with this revelation that he asked me to prepare a list of the apparatuses or instruments that I would need for a start. I told him that I would rather inspect the available instruments first and make do with them. Without a cost to the department, I introduced the few apparatuses to the students and started demonstrating to them how best they could use them. I then borrowed a few apparatuses from other schools to add up. I was subsequently asked to prepare the final year students for their exams. Within a very short time I did about twenty different practical lessons with them which really inspired and built their confidence for the exams. During the examination day, for the first time in the history of the school, WASSCE chemistry practical examination was written in the confines of the school. The Headmaster, Assistance Headmaster, Head of department and fellow teachers then congratulated me for the effort I had put into making such a turning point in the school. Even though the final year students were 13 in number, one person had A1 in chemistry which was also the first time the school recorded an A1 in Chemistry. With my knowledge in laboratory science, I then helped to the school to set up a science laboratory for practical lessons in the school, curtailing the need to travel to other schools for practical lessons. Subsequently all practical lessons and examinations have been conducted in the confines of the school, saving teachers, students, and management time for effective academic works.



Entretien avec

Sid El Moctar Yadali

Lauréat 2023 du Prix continental du meilleur enseignant de l'Union africaine

Q : Pourriez-vous nous parler un peu de vous ?

Je m'appelle Sid El Moctar Mohamed. J'ai 43 ans je suis marié avec une famille composée de 6 membres. Je suis diplômé des universités marocaines car en 2001 j'ai bénéficié d'une bourse au Maroc après avoir obtenu mon diplôme en 2010. J'ai travaillé dans une entreprise minière dans le nord du pays. En 2013 j'ai rejoint l'enseignement. Je suis maintenant professeur de physique et chimie.

Q : Qu'enseignez-vous, à quel niveau et où ?

J'enseigne la physique et la chimie à tous les niveaux (collège et lycée) au Lycée d'el Jadida à le Ksar à Nouakchott.

Q : Depuis combien de temps êtes-vous enseignant et qu'est-ce qui vous a motivé à le devenir ?

J'enseigne depuis une dizaine d'années. L'une des choses qui ont fait de moi un enseignant était l'amour de ce métier. Ce sont certains des professeurs qui m'ont grandement influencé dans mon parcours en raison de leur merveilleuse méthodologie d'enseignement.

Q : Qu'est-ce qui vous passionne le plus dans votre enseignement ?

Ce qui me passionne le plus, c'est former les élèves pour qu'ils deviennent des cadres compétents qui vont aider notre pays par la suite et notre continent africain. Résoudre des problèmes mathématiques et physiques est aussi une de mes passions tout comme mener des expériences physiques et chimiques en laboratoire.



Q : Quels sont les défis auxquels les enseignant(e)s sont confrontés aujourd'hui et que peut-on faire pour surmonter ces défis ?

Parmi les défis auxquels l'enseignant est confronté on peut citer le travail dans certaines régions éloignées qui ne disposent pas de l'électricité et des produits de première nécessité et peuvent être caractérisées par une chaleur extrême ou une humidité élevée. En outre, l'un des défis auxquels l'enseignant est confronté est de travailler dans certains établissements qui ne disposent pas de l'équipement nécessaire pour dispenser des cours typiques. Afin de surmonter ces difficultés, les établissements doivent être bien équipés et disposer des laboratoires et d'équipements pédagogiques, ainsi que d'une salle d'informatique.



Q : Quelles sont certaines des opportunités que les enseignants pourraient saisir et que pourrait-on faire pour leur donner les moyens de le faire ?

Les opportunités que les enseignants pourraient saisir sont nombreuses. On peut citer d'abord la formation continue. Celle-ci permet à l'enseignant de se perfectionner à travers l'acquisition de nouvelles méthodes pédagogiques qui peuvent les aider dans la pratique de la pédagogie en salle de classe (comme les approches innovantes). Le Ministère de tutelle pourrait aussi organiser des séminaires de formation et des journées de réflexion sur les contenus des manuels (les points forts et les lacunes).

Q : Vous avez été reconnu comme un enseignant exceptionnel. Quels conseils pratiques donneriez-vous aux autres enseignants ?

Je conseille à mes collègues enseignants de se consacrer à leur travail, d'être présents à l'heure, de préparer les cours avant de les présenter, de créer une certaine atmosphère d'émulation (voire de saine compétition) en classe et de passer les examens à temps.

Q : Avec le recul, s'il y avait quelque chose que vous pourriez faire différemment dans votre carrière d'enseignant(e), que serait-ce ?

S'il y a un métier que je ferais qui serait différent de l'enseignement, ce serait un métier lié à la santé où je peux apporter une aide médicale à ceux qui en ont besoin.

Q : Que signifie pour vous le fait d'être reconnu(e) pour ce prix ? Envisagez-vous d'utiliser cette reconnaissance pour promouvoir davantage une éducation de qualité ?

Être reconnu de cette manière est pour moi comme une motivation et un soutien pour le reste de ma carrière d'enseignant. J'investirai ce succès dans le développement de mes compétences et capacités dans le domaine de l'éducation à l'avenir.

Q : Enfin, pourriez-vous partager une anecdote personnelle sur vous-même ?

Un jour un de mes élèves m'a demandé s'il était possible de punir une personne pour quelque chose qu'il n'a pas fait. Je lui ai répondu « non », bien sûr. L'élève était très content et m'a répondu : « d'accord, je n'ai pas fait mes devoirs. »



Interview with

Rosemary Bosibori Onyancha

Winner of the 2023 African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Rosemary Onyancha. I am the second-to-last born in a family of eight, born to Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone Onyancha. I am happily married to John Kebaso and together we are proud parents of three wonderful girls. I am a native of Nakuru, where I was both born and raised. Education has always been a significant part of my life. I hold a degree in Education Science, which I earned from Kabarak University. Currently, I am pursuing a Master's Degree at Kenyatta University.

One of my passions is being a trained invention educator. I find great fulfillment in providing solutions to real-life problems and guiding learners to achieve the same goal. To nurture creativity and innovation among students, I initiated a platform called the "Virtual Talent Search," where learners can showcase their creative talents. In addition to my teaching and educational pursuits, I am a dedicated volunteer with the President's Award Scheme. In this role, I serve as an award leader at the Moi Forces Academy Lanet award center. This involvement allows me to help young learners become "World ready" by instilling essential life skills and values in them. I actively contribute to the holistic development of our students at school by engaging in various activities aimed at molding well-rounded individuals. This multifaceted approach not only enhances their academic pursuits but also plays a vital role in reducing delinquency. Activities I am involved in include Swimming Coaching, Organization and Running of Meets, Clubs Activities virtually with Parvus Software Development Institution, and Cultural Days. By engaging in these activities, I aim to



contribute to the overall development of our students, equipping them with life skills, values, and a sense of responsibility. This proactive approach helps create a positive and enriching school environment while reducing the likelihood of delinquent behavior among the student body.

My commitment to volunteerism extends beyond the classroom and school grounds. I am actively engaged with various communities and organizations that collaborate with industry leaders such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and HP. Together, we work on initiatives aimed at equipping children, youth, teachers, and parents in Kenya with essential digital literacy and coding skills. Moreover, our efforts focus on ensuring that individuals are safe while navigating the online world. In summary, my life revolves around education, innovation, volunteerism, and empowering individuals with digital skills and knowledge. I am deeply dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of learners and communities in Kenya, and I look forward to continuing my journey of service and learning. I



am quick to express my gratitude to my employer, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), for providing a supportive environment that has enabled me to fulfill my duties. My journey with TSC has been nothing short of rewarding, culminating in my nomination for the African Union (AU) Continental Teacher of the Year 2023 award.

Q: What do you teach, at what level, and where?

I am a teacher in Computer Studies and Business Studies at Moi Forces Academy Lanet. This esteemed institution is a national girls' high school situated in Lanet, Nakuru City, Kenya.

Q: For how long have you been a teacher, and what motivated you to become one?

I have been a teacher for 15 years. My Inspiration and motivation in pursuing a career in education include providing educational equity. Witnessing the educational disparities that exist in our society ignited my determination to ensure that every student, regardless of their background or circumstances, has equal access to a quality education. Achieving a 100% return of girls to school during the pandemic exemplifies my commitment to this cause. My motivation is further fueled by a belief in gender equality. I am dedicated to empowering young girls through education, breaking down barriers that may hinder their educational journey, and ensuring they have every opportunity to succeed. I am also

enthusiastic about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education as these subjects provide students with valuable skills and knowledge that are essential for their future careers and for addressing the challenges of our rapidly evolving world. As I currently teach Computer Studies as a subject, I am pleased to observe that Computer Science is now recognized as a STEM subject in the new Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) within the Kenyan education system. Finally, my involvement in initiatives like providing free online instruction in STEM subjects highlights my commitment to innovation in education. I believe in the transformative power of technology and its ability to bridge gaps in access to learning. I am convinced that capacity development benefits not only students but also fellow teachers, creating a thriving educational community. In summary, my inspiration in pursuing a career in education lies in my dedication to educational equity, gender equality, the promotion of STEM education, and a





deep commitment to leveraging technology and innovation to empower students and teachers alike. These principles continue to drive my passion for teaching.

Q: What are you most passionate about in your teaching?

As a Kenyan teacher at Moi Forces Academy Nakuru, several aspects of teaching ignite my passion: (1) as I mentioned it, I am passionate about incorporating technology into education to enhance learning experiences and prepare students for the digital age – this includes using tools like Google Classroom and Teams for remote and distance learning; (2) I am committed to addressing educational disparities and ensuring that all students, regardless of their circumstances, have access to quality education – for example in the face of the pandemic, we strived to provide access to remote learning including via mobile phones; (3) regarding STEM education, we have tried to provide free online instruction in STEM subjects for Form 4 students to empower students with valuable skills - this initiative was spearheaded by Dr. Tom Okaya, the Kangema Sub County Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Director then, and I helped for a smooth operation of the online learning platform; (4) I am also passionate in fostering collaborations between teachers, including using with the Google Educators Group (GEG Kenya); (5) Another area of interest is exploring emerging technologies like Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) – these technologies have the potential to revolutionize education and prepare students

for the future; (6) Finally I am an active member, volunteer, and contributor to the Robotics Society of Kenya (RSK), a non-profit promoting computing in institutions and communities through various domains, including robotics, AI, physical computing, makerspace, Internet of Things, STEAM, chess education, and research – our goal is to build a thriving community of passionate educators, volunteers, partners, and sponsors dedicated to bringing the benefits of technology to schools, classrooms, and communities in Kenya and beyond.

Q: What are some of the challenges teachers face today, and what can be done to overcome these challenges?

Common challenges in the teaching profession in Kenya's education system include: (1) Lack of resources: Insufficient teaching materials, outdated textbooks, and inadequate classroom facilities can hinder effective teaching (potential solution: advocating for increased funding for education to improve infrastructure and provide up-to-date learning resources); (2) Teacher workload: Heavy teaching loads and administrative tasks can lead to burnout and reduced teaching quality (potential solution: implementing workload management strategies, including better teacher-student ratios and administrative support); (3) Teacher training: Inadequate pre-service and in-service teacher training may result in teachers lacking the necessary skills for modern teaching methods (potential solution: investing in comprehensive teacher training programs that incorporate innovative teaching approaches and technology); (4) High cost of living: This makes educators focus on other income generating activities and hinder the retention of talented individuals in the profession (potential solution: advocating for competitive and sustainable teacher salaries to attract and retain skilled teachers); (5) Large class sizes: Overcrowded classrooms can make it challenging for teachers to provide individualized attention to students (potential solution: building more classrooms and employ more teachers to reduce class sizes and improve student-teacher interaction); (6) Inequality in access: Disparities in access to quality education between urban and rural areas and among different socioeconomic



groups remain a significant issue (potential solution: developing policies and initiatives to ensure equitable access to education, including targeted support for marginalized communities); (7) Assessment pressure: Overemphasis on exams and standardized testing can limit creative and critical thinking in students and teachers (potential solution: promoting a more holistic assessment approach that includes project-based assessments and performance evaluations); and (8) Parental involvement: Insufficient parental involvement in students' education can hinder student success (potential solution: encouraging parental engagement through workshops, open communication, and involvement in school activities). Addressing the above challenges in the Kenyan education system requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, parents, and the community. Collaborative strategies and sustained investment in education can lead to positive changes and improvements in the teaching profession.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that teachers could seize and what could be done to empower them to do so?

Continuous learning comes to mind as teachers can further their education, attend workshops, and participate in online courses to stay updated with the latest teaching methods and technologies. I am personally committed to

this. I would encourage teachers to pursue the internationally recognized Google Workspace for Education certifications for educators – becoming a Google for Education Certified Trainer, Innovator, or Coach. Another achievement is becoming a Microsoft Certified Educator – implementing the twenty first century skills during the delivery of lessons. Teachers should have passion in volunteerism, particularly in the context of empowering fellow educators with the skills and knowledge acquired through interactions with available tools and emerging technologies. There is a need to encourage teachers to identify gaps in their own educational environments and leverage the available tools and emerging technologies to find creative solutions. This approach not only fosters a culture of innovation but also contributes to the growth and development of the education sector as a whole. Every educator has the potential to make a positive impact, and by sharing our knowledge and experiences, we can collectively work towards a more innovative and effective



educational system. Writing sessional papers about emerging issues in education and attending conferences organized locally and internationally by bodies like UNESCO, research bodies and Universities also helps further research skills which in turn makes the educational landscape worthwhile.

Q: You have been recognized as an outstanding teacher. What practical advice do you have for other teachers?

Perhaps I could suggest some broader initiatives for improvement for education systems? Along the lines I already mentioned, teachers as well as I could contribute to (1) Educational Workshops: Organize and lead workshops for teachers in Kenya to share innovative teaching methods, best practices, and the latest educational technology; (2) Curriculum Enhancement: Collaborate with educational authorities to revise and modernize the curriculum to meet the needs of the 21st century; (3) Accessible Education: Promote initiatives to improve access to quality education, particularly in underserved regions of Kenya and other African countries; (4) Advocacy: Use the platform to advocate for increased government investment in education, better teacher training, and reduced education inequality; (5) International Collaboration: Forge partnerships with educators and institutions across Africa

and globally to exchange ideas and resources for educational improvement; (6) Research and Development: Invest in educational research to identify and implement evidence-based teaching strategies that can benefit students worldwide; (7) Promote Inclusivity: Focus on inclusive education to ensure that children with disabilities and marginalized communities have equal access to education; (8) Mentorship: Establish mentorship programs to support and empower aspiring teachers, especially young educators in Kenya; (9) Global Outreach: Share my experiences and expertise at international forums, contributing to discussions on global education reform; and (10) Technology Integration: Encourage the integration of technology in education and digital literacy, keeping pace with the evolving educational landscape. By leveraging this recognition, I hope to make a lasting impact on education in Kenya, Africa, and the world, fostering a brighter future for all students and educators.

Q: Looking back, if there is something you could do differently in your career as a teacher, what would that be?

Reflecting on my teaching career, I would have invested more in continuous professional development, attending workshops, conferences, and training programs. This would have kept me updated with the latest teaching methodologies



and technologies, positively impacting the quality of education I provide. I might also have shifted my teaching approach earlier towards a more student-centered one, focusing on individualized learning and encouraging critical thinking. This change could have fostered greater student engagement and academic success. Embracing technology in the classroom sooner would have allowed me to leverage digital tools for interactive and personalized learning experiences, making lessons more engaging and relevant for students. Establishing mentorship relationships with other experienced educators and collaborating with peers would have enriched my teaching journey. It would have provided me with new insights and strategies to effectively address challenges in education. Engaging more with the local community and parents could have positively impacted the learning environment. Building stronger relationships with stakeholders can lead to greater support for educational initiatives and student well-being. Prioritizing inclusive education practices from the start could have ensured that all students, including those with disabilities or special needs, received equitable access to quality education. Advocating for education reforms and improvements at a broader scale within Kenya and Africa would have allowed me to make a more significant impact on the educational system and address systemic challenges. These changes, if implemented earlier in my teaching career, could have positively influenced my journey by enhancing the quality of education I provide, increasing student achievement, fostering professional growth, and allowing me to contribute more substantially to educational advancements in Kenya and Africa.

Q: What does being recognized for the Award mean to you? Do you plan to use this recognition to further promote quality education?

I am deeply honored and humbled to receive the African Union Best Teacher Award for Africa 2023. This recognition fills me with immense pride, not just for myself, but for my students, colleagues, and my beloved country, Kenya. The award inspires me to continue my mission of enhancing education in Kenya, Africa, and beyond.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

One of our proudest accomplishments has been achieving a 100% return of girls to school to the school after the pandemic. This was in part because even in the face of the pandemic, access to remote learning was possible, including via mobile phones. Another moment of pride stems from my role in initiating a collaborative effort with my fellow educators, resulting in our school receiving recognition as an HP Innovation and Digital Education Academy (HP IDEA) School. Our project, titled "Digital Presentation in Learning Enhances Communication Skills," helped for this recognition. Our Principal, Madam Jedidah Mwangi, was among the distinguished fellows involved in this initiative. Another high point was students coming up with a glider using carton boxes making them recyclable, reusable, and thus reducing wastage. This is one of the methods of conserving the environment and it is a practical action in the Sustainable Development Goals. As I reflect on my journey, my enthusiasm remains unwavering.



Entretien avec

Nundraj Goindo

Lauréat 2023 du Prix continental du meilleur enseignant de l'Union africaine

Q : Pourriez-vous nous parler un peu de vous ?

Je m'appelle Nundraj Goindo et j'enseigne la matière « Design and Technology » à l'École d'État Secondaire de Triolet (Triolet State Secondary School) de l'île Maurice. J'ai eu l'opportunité de travailler sur divers projets éducatifs en collaboration avec le Ministère de l'éducation, les universités, le Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), les organisations non gouvernementales, et les compagnies privées. Ce sont des projets visant à améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement de cette matière à travers l'île Maurice. Je suis passionné par l'enseignement et j'aide mes élèves à exploiter leur potentiel. Je crois que le "Design And Technology" représente un outil puissant qui peut permettre aux apprenants d'acquérir de multiples compétences, dont la résolution des problèmes, l'esprit critique et la créativité. Je crois également qu'il est important de transmettre aux apprenants les valeurs dont ils ont besoin pour réussir dans la vie, comme le travail d'équipe, la collaboration et la persévérance.

J'ai commencé ma carrière d'enseignant à l'âge de 18 ans en tant qu'enseignant remplaçant, connu à l'île Maurice comme 'Supply Teacher' et j'ai travaillé dans de nombreuses écoles secondaires. J'ai eu le privilège d'enseigner avec des élèves de tout âge, issus de différents milieux sociaux. J'ai réalisé, à travers mes multiples expériences, que l'éducation possède le pouvoir de transformer les vies et je m'engage à offrir à mes élèves la meilleure éducation possible. Je tiens à ajouter que le système éducatif de mon pays a largement contribué à développer mes compétences. Depuis le pré-primaire jusqu'à mes études tertiaires, je n'ai cessé de m'épanouir.



Dans ma vie professionnelle, je suis reconnu pour mes méthodes d'enseignement innovatrices et ma capacité à développer chez les élèves un réel intérêt pour la matière et les études. J'ai également été reconnu pour ma démarche visant à promouvoir l'enseignement. Je suis également passionné par le football et actuellement entraîneur au Liverpool Football Club International Academy-Mauritius (LFCIA) où l'on enseigne les valeurs associées au club, notamment « Commitment, Unity, Ambition, and Dignity ». Dans ma vie personnelle, on me connaît pour mon attitude positive et ma volonté d'aider les autres. J'ai réalisé également divers projets à caractère philanthropique pour créer une meilleure société.

Q : Qu'enseignez-vous, à quel niveau et où ?

J'enseigne « Technology Studies » aux élèves des années 7 à 9, le « Design and Communication » au niveau de la SC (O-Level) et « Design and Technology » aux élèves des années 10 à 13 dans les écoles secondaires. « Design And Technology » est une matière qui apprend aux



élèves à concevoir et fabriquer des produits et des systèmes. Il s'agit d'une matière pratique et technique où les élèves utilisent leurs mains et leur tête pour résoudre des problèmes « Design And Technology » enseigne également aux apprenants le processus de conception, une approche systématique pour résoudre des problèmes. Dans mes cours, les apprenants découvrent une variété de sujets, notamment : les matériaux et leurs propriétés, les processus de fabrication, les principes de conception, la conception assistée par ordinateur, l'électronique et la robotique. Mes élèves ont également la possibilité de travailler sur une variété de projets, tels que concevoir et fabriquer un nouveau produit, résoudre un problème ou participer à des concours. C'est également une matière qui offre de multiples perspectives et qui prépare les élèves pour diverses carrières dans les domaines de l'ingénierie, de la conception et de la fabrication (et l'enseignement). Le système éducatif mauricien offre une égalité des chances aux enfants leur permettant ainsi de découvrir leurs aptitudes et d'exploiter leurs capacités.

Q : Depuis combien de temps êtes-vous enseignant et qu'est-ce qui vous a motivé à le devenir ?

Je suis enseignant depuis plus de 10 ans. J'ai toujours voulu exercer le métier d'enseignant parce que j'ai toujours pensé que l'éducation est la clé d'un avenir meilleur. J'éprouve une grande satisfaction et un véritable plaisir à aider les élèves à développer les compétences et les connaissances dont ils ont besoin pour réussir à l'école et surtout dans la vie. Je me souviens d'avoir demandé à mon professeur à l'âge de 14 ans « Comment devient-on enseignant de Design and Technology » et tout le monde dans la classe a ri. Aujourd'hui, pour moi ce rêve s'est concrétisé.

J'ai une véritable passion pour cette matière. Dès ma tendre enfance mes oncles, mes « Mamous

», m'ont appris le partage. Ils ont contribué à mon apprentissage en m'apprenant à effectuer des réparations. Je suis reconnaissant d'avoir l'opportunité d'exercer le métier de mes rêves et je m'engage à mon tour à transmettre mon savoir aux élèves et à créer de nouvelles possibilités pour eux. Je crois que tous les élèves ont le potentiel d'apprendre et de réussir, et je m'engage à leur fournir le soutien et les ressources dont ils ont besoin pour qu'ils développent leurs compétences dans cette matière ainsi que des qualités qui feront d'eux de bons citoyens capables de relever des défis mondiaux.

Q : Qu'est-ce qui vous passionne le plus dans votre enseignement ?

Comme je le dis toujours, « le monde appartient à celui qui crée ». L'enseignement est indéniablement une profession qui crée un impact sur les élèves. Mon objectif est de mener les élèves avec douceur et détermination vers la réussite. Je crois fermement que le « Design and Technology » constitue une matière qui possède une grande ouverture permettant de répondre aux exigences du 21ème siècle.

Dans mes cours, j'encourage les étudiants à être créatifs et à réfléchir à la manière d'appliquer leurs connaissances au profit des autres. Je les encourage également à travailler ensemble sur des projets et à apprendre les uns des autres. Je crois qu'il est important que les étudiants apprennent à travailler en équipe et à résoudre des problèmes de manière collaborative. Je suis également passionné par le fait d'aider mes élèves à développer le goût d'apprendre. Je souhaite qu'ils développent une curiosité naturelle face au monde qui les entoure et qu'ils soient enthousiastes pour apprendre de nouvelles choses. Je crois que l'éducation est un voyage qui dure toute la vie et je juge ainsi essentiel d'aider les élèves à développer les compétences et les connaissances dont ils ont besoin pour

réussir non seulement sur le plan académique mais aussi au plan personnel et professionnel. Heureusement le système éducatif mauricien offre l'opportunité d'un bon apprentissage et d'un bon développement personnel.

Q : Quels sont les défis auxquels les enseignant(e)s sont confrontés aujourd'hui et que peut-on faire pour surmonter ces défis ?

Il est important de rappeler que les enseignants jouent un rôle essentiel dans la société. Ils ont pour mission de former les générations futures et d'aider les élèves à développer les caractéristiques requises pour mieux vivre en société. Le travail de l'enseignant évolue constamment pour s'adapter aux nouvelles exigences, aux transformations sociales ainsi qu'aux nouvelles technologies éducatives. Je suis conscient des défis auxquels les enseignants sont confrontés en Afrique, tels que l'insécurité, le manque de ressources, le manque d'infrastructures, les tests standardisés et les problèmes de santé mentale. Certaines initiatives pourraient aider à surmonter ces défis afin que notre nation africaine atteigne son plein potentiel et contribue au succès de l'Agenda 2063 et de la Stratégie continentale de l'éducation pour l'Afrique (CESA en anglais). Nous devons accroître le financement de l'éducation en Afrique car cela permettrait d'embaucher un plus grand nombre d'enseignants, de réduire la taille des classes et d'acheter les ressources dont elles ont besoin pour offrir aux élèves une éducation de haut niveau.

Un plus grand investissement dans le secteur éducatif permettrait également aux écoles dans certains pays de mettre en œuvre des programmes visant à soutenir les enseignants et les élèves. Le slogan « éducation pour tous partout » doit devenir une réalité mondiale. D'où le besoin d'un plus grand investissement dans les infrastructures, telles que les routes et l'électricité afin de faciliter l'accès des enseignants et des élèves à l'école. Il est également important de concevoir d'autres modes d'évaluation plus motivants, qui exercent moins de pression et qui contribuent à combler le déficit de confiance chez certains apprenants. Il est important d'accorder aux élèves ainsi qu'aux enseignants un soutien en matière de santé mentale car on ne peut pas faire abstraction du fait que certains enseignants

se trouvent confrontés à de réels problèmes dans certaines écoles.

Q : Quelles sont certaines des opportunités que les enseignants pourraient saisir et que pourrait-on faire pour leur donner les moyens de le faire ?

Les enseignants disposent de nombreuses opportunités pour améliorer l'éducation de leurs élèves pour les rendre autonomes. Ils peuvent poursuivre leur développement professionnel, collaborer avec d'autres enseignants, et utiliser la technologie en classe afin de mieux diffuser leur savoir. Il est également important de motiver les enseignants en leur octroyant un certain financement, une plus grande autonomie, un plus grand pouvoir de décision, et de reconnaître leurs efforts. L'île Maurice ne cesse de multiplier les initiatives qui vont dans ce sens et je pense que ces initiatives constituent un véritable facteur de motivation pour nous, les enseignants.

Q : Vous avez été reconnu comme un enseignant exceptionnel. Quels conseils pratiques donneriez-vous aux autres enseignants ?

L'enseignement est une profession enrichissante et noble. C'est un bonheur pour moi d'exercer ce métier. En tant qu'enseignant, j'ai appris que le développement de bonnes relations avec les élèves est un facteur fondamental. Lorsque les élèves savent que vous vous souciez d'eux et que vous souhaitez qu'ils réussissent, ils sont plus motivés et s'impliquent davantage. Cela signifie créer une classe où les élèves se sentent libres et n'hésitent pas à demander de l'aide. Il est important de développer un climat de confiance et de respect mutuel. Répondre aux aptitudes variées est également essentiel car l'école est un lieu où l'intelligence est multiple. Offrir différentes opportunités d'apprentissage pour répondre aux besoins de tous les apprenants est la clé du succès. La technologie peut également être un outil



puissant pour responsabiliser les étudiants, mais il est important d'en faire une bonne utilisation.

Q : Avec le recul, s'il y avait quelque chose que vous pourriez faire différemment dans votre carrière d'enseignant(e), que serait-ce ?

La vie est un éternel apprentissage. On ne finit jamais d'apprendre. C'est le cas des enseignants également car ils sont toujours à la recherche de nouvelles approches pour répondre aux attentes des élèves. Je dois dire qu'il m'est arrivé de sortir insatisfait de certaines classes, avec l'impression de ne pas avoir répondu aux attentes de tous les élèves car le pouvoir d'assimilation varie entre els élèves et est loin d'être homogène. Je suis toujours à la recherche de cette formule qui pourrait permettre de répondre aux attentes personnelles de chaque élève, peu importe le nombre d'élèves dans une classe.

Q : Que signifie pour vous le fait d'être reconnu(e) pour ce prix ? Envisagez-vous d'utiliser cette reconnaissance pour promouvoir davantage une éducation de qualité ?

Être reconnu pour ce prix signifie beaucoup de choses pour moi. Je juge important d'exprimer toute ma reconnaissance envers tous ceux qui m'ont aidé à exploiter toutes mes potentialités, qui m'ont inspiré et qui ont permis la réalisation de mes rêves. C'est une récompense non seulement pour moi mais également pour toutes ces personnes qui m'ont apporté un soutien constant et qui ont cru en moi. Cette reconnaissance internationale de mon travail confère un honneur particulier à mon pays et cela me procure une joie indicible. C'est l'enseignement mauricien qui est valorisé à un niveau international, ce qui représente une véritable fierté pour notre système éducatif, d'autant plus que ce prix est décerné aux enseignants qui s'engagent à promouvoir « une éducation pour tous partout. »

J'envisage d'utiliser cette reconnaissance pour promouvoir davantage une éducation de qualité de plusieurs manières. Tout d'abord, je continuerai à travailler sur mes projets actuels, qui visent à améliorer l'accès à l'éducation, à faire disparaître les disparités, les inégalités. En ma qualité de membre fondateur de la « Design and Technology

Education Association (DATEA) », je participerai également à des ateliers de travail et conférences pour partager mes idées et expériences. Enfin, j'encouragerai les autres à s'engager dans la promotion d'une éducation de qualité, accessible à tous car l'éducation est un droit humain fondamental, la clé du bien-être, d'un avenir meilleur, contribuant au bon fonctionnement de la société.

La mise en place d'une structure destinée à aider les enfants provenant des familles défavorisées en leur procurant tout ce dont ils ont besoin pour développer leurs aptitudes représente également l'un de mes rêves les plus chers. Je fais partie d'une association philanthropique « The Rising Stars » et je voudrais étendre mes activités à travers tout le pays et l'Afrique. Le prix élargira mon réseau, m'aidera à bâtir d'autres relations professionnelles avec des intérêts mutuels. Je solliciterai des financements et des subventions pour établir une connexion entre les institutions en Afrique afin de réaliser des programmes de développement professionnel continu à travers des échanges et des plateformes. Accroître la promotion du « Design and Technology » et STEM (sciences, technologies, ingénierie et mathématiques) avec la collaboration des institutions gouvernementales représente également une tâche prioritaire.

Q : Enfin, pourriez-vous partager une anecdote personnelle sur vous-même ?

Après mes secondaires études, je me souviens d'avoir demandé à quelqu'un quelles étaient les autres qualifications requises pour devenir enseignant. J'ai eu comme réplique « Ne deviens pas enseignant ! » Ces propos n'ont pas eu d'effet sur moi. J'ai suivi mes convictions personnelles, ma passion, ma vérité. On dit qu'on est heureux dans une vie qui nous ressemble. En exerçant le métier d'enseignant, je vis ma passion au quotidien.





Voices from Inspiring Youth

This series of interviews was prepared for Africa Youth Day celebrated on November 1 each year. Youth are defined by the African Union as the population from 15 to 35 years of age. The African Union Commission through the Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate commemorated African Youth Day 2023 through month-long activities under the theme “1 Million Next Level is Knocking: Youth-led Movement that Transcends Borders.” The theme was a call to all youth development stakeholders, member states, and partners to mobilize, implement and support the 1 Million Next Level Initiative through creating and accelerating opportunities for youth in the 4Es +H (Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Engagement + Health and wellbeing). The youth featured in this series of interviews are exemplary in their work in service to others in the areas covered by 4Es+H.

Interview with

Emmanuella Luanda Musafiri

Uganda Refugee Youth Representative for UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

Luanda Musafiri Emmanuella are my names. I am a female refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I founded TUMAINI for Refugee Women, a refugee women-led and community-based organization in the Nakivale Refugee settlement in Uganda. I am also one of the three refugee youth representatives in Uganda under UNHCR's Global Youth Advisory Council. My aim is to empower women, young girls, and youth to achieve their full potential and encourage their active involvement to become valuable members of their communities. In all of what I do, I try to integrate the fight against sexual gender-based violence, as well as economic empowerment and self-reliance, gender and social inclusion, and rights and justice.

My vision is to see a world in which refugee women, children, and youth are safe, healthy, self-reliant, and have their human rights respected and protected. For almost 6 years, I have been working alongside women and girls, equipping them with knowledge and skills for them to thrive socially and economically in the Nakivale refugee settlement. I truly believe that women and girls have the power to lift and make a change in their families and entire communities.

Q: Could you describe living conditions in the Nakivale refugee settlement?

Nakivale has a very large refugee population and is still receiving newly arrived refugees. The monthly food rations and cash that refugees used to receive from the World Food Programme was their means of survival. But prioritization has led some refugees not to receive rations anymore,



so it is becoming harder for them to feed their families. Women and girls are significantly vulnerable and consequently adopting negative coping mechanisms, such as survival sex. They are also subject to abuses such as early and forced marriage, and sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. Some Boys are now much more involved in drug abuse due to lack of education and job opportunities. Unemployment and poverty, particularly linked with the growing frustration men are experiencing, cases of gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation have increased, especially as men find themselves being unable to provide for their families.

Q: What are some of the initiatives you took to improve life in the settlement?

I founded TUMAINI for Refugee Women to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse in Nakivale by helping to ensure access to critical services for refugee women and young girls, such as life skills trainings and work opportunities to build a



better community. I realized that the risk of sexual exploitation was very high for women and girls because they were dependent on aid and could not provide for themselves and their families. Therefore, I started a tailoring and handcraft program to empower them with skills so that they become self-reliant and make their own decisions about their finances, their lives, and their future. I also created for them a saving and loans groups to provide access to cash assistance opportunities and to help them safely earn a living. This, in turn, increased their self-reliance and resilience. Since 2018, I have been advocating for refugee youth and women who face legal and human rights violations in my community. I try to hold community members, organizations, and the government accountable to their obligations to promote youth and respect women and girls' rights, so they can find safety, access justice, and rebuild their lives.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, I realized that girls were being exposed to new risks – including early and forced marriages, violence, and early pregnancies and sexual exploitation. They also had limited or no access to education because schools were closed. I came up with a youth counselling program on mental health where I would engage with youth individually with full respect to standard operating procedures for mental health and their safety in mind. In 2021, after I noted that most of the youth in my community were lacking skills and credentials, I managed to get a free eLearning space for them and build a comfortable and safe learning space lab with eleven desktop computers, three laptops, and a forty-inch flat screens where the youths learn computer literacy and other skills.

Q: Why did you take those initiatives, what motivated you?

I started those initiatives because I realized the hardship and pain that women, girls, and youth were going through in Nakivale. I believed that women are also powerful agents for social and economic change and a source of hope for reducing risks and vulnerability and for promoting resilience in their families and communities. Youth are the future generation and leaders, so I decided to take an initiative to empower these women, girls, and youth to unleash their potentials.

Q: What were some of the obstacles you encountered and how did you overcome them?

One of the obstacles I encountered was to convince other women to join me in my initiative since it was not easy as a refugee to assist fellow refugees. I decided to sit with refugee women and young girls from different communities in the settlement to ask them what changes they





needed in their communities and what their contributions to these changes could be. Then, I managed to take some of them into joining me on my journey to improve the lives of refugee.

Q: What could authorities and various organizations do to improve opportunities for youth in the settlement?

Authorities and organizations should increase their efforts in fight unemployment. The unemployment rate for refugee youth is even greater than for other groups. They are uninformed about the job market and the local economy. We need to support youth led initiatives and give them opportunities, and we need to involve them in decision-making that affects them.

Q: You were recommended for this interview by Rotarians. Did you benefit from support from Rotary for your initiatives? How useful was this support? What else do you need?

Yes I did. I received some capacity building training from Rotary which has increased

effectiveness of my organization. I am still in need of technical support and materials and equipment like sewing machines for our tailoring class and laptops for our computer lab to increase on our impact in the settlement.

Q: What advice do you have for other youth in the settlement, and more generally in Africa?

African youth should take their responsibilities, identify problems in their own communities, and design solutions for them. Our communities should no longer see us as troublemakers, but rather as change makers and valuable members of our communities.

Q: Looking back, is there something you would do differently?

Yes, I would stop thinking that I cannot, that I am unable to achieve and change lives of my fellow refugees, as I used to think back in 2016.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

In 2012 I fled my country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, together with my family to go to Uganda. My goal in life is to see women and girls thriving economically and socially. In 2016, I started volunteering with different organizations in Nakivale as an interpreter and community worker. In due course, I noticed that women and girls in my community were facing an under-addressed problem. They were also adopting negative coping mechanisms, as I mentioned earlier. This is why I founded TUMAINI for Refugee Women. What I hope is that my story can inspire many other youths to take their destiny in their own hands and help others.



Interview with

Rossette Kyakyo

Founder of SYRADO

Slum Youth Rehabilitation and Development Organisation Uganda

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Rossette Kyakyo. I am the founder of a youth- and women-led NGO and Team Leader for Slum Youth Rehabilitation and Development Organization (SYRADO). I have a postgraduate diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation from the Uganda Management Institute, a degree in social sciences from Makerere University (majoring in social work and social administration), a diploma in social media marketing from SHAW Academy, a diploma in Guidance and Counselling from YMCA, a certificate in Home and community HIV/AIDS care, and a certificate in Digital marketing.

I am listing these diplomas and certificates because they have provided me with skills to become a champion and activist for adolescent girls and young women who are marginalized in the slums of Uganda. I have experience in youth advocacy and social enterprise. I continue to learn a lot and conduct research on how to effectively empower youth and women, including teenage girls who are marginalized. This includes the chronic poor, sex workers, young people living with HIV, refugees, and drug addicts living in the slums in Uganda. I have so far trained over 400 youth with entrepreneurship skills, 100 of whom are now business owners. Recycling trash into treasure has created businesses for HIV+ teenage girls living in the slums, among others through making briquettes, decorative bottles, straw doormats, and paper beads, all of which also helps with environmental protection and climate change mitigation.



Q: You created SYRADO in Uganda? What is the history of the organization and how did you go about creating it?

SYRADO Uganda is a young women-led not for profit that works with youth in slum communities to improve their livelihood. We integrate 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 in the slum communities in Kampala. SYRADO mainstreams gender, leadership, and advocacy through its programs. We empower youth to form groups through which they learn and participate in development processes.

SYRADO was born out of the need to change slum communities into cities. Growing up as an orphan I had the drive to study. I paid for my studies myself since high school up to where I am now.



There are divine helpers that helped me along the way. So I wanted to do the same for unfortunate youth like me at the time. Most youth in slums live in absolute poverty not because of their own making but because of unfortunate circumstances like the death of their parents, chronic poverty, gender-based violence, discrimination, and stagnation among others. Instead of helping them, politicians were taking advantage of the situation by promising slum youth money to

riot, and they would end up in prison. I knew the only way they can be fully empowered would be equipping them with employable skills that would solve their community problems like poor living conditions, stigma, and lack of information while earning a living. I know it was a calling and my life's purpose to support slum youth to reach their full potential.

All those ideas were in my head, but I did not know how to implement them until I attended the African Youth Summit in 2018 that was held in Nairobi, Kenya. During the conference I interacted with many youths who were doing an amazing job in their respective African countries. I learned a lot from the interactions. They opened my eyes to many possibilities and how to implement different initiatives. SYRADO was born in October 2018.



Q: What are some of the initiatives that you are currently leading?

I am currently leading several initiatives. The first is about menstrual hygiene management to end period poverty in slums and UPE (universal primary education) schools. This is done through advocacy for better health and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) facilities for girls in the schools, movement building, and information sharing. We also train girls on how to make re-usable pads by using available materials in the community. A second initiative is recycling trash into treasure. This is aimed at climate change mitigation and environmental protection while



earning income for youths and especially young women. This is done through making beautiful artifacts using recycled materials like bottles, straws, and kavera. The slum has a problem of drainage blockages and flooding due to poor waste management, so we aim to solve that problem while earning income. I am also part of the Girls not Brides Uganda network with the aim to end child marriage and we are working on the concept to celebrate the African girl's day as partners.

Q: What are some of the obstacles that you encounter in your work and how do you overcome them?

This social development work that we do has many challenges, but most of them are financial, political, and cultural. Financially, we depend on donations and grants which are not stable and sometimes it can be so hard when it comes to sustainability. The way we deal with it is to have various income sources like member contributions and local fundraising. Politically, the climate is somehow limiting as we have to stay conscious of what we do or say as civil society. The way we have managed this is to work alongside the government when implementing our projects. Culturally, the ghetto culture is hard to penetrate. The youth in slums are so used to being given handouts that they don't like working or studying. We have overcome this with a lot of mindsets change training before we begin the skilling.

Q: What are some of the opportunities that you see available for your work and the youth you serve?

We have skilling opportunities in ITC, photography, hair dressing, tailoring, and reusable pads making. We also have art for health where we are using visual art to curb mental health and use it for rehabilitation. We create and organize youth into groups and make them ready for funding support through training.

Q: What could authorities and various organizations do to improve opportunities for youth in Uganda?

There is a need to work together as organizations through networks to attract funding so that projects that support youth can increase and be improved. We also need to promote accountability, transparency, sustainability, and learning so that the intended beneficiaries can indeed benefit.

Q: Did any specific person inspire you in doing this type of work? If so, who was it and how did that person inspire you?

Many people inspired me. Let me mention Dr. Victoria Kisaakye Kanobe at UNESCO IICBA who does an amazing job on the African Continent as an educator and mentor. I would also like to mention youth from the Africa Youth Summit of 2018 in Nairobi. They taught me that starting



small is better than not doing anything at all. I also would like to mention Mrs. Josephine Kanabo who works with women who have been raped by taking them through a healing process, counselling and skilling them. She taught me about the community development model that I started with and am still using to-date. This community development model helps to keep moving even when finances are not available. The model relies on community resources where community members are rallied to the cause of their own development, using what they have.

Q: What advise do you have for other youth in Uganda, and more generally in Africa?

Africa's largest population are youth. In Uganda 78 percent of the population are youth and children, which means that there is a high dependence burden. This also means that there is high unemployment. Despite all the stated and other challenges, youth have what it takes to

change their narrative. Don't despise jobs, seek opportunities, and take them with two hands and work hard. Your dreams are valid but remember to turn those dreams into reality by working hard on them. Lastly be the change you want to see: your community depends on you. Change makers never quit or retire. As the majority population in Africa, as youth we have the ability to write our own story for the Africa we want.

Q: Looking back, is there something you would do differently?

I wouldn't change a thing because I believe that every experience is an opportunity to learn. That said, I could have begun SYRADO in 2015 when I completed university. I feel I wasted a lot of time, and many youths went to prison or died on overdose because there was no one to support them and all the people just wanted to use them.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

I am an Ambivert who can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



Interview with

Zigwai Tagwai

ONE Global Activist and Rotary Positive Peace Activator

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Zigwai Tagwai. I am an activist who has worked to promote active citizenship in governance processes in Nigeria, engaging with stakeholders in the public, private, civic sector, and elected representatives. The aim has been to demand accountability and transparency in governance and social service delivery. I am a graduate of International Studies from Ahmadu Bello University and a pioneer alumna of the School of Politics Policy and Governance (SPPG), with a certificate in Public Leadership and Policy. I am also a Mandela Washington Fellow and an alumna of the Young African Leaders Initiative Regional Leadership Centre (YALI RLC), with a certificate of Leadership in Civic Engagement, and experience in project management and implementation. I am a Rotary Positive Peace Activator committed to driving peace building efforts at local, community, and global levels, working in partnership with Rotarians and the Institute for Economics & Peace. Finally, I am a ONE Global Activist with ONE Campaign in Nigeria supporting efforts to end extreme poverty and preventable diseases.

Q: You have worked with several NGOs in Nigeria. Could you tell us what you have learned from some of these experiences?

My experience working with non-governmental organizations in Nigeria has focused on issues of women's empowerment as well as civic education and citizens' engagement in politics and governance. I have had the opportunity to work among others with Aspilos Foundation, the Young



African Leaders Initiative, the Accountability Lab Nigeria, Women in Management Business and Public Service, the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, and other organizations. I have come to appreciate the value of collaboration and partnerships in promoting causes and ensuring that transformational and sustainable impact is made, especially in the civic space where a lot of organizations are working on either similar or intertwining social or human rights issues. This has further cemented in my mind the words of Martin Luther King Jr. who said: *"there is power in numbers and there is power in unity."*

I have also learnt the power of consistency and resilience in fighting for the causes I believe in and ensuring that the rights of every human are upheld and safeguarded. It may not always seem like the efforts we put in are making a difference, but I always remember that "little drops of water make an ocean", and as Andrew Young puts it, "We think it is complicated to change the world. Change comes little by little. Nothing worthwhile can happen in one generation".



Inclusion, consultation of all stakeholders at every point of engagement on an issue, planning, or implementation is essential to ensure that the right problems are being addressed using the most effective solutions. The place of feedback and efficient information sharing is key to any initiative, community, relationship or project. And we never should stop learning.

Q: What are some of the initiatives that you are currently involved with?

I am currently one of 41 Nigerian youths selected from a large pool of applicants to participate in the 10-weeks full-time Legislative Internship Programme implemented by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) with support from the European Union (EU) for young Nigerians who wish to gain knowledge of legislative practices and processes at the National Assembly (Nigerian parliament). I have been assigned to the House of Representatives Committee on Civil Society Organizations and Development Partners, where I get to observe plenary sessions, attend public hearings, learn the lawmaking process and how a bill is passed into law. This is helping me build my understanding of the functions and operations of the Nigerian Legislature, familiarize myself with legislative documents, and gain knowledge of the foundation and framework of legislative processes. I am providing administrative assistance to my committee clerk,

analyzing legislative documents, writing reports on proceedings during the plenary session and some speeches, and relating with civil society organizations during meetings or trainings.

I am also working on a community development project that has to do with capacity building for stakeholders (traditional leaders, clergy, representatives of youth associations, unions, educational institutions, public officials, and civil society organizations) on peace building strategies and citizens participation in budget formulation and implementation within my local government area, Jema'a, in Kaduna state, Nigeria.

Q: Why did you take those initiatives, what motivated you?

There is no greater force in any society than a well-informed citizenry, equipped to effectively and consistently engage elected and appointed representatives towards ensuring that they deliver on their responsibility and every citizen can afford, access, and benefit from quality basic services. The role of citizens cannot be overemphasized in the process of policy formulation, budget drafting, and implementation, whether as civil servants, contractors, traditional leaders, youths, persons with disabilities, or legislators. No society can thrive without an awakened citizenry who take ownership of the development of their society, and leaders who are committed to service, consultation, transparency, and accountability.



These are my reasons for taking up the legislative internship and working on the community development initiative for my local government. I intend to not just build capacity and gain practical skills, but also put into practice all that I am learning by engaging the citizens in my community with knowledge of how legislation works and how to effectively engage with representatives. I also intend to serve as a connecting link between community members and the National Assembly, especially the representatives of my community, to amplify their voices, concerns, and needs, so they can be heard and attended to.

Q: What are some of the obstacles that you encounter in your work and how do you overcome them?

First will be getting buy-in from a good number of community members or target audiences, with genuine interest in and commitment to pursuing the causes that matter and sustaining momentum after the initial engagement. This is because most persons have either lost hope in the ability of the government to effectively address the challenges of its citizens, or do not trust the government of the day to truly have the interest of the people at heart. This itself is a result of consistent broken/false promises. In overcoming these challenges, I hope to ensure that for every idea that I have, I consult people to get their opinion, get practical

examples of consequences and benefits of engaging or not in the issues, and together build a realistic plan on how to engage and sustain an initiative.

Second will be the challenge of funding. The work that I do has no government budget appropriation, but it involves a lot of stakeholder engagements through travels, meetings, training sessions, and stakeholder management over a long period of time. This results in costs ranging from securing venues for meetings to providing logistical support to the project team and participants, as well as technical and administrative support, or even consultants or facilitators in some cases, as well as contacts with media. In addressing these challenges, I have learnt to not only build relationships through networking, but also to maintain these relationships by contributing my quota to the work that they do. This has in turn made it easier for me to reach out to my network and leverage expertise for the work that I do.

Q: What could authorities and various organizations do to improve opportunities for youth in Nigeria?

Authorities and organizations should be more responsive to feedback on how they are carrying out their responsibilities. This can help enhance inclusion in rolling out initiatives and effective communication, thereby ensuring better



outcomes. There should also be more platforms created to support and promote youth innovative ideas and initiatives, not just through capacity building, but also with technical and financial support (say by linking youth with partners who can support them with equipment, staff, materials, workspace, etc.) Existing policies and structures should be reviewed to ensure that they are viable enough to support opportunities in a safe environment where youth initiatives and contributions can be nurtured, considered, and utilized. I believe that funding in the form of grants should also be made available not just to individuals who have registered organizations or a company, but also to independent individuals who have a proven track record of good work in whatever area they are committed to, so as to enable them to implement initiatives and project plans which they have nurtured over time but have been unable to efficiently lead because of a lack of resources.

Q: Did you benefit from support from Rotary for some of your initiatives, whether through funding or training? How useful was this support?

I was a beneficiary of the Nigerian Rotary - IEP Peace Ambassador Program between February to May 2022, and of the Rotary Positive Peace Activator training for West and Central African peacebuilders between March to April 2023. Both trainings helped in improving my knowledge of

strategies and tools for building and sustaining peace. They strengthened my ability to identify concrete ways to enhance and engage in peace and conflict resolution and leverage the pillars of Positive Peace. I was also able to build a valuable network of like-minded individuals from across West and Central Africa. I have been able to apply these strategies in my work in Nigeria.

Q: What advice do you have for other youth in Nigeria, and more generally in Africa?

You are not alone, your ideas are valid, and no one will place more value on the cause that matters to you than you do. You need to keep at it, push the boundaries, and never let anyone take your voice from you. Find others who are also doing the work or willing to commit. It is a world of collaboration and not competition. We must win together and leave no one behind. Be intentional about every step you take and decision you make, never stop learning, and be ready to speak up for yourself and others.

Q: Looking back, is there something you would do differently?

If I had known all that I do now know, I would have started on this part of community service, advocacy, and civil rights activism much younger. I would have exposed myself to more cross-cultural and inter racial experiences at a younger age. I would have taken even more risks by getting out of my comfort zone. However, I also believe that everything in life happens for a reason. All our individual experiences sum up to make the whole story in the end. So just maybe, I would not have made it to this side of the divide if I had done anything differently.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

I remember the day I received the news of my acceptance into my choice of a competitive secondary school while I was taking care of chores at home. I ran to share the news with my dad, and like the flash of lightning, he had me on his back and ran all around the compound with such a beautiful resounding laughter I can never forget. That day, I understood that though a burden/fight/cause may seem like yours alone, the victory could be for a thousand more.

Interview with

Jocelyne Cyiza Kirezi

Economist and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with VVOB

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Jocelyne Kirezi, and I am a Rwandan with a background in economics. I completed my bachelor's and master's degree in economics at the Université Libre de Bruxelles - Solvay Business School of economics and management. Currently, I work as a researcher for VVOB, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of education in various countries. My journey in economics and research has allowed me to explore and contribute to various projects aimed at enhancing education, professional development, and leadership in the field. I am passionate about data and using research to make a positive impact on education, particularly in the context of Africa.

Q: Where do you work and what are your responsibilities?

I am working as Strategic Education Advisor at VVOB – education for development in Rwanda, where I oversee Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research. My responsibilities include designing and implementing research projects related to school leadership, monitoring, and evaluating the effects and impact of our programs and contributing to the strategic development of educational initiatives using evidence.

Q: Why is it important to invest in school leadership in Africa?

Investing in school leadership in Africa is crucial because it directly impacts the quality of education and, consequently, the future of the continent. Effective school leadership ensures that teachers are well-supported, resources are



utilized 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.

Q: What are examples of good (and maybe not so-good) practices to strengthen school leadership?

In terms of good practices to strengthen school leadership, it is crucial to provide clear frameworks for leadership, continuous professional development, and training for school leaders. Effective mentoring and coaching programs are also beneficial. Collaboration among schools and fostering a supportive community can also strengthen leadership. On the other hand, not-so-good practices might include appointing leaders without adequate preparation, lack of transparency, and insufficient support for school leaders. Other not-so-good practices often involve a lack of resources, support, or recognition for school leaders, which can hinder their ability to lead



effectively. In addition, building evidence on school leadership practices is crucial for accountability, improvement, and ensuring effective educational outcomes.

Q: You have a background in statistics and STEM. How does that help you in your work?

My background in statistics and STEM has been beneficial to my profession because it has provided me with analytical and problem-solving skills. This, together with curiosity and a willingness to learn new things, I feel, makes these skills. It allows me to approach educational research with a data-driven mindset, ensuring that our programs are evidence-based. I can design rigorous research methodologies, analyze complex data, and make informed recommendations for educational improvement, all of which are essential for monitoring, evaluating, and advancing school leadership in Africa.

Q: You could have chosen to work in the private for-profit sector. What made you choose VVOB?

I believe in the transformative power of education. I chose to work at VVOB because of its strong commitment to education and sustainable development. VVOB's mission aligns with my passion for improving education in Africa. Working in the education sector provides a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact on individuals and communities, and I wanted to be a part of that positive change. I also enjoy contributing to the generation of evidence that helps to shape programmes and policies.

Q: What could governments and other stakeholders do to improve opportunities for youth in Africa?

I believe that everything starts with quality education whether formal or informal, so I think that governments and other stakeholders can

enhance youth opportunities by investing in quality education, vocational training, and skills development. This includes developing policies that focus on inclusive and equitable education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support. Moreover, fostering innovation and digital literacy is essential to prepare youth for the demands of the modern job market.

Q: What advice do you have for other youth in Africa?

My advice to other young people in Africa is to remember that the journey may not be easy, but your passion for your goals, being open to continuous learning, and unwavering perseverance will always yield results. Seek opportunities to make a positive impact in your community and be open to exploring different career paths. Most importantly, believe in your ability to drive change.

Q: Looking back, is there something you would do differently in your studies or career?

Looking back, I wouldn't change my academic and career choices, as they have led me to where I am today. When I finished my master's degree, I was

thinking of pursuing a career in Finance, because I liked playing with numbers and I felt that with my background that would be the most appropriate career path. When I came back in Rwanda after my studies, I had an opportunity of an internship in a think tank which led to a full-time job after one month and since then I am a researcher.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

A personal anecdote that comes to mind involves my experience as a qualitative researcher. In my previous workplace, I was conducting field surveys in a rural village to gather qualitative data for a poverty analysis project. The research involved drafting life stories of participants to understand the pathways leading into poverty or out of it. The field was challenging emotionally because you are basically working through the life of a person with most of the time a large set of socio-economic challenges and but also successes. It was a profound reminder that research is not just about data: it is about understanding and connecting with the people you are trying to help. This experience continues to shape my approach to research and education today.



Entretien avec

Olga Tusala Katembo

Volontaire permanente du Mouvement International ATD Quart Monde

Q : Pourriez-vous nous parler un peu de vous ?

Je suis Olga Tusala Katembo, volontaire permanente au sein du mouvement international ATD Quart Monde. Je suis de nationalité congolaise, de l'Est de la ville de Bukavu en République Démocratique du Congo. Je proviens d'une famille de sept enfants dont quatre filles et trois garçons. Je suis la cadette. Je travaille en mission en République centrafricaine depuis 2021. J'ai 28 ans et suis mariée depuis 2020 à Bob Katembo qui est aussi volontaire permanent du Mouvement en Centrafrique. Je suis la mère d'un petit garçon âgé d'un an.

J'ai connu ATD Quart Monde en 2012. Je suis née dans une famille en situation de pauvreté avec un papa qui rappelait toujours la valeur de la dignité. La dignité est supérieure à l'argent. Quand j'ai fini trois années d'études supérieures en santé publique, j'ai lu les écrits du Père Joseph Wresinski, le fondateur d'ATD Quart Monde et je me suis retrouvée dans ses paroles : « L'enfant pauvre n'a pas d'enfance. » Cela m'a fait relire mon temps au collège quand je payais les frais de scolarité en vendant des beignets. Être ami de ceux qui n'ont pas d'amis, cela me parle !

Q : Vous travaillez avec le Mouvement international ATD Quart Monde. Comment l'action du Mouvement a-elle commencé dans votre pays ?

Le Mouvement International ATD Quart Monde est venu en Centrafrique en 1984 en soutien d'une action de la mission catholique dans la préfecture de Markunda à la frontière Tchadienne. En 1986, les volontaires permanents se sont installés à Bangui, précisément dans le quartier Galabadja. Tout en travaillant auprès de structures



extérieures, ils étaient en recherche de ceux qui vivaient les situations les plus difficiles. Leurs pas les ont amenés à rencontrer les enfants de la rue, ainsi que les premiers amis du Mouvement. La même année, le Père Joseph, le fondateur du Mouvement, est venu à Bangui. Un ami raconte : « Il a rencontré les enfants et les jeunes qui font la récupération à la décharge de l'aéroport. Très ému, il leur dit que ce n'est pas sur un lieu comme celui-ci qu'on peut apprendre. Alors il leur a promis de construire avec eux la cour aux 100 métiers où des artisans viendraient pour partager leur savoir-faire avec les enfants. » De là est venu le tout premier projet, la construction de la cour aux cent métiers. Ce projet a accueilli des centaines de jeunes parmi les plus vulnérables de Bangui. La plupart vivaient dans la rue. La cour leur a permis d'acquérir les rudiments de métiers qui leur ont donné une plus grande sécurité dans leur vie et leur ont ouvert un avenir. Un principe fondamental du mouvement guide cette action de partage du savoir : « Il n'y a personne qui ne puisse pas apprendre quelque chose aux autres. » Dans les mêmes années, le mouvement a commencé l'animation d'une bibliothèque de rue (pour amener les livres et la

lecture là où les enfants vivent) dans un quartier proche du grand marché du kilomètre 5.

Q : Quelles sont les actions actuelles du Mouvement dans le pays, et quelles sont vos propres responsabilités ?

Actuellement en Centrafrique nous avons des commissions thématiques d'interventions ainsi que des actions culturelles. Nous sommes une petite équipe de volontaires permanents mais le volume d'action mené est important grâce à une centaine de personnes qui prennent des responsabilités bénévoles dans l'action. Nos actions culturelles regroupent des enfants en situation de rue, et plus généralement des enfants qui vivent dans des situations d'extrême pauvreté. Il s'agit entre autres de : (1) Tapori : un courant mondial entre tous les enfants pour bâtir un monde d'amitié – la devise des enfants Tapori est : « *Nous voulons que tous les enfants aient les mêmes chances.* » ; (2) Les bibliothèques de rue : cette activité permet aux enfants de découvrir, de s'ouvrir sur le monde et d'apprendre à travers la lecture. D'autres activités se font comme des bricolages, des dessins, différents ateliers d'apprentissages, des jeux, danses traditionnelles, etc. ; et (3) la dynamique Jeunesses Quart Monde : un groupe de jeunes qui s'engage bénévolement afin d'accompagner les enfants dans les différentes actions.

Nous animons aussi plus d'une demi-douzaine de commissions sur différents secteurs d'intervention dans le but d'accompagner les hommes, les femmes et les jeunes dans leurs communautés afin d'éradiquer l'extrême pauvreté. Il s'agit de : (1) la commission *Éducation* s'occupe des questions liées à l'éducation – elle élabore des partenariats avec des écoles communautaires, facilite

l'inscription des enfants démunis dans les écoles, et mobilise les communautés sur l'éducation pour tous et d'excellence ; (2) la commission *Santé pour tous* intervient sur les questions liées à la santé auprès des communautés les plus défavorisées. Les membres de la commission accompagnent les familles les plus fragiles, et notamment celles dont les enfants souffrent de malnutrition, dans les structures de santé, et participent à la mobilisation et à la sensibilisation sur l'éducation sanitaire ; (3) La commission *Environnement* s'occupe des questions liées à la préservation de l'environnement et au changement climatique. A travers cette commission, les familles en situation de grande pauvreté sont des acteurs primordiaux qui contribuent à la préservation de l'environnement à travers les pépinières, le ramassage des ordures etc. ; (4) La commission *Plaidoyer* s'occupe des questions de plaidoyer pour porter les différentes doléances que les familles et les communautés les plus pauvres présentent ; (5) La commission *Documents administratifs (Acte de naissance)* s'inscrit dans la campagne prônée par le gouvernement à travers le Ministère de l'Administration du Territoire avec comme mission principale de doter d'actes de naissance les enfants issus des communautés les plus fragiles ; (6) La commission *Compagnons Agir en Dignité* accompagne les familles les plus fragiles pour rebâtir leur dignité et aller à la recherche de ceux qui manquent encore ; (7) La commission *Activités Génératrices de Revenus* accompagne les familles en situation d'extrême pauvreté dans le cadre de renforcement de capacité pour relever les défis liés au panier ménager ; et enfin (8) La commission *Co-responsabilité* regroupe toutes les commissions pour programmer et évaluer toutes les actions liées à la vie du Mouvement afin de porter les responsabilités ensemble.





Enfin, le Mouvement International ATD Quart Monde en Centrafrique accompagne des associations partenaires comme le Regroupement des Transporteurs à Pied (RTAP) qui cherche à valoriser leur métier, le réseau des médiateurs que nous soutenons dans le développement de son organisation interne et dans sa constitution en association locale, les familles solidaires de Boali, les familles Zo Kwe Zo de Danzi, les famille Ilondo Maboko na maboko de Kokoro et les familles de l'île Mbongossoua. Dans toutes ces actions, j'occupe la responsabilité de la commission Santé, les actions culturelles notamment Tapori en co-responsabilité avec d'autres jeunes, et également les questions administratives et financières.

Q : Quelles sont les principales difficultés que les familles en grande pauvreté et en particulier les jeunes rencontrent au quotidien ?

Les difficultés sont énormes et touchent presque tous les plans. Une mère de famille m'a dit que si la santé n'est pas bonne, on n'a pas la force d'aller travailler, pas même la force de manger. Donc peut-être que le plus important c'est la santé. Je vais donner un exemple : les familles du quartier de Kokoro ont été obligées de se réfugier dans une école à cause d'inondations, avec 12 familles dans une salle de classe où tout était mouillé. Les familles ont vécu une semaine sans assistance et leur santé s'est dégradée avec des maladies, du paludisme, et des maladies hydriques. C'est à ce moment qu'on a pensé à la commission Santé, à la commission agir en urgence et on a créé une brigade d'intervention, y compris pour déboucher les caniveaux...

Avec la commission Santé, nous avons organisé des visites par rotations. Nous avons commencé pour créer de la confiance. Pas en se présentant

au nom d'ATD Quart Monde, mais avec une proposition simple : « *Levons-nous et travaillons main dans la main.* » Une femme a accouché et le bébé n'a pas survécu faute de soutien médical. On a commencé à secourir cette femme avec la liste de médicaments qu'on avait. Disons qu'on lui a sauvé la vie. Une autre femme, nous l'avons secourue et on lui a donné des médicaments. D'autres cas nous dépassaient, alors nous sommes allés avec les personnes affectées à l'hôpital avec un plaidoyer pour qu'elles soient acceptées à l'hôpital. D'autres personnes sont venues en aide en amenant de la nourriture. A chaque catastrophe, les familles les plus pauvres sont les victimes. On ne voulait pas se présenter comme ATD Quart Monde au départ car les familles auraient pu croire que nous étions une ONG qui distribuait de l'aide. On est venu pour s'asseoir avec la communauté et s'interroger ensemble : que peut-on faire face aux inondations, aux eaux stagnantes ? Avec les habitants du quartier, on a fait des chantiers pour relever des maisons, on a organisé des brigades pour débroussailler les espaces. On a contacté les chefs de quartier et interpellé le maire de Bingbo. Les familles nous font maintenant confiance.

Q : Quelles sont selon vous les réponses possibles à ces difficultés ?

Considérons l'éducation. La plupart de jeunes n'ont pas eu la chance d'atteindre un niveau scolaire adéquat à cause de plusieurs crises militaro-politiques qu'a connu le pays. Il y a aussi un manque d'emplois pour la jeunesse, ce qui peut contribuer à un engagement en précipitation dans la vie de couple. On voit aussi des abandons des études au profit des activités commerciales afin de subvenir aux besoins d'urgence. Il faudrait davantage de programmes d'action, par exemple

: doter la jeunesse de formation professionnelle ; mettre les stratégies en place pour l'accès à l'éducation pour tous afin de donner le goût de l'éducation à la jeunesse ; créer des emplois pour la jeunesse selon le génie de chaque jeune ; organiser des séances d'information et formation ; associer les jeunes dans la prise des décisions. Mais surtout, dans tous les programmes d'action, il y a le défi de s'unir, d'atteindre d'abord ceux qui vivent les situations les plus difficiles et de ne laisser personne de côté.

Q : Pourquoi avez-vous décidé de rejoindre le Mouvement ? Comment renouvez-vous votre motivation au quotidien ?

J'ai rejoint le Mouvement afin de contribuer au combat de la lutte contre l'extrême pauvreté, ainsi que pour contribuer à la construction d'une société plus juste et meilleure où chacun trouve sa place. Je m'engage avec toutes mes forces, tout mon temps aux services de familles victimes de la violence de la misère et de l'extrême pauvreté enfin d'apporter ma contribution pour son éradication. Ma motivation est renouvelée chaque jour à travers le courage de familles. Je considère les familles comme mon école et je peux dire qu'elles sont mes maîtres. Comme nous le disons souvent « *même dans la misère l'homme réfléchit.* » Les familles sont en situation de pauvreté mais elles aiment quand nous les visitons. Cela leur redonne le sourire malgré leur situation difficile, l'espoir d'avoir un demain meilleur.

Q : Que pourraient faire les autorités et d'autres organisations pour améliorer les opportunités pour les jeunes en grande pauvreté

Les autorités et organisations pourraient mieux associer les familles en situation de pauvreté dans les projets des communautés, surtout car elles ont aussi les idées constructives. Elles pourraient mettre la jeunesse au centre de leurs politiques publiques par exemple avec des subventions dans le cadre de bourse d'étude. Elles pourraient ouvrir des opportunités de formation et d'emplois à la jeunesse (centre de formation professionnelle.) Elles pourraient mettre en place des espaces culturels pour permettre à la jeunesse de s'ouvrir sur le monde culturel. Et elles pourraient appuyer les activités d'entrepreneuriat de la jeunesse.

Q : Quels conseils donneriez-vous aux autres jeunes de votre pays et plus généralement aux jeunes en Afrique ?

A la jeunesse, mon conseil serait d'avoir le courage de travailler, mais aussi de se concentrer dans leurs études, surtout pour ceux qui fréquentent encore les bancs de l'école. Il y a de jeunes qui n'arrivent pas à étudier par manque de moyens. Ils ont la volonté mais ils sont dans l'extrême pauvreté. C'est le cas de Brafinel, un jeune engagé dans le Mouvement. C'est un garçon intelligent qui a l'espoir de devenir un informaticien, mais il dit qu'il ne sait pas si son rêve se réalisera un



jour car les jours passent et son âge avance aussi. D'autres jeunes se lancent dans le petit commerce pour répondre à leurs besoins. Certains qui se débrouillent dans un petit commerce payent eux-mêmes les études. C'est le cas d'Ermand, un jeune pousseur (charretier) qui partait à l'école avec sa pousse, c'est à dire une charrette avec laquelle on offre aux passants de transporter des marchandises. Malgré le mépris porté sur les pousseurs par beaucoup de personnes, il n'a pas abandonné, jusqu'à avoir son diplôme de Baccalauréat, et aujourd'hui il est candidat à une bourse. C'est aussi le cas de Félix, un animateur de bibliothèque de rue. Il est à l'université et travaille comme agent de sécurité, C'est avec cela qu'il paye ses études. Il explique : *« je travaille pour mes besoins académiques. Mon contrat est de 120 000 FCFA mais je reçois 40 000 FCFA. Je ne peux pas me plaindre car c'est avec ça que je dois arriver au bout de mes études afin de trouver un bon boulot. »*

Je trouve que ce sont des jeunes qui ont de l'avenir. Mais quels obstacles à franchir ! C'est pour cela qu'ils méritent des encouragements pour ne pas baisser les bras et continuer à se battre, pour ne pas perdre l'espoir à cause des difficultés quotidiennes. Car la jeunesse, c'est aujourd'hui qu'il faut la soutenir. Les études sont très importantes dans la vie des jeunes et pour leur futur. Un jeune militant d'ATD Quart Monde suit une formation en alphabétisation car il n'a pas eu la chance d'étudier par manque de moyens. Il dit qu'aujourd'hui, il se sent nul quand son enfant amène son devoir pour se faire aider. Il dit : *« je ne peux pas lui dire que je ne sais pas lire, je ne peux pas non plus l'aider. C'est pour cela que malgré mon âge, je dois apprendre à lire et à écrire. »* C'est pour cela que j'encourage les jeunes à étudier.

Q : Avec le recul, y a-t-il quelque chose que vous feriez différemment ?

J'aurais aimé continuer ma formation en santé publique car mon souci était de faire cinq ans d'études supérieures, mais ma famille n'en avait pas les moyens. Je vendais de beignets pour mes besoins académiques. J'ai vu que cela ne pouvait plus suffire vu le coût des études qui avait augmenté pour le deuxième cycle. Comme je n'ai pas pu terminer mes études de santé, devant les familles qui nous exposent leurs problèmes de santé, et qui ont besoin de notre soutien moral,

je me sens parfois limitée car dans le monde actuel, aussitôt les jours passent, aussitôt il y a des améliorations dans les soins à donner. Une formation de santé demande aussi de la mise en jour. Je n'ai pas continué mes études, mais je suis toujours à l'école du Mouvement ATD Quart Monde car chacun est élève et maître à la fois.

Q : Enfin, pourriez-vous s'il vous plaît partager une anecdote personnelle sur vous-même ?

J'ai été touchée par la vie d'une femme que j'ai rencontrée. Pendant la crise de la COVID, elle était obligée de sortir pour gagner de quoi manger. Son mari l'avait abandonnée et elle était en situation de grand isolement. Elle est mère de famille et a quatre enfants et il n'y avait pas de toilettes dans leur maison d'une seule pièce. Alors les enfants allaient jeter les cacas dans le caniveau. Le voisinage les a traités de sorcières et les enfants n'osaient plus sortir. Face à cette situation de rejet, on a réfléchi avec d'autres membres d'ATD Quart Monde. On est allé voir le chef de quartier. On s'est rendu compte qu'il y avait deux autres familles dans le quartier qui n'avaient pas de toilettes. Il y a eu une mobilisation ensemble. Un voisin a donné une parcelle pour les toilettes, d'autres ont donné chacun quelques dollars. Et des toilettes ont été creusées. Cette femme a retrouvé le sourire avec ses voisines. Deux jours avant que je ne quitte Bukavu, elle est passée au bureau avec trois voisines et c'était beaucoup d'émotion ensemble.



Entretien avec

Ousseynou Gueye

Directeur Exécutif de Polaris Asso

Q : Pourriez-vous nous parler un peu de vous ?

Je m'appelle Ousseynou Gueye. Originaire de Rufisque, une charmante ville non loin de Dakar, j'ai grandi dans un univers riche et diversifié. Mon enfance a été façonnée par un enseignement rigoureux de ma mère, institutrice, et de mon père, technicien en télécommunications. Mon éducation a été marquée par un doux mélange de traditions : d'un côté, l'école coranique, et de l'autre, l'école catholique de Rufisque, dirigée par des sœurs. Mon parcours professionnel et académique est tout aussi varié. La discipline et la rigueur du Prytanée militaire de Saint-Louis m'ont formé, tandis que mon Master 2 en Sciences Politiques à Paris m'a ouvert les yeux sur les défis démocratiques de notre ère numérique. Mon expérience au sein du Programme Google Ateliers Numériques en France a renforcé cette compréhension. Cependant, c'est mon retour au Sénégal, après de nombreuses années en France, qui a marqué le début de mon aventure la plus passionnante : la création de Polaris Asso. Une initiative dédiée à mobiliser la jeunesse pour qu'elle prenne en main les enjeux majeurs d'un monde en constante mutation, en particulier dans le domaine numérique.

Q : Vous avez créé POLARIS ASSO au Sénégal ? Quelle est l'histoire de l'organisation et comment avez-vous procédé pour la créer ?

Alors que je résidais en France depuis déjà quelques années, l'envie me prit de retourner au Sénégal, pas seulement pour des vacances, mais avec un désir profond de rencontrer la jeunesse sénégalaise, de partager mon savoir-faire et d'apporter une contribution. Avec l'aide de quelques économies, j'ai organisé et co-animé des ateliers dans plusieurs établissements scolaires



sénégalais, en compagnie d'amis dévoués. Notre mission était de sensibiliser ces jeunes au monde du numérique, de les inciter à explorer les nouvelles technologies, de développer leurs compétences pour les métiers futurs tout en mettant en garde contre ses pièges.

À travers ce bénévolat, j'ai réalisé que la majorité de ces jeunes ignorent les opportunités que le numérique peut leur offrir, que ce soit pour l'éducation, la formation, l'emploi, l'expression de leur créativité ou même pour soutenir leur communauté, comme aider leurs mères à vendre en ligne. Face à cet écart flagrant de compétences et à l'absence d'initiatives pour y remédier, mon cœur a été touché. De retour en France, j'ai pris une décision audacieuse : rentrer définitivement au Sénégal, car c'était là que mon action était la plus nécessaire. C'est dans cet élan qu'est née Polaris Asso. Après avoir surmonté les formalités administratives, nous avons pu obtenir un récépissé officiel, ce qui nous a permis de nous plonger pleinement dans l'élaboration de programmes destinés à la jeunesse sénégalaise.



Q : Quelles sont certaines des initiatives que vous dirigez actuellement ?

Actuellement, nous pilotons diverses initiatives axées sur la mobilisation de la jeunesse face aux défis contemporains. Un de nos projets phares a été le plaidoyer pour l'inclusion numérique des jeunes femmes et filles au Sénégal. Grâce à nos campagnes de sensibilisation et nos formations professionnalisantes déployées dans les 14 régions du pays, nous avons réussi à soutenir plus de 15 000 jeunes filles et femmes. Le mouvement pour l'inclusion numérique au Sénégal est désormais en plein essor. De plus, nous proposons une plateforme d'apprentissage numérique en libre accès, permettant à la jeunesse de se former à distance.

Sur le front du plaidoyer, nous avons également abordé la question préoccupante du cyberharcèlement au Sénégal. Suite à nos efforts, un livre blanc accompagné de recommandations a été présenté aux instances gouvernementales. Dans le but de combattre les violences en ligne, et en partenariat avec les autorités, nous avons inauguré un centre dédié à l'écoute et au soutien des victimes de ces violences. Sur le même registre, avec les autorités sénégalaises, nous travaillons à éveiller la éco-citoyenne des jeunes notamment par la promotion de pratiques numériques responsables chez les citoyens.

Récemment, à l'aube des élections présidentielles, nous avons lancé une plateforme citoyenne dédiée à la lutte contre la désinformation. Cette initiative vise à former des experts en éducation aux médias et des vérificateurs d'informations, garantissant ainsi que le discours démocratique repose sur des données crédibles et authentiques. Dans une ère où l'information abonde, il est vital

d'éduquer notre jeunesse à discerner le vrai du faux, afin de les protéger des manipulations potentielles.

Q : Quels sont les obstacles que vous rencontrez dans votre travail et comment les surmontez-vous ?

Au cœur de nos défis se trouve d'abord la résistance culturelle. De nombreux stéréotypes persistent, en particulier l'idée que la technologie n'est pas destinée aux jeunes filles. C'est un préjugé tenace que nous combattons quotidiennement. Notre principal adversaire est donc ce préjugé. Pour y remédier, nous engageons des dialogues profonds avec les communautés, en particulier les parents, afin de déconstruire ces idées reçues dès la racine. Dans cette optique, nous avons initié le programme "Mission Parents 2.0".

Deuxièmement, notre système éducatif n'a pas suivi le rythme effréné des mutations sociétales. Il peine à offrir des opportunités permettant aux jeunes d'exprimer leur créativité, leur talent, et de développer leur agilité, essentielle à l'ère numérique. Face à cela, nous collaborons avec des établissements pilotes et les autorités gouvernementales pour revisiter les curriculums. L'objectif est de valoriser le bénévolat et de promouvoir l'acquisition de compétences numériques dans les parcours académiques.

Enfin, le troisième défi majeur est le manque de ressources humaines qualifiées. Beaucoup de nos talents, surtout dans le numérique, cherchent des opportunités à l'étranger, privant le Sénégal de compétences essentielles. C'est un problème que nous abordons avec sérieux, en cherchant des moyens d'encourager ces talents à contribuer au développement national.

Q : Quelles sont certaines des opportunités qui, selon vous, sont disponibles pour votre travail et pour les jeunes que vous servez ?

Le monde actuel, en dépit de ses défis, regorge d'opportunités sans précédent, surtout dans le domaine numérique. Premièrement, l'ère numérique dans laquelle nous vivons est en perpétuelle mutation. Cela signifie que de nouvelles plateformes, outils et technologies émergent constamment, offrant une pléthore d'opportunités pour l'éducation, la création et l'innovation. Le potentiel est énorme, surtout lorsque l'on considère les avancées récentes en matière d'intelligence artificielle, de réalité virtuelle et augmentée, et d'autres technologies émergentes. Les jeunes Sénégalais ont donc une chance unique de se positionner à l'avant-garde de ces évolutions technologiques.

Deuxièmement, le dynamisme, la passion et la résilience des jeunes sénégalais sont des atouts inestimables. Lorsqu'ils sont équipés des bonnes ressources, formations et opportunités, ils ont le pouvoir de créer des solutions innovantes répondant aux défis uniques de notre société. Je suis convaincu que, si nous parvenons à canaliser cette énergie et ce potentiel, nous assisterons à une vague d'innovations et de réussites inédites.

Troisièmement, la prise de conscience autour des enjeux de l'inclusion numérique n'a jamais été aussi forte. Au niveau national, le gouvernement et diverses institutions reconnaissent de plus en plus l'importance de l'éducation numérique et de l'inclusion. Sur la scène internationale, des organisations comme l'UNESCO et d'autres partenaires clés montrent un intérêt croissant pour des initiatives comme la nôtre. Cette tendance positive crée un environnement favorable pour obtenir des partenariats, des financements et des collaborations qui peuvent amplifier l'impact de notre travail.



Q : Que pourraient faire les autorités et diverses organisations pour améliorer les opportunités pour les jeunes au Sénégal ?

Il est vital de reconnaître le décalage démocratique actuel. Un fossé significatif s'est formé entre la jeunesse, qui constitue une grande partie de la population, et les élites au pouvoir. Les jeunes, bien qu'étant le pilier de l'avenir du Sénégal avec leur dynamisme et leur capacité d'innovation, ressentent une mise à l'écart lorsqu'il s'agit de décisions essentielles. Le gouvernement doit non seulement prendre conscience de cette situation, mais aussi y apporter des solutions. Cela passe par des politiques publiques qui répondent aux besoins et ambitions des jeunes, tout en tenant compte des obstacles qu'ils rencontrent. Il est primordial d'offrir des plateformes où leur voix peut être entendue et influencer la gouvernance. En valorisant leur savoir-faire, leur vision et leur enthousiasme, nous pouvons élaborer des stratégies plus complètes, novatrices et pérennes pour le pays.

Pour améliorer les perspectives des jeunes sénégalais, une collaboration étroite est nécessaire entre les décideurs politiques, les entités nationales et internationales, ainsi que le monde des affaires. L'éducation doit être au cœur de cette démarche. Les investissements dans ce domaine devraient non seulement valoriser la richesse culturelle africaine, mais également favoriser l'apprentissage du numérique et le développement des compétences interpersonnelles, souvent désignées par le terme "soft skills". En revisitant les curriculums pour y intégrer des éléments tels que la numérisation, l'innovation, l'empathie ou la connaissance de soi, nous préparons nos jeunes à un futur dominé par des évolutions technologiques, à l'image de l'avènement de l'intelligence artificielle.

Q : Une personne en particulier vous a-t-elle inspiré pour faire ce type de travail ? Si oui, qui était-ce et comment cette personne vous a-t-elle inspiré ?

Plusieurs figures ont influencé ma trajectoire, mais Nelson Mandela se distingue nettement. Sa capacité à unifier, à pardonner, et à diriger avec intégrité m'a toujours inspiré. Sa vision d'une Afrique en paix, prospère et inclusive est une lueur d'espoir que j'ai toujours voulu suivre. Ses écrits et son parcours m'ont montré que, malgré les

obstacles, on peut réaliser de grandes choses avec détermination et amour pour son peuple.

En tant qu'entrepreneur, Mandela est un phare dans mon quotidien. Entreprendre est une mission épuisante qui requiert un engagement de chaque instant, et les fruits de cet engagement ne se manifestent souvent que sur le moyen ou le long terme. Les défis sont constants, d'autant plus dans un pays comme le Sénégal où l'écosystème entrepreneurial est encore en développement. Quand on part de zéro, chaque jour est un combat, un effort pour construire et progresser. Et face à ces défis, la résilience légendaire de Mandela m'a toujours servi de source d'inspiration. Son endurance face à l'adversité m'a enseigné l'importance de la persévérance et du courage dans la quête de mes objectifs.

Q : Quels conseils donneriez-vous aux autres jeunes au Sénégal et plus généralement en Afrique ?

Mon premier conseil serait de croire en vous-même et en vos rêves. L'Afrique est un continent riche en potentiel et en opportunités, et chaque jeune a le pouvoir d'y apporter une contribution significative. N'ayez pas peur d'innover, de sortir des sentiers battus, et de défier le statu quo. Deuxièmement, éduquez-vous constamment. Dans notre ère numérique, l'apprentissage est plus accessible que jamais. Saisissez chaque opportunité pour acquérir de nouvelles compétences et élargir vos horizons.

À l'heure actuelle, de nombreux jeunes sont tentés par l'immigration clandestine. Je comprends leur désarroi et leur aspiration à réussir, quelle qu'en soit la manière. C'est une preuve de leur détermination et de leur volonté. Cependant, il est essentiel de se rappeler que c'est par ses propres fils et filles qu'un pays se construit. En se lançant dans l'aventure périlleuse de l'immigration clandestine, non seulement de nombreux jeunes risquent leur vie, mais nous renonçons également à la possibilité de réussir sur nos terres natales, et de bâtir un avenir radieux pour les générations futures d'Africains. Enfin, n'oubliez jamais d'où vous venez. Restez connecté à vos racines, à votre culture, et utilisez-les comme une source d'inspiration dans tout ce que vous entreprenez.

Q : Avec le recul, y a-t-il quelque chose que vous feriez différemment ?

Avec le recul, il y a bien sûr des moments où je me demande si certaines décisions auraient pu être prises différemment. Peut-être aurais-je dû être plus patient à certains moments, ou plus audacieux à d'autres. Mais en fin de compte, chaque décision, chaque succès et chaque échec m'ont conduit là où je suis aujourd'hui. Ils ont façonné Polaris Asso et ont renforcé ma détermination à servir les jeunes du Sénégal. Si je devais vraiment choisir une chose, je dirais que j'aurais aimé commencer plus tôt, pour avoir encore plus de temps pour apprendre, grandir et avoir un impact.

Q : Enfin, pourriez-vous s'il vous plaît partager une anecdote personnelle sur vous-même ?

Bien sûr ! Lors de nos débuts avec Polaris Asso, je garde un souvenir marquant de ma rencontre avec deux adolescentes réservées. Elles semblaient réticentes à s'exprimer en groupe et à partager leurs visions. Cependant, au fil des sessions, elles ont rassemblé leur courage et dévoilé leurs ambitions : l'une envisageait de créer une plateforme dédiée aux produits alimentaires biologiques, tandis que l'autre souhaitait lancer une entreprise pour aider les gens à créer des jardins ruraux chez eux. Leur enthousiasme était palpable et leurs projets, prometteurs. Aujourd'hui, chacune d'elles pilote sa propre entreprise et emploie plusieurs collaborateurs. Elles incarnent pour moi une véritable source d'inspiration et me rappellent constamment la raison d'être de mon engagement. À chaque fois que je repense à elles, je réalise à quel point il est possible de transformer une vie en offrant simplement confiance et moyens pour concrétiser des rêves.



Interview with

Ann Maria Nassanga

Artist and film maker

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Ann Maria Nassanga, but I go by Afrie. I am an awardwinning Ugandan filmmaker, musician, and girls' education advocate. I am the continental African Union CIEFFA ambassador for the #AfricaEducatesHer campaign. My song, Let Her Know is the theme song of this campaign.

Q: You are a filmmaker, musician, and girls' education advocate from Uganda. How do you spend a typical day?

Each day is usually so different from the other. I like to pray in the morning, do a simple workout routine, and find something that makes me laugh at least once a day. It could be a meme, or I would call a friend and have a hilarious conversation. After that, it is between studio time, working on a film set which includes writing, composing music, directing, and editing. I also run an Initiative called The Kalaverse that uses art to empower and educate female creatives. I like to sneak in a good book or two and a slice of my favorite fruit. My evenings may have a music performance where I go out and sing then come back home and rest.

Q: Why is it so important to educate girls in Uganda and more generally in Africa?

Education is the tool that equips human beings to solve complex problems, and Africa has a number of those. In my country, Uganda, hindrances to girls' education are many and are mostly fueled by a misconception of who the African/Ugandan girl truly is. Negative practices like early marriage and female genital mutilation are grounded in the fatal belief that women are men's property/slaves and therefore do not need to go to school.



And yet, women are the backbone of our communities, so this means that when you educate a girl/woman, you are empowering a whole family and community, and therefore a generation of problem solvers. I believe that for Africa to quickly solve our many problems, empowering and educating girls/women must rise to the top of the list.

Q: What are examples of good (and maybe not so-good) approaches to promote girls' education?

One good way of promoting girls' education is through the use of mass media and technology. With the rise of the information age, using social media to spread awareness has proven effective in bringing dark cultures to light and therefore making room for relevant and timely conversations by many people over a short period of time. Using technologically advanced art forms like music and film has also made it easier to inspire society towards the cause of girls' education. As Africans, we are very musical and enjoy expressing ourselves through art like dance and theatre. As promoters of girls' education, we should continue to embrace the place of arts in motivating fellow Ugandans/Africans towards real change.



A not so good way is upholding negative gender stereotypes in education. For example, endorsing the thought that girls are not good at sciences or mathematics, or that girls cannot do courses that involve technology and engineering. This is a misconception that ends up discouraging many otherwise excellent female students.

Q: You did a great documentary about a female doctor in Karamoja? What did you learn?

Thank you very much. Karamoja is one of the most rural regions of Uganda. Haunted by the aforementioned practices of early marriage and female genital mutilation, it is very rare for a girl from this pastoral community to complete primary school, let alone secondary school. For Dr. Faith Nangiyo to persevere and not only finish school but also become one of the region's first and most celebrated female Karamojong doctors is nothing short of a miracle! My takeaway from the experience was a quote by Dr. Faith when I asked her what kept her going. She said, *'We are not where we were born or where we grew up but we each have a choice as to who we eventually become.'*

Q: You have worked with AU CIEFFA for some time. How have you been able to contribute to the African Union's work?

The remix of my song, Let Her Know, is the continental theme song for the African Union CIEFFA #AfricaEducatesHer campaign to educate girls post Covid-19. I am also an ambassador for this campaign. Furthermore, my documentary film Little Faith has been screened by the African Union CIEFFA to promote girls' education post Covid-19.

Q: What could governments and other stakeholders do to improve opportunities for girls in Africa?

The governments should implement and enforce strict laws that protect a girls' right to education. In many rural areas, these laws are not strictly obeyed and are often overridden by customary law and tradition.





Q: What advice do you have for other youth in Africa?

Don't wait for your government to 'figure things out for you,' take the step and solve the local problems in your local community. There is always a wealthy reward for problem solvers.

Q: Looking back, is there something you would do differently in your career?

All the mistakes and failures I have experienced have become stepping stones to my next level. So looking back, I am happy to say I have no regrets, only lessons no matter how painful.

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

Growing up, I was so much of a tomboy that I often prayed I would mysteriously go to sleep and wake up as a boy. I was afraid of the looming, seemingly inevitable burden of womanhood. Years later, I am a girls' education advocate by some twisted sense of destiny. And more than my gift and passion for storytelling, what truly sets me apart is that I am an African girl. It is interesting that the key to our freedom is sometimes locked up in a safe called fear.



Interview with

Simon Peter Kaweesi

Founder of The Student Hub

Q: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Simon Peter Kaweesi. I am the founder of The Student Hub, an EdTech platform providing career guidance to students in Africa. I am a Graduate of Computer Engineering from Makerere University in Uganda and I aim to use my coding and leadership skills to support students and contribute to the broader education sector by developing tools that bridge what I perceive as critical gaps.

Q: You founded The Student Hub, an innovative Edtech platform. How does the platform work?

The Student Hub (www.studenthub.ug) uses technology to personalize career guidance for students. Using an AI powered algorithm, the platform aligns the abilities and interests of students to emerging career paths. The model includes aspects related to Self-awareness, Career Exploration, Matching, and Action Planning. A student at any level of education can map out their career path from the classroom to the workplace as well as receive support to achieve their full potential in school, career, and life. Since 2015, we have served more than 60,000 students.

Q: Why is it so important to provide career guidance to students in Africa?

It is well known that Africa will have the largest young labor force in the world by 2035. Career guidance plays a critical role in shaping that labor force as students must select career paths that work for them and will contribute to the development of Africa. Students must acquire skills that relate to their abilities, and they must do so before they transition to the labor Market. Unemployment in Africa is largely attributed to a skills mismatch, a problem exacerbated by a lack



of career guidance at different levels of education. The Student Hub aims to fill that gap.

Q: What are examples of good (and maybe not so-good) approaches to providing career guidance to students?

Career guidance is often treated as an event held once a year in many schools and it is not personalized to each specific student. This is not a good practice as career guidance should instead be a systematic process helping students discover their abilities and interests and helping them develop those abilities and interests throughout their academic and career life.

Career guidance is also not simply a course selection as handled in many schools. It rather should be part and parcel of a student's academic experience from the clubs they may select to the activities they attend outside school and even to some extent the hobbies they select.

Q: Why has the Hub become so successful? What was your recipe for success?

The key to our success has been our holistic approach to career guidance. As I just mentioned



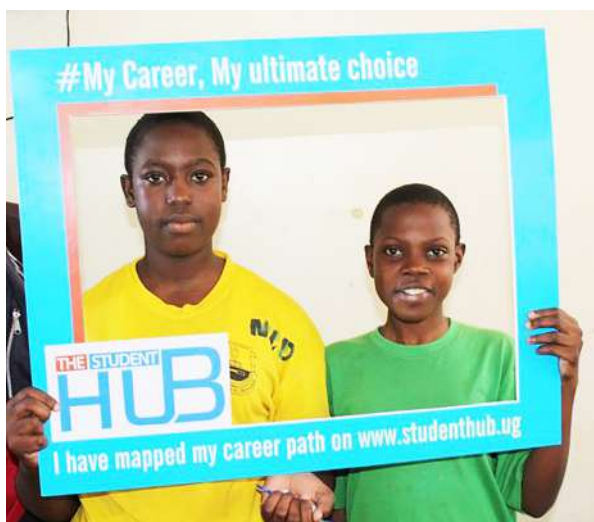
it, we recognize that career guidance is not just an event but a process, one where a student discovers their abilities and interests and visualizes his/her career path from the classroom to their desired destination.

Q: You have worked with the African Union. How have you been able to contribute to the African Union's work?

We were part of the AU EdTech Expo in 2019, where we were given the opportunity to showcase our school career guidance platform. We are also proponents of Education Tourism in Africa, having guided over 1,000 students to study opportunities in Africa, including at the Pan African University, Kwame Nkurumah University of Science and Technology, and African Leadership University to mention but a few.

Q: What could governments and other stakeholders do to improve career advice for students in Africa?

Governments and other stakeholders should enact relevant policies that guide and inform the work



of career counselors. This would include policies around Education Tourism with incentives provided to African students interested in studying in other African countries. That way we shall be able to achieve the goal of being a light unto the career paths of students in Africa.

Q: What advice do you have for other youth in Africa?

A modern and prosperous Africa will be anchored on the firm foundation of Africa's youth. African unity and grand plans such as AfCFTA (the African Continental Free Trade Area) will need to be catalyzed by today's youth. My advice to the youth is to rise up and seize the opportunities that Africa has to offer and become themselves the change that they want to see in Africa.

Q: Looking back, is there something you would do differently in your career?

I would have put more emphasis on doing a stakeholder mapping and building networks that influence policy makers. I would also have spent more time in the cooperate world to learn how great teams are built and managed. I basically started The Student Hub straight from the University with little experience in running a company. We have been successful, but there was a lot to learn!

Q: Finally, could you please share a personal anecdote about yourself?

I am a dreamer! I have a book where I write my dreams. Even random thoughts make it to my book of dreams.





Selection of Essays from IICBA's Blog and Other Sources

This section consists of short essays from IICBA's blog and other sources. IICBA's Blog features essays by IICBA staff as well as guest essays from policy makers, researchers, teachers, and other education stakeholders. Many essays are about teacher policies and professional development (pre- and in-service), but other essays related to the education system and how to improve both schooling and learning are also welcome. Essays may focus on any education level, from preschools to primary and secondary education, TVET, and higher education. If you would like to contribute an essay for IICBA's blog or this Magazine, please write an email with your submission (maximum 1,200 words) to info.iicba@unesco.org.

World Teachers Day Remarks

By Dr Dennis Sinyolo, Regional Director, Education International Africa Region

Delivered during the 2023 regional commemoration held at the KIX Continental Research Symposium in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



Thank you director of ceremonies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Happy World Teachers Day!

I am speaking on behalf of African educators, who are part of the 32.5 million strong membership of Education International, the global union of teachers and education workers with a presence in 178 countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you can read, thank a teacher. None of you would be in this symposium without teachers. Teachers transform education and lives. They impact communities and inspire children and young people to learn, to protect the planet, to solve societal problems, to adapt to new situations, to create and innovate.

Despite their importance, teachers are often undervalued, underpaid, underestimated and undermined. Too much control undermines teaching as a profession by taking away the autonomy and freedom of educators to teach and carry out research without interference.

This being a research symposium, I reiterate what I have said before, 'speaking without evidence is a mere expression of an opinion, and an opinion is not necessarily a fact'. Let us, therefore, use

evidence to inform and influence education policy. Furthermore, let us empower our teachers to carry out research, including action research.

Dear friends, poor salaries and working conditions have impaled the dignity of the African teacher. We welcome the recommendations of the UN's High Level Panel on Teachers, released during the UN General Assembly two weeks ago. The recommendations call on governments to address the global teacher shortage and to restore the dignity of the teaching profession by providing long-term funding for well-qualified and well-supported teachers.

Ladies and gentlemen, we also welcome the decision by the African Union (AU) to designate 2024 the year of education. We therefore urge the AU to take bold steps to rebuild and transform education in Africa. We specifically urge the African Union, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW) to convene a high level summit on education financing. Such a conference would be a game changer as it would invite African governments to pledge to increase domestic investment in education and teachers, and partners to increase development aid. We also urge the African Union to convene a high level summit on teachers in which governments would be invited to make concrete commitments to close the teacher gap, improve the quality, status and working conditions of teachers. Education International would be happy to co-organize such a conference with the African Union, UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF and other interested agencies.

Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot lose the momentum to revitalize the teaching profession as envisioned in the first strategic objective of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA).

I would, therefore, like to propose a **5-Point Plan** for revitalizing the teaching profession in Africa.

In this plan, we call upon African governments to:

1. **Train and recruit enough qualified teachers.** Every student has the right to a highly trained, professionally qualified, supported and motivated teacher.
2. **Trust and respect teachers** by giving them the professional autonomy and freedom they need to teach creatively, collaborate and carry out research.
3. **Make teaching an attractive and first choice profession** by ensuring decent salaries and working conditions of teachers.
4. **Involve teachers in genuine and institutionalised social and policy dialogue** through their unions.
5. **Invest in education and teachers** by meeting the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks of allocating at least 20% of the national budget or at least 6% of GDP to education.

Dear friends, through the ongoing Go Public! Fund Education campaign, EI will continue to press on African governments to provide quality public education for all. A quality education delivered by highly trained, professionally qualified, trusted, valued, supported and motivated teachers.

Ladies and gentlemen, money put into education and teachers is not an expense, but an investment. An investment in children and young people; an investment in our future; and an investment in the Africa we want.

As we celebrate our educators, let us remember that teachers' working conditions are children's learning conditions.

Dear friends, take a moment to thank and celebrate our teachers.

We are stronger together!



Inclusive Education: Reaching Children with Disabilities in Africa

Natalia Amelina, Florence Migeon, Justine Sass, Tao Zhan, and Quentin Wodon

Natalia Amelina is Chief of Unit for Teacher Professional Development and Networking at UNESCO IITE. Florence Migeon is Team Lead on Inclusive Education in the Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality at UNESCO. Justine Sass is Chief of the Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality at UNESCO. Tao Zhan is Director of UNESCO IITE. Quentin Wodon is Director of UNESCO IICBA.



Photo Credit: Dietmar Temps/Shutterstock.com

December 3 is the [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#). Children with disabilities continue to have different educational opportunities as other children, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where many countries struggle to ensure quality education for all. UNESCO is committed to inclusive education and is organizing two webinars today on this topic. The first on disability inclusion and gender equality in education is organized by UNESCO HQ together with Plan International. The second on digital and other technologies for inclusion is organized by UNESCO IITE and UNESCO IICBA. We will share highlights from those webinars together with findings from on-going research in a subsequent blog.

A study co-authored by one of us, [The Challenge of Inclusive Education in Africa](#), suggests that children with disabilities are at a disadvantage for enrolling and completing school. They also tend to learn less while in school. Based on census data for 11 countries, the study showed that primary school completion rates were 10 percentage

points lower for girls with disabilities than for girls without disabilities. For boys, the disability gap in primary completion rates was 13 points. Gaps were also large for secondary education completion and children with disabilities were much more likely to never enroll in school at all. Even when children with disabilities manage to remain in school, they perform on average less well on mathematics and reading tests such as PASEC in Francophone Africa. Other studies have found qualitatively similar results (see for example the global [factsheet from UNICEF](#), the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report on [Inclusion and Education: All means All](#), and UNESCO's 2023 report [Ready to Learn and Thrive: School Health and Nutrition around the World](#)).

Multiple factors lead to disability gaps in education. The study for Africa mentioned above suggests that according to teachers, lack of adequate infrastructure for children with disabilities is a major issue. But lack of training is also an issue. PASEC data suggests that among a dozen types of in-service training, training on inclusive education is the least provided. Countries need much stronger inclusive pre- and in-service teacher education programs for education systems to become more inclusive.

What can be done? We must recognize that experiences of discrimination and exclusion in education are due to intersections of various characteristics and identities. These include ability, poverty, gender, class, race, ethnicity, caste, language, migration or displacement status, HIV status, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

As will be discussed in the [Disability inclusion and gender equality in education](#) webinar, the intersection of gender with disability can act as a magnifier, resulting in further education deprivation. It is fundamental to have an intentional focus on inclusion in education which tackles the root causes of exclusion, including inequality in the distribution of resources and power and the social and gender norms that perpetuate marginalization.

The inclusion of learners with disabilities in education demands going beyond access to schooling and adequate infrastructure. It requires assuring their participation, learning, progression, and attainment; providing accessible learning materials and resources; creating safe, friendly, and accessible environments; ensuring teachers and other school staff are adequately trained and supported; and working with schools and communities to tackle bullying, stigma, and discrimination.

Some interventions may also be specific to each type of disability. Consider the case of visual impairment, one of the most common disabilities for children whose [prevalence](#) is rapidly growing. Based on census data from 21 countries, A [study](#) by EYelliance and the World Bank found that children with visual impairment are five to seven percentage points less likely to ever enroll in school, complete their primary education, and be literate than children without disabilities. They may also perform less well on assessments. Simply screening children for visual impairment and providing eyeglasses to those who need them could make a major difference, as shown for example in [China](#). Unfortunately, the coverage of school eye health programs is extremely low in Africa. UNESCO IICBA and EYelliance are finalizing a new study providing a cost-benefit analysis of these programs to encourage scale-up. Preliminary results suggest high benefit to cost ratios.

Strengthening Ministries' capacities and skills to improve planning and management processes and enhance partnerships towards more inclusive education systems is also essential. Ministries of Education representatives from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe benefited

from UNESCO support in the use of the [UNESCO tool](#) on welcoming learners with disabilities in quality learning environments. The tool presents 10 key areas where actions can be taken to make education systems more inclusive. To promote knowledge sharing in the region, UNESCO is also developing an Online Platform for Inclusive Education Systems Thinking in partnership with the University of South Africa.

Finally, the role of ICT in improving educational opportunities for children with disabilities is also important. UNESCO IITE has an active work program in this area, including the provision of [online training for teachers in Africa](#). Technology has considerable but also significantly unused potential to support inclusive education. In relation to the universal design for learning, it supports a focus on inclusive means to present information, express knowledge, and engage in learning and communication. Assistive devices help persons with disabilities overcome major barriers which hinder their full and beneficial participation in education. IITE supports the provision of access to up-to-date technologies and innovative tools for disabled people through teacher professional development, dissemination of guidelines and policy dialogue, including through its project on "Integrating Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovations to Strengthen Inclusion and Equity of Education in Africa" in partnership with the Chengdu Culture and Tourism Development Group LLC in China. The project promotes the use of AI and digital innovations in Rwanda and Mauritius. Online training courses, collections of best practices, recommendations, and forums for teachers are available at IITE's [E-Library for teachers](#).

As noted by Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, in her [message](#) for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities this year, *"building a fairer, more sustainable world does not mean creating societies where everyone is the same. It means building a world where everyone has their place. In these efforts, accessibility and inclusion are key. This is UNESCO's message on this International Day – and every day."*

Teachers and Head-teachers Continuous Professional Development in Sub- Saharan Africa

Astérie Nyirahabimana and Phumzile Magagula

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Photo Credit: KIX Africa 19

Across sub-Saharan Africa, countries are working to ensure quality in their education systems, measured by the level of achievement in students' learning outcomes. Quality of education hinges on numerous factors, with teachers and school leaders emerging as the most important change agents. While teachers play a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes, many lack the necessary training to ensure effective learning among children; hence, there is an urgent need to prioritize teacher professional development and proficient school leadership. Research clearly emphasizes the impact of teacher professional development on enhancing teaching and learning, while effective school leadership significantly contributes to elevating teachers' professional growth at the institutional level (Hasha & Wadesango, 2020; Taylor et al., 2017; Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019; Glewwe et al., 2011).

The recent GPE KIX Africa 19 and KIX Africa 21 [2nd Continental Symposium](#), held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from October 3rd to 5th, 2023, showcased methods and strategies for generating, analyzing, and utilizing education systems data to promote resilient, inclusive, and high-performing education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. The symposium brought together more than 280 education stakeholders from 40 African countries and featured more than 90 presentations on topics such as good practices in data production and analysis on teachers and students; education management information systems (EMIS) strengthening; and inclusive and equitable data collection methods in marginalized populations.

We both participated in the symposium as researchers, presenters, and rapporteurs. We are currently involved in teacher professional development in Rwanda and education sector coordination through the federal government of Eswatini. Participants of the symposium recognized the indispensable nature of professional standards, competencies, and development opportunities for teachers and school leaders in our own countries and across Sub-Saharan Africa. Coinciding with World Teachers' Day, the symposium highlighted recent African-led research and innovative experiences from Africa to enhance professional standards, teacher education, and working conditions for educators.

As the education landscape in sub-Saharan Africa undergoes rapid changes, school leaders are tasked with creating supportive teaching and learning environments and investing in quality professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders from their induction periods onwards. Continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and headteachers over their careers remains crucial, leveraging experience and reflective learning to enhance knowledge and skills. A school, in essence, functions as a learning community where leadership norms foster continuous learning, providing an environment conducive to the growth of both new and experienced teachers ([VVOB Rwanda, 2023](#)).

Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of teachers' professional development on student performance and teaching practices. Effective CPD not only motivates educators to remain in their roles but also contributes to an overall positive school culture and continuous improvement (Uworwabayeho, A. et al., 2020). For CPD to be effective, it must engage and motivate educators, fostering a growth mindset that encourages the ongoing development of knowledge and skills (Germuth, 2018).

Examples from Rwanda evidence the feasibility of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and school leaders. For years, the provision of CPD for Rwandan educators has been a collaborative effort by government, academic, and multinational organizations such as VVOB – *education for development* in partnership with the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB), the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESIA), and the University of Rwanda College of Education (UR-CE). The interventions in (head) teachers CPD have been prefaced by [the national CPD framework](#) establishment.

These CPD programmes utilize the model of [shared leadership](#): They collectively target school leaders with a Diploma course (CPD Diploma in Effective School Leadership); educational actors (school-based mentors) who also play a leadership role in the school; and sector and district officials who play a role in supporting school leaders (CPD Certificate in Educational Mentorship and Coaching). [These programmes](#) aim to improve the skills and competencies of educational leaders

in schools and across different levels in the education system, with the objective to improve the [quality of teaching](#), through addressing repetition, drop-out and equity gaps in student learning outcomes. These CPD programmes have been delivered in a face-to-face or in-person modality; but to reduce the cost of traditional in-person learning, an innovative e-learning component (blended delivery modality of the CPD programmes) is being implemented.

In Eswatini, CPD is connected to data strengthening and management at the school level. It entails the training of school principals by the EMIS department of the Ministry of Education and Training on the new PIN-driven system called DHIS2 to ensure real time data capturing. This training is also available to one focal teacher per school. There is also the In-service Education and Training (INSET) which aims at training principals and teachers on curriculum implementation, financial management, human resources, and instructional management. INSET mainly trains teachers on curriculum, content, and pedagogical mastery. Essentially, all those in management are empowered by INSET in different ways as per their need. Notably, these interventions are available to head teachers and teachers who are already in the field.

The Guidance and Counseling Department in the Ministry enhances the capacity of teachers to ensure safe and secure learning environments through the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Framework. This framework covers life skills including psychosocial support, mental health, gender-based violence, etc., and targets both head teachers and teachers. This department in collaboration with INSET also trains newly appointed school principals on school development plans in line with the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Framework.

There are some challenges regarding CPD though, such as the lack of resources, prioritization, and utilization of data for the improvement of programmes. Data collection and management is worthless if data are not disseminated timeously for policy makers to use while still relevant and current. There is also a paucity of qualified data analysts who can break down data to a clear form that is ready for policy makers to understand

and use. Most policy makers are not specialist researchers and need assistance in interpreting data and comparing findings.

Time constraints and resource allocation also inhibit the full potential of CPD. Educators face challenges in finding time for professional development amidst their busy schedules, while inadequate resources, including funding and access to training programs, hinder the effective implementation of CPD. Addressing these challenges necessitates schools to offer flexible learning opportunities and prioritize investment in staff development.

African governments must prioritize increased funding for teachers' and headteachers' CPD, alongside establishing robust Teachers Information Management Systems (TIMS). This investment is crucial, as CPD is not just a professional obligation but a catalyst for educational excellence. Embracing CPD creates a culture of lifelong learning, innovation, and adaptability among educators, ensuring a more informed and resilient education system.

The researchers and policy actors at the 2nd Continental KIX Symposium also realized that CPD cannot be improved at the national level without greater collaboration between governments, school leaders, teachers, and researchers. These symposium participants recognized the necessity of establishing forums at various administrative levels to share data on best practices, challenges, and strategies concerning teachers' and headteachers' CPD, ultimately improving education quality. In sub-Saharan Africa, where dynamic educational reforms and innovations are underway, data must play a central role in informing and driving these initiatives. Despite substantial research efforts, the effective utilization of research data by policymakers and implementers remains inadequate due to insufficient data management systems in many African countries. Enhancing data production, analysis, and utilization is a priority to fortify resilient, inclusive, and high-performing education systems in the region.

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Ending violence in school and promoting mental health: Learning from Africa

Delia Mamon, Dipak Naker and Quentin Wodon

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Photo Credit: GPE/Rodrig Mbock

November 2, was the [International Day against violence and bullying at school including cyberbullying](#). The theme this year was “No place for fear: Ending school violence for better mental health and learning.”

Violence in schools is a major issue [in Africa](#) as well as globally, and there is a strong connection between such violence, mental health, and learning outcomes.

In this blog, we highlight evidence on this interconnection and, more importantly, suggest what can be done to end violence in schools, improve mental health for both learners and teachers, and boost learning outcomes.

Violence in school negatively affects learning

Consider first the evidence of the harmful effects of violence in schools. Two years ago, an [investment case](#) to end violence in schools was published by the World Bank and the Safe to Learn Initiative (see also the action-oriented [summary](#)).

The argument was simple. For education to be transformative, learning is needed, yet less likely to happen if a child experiences fear or trauma

in school. Violence in schools affects learning negatively and leads some children to drop out of school.

In addition, being the victim of violence in school has a wide range of other negative effects, including for health (not sleeping well, headaches, injuries from corporal punishment, and poor mental health), engaging in risky behaviors (using drugs and alcohol or having sex at a younger age), and even considering suicide.

For virtually all education and health variables for which data were available in school health surveys, violence was associated with negative outcomes in a statistically significant way.

Individuals and societies are paying a heavy price as a result with an estimate of \$11 trillion in lost lifetime earnings globally (just including impacts on schooling and learning, not additional impacts on health, including mental health).

Cost-benefit analyses suggest that interventions to prevent violence in schools are a smart economic investment.

The benefits of investing in preventing violence in and through schools are likely to far outweigh the costs, and beyond the issue of violence in schools, the education system is in effect a great entry point to prevent violence more broadly.

Examples of good practices against school violence

So, what can be done to prevent violence in schools? The [Coalition for Good Schools](#) has published an [evidence review](#) (see also its [summary](#)). The report suggests that it is best to:

1. Implement multi-component and integrated interventions engaging a variety of stakeholders
2. Consider whole school approaches that address not only policies and practices, but also values
3. Promote group-based learning which can help in developing shared values while also tackling gender norms
4. Provide leadership opportunities for school staff and learners including through short practical courses
5. Adapt interventions to the school context (e.g., different types of violence require different strategies)
6. Adopt an iterative learning process, considering the “how” of interventions apart from the “what” and due attention to monitoring outcomes along the way.

Several interventions reviewed were implemented in Africa, especially anglophone countries. This includes the [Good School Toolkit](#), for which an [evaluation](#) suggests that the program reduced the risk of physical violence by teachers and school staff by 42%; halved the number of teachers who reported using physical violence against students; and improved students’ connectedness and sense of safety and belonging with their school.

Importantly, the cost of implementing many interventions can be low, as [simulations](#) illustrate.

From francophone Africa, a great experience is that of [Graines de Paix](#), a non-profit operating currently in [Benin](#) and [Côte d’Ivoire](#) that received the prestigious UNESCO-Hamdani Prize for Teacher Development in 2022. In Côte d’Ivoire, Graines de Paix worked with the Ministry of Education to develop the *Apprendre en Paix, Eduquer sans Violence* (Learning in peace, teaching without violence) program in 2016-2017.

The project aimed to upgrade teachers’ capacities to use more efficient classroom management techniques than violence-based authority, and improve classroom dynamics (see the findings from a [formative evaluation](#) of the program).

The program has now been remodeled and replicated in Benin since 2018. It now incorporates the move from passive to interactive

learning and includes a gender transformative lens and attention to extreme violence prevention.

In Côte d’Ivoire, the program has also been implemented in [Islamic schools](#) jointly with local teacher Imams and ministry officials.

More resources on ending school violence

These are just a few examples of promising interventions from Africa.

In terms of global guidance, UNESCO is providing various resources including:

- a [Q&A](#) on ending school violence for better mental health and learning
- resources on [safe learning environments](#)
- resources on [education, health, and well-being](#).

A number of UNESCO and other United Nations publications may also be useful, including:

- How school systems can improve health and well-being – [topic brief](#) on mental health
- [Five essential pillars](#) for promoting and protecting mental health and psychosocial well-being in schools and learning environments
- Behind the numbers: [Ending school violence and bullying](#)
- School violence: [Why gender matters](#) and how to measure school-related gender-based violence
- UN Women’s [Global Guidance](#) on school-related gender-based violence.

At UNESCO IICBA, we have been working for the last few years on a program to promote mental health and psychosocial support for teachers and learners.

You may in particular find useful a [study](#) assessing the psychosocial impact of Covid-19 on teachers, teacher educators, and learners and psychosocial support needs; and a [training guide](#) to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support for pre- and in-service teachers in Africa.

Also relevant is the recent launch of the African Union’s [Continental Strategy](#) on Education for Health and Well-being of Young People.

Empowering Education: The Transformative Role of Technology in Africa

Lawalley Cole

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Access to education in Africa has undergone substantial growth since the 1960s (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2023). Yet despite gains, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 57% of primary school-age children globally who lack access to education reside in this region. Today, around 97.5 million African children, from primary school age to secondary school age, do not attend school. The quality of education in Africa has also become a cause for concern, with the learning poverty rate (the inability to read and understand a simple text by age 10) for sub-Saharan Africa estimated at 86%. Addressing the education crisis in Africa requires a focus on at least three key areas: (1) increasing school attendance; (2) supporting students to complete their education; and (3) ensuring competency in essential education basics such as literacy and numeracy.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened existing vulnerabilities within African school systems. Until January 2021, schools in Africa experienced an average of 23 weeks of partial or complete closures due to the pandemic (Reimers, 2022). These prolonged closures resulted in massive

learning losses (Rogers, 2022). Projections suggest that by 2030, 78% of African children may still experience learning poverty (UNICEF, 2021). Limited access to learning resources during the pandemic, particularly for students at home, exacerbated declining academic achievement (Evans and Mendez Acosta, 2021).

Technology has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping the future of education in Africa. Internet usage has seen rapid growth, with the continent having 570 million internet users in 2022, more than double the number in 2015. Countries like Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, and Uganda have become hotspots for education innovation (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2023). Digital education offers a cost-effective approach to enhancing a country's performance on the SDGs without significant physical infrastructure investments (Van Manen et al., 2021). Mobile devices, widely accessible across Africa, are catalysts. Over 1.4 billion African subscribers utilize mobile phones for their children's educational benefit (Chebib, 2020).

The widespread availability of mobile devices and internet connectivity enables students in urban and remote areas to access diverse educational content, engage in interactive learning experiences, and connect with educators and peers globally. This inclusivity could bridge (to some extent) the gap between urban and rural communities and provide more equal educational opportunities for all African students. Digital education could leverage e-learning platforms and digital resources to offer personalized and flexible learning experiences, allowing students to study at their own pace. Furthermore, technology could also empower educators to create dynamic and interactive lessons, tailor instruction to

individual student needs, and provide real-time feedback, thus improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Yet despite the potential benefits, Africa still faces challenges from the digital divide. Many students need access to basic technological infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity, computers, and digital devices. This disparity exacerbates educational inequalities, as students from underserved communities face disadvantages in accessing digital learning resources and participating in online education. Addressing the digital divide necessitates collaborative efforts from governments, educational institutions, and private sector stakeholders. Investments in digital infrastructure, the affordability of devices, and expanding internet connectivity to rural and marginalized communities are essential for ensuring equitable access to technology-enhanced learning. By bridging the digital divide, Africa can promote equality in education.

In addition to expanding access, prioritizing digital literacy and skills development is vital for practical technology usage in education. Integrating digital literacy into the curriculum and training educators on leveraging technology for instruction is needed to prepare students for the digital age. Digital literacy can be understood as accessing, evaluating, and using digital resources effectively and safely. Fostering the development of digital skills, such as coding, data analysis, and digital communication, empowers students to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world and contribute to the digital economy.

Digital literacy can also be used to bridge the gender gap in education. Globally, over 129 million girls do not attend school due among others to poverty, gender-based violence, and child marriage (Van Manen et al., 2021). Additionally, many girls miss up to 50 days of schooling each year due to a lack of sanitary wear (Life Healthcare, 2021). Digital education provides opportunities for girls to study at home and overcome these obstacles to educational access.

Digital education enables personalized monitoring, allowing teachers to track student progress and tailor instruction to individual learning needs. Digital education also provides students access to subject matter experts online without qualified teachers in their immediate

environment. Innovations such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality can potentially transform the learning experience and create new opportunities for immersive and interactive education. These technological advancements can support the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, essential skills for the 21st century workforce. But for this to happen, we must build ecosystems that support technology-enhanced learning, including by investing in digital infrastructure, establishing partnerships with technology companies, and promoting innovative pedagogical approaches.

By leveraging technology, Africa can build an inclusive, dynamic, and forward-thinking education system. Technology holds tremendous potential to transform education in Africa by expanding access, improving quality, and fostering innovation. However, addressing the challenges of digital technology and connectivity requires the collective effort of governments, the private sector, and the general public. Governments must bridge the digital divide by prioritizing digital literacy and skills development. They must collaborate with stakeholders to overcome barriers such as unreliable electricity, limited connectivity, and affordability. The private sector also has a significant role in advancing education in Africa through technology. It can support innovation by developing and providing cost-effective solutions addressing African students' specific challenges. Collaboration between the private sector and governments is essential to leverage resources, expertise, and networks to implement effective digital education programs. Finally, the public, including civil society organizations and communities, must advocate for digital education initiatives. By raising awareness about the importance of digital literacy and skills, it can contribute to creating a demand for technology-enhanced learning. Communities can provide support and resources to ensure that students have access to digital technologies, even in remote areas.

In summary, the successful integration of technology in education in Africa requires the collaboration and cooperation of governments, the private sector, and the general public. By working together, Africa can build an inclusive and forward-thinking education system that prepares students for success in the digital economy.

Africa Youth Day: Celebrating Youths and Identifying Priorities for Investment

Prudence Ngwenya and Quentin Wodon

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Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

November 1 is Africa Youth Day, a day set aside every year to recognize youth as key agents for social change, economic growth, and sustainable development. Last year, His Excellency Musa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, launched the [“One Million Next Level \(1mNL\)”](#) initiative which aims to reach 300 million young people with opportunities in health and wellbeing, education, employment, entrepreneurship, and engagement (4Es+H). This remains the theme of the Day this year.

Youth are defined by the African Union as the population from 15 to 35 years of age. They account for over a third of the continent’s population and represent the future of Africa. The Africa Youth Day is an occasion to celebrate the contribution of youth on the continent and renew our commitment to invest in youth. To celebrate the Day, the Directorate for Women, Gender and Youth at the African Union Commission and the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa are jointly releasing interviews of extraordinary youth and an analysis of popular support and priorities for investments in youth.

Interviews with extraordinary youths

Six youths leading initiatives in service to others were interviewed to celebrate Africa Youth Day. [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 program, created a saving and loans groups, came up with a youth counselling program, and managed to create a safe learning space lab with eleven desktop computers, three laptops, and a forty-inch flat screens where youths learn computer literacy and other skills.

[Jocelyne Kirezi](#) from Rwanda works as a researcher for VVOB, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of education especially in Africa. She oversees designs and implements research projects related to school leadership, monitoring, and evaluating the effects and impact of VVOB’s programs. As she explains, investing in school leadership in Africa is crucial because it directly impacts the quality of education and, consequently, the future of the continent. Effective school leadership ensures that teachers are well-supported, resources are utilized 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, an organization with an outstanding record in working with the extreme poor and giving them voice. She mentioned the story of a woman she met. Her husband had abandoned her and she was in a situation of great isolation together with her four children. As there was no toilet in their one-room house, the children had to throw waste in the gutter, which led to conflict with the neighbors. Olga went to see the neighborhood chief. They realized that two other families were in the same situation. In the end, the whole neighborhood got together to find a solution. One neighbor donated a plot for building a new toilet, others each donated a few dollars. Toilets were dug. The woman she had met found her smile again. Together they had found a solution and brought the neighborhood together in solidarity.

[Ousseynou Gueye](#) founded Polaris Asso, a nonprofit in Senegal. Thanks to awareness campaigns and professional training deployed in the 14 regions of the country, Polaris managed to support more than 15,000 young girls and women in acquiring digital skills. On the advocacy front, they have addressed cyberbullying, including with a white paper presented to government authorities. With the aim of combating online violence, they opened a center dedicated to listening to and supporting victims of violence. They are also working to awaken eco-citizenship among young people, in particular by promoting responsible digital practices. On the eve of the presidential elections, they launched a citizen platform dedicated to the fight against disinformation, training media literacy experts and fact-checkers, and ensuring that democratic discourse is based on credible and authentic data.

[Rossette Kyakyo](#) founded Slum Youth Rehabilitation and Development Organization (SYRADO) in Kampala, Uganda. SYRADO works with youth in slum communities to improve their livelihood. 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 Rossette paid for her studies herself since high school. There were divine helpers, as she said, that helped her along the way. So she wanted to do the same for others. Most youth in slums live in absolute poverty not because of their own making but because of unfortunate circumstances. Rossette says she knew the only way they could be fully empowered would be equipping them with employable skills. She says it was a calling and her life's purpose is now to support slum youth to reach their full potential.

[Zigwai Tagwai](#) promotes active citizenship in governance processes in Nigeria. She is currently one of 41 Nigerian youths participating in a 10-weeks Legislative Internship Programme implemented by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre with support from the European Union for young Nigerians who wish to gain knowledge of legislative practices and processes at the National Assembly. The internship is helping her build her understanding of the functions and operations of the Nigerian Legislature. She is also working on a community development project building capacity of stakeholders (traditional leaders, clergy, representatives of youth associations, unions, educational institutions, public officials, and civil society organizations) for peace building strategies and citizens participation in budget formulation and implementation within her local government area, Jema'a, in Kaduna state, Nigeria.

Popular support and priorities for investments in youth

Many other youths could have been interviewed, but these sixth change makers illustrate the massive potential of youths to transform Africa. Each of them, in their own way, is making a real difference. Investing in youths is one of the best investments countries can make. We are therefore also releasing for Africa Youth Day an analysis of data from the Afrobarometer to measure levels of popular support for investing in youth, priority interventions to do so, and perceptions of government performance as well as changes in performance over time. [Estimates](#) are provided for Africa as a whole, by sub-region, and at the level of individual counties. Comparisons are made by gender and by age group (i.e., youth versus older individuals). The analysis is based on the last two survey waves from the Afrobarometer.

A few key findings stand out. Respondents to the surveys are asked if they would be willing to pay additional taxes to invest in youth. More than half state that they would be willing to do so. In terms of priorities for investment, employment (especially job creation) tends to come first, followed by education. The level of priority granted to social services tends to be lower. Very few individuals state that Governments should not spend. Ratings of government performance in a range of sectors tend to be low, although they are higher for basic services than for issues related to jobs and the economy. There is a decline in recent years in the perceived performance of governments, with the share of individuals rating performance well lower in the last survey.

To conclude, Africa has the youngest population in the world with over 420 million people between the ages of 15 to 35 years. There is probably no more important task today than investing in youth. Ensuring that children and youth are well educated and healthy and have opportunities for employment when reaching adulthood is a top priority. The African Union has developed policies and programs at the continental level to steer the continent towards the benefits from the demographic dividend. Many youths are already making a difference, as the stories shared earlier illustrate. We need to support them.



African Union & AFTRA: A Partnership for Teachers in Africa

Steve Nwokeocha

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PHOTO: AU Commissioner, Professor Mohamed Belhocine (second from left) and AFTRA President, Professor Josiah Ajiboye (third from right) with their teams during the AFTRA courtesy visit to the Commissioner on November 13, 2023.

The African Union is the mother organisation to all indigenous associations in Africa established to realise Africa's dream of being a prosperous, united, and globally competitive region of the world. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the [African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa \(CESA\)](#), and the [Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want](#), all provided for the formation of a coalition of stakeholders to work towards the attainment of the SDGs, CESA and Agenda 2063 targets. The Africa Union has latched onto this provision to identify and work with critical international associations in Africa. One of these is the [Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities \(AFTRA\)](#). This is the intergovernmental umbrella body of the Ministries of Education and national agencies which have the statutory mandate of regulating teaching as a profession in Africa.

The [story of AFTRA](#) began on October 12, 2010, when it was inaugurated in Abuja, Nigeria as an initiative of the Ministers of Education in Africa.

That initiative was led by Nigeria's Federal Minister of Education at the time, Professor Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufa'i and South Africa's Minister of Basic Education, Hon. Mrs. Angela Motshekga, MP. Sixteen countries participated in the inauguration. Thirteen years down the line, AFTRA has become Africa's leading organisation on matters related to the regulation of teaching. Based on the laws of their respective countries, the Ministries and national agencies that are members of AFTRA have the mandate to set standards for individuals who wish to enter into the teaching profession. They also register and license teachers and school leaders and they regulate teacher continuous professional development. AFTRA's members also advise authorities in higher education regarding teacher education curricula. They accredit pre-service teacher education and induct newly qualified teachers into the profession. Finally, they also discipline teachers on matters of professional misconduct, suspending or withdrawing teaching licenses as needed.

The role of AFTRA in the critical aspects of teacher professionalism made it to be one of the African Union's closest allies in the repositioning of education in Africa. Every year since AFTRA's inception, the African Union takes a centre stage in participating in the AFTRA Ministerial Session, which is the annual summit of the African Ministers of Education within AFTRA. The African Union has also used the occasion of the AFTRA Conference to organise a physical meeting of the [Teacher Development Cluster](#) under the Continental Education Strategy for Africa, and more recently to participate in a half day training event organized at the annual conference by

UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Development in Africa (IICBA). AFTRA is the Co-Chair of the Teacher Development Cluster together with Education International, with UNESCO IICBA managing the secretariat of the cluster.

On policy, AFTRA has led the African Union's development of the core frameworks for the regulation of teaching in the continent. The first is the [Continental Framework of Standards and Competences for the Teaching Profession](#) (2019) which was adapted from the UNESCO/Education International Global Framework of Teaching Standards (2019). The second is the [Continental Teacher Qualification Framework](#) (2019) which defines who a teacher is and what level and quality of training and competences are required for professional registration and licensing. The framework also suggests a career path and stages for teachers and school leaders and the requirements of each career stage. The third is the [Continental Guidelines for the Teaching Profession](#) which discusses measures an African Union member state should take to professionalise its teaching force. For instance, it encourages countries to enact a law that legalises teaching as a profession so that only adequately trained and registered teachers can engage in teaching; it provides for the establishment of a national teaching council to serve as the apex national body to regulate teaching; it recommends that member states have their Ministries of Education become member of AFTRA and the world body of the teaching councils (the International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authorities); etc. The Guidelines also include a toolkit containing the laws, tools, and instruments for the regulation of teaching extracted from selected countries that are currently regulating the profession.

Other core frameworks for teachers that benefitted from AFTRA's contributions include the African Union Teacher Mobility Protocol and, as it pertains to teachers, the Free Trade Agreement. AFTRA is also serving on the Advisory Board of the African Union Continental Qualifications Framework, and a host of other areas of joint operation. As an example of recent analytical work informed by the African Union frameworks and instruments, AFTRA together with UNESCO IICBA published for World Teachers' Day in October

2023 an analysis of [professional standards and competencies for teachers in West Africa](#), with in-depth situational analyses for [Sierra Leone](#) and [The Gambia](#). As another initiative with UNESCO IICBA that builds on the African Union frameworks, the Journal of Teaching and Learning in Africa will be relaunched in early 2024 with at least two issues per year and quality contributions.

On November 13, 2023, the leadership of AFTRA, led by its President, Professor Josiah Ajiboye, who is also the Registrar/Chief Executive of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, paid a courtesy visit to the African Union Commissioner of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI), Professor Mohamed Belhocine, in his office at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The visit was to congratulate the new Commissioner on his appointment and to pledge continuing support and collaboration with the African Union. The Commissioner assured that it will use its platforms to project AFTRA's ideals and mandates and directed the Head of Education Division, Mrs. Sophia Ashipala to meet with AFTRA to come up with a new blueprint to drive the collaboration with AFTRA.

Beyond Africa, AFTRA speaks for the teaching profession in Africa as a member of the [International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authorities](#) (IFTRA) which is the coalition of the agencies regulating teaching in the world. In this capacity, AFTRA is the Africa regional branch of IFTRA. The membership of IFTRA has helped AFTRA to exchange best practices with other parts of the world. This has impacted positively in the regulation of teaching in Africa and enabled teachers registered and licensed in Africa to be on par with their peers in other parts of the world. In Africa, AFTRA will hold its next annual conference in Zambia, 20-25 May 2024. If you are able to join us, we would love to welcome you. Please register via the [AFTRA website](#).

Strengthening the Teaching Profession: Lessons from Sierra Leone

Conrad Sackey and Quentin Wodon

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Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

[World Teachers' Day](#) was observed last week on October 5. This is a Day to celebrate the essential contributions that teachers make to our children, communities, and society, but also a time to take stock of where we stand on ensuring that we attract the best into the teaching profession. Last week we held in Freetown a validation workshop for a [new study](#) by [UNESCO IICBA](#) on professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders. The study was led by Steve Nwokeocha and Aminata Sessay.

As in much of sub-Saharan Africa, children in Sierra Leone are not learning enough in school and many drop out prematurely. Improving teaching in the classroom and the quality of the school leadership, including through professional standards and competencies, is the key to improving learning. The IICBA study focuses on three areas: (1) Sierra Leone's framework of professional standards and competencies; (2) teacher education; and (3) the working conditions of teachers. The analysis relies on a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach including two online surveys, key informant interviews, and brainstorming sessions. Lessons for Sierra Leone are likely to be relevant for other countries as well.

What did we find? On professional standards and competencies, Sierra Leone has made major progress in the last five years with the establishment of the [Teacher Service Commission](#) (TSC). The country now has a standards and competencies aligned with the recommendations of the African Union. The country may be the first in Africa to have signed an [agreement](#) with its [teacher union](#) to change the salary structure and grade levels of teachers to match the career stages prescribed by the African Union Commission. As for teachers and school leaders, a majority seem to be aware of the new standards and in favor of them.

On teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, many issues continue to undermine quality. The regulatory and quality assurance frameworks for pre-service teacher education is weak and the Teacher Certificate remains the dominant qualification. At least 40 percent of teachers are considered "untrained and unqualified" – they require a path to acquire a degree and minimum qualifications. Even when teachers and school leaders feel they received adequate pre-service education, retraining is likely needed in many areas. Similar issues affect continuous professional development (CPD). Government programs (and budgets) are insufficient to address CPD concerns, with only a minority of teachers and school leaders trained each year. Another issue is the multiplicity of (donor) agencies training teachers, often with their own preferences in terms of what training should emphasize, without sufficient coordination. A positive development is a National School Leadership Program being developed

by TSC, although it could be better aligned with the African continental standards, domains, and competencies of school leadership.

On working conditions for teachers, the recent Collective Agreement signed between TSC and the Teacher Union is a major step forward. The [Presidential Teacher Awards](#) instituted in 2021 to recognize some of the Best Teachers at the district and national levels is also a great initiative. Another positive development is the role of the Teaching Service Trade Group Negotiating Council in promoting harmony in labor relations between employers and union representatives. At the same time, issues remain. Teacher performance evaluations still follow a traditional pattern, not considering CPD credits for example. Overall, teachers and school leaders rate their social status and job satisfaction as average only, rather than good.

As we write this blog, additional positive developments are worth emphasizing. After receiving the initial report of UNESCO IICBA's Situational Analysis, the Ministry has been working hard to address identified gaps. Last week, a Cabinet Paper on Recommendations, Guidelines, and Procedures for a Credit Mapping Framework that Allocates Appropriate Credits to Teachers for Approved In-Service Training Courses was approved by the Cabinet. In addition,

a High-Level Policy Consultation on Continuous Professional Development will be developed into a Cabinet Paper to be jointly presented by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education. This comprehensive CPD framework for teachers in Sierra Leone will be based on quality reforms of key entities, providing enhanced alignment, linkages, accountability, and coordination in the governance of teacher professional development to make pathways for advancement transparent and equitably available to all teachers.

The [IICBA study](#) has been an important milestone on the path to professionalizing teaching and school leadership in Sierra Leone and beyond. The analysis was conducted within the framework of the African Union's [Continental Education Strategy for Africa](#) (CESA 2016-2025) and [Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want](#). Sierra Leone is one of several countries selected for analysis and intervention by the Shanghai-FIT Project which covers Africa and the Asia-Pacific to professionalize teaching in both regions and make progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Much has been achieved in Sierra Leone, but much remains to be done to support teachers and school leaders as best way we can. This matters as teachers' contribution to our children, communities, and societies is both fundamental and foundational.



Quality Education for All: The Poor as Our Teachers?

Bruno Dabout and Quentin Wodon

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INTERNATIONAL
DAY **for the**
ERADICATION
of POVERTY
17 OCTOBER



Photo Credit: United Nations

“Learning to listen to those in extreme poverty requires great humility. They have so much to tell us, much more than we imagine.” This quote is from an [interview](#) by Father Joseph Wresinski with Joseph Sané in Dakar, Senegal, on November 20, 1987. A month earlier, on October 17, Wresinski presided over a gathering of 100,000 people from all backgrounds and continents on the Human Rights Plaza in Paris where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed. A [commemorative stone](#) was unveiled, stating: *“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”*

A Catholic priest, Wresinski founded the [International Movement ATD Fourth World](#) as a non-confessional, inter-denominational non-governmental organization that works today in three dozen countries. He passed away a few months after the October 17 gathering, but the date was later adopted by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. It is celebrated to promote understanding and dialogue between people in poverty and wider society. The [theme for the Day](#) this year is Decent Work and Social Protection: Putting dignity in practice for all.

One of the worst forms of extreme poverty today remains the lack of quality education for children who live in households marked by extreme poverty. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, we are not talking here of “learning poverty”, defined as whether a child aged 10 is able to read and understand a simple text. Most children in Africa are unfortunately learning poor according to available estimates. But some children are in a much worse situation than others. Most children in extreme poverty are not even able to go to school. The data suggest that [250 million children](#) today are out of school globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of children out of school increased by 12 million between 2015 and 2021. The consequences are severe, ranging from lower expected earnings in adulthood to higher health risks, and for adolescent girls, being married as children and having children too early are additional risks.

Beyond a lack of income, Wresinski understood that the extreme poor suffer from deep-seated forms of social exclusion, and this is where there is a difference between poverty and extreme poverty: *“Poverty, material deprivation, oppression inflicted by those who have power are hardtop bear. What is truly insufferable, however, is being despised and continuously reminded that one is an inferior*

and utterly useless being.... A person in misery suffers an unbearable situation, being considered negligible or, worse, a harmful being who should never have been born, while deep inside he still knows he is a person." Children not going to school today face a much higher risk of being in extreme poverty in adulthood, and of being seen as a burden by their community and society instead of an asset.

The subtitle for this blog is "the poor as our teachers." What does this mean? One of Wresinski's deepest convictions was that the very poor could be our teachers. At a foundational level, he argued that *"those living in poverty are the very source of all human ideals. It is through injustice that humanity discovered justice; through hate, love; through contempt, dignity; through tyranny, the equality of all human beings."* At a practical level as well, he argued that we could and should learn from the poor about what extreme poverty means and how to end it, including in matters related to quality education for all.

To learn from the very poor about practical ways to end extreme poverty, Wresinski's organization piloted the "[merging of knowledge](#)" approach. As noted on the webpage describing the approach, *"this inclusive technique helps people facing extreme poverty and social exclusion dialogue with policy makers, business leaders, social workers, and teachers. The goal ... is to overcome differences in speaking and thinking.... [and] create spaces where people in poverty can openly share their thoughts. Most importantly, they do this*

as equals with researchers. This breaks down the sort of unequal relationships between researchers and subjects that traditionally define academic work." ATD Fourth World has produced [guidance on the approach](#). It has been used in a wide variety of settings, including the [Hidden Dimensions of Poverty](#) research project with the University of Oxford, a training program with the [Belgian Child Protection Agency](#), and a research project on [Education for All in Tanzania](#).

For those interested in this approach, in observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, [UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations](#) (MOST) is organizing a [roundtable](#) on the Merging of Knowledge approach (you can register to [participate online](#)). A panel will bring together key stakeholders, including academia, ATD Fourth World members, and policymakers. Despite recognition from prestigious universities, the Merging of Knowledge approach still faces challenges in being integrating ex-ante into the development of poverty reduction policies. Merely consulting with excluded communities is insufficient; genuine participation from the outset of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation is needed. As the poor can teach us, inclusive engagement is essential for policies to be inclusive and have a better chance of having a positive impact on the lives of people in extreme poverty. This is also true in matters of education.

Educating Girls and Ending Child Marriage and Early Childbearing: A Priority for Nigeria

Claris Ujam and Quentin Wodon

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Photo Credit: Center for Girl-Child Education

Mrs. S. was married as a child, became pregnant, and was abandoned by her husband. She gave birth under very difficult circumstances, suffering from obstetric fistula. Her child suffered from palsy and died a few months after birth. Her story was told by Hon. Dr. Yusuf Sununu, the Minister of State for Education, who is a gynecologist, on October 11 at an event organized by the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria in Abuja to celebrate the [International Day of the Girl Child](#), whose theme this year was “Our Time is Now – Our Right, Our Future.”

The event was co-sponsored by UNESCO IICBA and the World Bank’s AGILE project and attended by some 200 participants, including delegations of young girls and some boys from area schools. Also in attendance was a small delegation from Kaduna State where the [Center for Girls’ Education](#) has been implementing for a dozen years a safe space program to keep girls in schools and delay marriage and childbearing. For UNESCO IICBA, the

event followed on a national dialogue on gender and data organized in March 2023 under [KIX Africa 19](#), the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange Hub for anglophone Africa funded by the Global Partnership for Education and Canada’s International Development Research Center.

Parts of the event were celebratory. This included amazing dances by girls and a theater-like sketch (Dance Drama), both serious and funny, on how girls can suffer when marriage is forced on them by their parents, or they are not able to remain in schools. Parts of the event were also a stock-taking exercise to assess where Nigeria stands in its quest to educate all girls at least up to the senior secondary level and end both child marriage (entering into a formal or informal union before the age of 18) and early childbearing (having a first child before the age of 18). The State Minister of Education gave poignant remarks, including the story of Mrs. S. while UNESCO IICBA presented the results of analytical work that will result in a report on gender inequality in and through education in Nigeria as part of a broader Africa-wide program of work.

The report will make the case for why investments in girls are crucial for Nigeria’s development. Part of the analytical work to be featured in the report is already available in a series of [Knowledge Briefs](#) on IICBA’s website. The briefs document recent trends in girls’ educational attainment, as well as the prevalence of child marriage using the latest available Demographic and Health Surveys for 2013 and 2018 (see [Nigeria: Basic Profile of](#)

[Early Childbearing](#) and [Nigeria: Basic Profile of Child Marriage](#)). They demonstrate the very strong relationship between on the one hand girls' education and child marriage, and both the other hand child marriage and early childbearing (see [Nigeria: Girls' Education, Child Marriage, and Early Childbearing across States](#)). Basically, educating girls up to the senior secondary level is the best way to end child marriage, which would also drastically reduce early childbearing and maternal mortality.

Low educational attainment for girls and child marriage have negative impacts on a wide range of development outcomes not only for the girls themselves, but also their children, families, communities, and societies. Girls dropping out of school early are more likely to marry or have children early, before they may be physically and emotionally ready to become wives and mothers, as the story of Mrs. S. illustrates. This may affect their own health and may also affect that of their children. For example, children of mothers younger than 18 face higher risks of dying by age five and being malnourished (see [Nigeria: Girls' Education, Early Childbearing, and Child Health](#)). They may also do poorly in school. Other risks for girls and women associated with a lack of education include intimate partner violence and a lack of decision-making ability in the household.

Through lower expected earnings in adulthood and higher fertility over their lifetime, lack of education for girls leads to higher rates of poverty for households. This is due to both losses in incomes and higher basic needs from larger household sizes. Fundamentally, a lack of education disempowers women and girls in ways that deprive them of their basic rights.

At the level of countries, a lack of education for girls can lead to substantial losses in national wealth. Human capital wealth is the largest component of the changing wealth of nations, ahead of natural capital (such as oil, minerals, and land) and produced capital (such as factories or infrastructure). By reducing earnings, low educational attainment for girls leads to losses in human capital wealth and thereby in the assets base that enables countries to generate future income (see [Nigeria: Gender Inequality and National Wealth](#)).

Low educational attainment for girls is also associated with higher population growth given

its potential impact on fertility rates (see [Nigeria: Girls' Education, Child Marriage, and Fertility Rates](#)). This may prevent the transition that could generate the demographic dividend. Finally, low educational attainment for girls may lead to less inclusive policymaking and a lower emphasis on public investments in the social sectors, as well as higher risks of conflicts and violence. Overall, the message is clear: educating girls is not only the right thing to do. It also makes strategic sense for countries to fulfill their economic potential while also promoting peace and sustainable development.

What can be done to ensure that all girls complete their secondary education, could virtually end child marriage and would also drastically reduce early childbearing? The first step is to understand the local context that leads girls to drop out of school and get married as children (see the two-part Knowledge Brief on qualitative insights from Hausa communities in Niger and Nigeria on girls' education and child marriage: [Part 1-Parents](#) and [Part 2-Adolescent Girls](#)). Once the local context is understood, there are wonderful examples of successful programs to learn from, such as the program led by the Center for Girls' Education in Nigeria mentioned earlier (see [Nigeria: Pathways to Choice, A Program to Educate Girls and Delay Marriage](#)).

Although this cannot be discussed in detail in this blogpost, a key argument made by UNESCO IICBA at the event in Nigeria was that for investments in girls' education to succeed, special attention must be placed on empowering teachers for all learners to thrive. Lack of learning in schools is a major driver of girls dropping out, which increases the risk that they will be married and have children before the age of 18. To improve learning for boys and girls alike, improving teaching in general is key. But specific aspects related to gender also matter. In many countries, female teachers and school principals appear to improve learning, yet only a small share of teachers and principals are women. The same is likely true in Nigeria. Gender-responsive pedagogy is essential to improve educational outcomes, yet it is not widely practiced. Preventing gender-based violence in schools is also key. We will come back to these topics in this blog, but the event in Nigeria was a great opportunity to celebrate the Girl Child, while also taking stock of what remains to be done to give all girls the opportunities they deserve.

Insights for Researchers and Policy Makers from the 2nd KIX Research Symposium

Yvonne Mboya, Hundessa Sileshi Tafessee, and Quentin Wodon

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KIX stands for Knowledge and Innovation Exchange, a program that benefits from funding from the Global Partnership for Education and the International Development and Research Centre. The [Second KIX Continental Research Symposium](#) featured in this two-part blogpost was organized in Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire on October 4-6, 2023, by the KIX Africa 19 and 21 Hubs, both established in 2020. The Africa 19 Hub covers 18 English-speaking countries plus Mozambique. The Africa 21 Hub covers mostly francophone countries. Both Hubs collect, generate, exchange, and facilitate the effective use of data, knowledge, and innovation for education policy formulation and implementation in their respective GPE-eligible countries.

Countries are represented in the Hubs by focal points designated by their respective Ministries of Education, most of whom were at the symposium. Also present were many African researchers and staff from United Nations and other agencies as well as a wide range of civil society organizations. This provided a unique opportunity for discussions between the close to 300 researchers

and policymakers present. The event featured plenaries, panels, breakaway sessions, synthesis discussions, and poster presentations.

Participants hailed from over 40 African countries. The theme for the symposium was “Strengthening Data Generation and Analysis for Resilient, Inclusive, and Better Performing Education Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa.” This post summarizes a few of the recommendations made by participants. These recommendations are not new, but they are worth restating because they matter.

On data collection and accessibility, a coordinated approach to data collection and accessibility is crucial within and across countries. This applies to data generated by governments, researchers, and international organizations as well as civil society. By harmonizing data collection and ensuring consistency, accuracy, timeliness, and accessibility, policymakers can have reliable information for decision-making. Establishing interconnected data management systems matters as well to ensure seamless data generation and utilization. By connecting various sources of information, policymakers gain a holistic view of education and can allocate resources more efficiently. Finally, collecting more data on learners with disabilities and other marginalized learners is required to provide inclusive education services.

On collaboration, research, and innovation, fostering collaboration between universities and governments can help break down silos and ensure effective use of research findings. Ministries often overlook the relevance of

researchers in shaping policies, but together, they can drive innovation and improve education systems through sharing and using research findings. Allocating funds for research, including scholarships and grants, is also needed to encourage and support researchers in pursuing innovative and impactful studies. Involving school leadership in decision-making also matters to promote shared responsibility and collaborative approaches. By leveraging the expertise of school leaders, policymakers can learn from the grassroots level and design more consultative policy implementation strategies.

On inclusive and equitable education opportunities, exploring the effectiveness of a bilingual approach in teaching learners, particularly at the primary level, can lead to improved learning outcomes. By leveraging students' language skills, education can be more inclusive and effective. Increasing funding with a focus on rural and hard-to-reach areas, matters as well, including as incentives for teachers to work in those regions. By addressing inequalities, education systems can become a more equitable and inclusive.

Symposium participants also stressed the need for more regular and efficient communication and information sharing strategies. They emphasized that research findings must be clearly communicated to non-academic audiences, and that governments and researchers should collaborate and engage in dialogue throughout the research process. Closer collaboration between knowledge creators and decision makers can lead to more targeted, demand-driven research with practical, applicable findings.

Data were collected among participants through online surveys before and after the symposium. Without going into details here (briefs will be prepared summarizing the data), it is worth noting that in the post-event survey, 9 in 10 respondents stated that the symposium had exceeded their expectations (38% stated that the symposium more than met their expectations, and 50% stated that the event delivered much more than expected). All respondents felt that the presentations were either relevant or highly relevant in strengthening their knowledge towards the six KIX thematic areas (learning

assessment systems; improving teaching and learning; strengthening early childhood education; achieving gender equality in and through education; data management systems strengthening; and equity and inclusion).

Participants were asked whether the symposium helped them in specific areas. This seems to have been the case with the share of respondents responding in the affirmative as follow by area: Identification of new research and evidence (98% responded yes); Ideas gained on how to improve educational data (84%); Ideas gained to strengthen gender equality and inclusivity (76%); Identified new policy and practice options (78%); Strengthen knowledge and skills (78%); and New or stronger relationships built (94%).

In conclusion, the symposium appears to have offered valuable insights for both researchers and policymakers. The feedback shared by participants underscored the importance of timely data generation, collaboration among stakeholders, and data/evidence-driven decision making. These takeaways are not surprising, but they matter to strengthen our collective commitment to transforming knowledge into impactful action within sub-Saharan Africa's education systems.

IICBA Country Pages Provide Basic Information on Education Systems

Gabriel Mekbib, Kevine Uwingabiye, and Quentin Wodon

Kevine Uwingabiye and Gabriel Mekbib are both consultants with UNESCO IICBA. Quentin Wodon is Director of UNESCO IICBA.



As a service to our partners and readers, [IICBA's website](#) now includes country pages. The webpages provide a brief introduction to selected issues and research relevant to each country's education system and links to resources that may be useful to officials of Ministries of Education and other education stakeholders. A special focus is placed on thematic areas from the KIX (Knowledge and Innovation eXchange) initiative for which UNESCO IICBA manages the Secretariat of the KIX Africa 19 Hub. The goal is to update the webpages at least once a year.

The country webpages start with a review of basic data on educational outcomes including learning poverty, educational attainment, and the human capital index. The focus then shifts to information related to the thematic areas of focus of the KIX Africa 19 Hub, namely: (i) learning assessment (ii) early childhood education; (iii) teaching & learning (iv) data challenge; (v) gender equality; and (vi) equity and inclusion. The webpages also include links to country documents as well as a range of other resources and websites.

Consider the case of [Ethiopia](#) as an example. Like many other African countries, Ethiopia is facing a learning crisis with [90 percent](#) of 10-year olds considered learning poor, that is Ethiopia not able to read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10. According to the World Bank and UNESCO Institute of Statistics ([UIS data](#)), the [primary school completion rate](#) was at 69 percent in 2021 for boys and 65 percent for girls. The lower secondary completion rate is much lower, with girls likely to trail boys although recent data are not available from UIS. [Gross enrollment](#) in tertiary education was at 13 percent for men in 2018 versus 8 percent for women.

[The country pages also include information on country's Human Capital Index \(HC\) which combines health and education metrics to estimate the productivity of the next generation of workers.](#) For Ethiopia, the HCI shows that: (i) the probability that a child will survive past age five is 94 percent; (ii) the years of schooling that a child is expected to complete by age 18 is 7.8 years; (iii) the level of learning that a child is expected to acquire is 348 on a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 the lowest attainment); (iv) the learning-adjusted years of schooling that a child is expected to complete, a measure combining the two previous measures is 4.3 years; (v) the adult survival rate of 15-year olds surviving until age 60 is 79%; and finally (vi) the probability that a child will not be stunted in early childhood is 63 percent.

Based on those six variables, the expected productivity in adulthood of a child is estimated

in comparison to full productivity that could be expected with full education and health. The estimate is that a child born in Ethiopia today will reach only 38 percent of its potential. This is lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa region but higher than the average for low-income countries.

The country pages also offer information on one last statistic that may help make the case for the importance of investing in education for the country's development. A country's wealth mainly consists of three types of capital: (1) Produced capital comes from investments in assets such as factories, equipment, or infrastructure; (2) Natural capital consists of assets such as agricultural land and both renewable and nonrenewable natural resources; (3) Human capital is measured as the present value of the future earnings of the labor force, which in turn depends on the level of educational attainment of the labor force. The latest estimates from the [World Bank](#) suggest that human capital wealth in Ethiopia accounts for 69 percent of national wealth.

Apart from basic data, the webpages provide links to the literature at a global level and for each country on six KIX themes: (i) learning assessment systems (ii) early childhood education; (iii) teaching and learning (iv) the data challenge; (v) gender equality; and (vi) equity and inclusion. For each topic, a link is provided to the GPE-KIX Discussion paper written at the start of the initiative in 2019 and additional publications that could be useful for policy. By necessity, to keep the webpages short, only a few resources are mentioned, but additional resources can be accessed through digital repositories.

The webpages also include information on the countries' education system and policies. For Ethiopia, this includes among others the country's [Education Sector Development Programme](#) which covers the period from 2020/21 to 2024/25 and the [Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap \(2018-30\)](#). Links are also provided to recent studies such as a recent [public expenditure review](#) for education completed by the World Bank. Other organizations also have useful information. This includes UNESCO's [Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews](#) (PEER) covering the themes of the Global Education Monitoring reports, including: [inclusion in education](#) (2020

Report), [non-state actors in education](#) (2021/22 Report), [technology in education](#) (2023 Report) and leadership in education (2024/25 Report, forthcoming). PEER also covers additional topics on key SDG 4 issues, including [financing for equity](#), [climate change communication and education](#), and [comprehensive sexuality education](#). Another example is the World Bank's [Education Policy Dashboard](#), for which Ethiopia is a pilot country.

Only a few links to the literature on education by theme for each country are provided in the country pages, but repositories of digital resources facilitate access to the literature. A few of those repositories are listed on each country webpage by alphabetical order:

- [3ie Development Evidence Portal \(DEP\)](#): DEP is a repository of rigorous evidence on what works in international development, including in the area of [education](#).
- [AERD](#): The African Education [Research Database](#) hosted by the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge collates research by African scholars on education.
- [African Development Bank](#): The Bank has [publications](#) that cover a range of topics, including education. It also hosts [ADEA](#) which also has selected [publications](#).
- [Global Partnership for Education](#): GPE is one of the largest funders for education in Africa. It does not have a knowledge repository, but it manages the [KIX initiative](#).
- [J-PAL](#): The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab maintains a database of impact evaluations and policy publications, quite a few of which are about education.
- [RePEc](#): Research Papers in Economics is a large archive of research on economics, including the economics of education. It can be searched through [IDEAS](#).
- [Teacher Task Force \(TTF\)](#): The TTF is collaborative across many organizations hosted by UNESCO. It maintains

a [Knowledge Hub](#) with resources on teacher policies.

- [UNESCO HQ](#): UNESCO is the lead agency in the UN systems on education. Its [Digital Library](#) includes [UNESCO Open Access](#) which includes most UNESCO publications.
- [UNESCO GEM](#): UNESCO publishes annually a Global Education Monitoring Report on a different theme each year with associated resources and background papers.
- [UNESCO IICBA](#): IICBA is a Category 1 Institute at UNESCO. It conducts research on education in Africa with several publication series and maintains a digital repository.
- [UNICEF](#): Publications can be found under [Reports](#), the [Office of Global Insight and Policy](#), and the [Office of Research](#). Also of interest is the [Data Must Speak](#) initiative.
- [World Bank](#): The [Open Knowledge Repository](#) provides access to the Bank's research. It includes a section on [Africa](#) with country pages including for [Ethiopia](#).

Country pages also offer links the websites of many organizations that include useful information for countries. For Ethiopia, this includes the [GPE Ethiopia Country Page](#); [UNICEF Ethiopia Country Page](#); [World Bank Ethiopia Country Page](#); [UNESCO IIEP Country Page](#). It is also often useful to download data from multi-country databases. The largest database on development, including education data, is the World Bank's [World Development Indicators](#) (WDI). The World Bank also maintain the [Education Statistics](#) (EdStats) database. Both World Bank databases rely in part for education on data from the [UNESCO Institute of Statistics](#). UNESCO also maintains the [Global Education Observatory](#) and the [World Inequality Database in Education](#) (WIDE), as well as a wide range of [other databases](#). Specific estimates are occasionally maintained by other agencies. For example, [UNICEF](#) provides data on out-of-school rates, adjusted net attendance rates, completion rates, foundational learning skills, information communication technology skills, youth and adult literacy rates, and school-age digital connectivity. Another useful reference is [StatCompiler](#) which provides data at various levels of aggregation from Demographic and Health Surveys across countries and over time, including Ethiopia. For comparison purposes, data from the [OECD](#) for member and partner countries (including South Africa) can be useful.

We hope the country webpages and the links therein will be useful for your work.

How Do Education for Peace and Transformative Pedagogy Actually Work?

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Today is the International Day of Education with a focus this year on [learning from peace](#). From 2017 to 2022, UNESCO IICBA led a series of projects for peacebuilding and the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) through education with support from the Government of Japan. The projects applied a transformative pedagogy approach, embodying the principles of teaching methods that encourage action-oriented, experiential, learner-centred, problem-based, and collaborative learning processes. In celebration of the International Day of Education, IICBA published a study with key [lessons from the projects](#). We produced [data briefs](#) on perceptions of violence in Africa. And We also conducted a series of [interviews with peace educators](#), of which an excerpt is provided below:

[W]e gathered in a circle for a reflective discussion on the insights gained from the activity. One student shared, "I learned that we all have conflicts, and they are not always about ethnicity or religion. Sometimes they are about family, friends, schools, or sports. I also learned that we could solve our conflicts peacefully, by listening to each other, understanding each other, and respecting each other. I realized

that we are not so different after all, and that we can live together in harmony." In appreciation of this insightful comment, I expressed gratitude and then asked the entire group if they concurred. They all nodded in agreement.

– Dr. Mary Mugwe Chui, Senior Lecture at Mount Kenya University

The interview [series](#) was conducted with the African Union ESTI Department. The concept of peace education is frequently acknowledged in academic and educational circles, yet it seems to be less prioritized and sometimes overlooked in practical application. This may be especially the case in African countries where basic literacy and numeracy skills are still issues to be grappled with. But what if education for peace were to increase the motivation and performance of learners? This seems likely, even if robust evidence may be lacking to prove it.

A key milestone in IICBA's multi-year effort was the development of regional teacher training guides. Activities in these guides may help understand how transformative pedagogy works. Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes the role of active engagement and hands-on experience in learning. Studies show that children learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process, through exploration, experimentation, and conversation. This is at the heart of the pedagogical approaches to peace education. Peace education is often defined as

an approach that promotes the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable learners to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner and to create the conditions conducive to peace at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level. To cultivate competencies such as critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to understand different perspectives, learning must reflect on both global and local realities, actively engage learners in the sense-making process, and make education a mutual exchange rather than a one-way transmission of knowledge – making it profoundly engaging and experiential. To create a culture of peace and respect, education for peacebuilding and transformation needs to i) Be inclusive, ii) Provide a (physically, culturally, and psychosocially) safe learning environment, and iii) Address inequalities. Again, note that learning activities are most impactful when customized to the specific context and the group of learners you will work with. Therefore, you are encouraged to adapt these to best meet the learning needs of your group. Below are three examples of activities that can be undertaken in the classroom.

Activity Idea 1 – What I Stand For

This is an activity that aims to let learners discover how their beliefs and opinions differ from those of others and thereby reflect on what it means to respect different beliefs.

- In whatever space you are, explain to the students that one end of the room means ‘agree’ and the opposite side of the room is ‘disagree’. Ask the learners to line up along the line or in the centre of the space facing you. Instruct them to respond to a series of statements by moving toward the side of the room to either ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ with the given statement.
- Read out a few statements that can cause a difference of opinions among the learners. Examples:
 - All children should be able to go to school.
 - Killing someone for any reason is wrong.
 - People have the right to fight for what they believe in.

- Everyone has the right to live in peace.
- Pollution is only the responsibility of governments.
- Religions are a major cause of conflict in the world.
- You are encouraged to identify your own statements that are sensitive to the context before the lesson.
- After finishing your statements, get the learners to sit in a circle and ask some of them to talk about their answers. Discuss some of the issues that they confronted and how this made them feel. If learners experienced difficulties in responding to the questions, ask them why they think this was so. A major point to come out of the discussion is that the world is not simple and that it is not always easy to decide what to believe and when to take a stand. Ask the learners about how they felt when others were standing on the other side of the line.
- Conclude the exercise by emphasizing how people’s beliefs and opinions differ and how that at times can lead to conflict. Discuss the importance of respecting those who may not have the same beliefs as us.

Activity Idea 2 – The Aardvark and the Elephant

The second activity intends to let learners reflect on the importance of listening.

- Begin this activity by asking everyone to take out a piece of paper. Tell them that you are going to read the description of a real animal and that they are to draw the animal.
- Pause between each line of the description to give them time to draw. If you move too quickly this will not work. Here’s the description:
 - An animal found largely in Africa
 - Long tubular snout (clarify- the nose is shaped like a tube)
 - Small eyes
 - Large ears
 - Long tail
 - Legs that are thin, in comparison with the size of its body

- Grey-brown hide
- Thick claws that can be used as digging tools
- Ask learners to hold up their pictures so that others may see what they have drawn. Ask them to reflect on the lesson from the activity, whether it was easy for them to draw what you were describing, and what made them draw it in the way they did.
- Explain to the learners, if it doesn't come up in their responses, that the activity is about *listening* and *internal voice*.
 - *Listening*: We tend to hear some basic pieces of information, and then jump to conclusions. Generally, we listen to the first part of what people say and then fill in the blanks.
 - *Internal Voice*: When we listen, we generally have a voice inside of our head that comments on what the other person is saying and fills in with additional information.
- Ask learners to reflect on how we can listen better. If they don't come up with it themselves, ask them what would be visible signs that show someone is likely listening well to them. At the end, ask learners to form pairs to practice active listening. If time is available, you can ask how it was to practice active listening and discuss.
- Most learners will draw an elephant. They will then hear the last clue and be VERY confused. Some will draw long claws on the elephant, while others may cross out their picture and start over. For your reference, here is a picture of the animal, which is an Aardvark (a type of anteater):



© Image Source: The Noun Project, Parkjism

Activity Idea 3 – My Life Tree

This last activity aims to let learners reflect on their own identity and what contributed to shaping their identity.

- Ask learners to take out a piece of paper and outline a large tree that fills up the paper. The tree should be only an outline that includes, roots, trunk, branches, leaves, fruits, and flowers.
- Explain that each part of the tree represents different aspects of their life.
 - Roots – Important beliefs that shape their life
 - Trunk – Important people in their life
 - Branches – Their strengths
 - Leaves – Challenging experiences they have had in their life
 - Flowers – What makes them happy
 - Fruits – Some of the most important achievements
- Tell students to write their responses to each part of the tree and take time to reflect on their answers.
- Ask learners to pair up and share the story of their life tree with their partner. After a while ask them to interchange their sharing roles. Invite participants to move around the room while holding their tree in front of their chest.
- Invite them to come together in a circle, and share similarities, differences, and anything else they found during the sharing with one another. Let them reflect on takeaways from the activity.

Sample drawing



These activity ideas are sourced from [A Practical Guide](#) and [Youth Guide on Education for Peacebuilding and the Prevention of Violence](#). You can find more activity ideas and information on [UNESCO IICBA's website](#). The activity chapter is also available in the French version: [Autonomisation des jeunes pour la construction de la paix et de la résilience et pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent au Sahel et dans les pays environnants: guide de l'enseignant](#). We hope those examples help explain how education for peace and transformative pedagogy may work.



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