



State of
Education in Africa
THE AFRICA-AMERICA INSTITUTE

State of Education in Africa Report 2015

A report card on the progress, opportunities and challenges confronting the African education sector



PHOTO: ARNE HOEL / WORLD BANK



PHOTO: MICHELLE MESEN / GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

Executive Summary

The African continent is full of tremendous promise. Emerging out of decades of stagnation, the continent is now home to seven of the world's 10 fastest growing economies. The significant strides in Africa's socio-economic progress have helped to grow a vibrant middle class and propel technological advancements at a rapid pace.

Africa is also the world's most youthful continent. Today, nearly 50 percent of Africans are under age 15.

Africa's young people are our future leaders and will be the driving force behind sustainable growth across the continent. Investment in education and training is essential in building an educated and skilled workforce and to encourage innovation.

For this reason, The Africa-America Institute (AAI) is excited about hosting our Second Annual State of Education in Africa conference in Lagos, Nigeria. The conference's overarching goals are:

- **To have a solution-driven conversation** with policy-makers, educators, administrators, philanthropists and those interested in capacity-building about the challenges and opportunities in education on the African continent.
- **To elevate and mainstream the conversation on education** as a key component of the economic development narrative of Africa.
- **To use AAI's convening power, visibility and thought-leadership** to uniquely identify the primary obstacles and practical interventions, which must be implemented to improve the educational landscape in Africa.

Educators and innovators from Africa and globally will gather to assess the progress of primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational education in Africa. Some of the world's leading thinkers and practitioners in education will offer insights into thematic, country and sector approaches to expanding education and strengthening the capacity of Africans and educational institutions.

Most importantly, the State of Education in Africa conference is designed to be open not just to experts, but to individuals who are committed to improving Africa's education sector, and can provide solutions and bold approaches to creating a quality education.

This report is a starting point for the wide range of discussions that will take place at this conference and beyond. We've gathered data and statistics from a vast body of research from the World Bank and UNESCO to provide an overview of the State of Education in Africa.

The Report Card showcases the considerable progress and achievements in the education sector in Africa, and also draws attention to critical key areas of improvement. We hope this report will inspire collective action to sustain progress and develop concrete steps to enhance the education sector on the continent.

Sincerely,



Amini Kajunju, President & CEO

This report provides a snapshot of the progress, to date, and challenges at the primary, secondary, vocational and technical, and higher education levels.

Overview of the State of Education in Africa:

Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education, Vocational and Technical Training, and Higher Education



PHOTO: ALBERT GONZÁLEZ FARRAN / UNAMID

Introduction

The State of Education in Africa 2015 report offers an opportunity for educators and innovators to gain a regional overview of the African education sector.

Each section gives a brief introduction, key statistics and strategies to consider in moving forward. The report provides a snapshot of the progress, to date, key statistics, and challenges at the primary, secondary, vocational and technical, and tertiary education levels.

The section on **Quality of Education in Africa** explores whether students are meeting education targets and learning outcomes as well as teacher training and effectiveness in African schools. The **Public Spending on Education Systems** section looks at the investments in education at all levels by African governments.

The **Report Card** assesses where education stands today and can guide stakeholders on the key priorities to enhance the African education system. The key education indicators were gleaned from World Bank statistics and UNESCO data on a regional level.

We hope the report will guide some of the engaging discussions that will take place on panels and the keynote address at the **State of Education in Africa** conference and pinpoint areas for innovative solutions to boost educational outcomes.

Young people are Africa's future leaders. We must equip them with the skills and tools for success. That is why AAI is building on more than 60 years of strengthening the human capacity of Africans and promoting the continent's development through higher education to launch the **Future Leaders Legacy Fund**. The AAI Future Leaders Legacy Fund provides scholarships to bright, yet under-resourced African students, who would be the first in their family to attend university, with the opportunity to study in top-performing African universities and colleges to earn bachelor's degrees and vocational and technical training certifications. The Fund will also ensure that African universities benefit by receiving increased resources to retain and educate students.



**Future Leaders
Legacy Fund**

THE AFRICA-AMERICA INSTITUTE

We all need to be part of the solution. Join us!

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood education offers positive lasting benefits for children.

The early years of a child's life lay the foundation for their socio-emotional development. More often than not, early childhood years will determine whether a child will be successful in school, gain decent employment and income, as well as influence the lives of future generations.

Investing in early childhood development benefits whole societies. Yet, African countries are lagging far behind other regions in early childhood development. Children enrolled in pre-primary education programs are more likely to come from affluent households, although children in low-income communities in Africa would gain the most from such programs. The goal of pre-primary schools should be to prepare children for success in primary school. However, the quality of early education programs tend to vary significantly from country to country. If early education programs exist in a country, studies found that teachers are often untrained and schools lack the necessary resources and effective curricula for early childhood development.

In sub-Saharan Africa, only seven countries achieved the gross enrollment ratio target of 80 percent or more students in pre-primary education programs.

► Key Statistics

- In 2012, **184 million children** were enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide. Nearly **11 million children** were enrolled in pre-primary education in sub-Saharan Africa in 2008.
- Globally, **8 of the 10 countries** with the lowest pre-primary net enrollment rates are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, only seven countries achieved the gross enrollment ratio target of **80 percent or more students** enrolled in pre-primary education programs.
- Yet, enrollment in pre-primary education programs is expanding throughout Africa. **Enrollment rose by almost two and half times** between 1999 and 2012. On average, only **20 percent of young children** in Africa were enrolled in pre-primary programs in 2012.

Source: UNESCO

► Moving Forward

Pre-primary programs aim to prepare young children to get off to a strong start in their school readiness. Millions of young children under age 5 are not reaching their developmental potential due to few early education programs. As African governments focus on providing greater educational opportunities to school-aged children, pre-primary school classrooms must be considered. Access to good quality pre-primary education can improve a child's primary education outcomes as well as life opportunities.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary education enrollments in Africa have experienced steady progress since 1999.

With the launch in the year 2000 of the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDG), a set of ambitious development targets to reduce extreme poverty worldwide by 2015, many African countries committed to working towards the development goal of achieving universal primary education. Sub-Saharan Africa has demonstrated the greatest improvement in primary education enrollments compared to other regions of the world.

Many African nations took an important step in the right direction by eliminating school fees to allow more children to attend in primary schools. The result was promising, but maintaining a high quality primary education continues to remain a challenge for most countries.

The Africa region has experienced an impressive increase in the number of students enrolled in primary school. Between 1990 and 2012, the number of children enrolled in primary schools more than doubled, from 62 million to 149 million children.

► Key Statistics

- The Africa region has experienced an impressive increase in the number of students enrolled in primary school. Between 1990 and 2012, the number of children enrolled in primary schools **more than doubled**, from 62 million to 149 million children.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, **15 countries have abolished school fees** since 2000, enabling more children to attend primary school.
- Despite tremendous gains in primary school enrollment, **no African country has achieved universal primary education**. For a country to achieve universal primary education, all children must have completed a full course of primary schooling.
- Globally, **58 million children** of primary school age were out of school in 2012. Of that number, **38 million children** were in Africa. About half of all out-of-school African children will never step foot in a school in their lifetime.

Source: UNESCO, United Nations

► Moving Forward

Completing primary education helps to lay the foundation for building a skilled and better-educated workforce in Africa. More attention needs to be devoted to not just increasing the enrollment rolls of primary schools, but ensuring that students stay in school and receive a quality education.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Given the impressive strides that African countries have achieved in moving towards universal primary education, expanding greater access to a secondary education is critical.

A secondary education is essential in preparing students for higher education and important life skills. Additionally, a secondary education provides the skills and tools to help meet a country's growing demands for highly skilled and educated workers in a globalized world.

There is a growing recognition among African governments on the need to invest in and expand access to secondary education.

► *Key Statistics*

- The good news is that **sub-Saharan Africa achieved the greatest gains** in secondary education participation compared to all other regions of the world between 1999 and 2012.
- Worldwide, there were **552 million youth** enrolled in secondary schools in 2012. Some **49 million secondary students** resided in Africa.
- After graduating from primary school, many students are finding it difficult to attend secondary schools close to home. Across Africa, secondary schools can accommodate only **36 percent** of qualifying secondary students.
- Young people living in rural communities are more likely to have limited access to secondary education compared to youth in urban areas. **Seven out of 10 rural youth** have never attended school.

Source: UNESCO, United Nations, World Bank

► *Moving Forward*

Ensuring a quality education at the secondary level will prepare students for institutions of higher learning and training, and produce graduates with the needed skills for the local labor market.

Today, secondary education is still largely reserved for a privileged few. Governments are recognizing the importance of investing in a secondary education. So, the challenge for African governments is not just to expand secondary education, but to enhance the quality of education at the same time.

Some African governments are exploring a wide variety of financing options to boost the quality and capacity of secondary schools. In Uganda—where 72 percent of secondary school-aged children are not in school—a public-private partnership is enabling more adolescents to gain an affordable, quality secondary education. For this partnership, nonprofit social enterprise organizations Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) and Absolute Return for Kids (ARK) operate a network of secondary schools, which are financially supported by the Ugandan government.

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VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING

Greater attention has centered on the importance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in enhancing Africa’s global competitiveness and creating decent employment.

Technical and vocational skills development helps to strengthen the local workforce in emerging economies. A skilled workforce also creates an attractive economic environment for investors.

► **Key Statistics**

- Technical and vocational education and training has not been a top priority for many African countries. In 2012, technical and vocational programs accounted for only **6 percent** of total secondary enrollment in the region, a slight drop from 7 percent in 1999.
- TVET programs markedly declined in the 1980s due to budgetary shortfalls in the education sector of many African countries and have never fully recovered. On average, only about **2 to 6 percent** of educational budgets are devoted to technical and vocation skills development.
- Companies operating in African repeatedly cite **insufficiently skilled labor as a bottleneck to growth**. By improving the knowledge and skills of workers through technical and vocational education and training, local economies can build a skilled workforce to increase the production of goods and services and contribute to economic growth.

Source: UNESCO, United Nations, World Bank, African Economic Outlook 2008

► **Moving Forward**

Some 11 million youth are expected to enter Africa’s labor market every year for the next decade, according to the World Bank. Job creation in Africa is largely in the informal economy, which also absorbs those who are unable to find employment in the formal sector. Due to sky high unemployment rates, many graduates with a secondary and tertiary education are now becoming self-employed and launching small- and medium-sized enterprises instead of opting for wage employment.

While technical and vocational education and training builds a strong skilled workforce, the training does not create jobs. The majority of people in African countries—nearly 80 percent—work in the informal sector, according to the World Bank. An estimated 40 million more youth are projected to drop out of school in the next decade. Lacking adequate work and life skills, many will face an uncertain future. Governments and private sector alike must develop workforce development and training programs that recognize that most youth will be self-employed or work for a small enterprise.

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education yields significant benefits for both African young people and society, as a whole: better employment opportunities and job prospects, improved quality of life, and greater economic growth.

And investments in higher education pay off. Returns to investments in higher education in Africa are 21 percent—the highest in the world. As the world becomes more technological, the school curriculums in Africa need to evolve to provide the right education and training for jobs in today's workforce. A severe mismatch still exists between the skills of young African workers and the skills that employers need for today's global workforce.

A one-year increase in average tertiary education levels would...eventually yield up to a 12 percent increase in GDP.

► Key Statistics

- Today, only **6 percent of young people** in sub-Saharan Africa are enrolled in higher education institutions compared to the global average of 26 percent.
- The promising news is that universities in many African countries are experiencing a surge in their enrollment. Between 2000 and 2010, **higher education enrollment more than doubled**, increasing from 2.3 million to 5.2 million.
- Overcrowding in lecture halls at some Africa universities is becoming all too common. Statistics show that on average there are **50 percent more students per professor** at African universities compared to the global average.
- In 2008, about 223,000 students from sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled in tertiary education outside of their home countries, representing **7.5 percent of the total global number of students** who study outside of their home country.
- Private higher education is one of the fastest growing education sectors in Africa. In 2009, there were around **200 public universities and 468 private higher education institutions** on the African continent. Comparatively, there are 1700 public universities and nearly 2500 private universities (4- and 2-year universities) in the U.S. alone.
- A **one-year increase in average tertiary education levels** would raise annual GDP growth in Africa by 0.39 percentage points, and eventually yield up to a **12 percent increase in GDP**.

Source: UNESCO, World Bank

► Moving Forward

African countries will reap substantial socio-economic benefits from increased investments in improving higher education and developing strong curriculums for a knowledge-based global economy. A commitment to improving higher education will give the next generation of leaders an opportunity to create a better future for themselves, their community, and their country.

With limited funds, African governments are entering into public-private partnerships with companies and investors like U.S.-based Africa Integras for infrastructure development projects to build academic facilities, student and faculty housing, and other facilities on university campuses.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The African education system stands at a crossroad.

More students than ever before in history are enrolled in schools throughout Africa. That's good reason to cheer, but the pipeline of trained teachers, instructional materials, and infrastructure development have not kept pace with the heavy demand. Rising enrollment rates have drastically outpaced an increase in education funding, resulting in shortages of instructional materials and supplies, poorly stocked libraries and overuse of school facilities.

Indeed, while more students are in school classrooms, there is a deeper learning crisis at play: many students are not gaining basic skills while attending school. In fact, some students in school are not much better off than those who missed school. Consequently, the quality of education in Africa is in a perilous state. Private institutions are increasingly stepping in to educate children who lack access to an education or to fill the gaps in a country's public education system.

In 2012, the average pupil/teacher ratio in primary school was 42:1. That statistic has not changed since 1999.

► Key Statistics

- The power of effective teaching can transform children for the rest of their lives. However, a severe shortage of trained teachers is a stark reality for much of the continent, impacting overall learning outcomes. In 2012, the **average pupil/teacher ratio in primary school was 42:1**. That statistic has not changed since 1999.
- For primary education alone, **one million new teachers need to be recruited** in Africa to achieve the universal primary education development target.
- African students are not on the receiving end of enough quality teaching time in the classroom. International standards recommend that primary schools operate between 850 and 1,000 hours per year. In contrast, African countries mandated **720 hours of instructional time** per year in the early primary grades, progressively increasing to about 830 hours by grade 8.
- The number of private schools across Africa for primary and secondary education continues to rise. In a UNESCO survey of 25 African countries, the proportion of private primary schools **increased from 9 percent to almost 10 percent** between 2000 and 2008.

Source: UNESCO, World Bank

► Moving Forward

The quality of education offered within a country is a strong predictor of economic growth rates, according to the World Bank. African nations stand to benefit from a better-educated labor market where workers possess the skills and knowledge to compete in a knowledge-based global economy. While universal access to schooling yields some economic benefits, significant improvements in the quality of learning will achieve a greater impact for advancing development progress and economic growth in countries.

The rise in private schools should not be seen as negative, but instead as a viable alternative to a failing public education system.

PUBLIC SPENDING ON AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Public investment in education is vital in building a highly skilled and educated workforce and in sustaining Africa's prosperity and progress.

Recognizing the strong correlation between education and socio-economic development, countries in sub-Saharan Africa have gradually increased public spending on education by more than 6 percent each year.

African countries devote a substantial proportion of the government budget to the education sector despite relatively low GDPs and a host of competing development challenges. Increases in government education spending are often not enough to meet key education targets and provide a decent education for its young people.

African countries have allocated the largest share of government expenditure to education at 18.4 percent

► Key Statistics

- Globally, public education expenditure accounts for 4.7 percent of the world's \$18 trillion GDP per capita. The Africa region devotes **5.0 percent of total GDP of about \$1.5 trillion** to public education expenditure, which is the second highest percentage after North America with a total \$32 trillion GDP per capita and Europe at 5 percent with a total \$24 trillion GDP per capita.
- African countries have allocated the **largest share of government expenditure to education** at 18.4 percent, followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 17.5 percent; and South and West Asia allocated only 12.6 percent.
- International donors, on average, finance nearly **6 percent of the education resources** of African countries. The total amount of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) committed to Africa's education sector was **\$2.6 billion in 2008**, reported The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC).
- The largest proportion of private funding for education in Africa is generated from individual households. Households contribute about **25 percent of the total national education expenditure**, according to UNESCO figures from 16 countries with available data.

Source: UNESCO, "Financing Education in sub-Saharan Africa—Meeting the Challenges of Expansion, Equity and Quality"

► Moving Forward

Improving education quality at all levels is imperative for African development. Education is primarily funded by African governments, which allocates its public education resources based on the country's priorities and needs. While public education spending priorities will vary from country to country, increased investment in education will help to successfully meet key education targets and build a skilled workforce.

Strengthening public-private partnerships will assist in complementing public sector funds to finance the public education system in Africa. For example, The Know and Grow Education Programme Partnership, an initiative of the Safaricom Foundation, Tinga Tinga Tales Foundation and Coca-Cola Central East and West Africa, aims to improve the learning environment in primary schools in disadvantaged regions of Kenya, by equipping public school classrooms with furniture, water harvesting and sanitation facilities.

BUILDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE FOR 21ST CENTURY JOBS

Africa is the world's most youthful continent with some 200 million young people between ages 15 and 24. Finding productive jobs for young people is critical to the continent's future. An educated and skilled population is attractive to many employers and investors. Many employers across Africa have been critical of the lack of basic, technical and transferable skills of graduates. Strong education systems are key drivers of economic growth in African nations.

The quality of secondary, vocational/technical and higher education is often measured by the performance of workers in the labor market, UNESCO maintained. That is why the African education system must be strengthened to absorb the entry of millions of African young people into the national and global workforce.

► Key Statistics

- Africa's working age population (15-64 years) continues to grow at a rapid pace. By 2040, **the world's largest labor force will be in Africa** with an estimated working age population of 1 billion.
- Africa is facing a severe shortage of highly-skilled African talent. **Young people in Africa make up nearly 40 percent** of the working-age population, yet **60 percent are unemployed**. On average, it will take a university graduate **five years** to obtain a job in Africa.
- Africa's youth population is better educated than previous generations. Based on current trends, **59 percent of 20-24 year olds will have a secondary education in 2030**, compared to 42 percent today.
- By the numbers, **137 million young people** between ages 20-24 will have a secondary education, and 12 million, a tertiary education.

Source: World Bank, McKinsey Global Institute, African Economic Outlook 2012

► Moving Forward

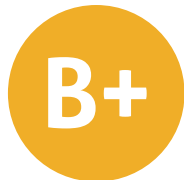
The rapidly growing working age population is a wake-up call for African governments, universities, and employers to collectively take action to boost job creation and innovation in the formal and informal sectors. Young people must be prepared for jobs in today's globalized economy to ensure a smooth transition of graduates into the labor market. Andela, a tech company co-founded by Nigerian tech entrepreneur Iyinoluwa Aboyeji, is building a network of computer programmers in Africa by recruiting and training individuals to be software developers. Trainees, in turn, make a four-year commitment and are placed with a technology company where they receive ongoing training and professional development.

Africa's working age population (15-64 years) continues to grow at a rapid pace. By 2040, the world's largest labor force will be in Africa with an estimated working age population of 1 billion.

Report Card:

IS THE AFRICAN CONTINENT MAKING THE GRADE?

Primary Education



Increased student enrollments in schools across Africa have enabled more students to get into the classroom. However, most African countries are not able to keep up with the fast pace of enrollments.

As a result, learning outcomes have tremendously suffered. Governments must invest in educational innovations to improve the quality of the education of primary schools.

Secondary Education



A rapid increase of students entering secondary education was due primarily to a rise in graduates completing primary school.

By and large, adolescents still lack access to a secondary education. Many are forced to travel long distances to school or to go to work to help support their family. More schools need to be constructed and safeguards put in place to address why adolescents are dropping out to school to work.

Vocational and Technical Training



A majority of African governments are not making technical and vocational education and training a top priority.

Budgetary constraints in the 1980s prompted governments to cut TVET programs in their education sector. Given Africa's need for more infrastructure development, increased investments in TVET will assist African countries to employ a skilled workforce to build and maintain new infrastructure projects.

Tertiary Education



University enrollment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are among the lowest in the world. While governments are investing in their universities, efforts must focus on expanding access and improving the quality of education to meet the needs of today's workforce.

Quality of Education



The African education system is in need of improvement. Despite more students enrolled in African schools, governments must focus on the quality of education by investing in trained teachers, instructional materials, and infrastructure development.

Public Spending on African Education



Public spending on education has increased in most African countries. African governments must assess their country's priorities and needs and invest in areas that will foster innovations and help to build a skilled and educated workforce. Public-private partnerships will bolster public education budgets to garner improvements in the overall education system.

Building a Skilled Workforce for 21st Century Jobs



Africa is facing a severe shortage of highly-skilled African talent. Governments must make a concerted effort to correct a serious mismatch between skills of graduates and the demands of a local and global workforce.



PHOTO: ESKINDER DEBEBE / UNITED NATIONS

Founded in 1953, The Africa-America Institute (AAI) is a premier U.S.-based international organization dedicated to strengthening human capacity of Africans and promoting the continent's development through higher education and skills training, convening activities, program implementation and management.



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