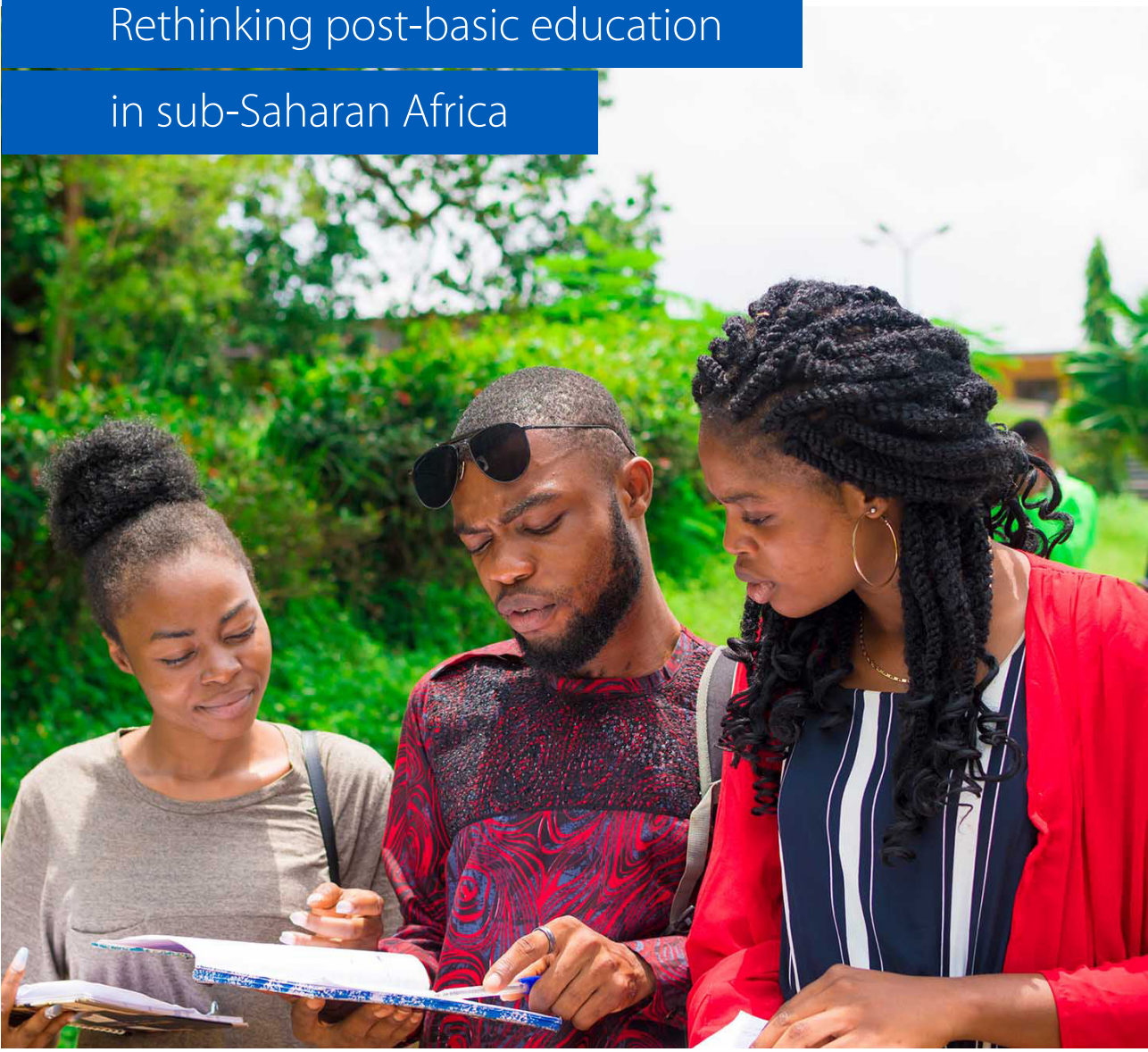
unesco

Youth and changing realities

Rethinking post-basic education in sub-Saharan Africa



Education 2030

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners and responding to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to **"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."** The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

unesco
United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Education 2030

Published in 2022 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

ISBN 978-92-3-100515-2

Cover photo: i_am_zews/Shutterstock.com

Designed by Aïda Alhabshi

Printed by UNESCO

Printed in France

SHORT SUMMARY

Youth and changing realities in sub-Saharan Africa

COVID-19 has severe social, economic and educational costs for youth. Nearly 20% of sub-Saharan Africa's population is aged 15-24. Their capacities will be vital for recovery and future resilience. Rethinking post-basic education is more important than ever, so that it helps youth in their life goals, contributes to the changing demands of society, and advances sustainable development.

In this publication, young people in Africa speak up about their aspirations and experiences of post-basic education. This synthesis report also assesses learning opportunities, considers factors affecting take-up, and identifies barriers and enablers of youth participation. Specific attention is given to financing to promote equity; socio-cultural barriers; skills for work and life; and increasing educators' capacity. A key message is that youth should be treated as agents of change and not only as beneciaries of education.

Increased research and policy attention to post-basic education is recommended, to be accompanied by financial resources. Synergies within post-basic education should be maximized and curricula must correspond more closely with the changing demands of the world of work. In the future, the supply and demand of post-basic education should be studied and assessed holistically.

20%
of sub-Saharan Africa's population is aged 15-24.
The capacities of youth are vital for the future.

As envisaged by the Education 2030 Framework for Action, all stakeholders, including relevant ministries and youth, should be engaged in policy dialogue and the development of education programmes.

unesco

"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

Youth and changing realities

Rethinking post-basic education in sub-Saharan Africa

Foreword

Youth are a priority, because they are the owners of the future and hold the keys to peace and sustainable development. Education should empower young people for full participation in their societies and education systems should be responsive to the voices, aspirations and actions of young people. This is especially important in post-basic education (PBE), being at the intersection of learning pathways, work and life.

In sub-Saharan Africa, as in other regions, youth faced challenging and rapidly changing social, economic, and environmental realities, even before the COVID-19 crisis.

This synthesis report seeks to integrate perspectives of PBE of young people from 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Their voices express diverse experiences, aspirations and expectations of PBE and training, work and life. They describe 'changing realities' in which education and training opportunities often seem unable to meet new demands of the world of work and society.

Four crucial PBE themes are explored, with reference to youth's experiences: financing, socio-cultural barriers, skills for work and life, and educators' capacities.

At present, PBE opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa are far from inclusive, not least because of underfunding and the costs to learners. Financial pressures force many students to engage in income-generating activities during their studies. Many youth complained of a shortage of learning materials and poor conditions for learning. The report also highlights that girls are more likely than boys to drop out of education and training because of different social expectations, early marriage, unplanned pregnancies, and a higher domestic workload.

Some young people felt that PBE was not sufficiently relevant to workplace requirements, and should do more to integrate technology skills. In their view, PBE should do more to facilitate transitions, whether academically or between education and employment.

At this time of upheaval, in which COVID-19 and other crises are shaking humanity, it is more important than ever that youth voices about education, training, and the future, are heard and acted upon by policy-makers and other education stakeholders.

In this Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it is worth recalling that the Education 2030 Framework for Action calls for youth, learners and their organizations to be full partners in the realization of SDG4; to encourage governments and other stakeholders to develop education programmes in consultation with young people; and to help shape policies for relevant and responsive education systems. This report makes an important contribution towards rethinking PBE in sub-Saharan Africa.

Stefania Giannini
Assistant Director-General for Education
UNESCO

Acknowledgements

UNESCO would like to thank all who contributed to this publication. First of all, thanks to Radhika Iyengar, Director of Education, Center for Sustainable Development, The Earth Institute, Columbia University. Haein Shin and Tara Stafford Ocansey were instrumental in writing parts of the study and Jennifer Lee Bradshaw and Usman Majid Rana supported the research. Data collection was done by Millennium Promise and thanks go to all the country teams for timely data collection and quality checks – and to all of the research participants.

This publication is based on five regional reports which were prepared by UNESCO Regional Offices in Abuja, Dakar, Harare, Nairobi and Yaoundé. Special thanks go to the following UNESCO colleagues who are or were based in the offices for their work related to the coordination of case studies and review of the manuscript: Dimitri Sanga and Gwang-Chol Chang, and a main editor, Akemi Yonemura, supported by Catherine Collin, Marika Tsolakis, Christiana Kallon and Aida Ndiaye (UNESCO Dakar), Charaf Ahmimed (UNESCO Harare), Saba Bokhari (UNESCO Nairobi), Albert Mendy and Tayim Dzounesse (UNESCO Yaoundé) and Rokhaya Diawara (UNESCO Abuja). Valuable comments were also received from Claude Akpabie, Ndeye Yacine Fall, Xavier Hospital, Modou Mar, Calice Olivier Pieume, and Tidiane Sall.

At UNESCO Headquarters, Sobhi Tawil provided overall direction and the contributions of Justine Sass, Abdul Rahman, Carlos Vargas Tamez, Huong Le Thu, Gaia Micciché, Keith Holmes, Maya Prince, Coralie Lolliot, Amelie Fabian, Alice Dekhtiarenko and Leanne Davey are gratefully acknowledged.

UNESCO would also like to thank external reviewers, including Alex Eble, James Keevy, Jonathan Penson, Dennis Sinyolo, and Gorgui Sow.

Special thanks are due to Kattie Lussier for revising, finalizing and editing the manuscript.

Finally, UNESCO would like to express sincere appreciation to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for its generous support for UNESCO's Education Research and Foresight programme, without which this project would not have been possible

Table of contents

Chapter 5
Conclusions

List of tables, figures and boxes

Tables

Figures

Boxes

Abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GIR	Gross Intake Ratio
GNI	Gross National Income
GPA	Grade Point Average
GPIA	Adjusted Gender Parity Index
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICFE	International Commission on the Future of Education
IFF	Illicit Financial Flows
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual and other sexualities
LPIA	Adjusted Location Parity Index
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFE	Non-Formal Education

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PBE	Post-Basic Education
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PSNT	Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
T-TEL	Transforming Teacher Education and Learning
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WHO	World Health Organization
WPIA	Adjusted Wealth Parity Index

Executive summary

The Education 2030 Framework for Action is guiding various actors towards achieving SDG4, which reasserts the importance of attention to youth learning in the process. Yet, progress in addressing the needs of young people, more specifically targets 4.3 and 4.4, have been slow. In the last two decades a lot of emphasis has been given to basic education, especially compulsory education. Work on post-basic education (PBE) has been fragmented, and has predominantly focussed on supply, whether education institutions or programmes.

The different sub-sectors composing PBE are consistently being compartmentalized and discussed separately in studies, reports and policies yet they are meant to address the needs of broadly the same age group and respond to the same socio-economic conditions. They are all part of a broader offering of educational services that may respond, or not, to young people's learning needs. This study is therefore an attempt to look at PBE as a whole and embrace its complexity. It considers both supply and demand issues of policy relevance. Focussing on the breadth of PBE is advantageous because it allows to explore education and training opportunities available to youth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in a manner that covers the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. This is particularly important when attempting to intersect youth perspectives in relation to their learning opportunities and their needs for work and life.

SDG4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target 4.3
By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Target 4.4
By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Source : UNESCO, 2015a

The overall objective of this study is to assess the relevance of educational provision and learning opportunities for youth (15–24 years of age) in SSA. It is situated within global commitments to SDG4-Education 2030, which calls for building education and learning systems that ***"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"*** (UNESCO, 2015a) by means of society-wide participation in education, in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

This synthesis report is based on five regional reports prepared by UNESCO's Regional Offices in Abuja, Dakar, Harare, Nairobi and Yaoundé. These reports incorporated 20 country case studies as well as information and analysis on 27 other countries in SSA including from UNESCO's Youth Survey (UNESCO, 2016). It takes into account relevant literature and statistics, and integrates the perspectives of young people from 20 SSA countries on PBE and training. By giving young people the chance to talk about their challenges and their perceptions of the relevance of PBE interventions to work and

life, the research attempts to better understand changing realities, the gaps in PBE provision and how to address them. This synthesis report is not an exhaustive presentation of the concerns and issues captured in the sub-regions but a reference document putting into light some regional cross-cutting themes expressed by the youth who took part in the study. It documents the factors of take-up of PBE and training among young people in SSA; examines the subjective dimensions of youth demand for PBE that may help explain reasons for non-take up; and provides policy suggestions to improve the provision of PBE.

Youth experiences are diverse and there were differences in the way the different case studies were conducted and documented. Consequently, it was not possible to cover all the aspects of PBE and youth experiences in this synthesis report. We, therefore, focussed on four prominent themes: financing of PBE, barriers to PBE, skills for work and life, and educators' capacities.

Financing to promote equity in access to post-basic education

The demographic trends in sub-Saharan countries have major financial implications because the growing number of children and youth also increases demand for education services. So far, education financing is not sufficient to meet all the needs. Analysts are therefore forecasting troubling times for PBE unless governments manage to put in place financing solutions that enable providers to meet the increasing demand. Although rising numbers of teenagers are expected to transit to PBE in the near future, government expenditure on PBE remains inadequate in several countries. Public spending on education is below international benchmarks in 22 SSA countries and higher secondary education remains largely underfinanced despite their need for specialized teachers, laboratories and other teaching and learning materials. While SSA receives close to US$ 3 billion a year in official development assistance for education, it accounts for less than 10% of the aid it receives, and the share allocated to PBE varies considerably between countries.

The costs of PBE are often too high for low-income families to afford and financial problems is the reason youth mentioned the most for not pursuing PBE or dropping out of school. Financial pressures force many students to engage in income-generating activities during their studies which reduces the time they can dedicate to assignments, readings and other course requirements. The situation is particularly problematic for young women in rural areas, who also have to do domestic work and are under constant pressure to get married and start a family. Many participants also complained about the shortage of learning and teaching materials, in particular the scarcity of textbooks, the lack of qualified teachers in some specialized fields of study, and the poor condition of infrastructure. These influence the quality of the learning and the overall educative experience. Adequate funding will be critical to address such problems.

Breaking down barriers through appropriate infrastructure and inclusive policy implementation

SDG Target 4.5 requires education actors everywhere to eliminate gender disparities and provide equal access to all levels of education and training to the vulnerable. The young people who took part in this study faced various challenges and identified key barriers that must be addressed in order to reach this target. Socio-cultural barriers include stereotypes about gender roles within a family, social pressures related to marriage and pregnancy, social norms around puberty and initiation ceremonies as well as inter-generational dynamics. Personal barriers to PBE include disabilities and chronic health conditions, immigration status, being part of an ethnic or linguistic minority group, and other forms of social exclusion. Physical barriers include the location of PBE services, the inadequacy of infrastructure, and the quality of water and sanitation facilities. All these factors increase the probability of adolescents dropping out of school.

Target 4.5
By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

Source: UNESCO, 2015a

PBE remains unattainable for many youth in SSA. Social and cultural barriers, such as norms that effectively discriminate against females, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, often stand between youth and their educational and career goals. The young women who participated in the study explained that girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school because of different social expectations, early marriage, unplanned pregnancies, and a higher domestic workload.

Barriers to PBE can be overcome, but in order to do so several measures must be put in place. It is essential to raise parents' awareness of the value of enrolling their teenage daughters in PBE instead of pressuring them to get married. Education actors also need to increase the number of schools that welcome and are equipped for the participation of children and youth with disabilities. Governments must make sure that there are various routes to PBE with entry or re-entry points into different types of formal and non-formal education to make sure that all youth, including those who previously dropped out or have never been in school, have opportunities to develop the capacities needed to improve their quality of life and contribute to their country's sustainable development.

To increase access and inclusion, PBE must be as affordable as possible. Substantial efforts are also required to build and upgrade educational facilities in a way that takes into account the different needs of youth and provides safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all as proposed in SDG Target 4.a.

Equipping youth with relevant skills for work and life

Young people are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed than adults. Youth also tend to have vulnerable and insecure livelihoods because they often work on their own account or contribute to family work. Both of these situations provide limited income stability and social security coverage. At

the same time, the majority of entrepreneurs in Africa are in the informal sector and need workers with knowledge and skills that are relevant to their specific situation in order to survive. In this context, it is necessary for youth to be well prepared for work and life.

Participating youth expressed a desire to help their family members and be able to support their own family one day. Some also talked about their duty to give back to their village, their community or their country. Generally, they saw education as a means to personal and social advancement. Youth from the East and West Africa regions mentioned technical skills as their top priority followed by soft skills such as interpersonal skills, time management, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability, decision-making, conflict resolution, respect, leadership and other social skills.

Nearly all respondents said the knowledge and skills they acquired through education were useful. However, some expressed concerns that what they were learning in school was not practical enough or lacked relevance to workplace requirements, especially when it came to technologies. It is therefore important to better align what is taught in PBE with the capacities needed for work and life in order to facilitate youth's transition to employment, better address the needs of the labour market, and encourage youth to persevere and make the necessary efforts to attain the level of competencies they need. Young people from SSA also asked for more quality control, a better integration of the different subjects as well as more flexibility in their academic progression.

Target 4.a
Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning

Source : UNESCO, 2015a

The problems raised by respondents include the breadth of the curriculum and how schooling is often too theoretical and exam-oriented; dissatisfaction with the way content is taught; the disparity of learning opportunities between urban and rural areas; the lack of correspondence between the knowledge and skills learned and the requirements of the world of work; and the lack of recognition and certification in some of the programmes. Other areas of concern include the lack of mentoring opportunities and psychological support for young people; the need for remediation programmes and support for youth facing academic difficulties; and the need to better integrate technology in education.

Increasing educators' capacity to improve learning

Educators are at the heart of the learning process, but in many SSA countries PBE is facing a severe shortage of qualified teachers. This is particularly true for instructors in scientific and technological fields and in remote or crisis-affected areas. As more youth are entering PBE, improving educators' capacities has become critical.

Several respondents talked about teachers who had inspired them, and some youth were satisfied with the quality of their learning experience. The following problems were reported: teacher shortage is perceived to undermine youth's opportunities to learn; teachers' competencies are sometimes limited, and some educators haven't been trained in the particular subjects that they

teach; teachers' absenteeism and tardiness. The attitude of educators in class is another recurring preoccupation. Young people want to feel respected in class and this is not always the case.

The quality of students' learning experience in PBE is directly linked to the training, the qualifications and the motivation of teachers. Three points deserve particular attention: 1) the importance for teachers to engage students in their learning; 2) the learning benefits of organizing classes in a way that enable students to gain both knowledge and skills; 3) the need to better integrate curriculum content and connect it to real-life contexts. In order to do their work properly, educators need support, decent working conditions and suitable teaching material.

Contribution and limitations of the study

Looking at PBE as a whole has enabled researchers to get a better sense of its complexity and the relations between different sub-sectors. It has also helped to develop a better understanding of the variety and diversity of youth's educational trajectories as well as a better appreciation of the similarities and differences of youth's learning experiences. The use of focus group discussions gave young people the chance to express their views and share their experiences. This enabled the researchers to understand issues that were important to the participants in a way that might not have been possible otherwise. The combination of statistical information with the qualitative data collected in the case studies was essential to appreciate the complexity of the PBE sub-sector and understand the changing realities of youth in SSA.

One of the main limitations of this study is that statistical data on PBE is not available for every country and often does not include information on vulnerable youth. Consequently, due to a lack of data, the situation of youth from vulnerable groups could not be properly explored in this study. More information on gender, age, income and location disparity could be particularly valuable to policy-makers and education partners. Similarly, data on the situation of youth with disabilities and displaced youth is seriously lacking which makes it more difficult to identify measures to support them. The danger of writing a synthesis report is to present findings in a way that appears to generalize youth's experiences. Consequently, in an attempt to present the overall portrait of PBE in SSA, some of the national specificity was inevitably lost. This publication is therefore meant to complement, not replace, specific national studies.

Overall findings and main messages

PBE is important to youth because it can help them to acquire the competencies they need to get better jobs and reach their personal and professional goals. PBE is also important to society because it is where the capacity of a country's labour force is built and where youth learn what they need to shape the destiny of their nation and enable their country to engage in a development path that is truly sustainable. When young people are successful in their careers, their accomplishments contribute to the prosperity of their countries. Youth's capacities will also be key to post-COVID-19 recovery. However, in order to play that role, the PBE offering must be better aligned with the changing needs of the world of work and society, and PBE curricula should evolve alongside socio-cultural and technological advancements. Yet, PBE is frequently overlooked by policy-makers and education partners and remains underfinanced in several SSA countries.

Youth represent a significant segment of SSA's population and deserve to have a voice in policy dialogues. Since future leaders will emerge from the youth, it is important to create spaces where they can be heard, particularly on issues related to PBE. The case studies suggest that youth's aspiration and dreams are a leading factor in deciding to take-up PBE or not. Youth's perceptions of different careers and whether they believe they can realistically achieve their dreams affect educational choices and learning trajectories. Youth's decisions are often influenced by role models, their personal circumstances, their perception of income and employment prospects, gender expectations, and the social status attributed to different professions. The most common barrier youth face is the cost of PBE, including books, transport, and so forth and the availability of PBE services, particularly for youth living in rural areas or belonging to a vulnerable group. The findings suggest that barriers to PBE affect young women and men differently, it is therefore important to further explore the gender dynamics within PBE.

In recent years, much attention has been paid to basic education. While this is understandable, it resulted in much fewer data being collected on PBE. For instance, limited recent data are available for upper secondary education in the region. There is also a lack of data on factors of vulnerability such as health condition, disability, ethnicity, religious belief, immigration status, geographical location and socio-economic status that affect youth. Attempts should be made to bridge that gap because reliable data would help the sector to be more responsive and better address the needs of the youth.

Rethinking post-basic education in SSA

PBE is multifaceted and complex because it addresses a multitude of needs that change constantly in response to transformations within societies. Accordingly, the same thinking that was used to expand basic education cannot be applied to PBE. So far, narrow and fragmented conceptions of PBE have led to oversights both in the factors affecting its effectiveness and its contribution to development. PBE systems need transforming and revitalizing in order to fully contribute to developing healthy national economies, social equity, sustainable human development and wellbeing. Their modernization will also be key to making SSA nations more resilient and reduce their vulnerability to crisis.

Until now, more attention has often been given to the supply side of PBE, and how to expand access and participation, than to the demand side, and on improving its quality and relevance for students, society and economy. There are three main problems with this. First, the tendency to look at issues of supply, infrastructure and location in a way that is mostly driven by formal PBE means that the provision of services often favours elites and excludes rural areas and vulnerable learners, including youth living in poverty, with a disability, or being displaced. Second, such approaches fail to appreciate the diversity of needs and contexts and how these evolve over time. Giving priority to addressing supply problems can reduce PBE's effectiveness and responsiveness - thus the necessity to better balance concerns for supply and demand, including the needs of youth and the requirements of employers. Finally, PBE is one of the main pillars on which national capacities are built. Without a direct focus on the quality and relevance of PBE, it will not be possible to address gaps in the competencies of the workforce, including in the health, education, governance, and economic sectors, which will ultimately limit development prospects in SSA.

The structure of PBE systems has contributed to a polarization of knowledge and skills where formal PBE institutions tend to be mainly responsible for academic and technical content while mainly non-formal and informal institutions deliver more 'vocational' and practical content. This no longer corresponds to 21st-century learning needs because the achievement of competencies often requires the mastery of all types of content and technological and scientific advances have reached every sector of life. Overcoming the dichotomy between academic and vocational knowledge and skills will be essential to make sure that PBE curricula remain relevant to work and life and that PBE institutions and programmes can adapt to changes. It is also necessary to reflect on the role of knowledge and skills in SSA's societies and how PBE can better integrate learnings that are often overlooked in SSA's PBE curricula such as indigenous skills and knowledge, ICTs, environmental and sustainability issues, as well as other neglected learnings.

The relevance of PBE to learners' work and life is particularly important if PBE is to contribute to human development and wellbeing. That said, learning needs are constantly evolving in response to social transformations and progress in different fields of activity. The adaptability of PBE systems is therefore critical. The need for capacity development goes beyond schooling and is not limited by age. Consequently, rethinking PBE also means expanding its scope to all youth and adults and adopting a lifelong learning perspective. In addition to their current offerings, PBE systems must also be able to deliver the broad range of soft skills and transferable skills that a person needs over his or her lifespan to adapt to the changes in their environment and their lives. Nevertheless, rethinking PBE in SSA will be in vain unless solutions are identified to make PBE systems affordable and inclusive. This will entail a shift of mindset and a willingness to engage and listen to all stakeholders. Vulnerable youth will need to be treated as agents capable of decisions and actions regarding their learnings rather than passive beneficiaries of education services.

Education policies will need to be reoriented in a way that facilitates continuous learning and supports human development throughout the lifespan. This will require a shift from supply-oriented policies to lifelong learning policies. PBE has the potential to be a cornerstone to develop capacities in all sectors of activity. For this to happen, policy dialogues that transcend the education sector and involve actors from various fields are needed. Doing so will help to make learning opportunities more relevant to society, more responsive to employers' needs, better aligned with national development priorities, and also contribute to make countries more resilient to crises.

Finally, rethinking PBE within a lifelong learning framework will require changes in the way PBE is studied, monitored and evaluated. The success of PBE cannot be measured the same way as basic education is because most traditional indicators are ill-suited towards assessing lifelong learning and success in PBE cannot be defined by a single metric such as enrolment rates or grades. Studying progress in PBE may require a combination of qualitative, quantitative and participatory methods. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation systems will need to be adapted to the complexity of PBE and pay more attention to the way factors of inequality intersect and influence learning and life trajectories.

Introduction

In order for a country to overcome its challenges and reach a level of development where its economy is healthy enough to meet the needs of its citizens, the capacity of its workforce and leaders is critical. To prosper, a nation needs a skilled labour force that can adapt with technological advances, but it also needs thinkers, planners and visionaries. PBE is where young people acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs they require to shape the destiny of their countries and enable them to engage in a development path that is truly sustainable. Yet, so far, young people have rarely been given opportunities to share their ideas and concerns about PBE and its relevance to their lives. By giving youth the chance to talk about their challenges and their perceptions of the relevance of PBE to work and life, this research attempts to better understand changing realities, the gaps in PBE provision and how to address them. This synthesis report therefore synthesises information from relevant literature and statistics as well as the perspectives of young people from 20 SSA countries in order to provide policy suggestions to improve the provision of PBE and identify issues that deserve further investigation.

An evaluation of past and present research in SSA may suggest that an overwhelming focus has been on basic education. The importance of research on PBE in SSA has sometimes been overlooked. Even when PBE is studied, it has mainly been examined from the supply side and there is an urgent need for studies addressing the relevance of, and demand for, PBE provision in SSA. For this reason, the study looks at PBE mainly from the perspective of demand and youth as its main target beneficiaries.

Unlike many studies which focus on post-compulsory education, this publication consciously addresses the broader concept of 'PBE'. Firstly, because the coverage of 'compulsory' education varies between countries in SSA and this makes statistical analysis complex. Secondly, because whether or not secondary education is compulsory or not is less important to this study than the question of what education and training opportunities are available to youth in SSA, and the different perceptions of youth towards their education, training and employment.

The different sub-sectors composing PBE are consistently being compartmentalized and discussed separately in studies, reports and policies yet they are meant to address the needs of the same age group and respond to the same socio-economic conditions. They are all part of a broader offering of educational services that may respond, or not, to young people's learning needs. Consequently, this study is an attempt to look at PBE as a whole and embrace its complexity. This is advantageous because it allows to explore education and training opportunities available to youth in SSA in a manner that covers the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. This is particularly important when attempting to intersect youth's perspectives on learning opportunities and their needs for work and life.

Through the use of mixed methods of investigation and the integration of youth's voices into the analysis alongside statistical data and literature findings, this study illuminates the issues for further exploration of PBE in SSA and how youth's voices could inform – and shape – future research and debate on the quality and relevance of PBE provision.

Rationale for the study

Education is a basic human right and a public good that should be accessible to all, irrespective of any institution. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has reaffirmed the critical role of education in broader societal development. More specifically, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.1 is to ensure universal completion of primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes among youth; Target 4.3 concerns equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education; and Target 4.4 requires a substantial increase in the number of youth (and adults) who have relevant skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship (UNESCO, 2015a).

In its fifty-year transformation plan, Agenda 2063[1], the African Union (AU) aspires for people-driven development, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth. The African Youth Charter[2] recognizes that Africa's greatest resource is its youthful population. Similarly, the AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025[3] highlights the importance of youth participation and socio-economic integration and the underlying need for improved education and skills development. However, in an ever-changing world where global socio-economic development patterns are often characterized by low employment growth, youth unemployment, and declining quality of jobs, ensuring relevance and quality in education and training has been an increasing challenge. This is particularly the case in SSA, where about two-fifths of the population is below 15 years old and nearly one-fifth is in the 15–24 age bracket (UNDESA, 2020).

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2020), SSA's youth literacy rate has risen from 70.08% in 2004 to 76.74% in 2018. However, there is still a high percentage of youth who do not have the minimal level of skills in reading and maths to function well in the society. SSA, with 28 million adolescents and 37 million upper secondary school-age youth not attending school in 2018, is the region with the highest out-of-school rates and the lowest participation in secondary education. Less than half of all youth (42%) are enrolled at the upper secondary level in SSA. The situation is worse for young women, who are more likely to be out of school than their male colleagues.[4] They therefore deserve particular attention (UIS, 2019b). That said, significant location and wealth disparities exist with rural youth and young people in situations of poverty being considerably disadvantaged (see Graph A in Annex IV).

Relevant knowledge and skills are particularly important for young people to access the labour market and achieve a decent standard of living. Employment data from the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020a), however, reveal that youth are three times as likely to be unemployed than adults (25 years or older). The youth unemployment rate in SSA was 8.7% in 2019 with a one percent gender gap in favour of men, suggesting that social and cultural norms still limit young women's access to employment. Young workers are also often in precarious conditions. Increasingly exposed to non-standard, informal and less secure forms of employment, they often lack legal and social

1 http://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview

2 https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf

3 https://edu-au.org/strategies/185-cesa16-25

4 The adjusted gender parity index of out-of-school rate for upper secondary age youth in SSA was 1.10 in 2018.

protection and have little opportunities for professional development. In 2019, 41.5% of SSA youth workers were in a situation of extreme working poverty (earning under US$ 1.90 per day) and 27.2% were in moderate working poverty (between US$ 1.90 and US$ 3.20 per day). In this context, the relevance and quality of PBE is critical to support youth's transition to the job market. For instance, a growing number of employers now require that the people they hire have some digital skills. Post-basic learning opportunities are therefore essential to make sure that SSA youth are not ill-prepared.

Target 4.1
By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Target 4.3
By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Target 4.4
By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Source : UNESCO, 2015a

In 2020 the world was confronted by an unprecedented crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic. The health emergency prompted confinement measures and widespread closures that affected education, jobs, livelihoods and well-being of people across the world[5]. The resulting economic crisis will be felt for years across key sectors of economy and society. ILO (2020b) estimates the resulting working-hour losses in SSA at 2.4% in the first quarter of 2020, or the equivalent of 9 million full-time jobs,[6] and 11.4% (43 million full-time jobs) in the second quarter. While the substantial labour market disruptions caused by COVID-19 affected all groups of workers, youth have been hit particularly hard because they often work in the informal sector, which is more vulnerable to confinement measures. Their livelihoods are therefore highly vulnerable to disruptions. According to the UN's latest labour force data, youth's unemployment has increased more and at a faster pace than that of prime-age adults (UN, 2020a). Young women are especially affected by the pandemic due to the increased demand for unpaid care resulting from lockdowns and the presence of children at home. Women in domestic work are also highly vulnerable to losses of jobs and income due to containment measures. Finally, hard-hit sectors such as accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, as well as business, administrative and manufacturing activities employ a large proportion women and youth (ILO, 2020b).

5 UN experts have stated that the virus and its impact could last several years and warned that due to limited testing and reporting capacities, cases of COVID-19 in Africa may be greatly underreported (UN, 2020b). In many SSA countries, a majority of people work in the informal economy, which offers less protection. At the same time, many small and medium businesses struggle to comply with social distancing and stay-at-home orders. Some are also running out of funds to sustain themselves. Consequently, the pandemic has negative consequences on SSA workers' lives and livelihoods and there is a risk that many people in Africa will face food insecurity. Remittances, on which numerous SSA households rely to supplement their incomes, are also projected to decline. The crisis has led to exchange rate depreciations and a projected decline in Africa's GDP. Such circumstances could lead to a recession or a full-blown financial crisis. (UN, 2020b).

6 40 hours per week.

The pandemic has caused the largest disruption of education in history, impacting on learners and teachers worldwide, from pre-primary to secondary schools, TVET and other skills development providers, as well as universities (UNESCO, 2020c). The combination of extended school closures and wide-spread economic hardship risk undermining youth's aspirations and potential and places them in danger of bearing the impacts of this crisis on their shoulders for a long time. UNESCO (2020c) estimates that 5.3 million children and youth from SSA are at risk of not returning to school in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 with university students being particularly affected due to the higher cost of their studies. Many of them may eventually drop out.[7] Unfortunately, policy responses are rarely designed to address the specific needs of young people (UN, 2020a).

After the pandemic, the world will probably face higher levels of unemployment, inequality, poverty, debt and political frustration (ILO, 2020b). Youth's capacities will be essential to move forward and possessing the proper skillsets may be more important than ever. In order to respond to the massive loss of jobs and reorient workers towards employment or entrepreneurship, policies will therefore need to include a skills development component. That said, the demand for skills in the labour market is expected to change. TVET systems as well as other PBE providers will therefore need to be ready to adapt (UNESCO, 2020b).

Given the potential for youth to lead and shape the world, current educational patterns compel a better understanding of non-take up or incomplete take up of PBE and training. While supply-side factors are relatively well documented, less is known about the determinants of youth's demand for education and training. In order to better understand the subjective dimensions of such demand, it is necessary to better document the characteristics of out-of-school youth, their realities and aspirations, and their perceptions of the relevance and potential benefits of education and training opportunities available to them.

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this study was to assess the relevance of educational provision and learning opportunities for youth (15–24 years of age) in SSA. It is situated within SDG4-Education 2030, which calls for building education and learning systems that promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by means of society-wide participation and through all channels - formal, non-formal and informal settings.

This study explores the learners' point of view relative to the degree of responsiveness of education and training opportunities to their aspiration and their needs. It attempts to bring out the voices of youth to understand education provision gaps. By doing so, it seeks to recommend more responsive policy options to address youth's disengagement from education and the ensuing consequences in skills shortages, low employment prospects, and general well-being.

7 If the simulations are accurate, a higher percentage of SSA girls will be affected (1.99%) compared to boys (1.90%) across all education levels.

The study therefore aims to:

(1) document factors of take-up of PBE and training among youth within SSA;

(2) examine the subjective dimensions of youth's demand for PBE and training that may help explain reasons for non-take up; and

(3) provide a set of policy suggestions.

Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, the research explored issues pertaining to the relevance of PBE to the changing realities of youth in SSA including the following questions:

- Profile of youth
  a. What are the major causes of non-take up of formal and non-formal education and training opportunities among the youth?
  b. What are their life aspirations, hopes and dreams?
- Youth's point of view on knowledge and skills for Education 2030
  a. What are youth's demands and expectations of PBE and training (motivations, aspirations, and needs for learning opportunities)?
  b. What are youth's perceptions of the barriers to pursuing PBE and training (relevance of education, financial, economic and/or cultural obstacles, future job opportunities, and so forth)?
  c. What do youth think of their educators and the quality of post-basic learning experiences?

Context of post-basic education in SSA

Defining post-basic education in the context of SSA

While there is no universally agreed definition of PBE, it is generally understood as a range of formal, informal and non-formal educational activities addressing people who have completed basic education, however defined, and need to complement their knowledge and skills. It is important to acknowledge that there are differences across SSA countries in terms of what is considered basic education. As a result, understandings of PBE also vary. In the International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO, 2011) basic education includes primary education, lower secondary education as well as a wide variety of non-formal and informal public and private activities intended to meet the basic learning needs of people of all ages**.** Consequently, in this synthesis report, PBE refers to all public and private activities intended to meet the learning needs of young people beyond lower secondary education or equivalent instruction. It, therefore, includes upper secondary and tertiary education, including university, post-secondary non-tertiary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), as well as other forms of training and capacity development interventions aimed at the youth.

Educating youth in SSA: A diversity of systems and conditions

The UN refers to youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Therefore, considering that the official age to enter primary school in SSA varies from 5 to 7 years old and the duration of primary education is from 5 to 7 years, most youth should qualify for enrolment in upper secondary or tertiary education. However, youth's experiences of PBE reveal significant differences in the age of entry and school trajectory. Some of the differences are caused by the structure of the education system adopted by each country. In addition to the variation in years of primary education, the duration of lower and upper secondary cycles also diverges. For example, some countries such as Zambia and South Africa have 2 years of lower secondary and 3 years of upper secondary (2–3 system). Others, like Burundi, Togo and Senegal have 4 years of lower secondary and 3 years of upper secondary (4-3 system). There are also countries with 2-4, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 and 4-2 systems (see Annex III). As a result, the duration of what is considered basic education and age of entry to PBE differs. This has policy implications and, as will be discussed in Chapter 1, may influence funding and access.

Another important source of differences pertains to the specific conditions of schooling. Learning opportunities are not evenly distributed within and across countries. For example, possibilities to pursue PBE are much fewer in rural areas, poor communities and conflict-affected zones. The quality of educational services can also vary considerably impacting the extent to which essential knowledge and skills are acquired and the likeliness they will be retained and used in daily life. Finally, individual differences have a significant influence on youth's access to education, their progression and whether they continue their learning or not. Some children begin primary education when they are older, some have to repeat grades, and others are promoted without fully mastering the content of the level they are at. All of these factors influence the desire and capacity to pursue PBE. Factors such as gender, socio-economic situation, health status, the language spoken, the support received at home, and so forth also have an influence on youth's aspirations and educational trajectories. These will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Partly in order to address the capacity gap resulting from high learning inequalities and the misalignment of school curricula with the job market's requirements, TVET programmes have emerged throughout SSA. Their importance is highlighted by SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4 as well as the African Union's release, in 2013, of an 'African TVET Strategy for Youth Employment' that focused on enhancing links between trades and education. While most SSA countries have a TVET policy that is focused on relevance and expanding access, many barriers still remain to enact effective TVET some of which will be presented in Chapter 3. In addition to TVET programmes, non-formal education (NFE) for youth often provides a substitute to the standard curriculum through second chance education, literacy classes or service-learning initiatives (Tsolakis and McCowan, 2013; Yasunaga, 2014). Accelerated education programmes are also important because they provide an alternative route to achieving foundational skills. NFE opportunities come in various forms and are often provided by NGOs or other organizations. This diversity allows them to better adapt to specific contexts and needs. However, their eclecticism makes collecting quantitative, cross-national data more complex, thus reducing possibilities of comparative analysis.

Learning gaps and participation in post-basic education

Even amidst the various efforts to make diverse sets of learning opportunities and programmes available to youth, many young people still do not have access to basic education, and the region experiences huge gaps in learning, even in some of the most basic skills. Learning assessments show that many students exit the basic education system without having gained core competencies in reading, writing and arithmetic. Youth illiteracy remains a major challenge for several countries. In comparison with other regions, SSA has the lowest youth literacy rate. In 2018, only 76.7% of SSA youth, ages 15-24, were literate, compared with 89.6% of youth in South and West Asia and 86.0% of youth in the Arab States. Within SSA, there is a wide disparity. In some countries, such as Botswana, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sao Tome & Principe and South Africa close to 100% of the youth population is considered literate. In the Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan and Guinea and Mali, less than half of the youth population had literacy skills (see Graph B in Annex IV).

Although progress has been made in the last 20 years, SSA is still the region with the lowest upper secondary and tertiary enrolment rates in the world (UIS, 2019). While SSA's average of gross enrolment ratio (GER) at upper secondary level has increased from 20% to 34% between 1999 and 2017, completion rates are still very low. At the tertiary level, for the same period, GER increased from 4% to 9%, a much slower progression than in other regions. Although youth's participation in vocational education is very limited globally (around 3%), SSA's participation has remained fairly constant with only 1% of youth enrolled in formal vocational education (see Graphs C, D and E in Annex IV).

Overview of the study design and methodology

This synthesis report is based on five regional reports prepared by UNESCO's Regional Offices in Abuja, Dakar, Harare, Nairobi and Yaoundé. As shown in Table 1, the reports incorporated 20 country case studies as well as information and analysis on 27 other countries in SSA including from UNESCO's Youth Survey (UNESCO, 2016). The objective of the country case studies was to understand local perspectives on educational attainment, benefits, challenges and prospects.

Table 1. SSA countries selected for case studies and by the UNESCO Regional Offices

Regional Office	Case study countries	Additional countries analyzed in the regional reports
Abuja	Ghana, Guinea, and Nigeria	Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo
Dakar	Mali and Senegal	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, and the Gambia
Harare	Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe	Botswana, Eswatini[8], Lesotho, Mozambique, and South Africa
Nairobi	Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda	Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Somalia
Yaoundé	Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo, Gabon	Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome & Principe

Source: Authors

8 Swaziland was renamed Eswatini in 2018.

The data used were collected from various primary and secondary sources using mixed methods. Initially, desk reviews were conducted to gather information on participation in formal and non-formal education in SSA. The main sources of data used were national education and employment statistics from the databases of UNESCO, ILO, and the World Bank. Extensive literature reviews, including peer-reviewed articles and reports from various organizations, were also undertaken by the authors of the background papers. These reviews formed the basis on which research protocols and data collection tools were developed. They also helped to better understand policies, issues and trends in PBE and provided relevant information to put data into perspective.

The qualitative data was collected using focus group discussions (FGDs) with youth in both rural and urban areas as well as individual interviews with youth and educators. Some workshops were conducted in English with the help of local research assistants who assisted with translation when required. For other FGDs and interviews, local languages were primarily used. More than 600 respondents from across the region took part in the case studies[9]. The number of participants in the FGDs were between 8 and 12 and included both women and men. In some cases, the FGDs were one-day workshops and in other cases, the discussions lasted for approximately two hours. FGDs were conducted at various locations such as schools and community spaces to ensure a wider coverage. A summary of the sampling is provided in Annex II.

Quantitative and qualitative data from UNESCO's Youth Survey (UNESCO, 2016) were also used. The survey contains data drawn from thirteen SSA countries on youth's perspectives on education, the barriers they face and their recommendations with regard to education. The countries include Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, and Zambia. The survey data were collected between 2009 and 2016 and engaged approximately 3,700 youth both in and out of school, employed and unemployed, urban and rural, male and female, youth with disabilities, youth affected by conflict, and youth affected by HIV.

Achievements and limitations of the study

While the perspectives and factors affecting the supply side of PBE policies are relatively well documented, less is known about the determinants of youth's demand for education and training. This study is the first of its kind to present youth's voices in an attempt to assess the relevance of educational provision and learning opportunities for youth (15-24 years of age) across the different regions of SSA. As such, it contributes to broaden our understanding of PBE in SSA. That said, the design of the study relied on literature to identify the themes included in the data collection tools. This means that there might be topics that are relevant to youth and education but were not addressed in the case studies.

The publication seeks to bring out the voices of the youth substantiated with the literature review and not to highlight all generic factors that may affect the youth and their education. Therefore, this study must be seen as a reference document putting into light some key regional cross-cutting themes rather than an exhaustive presentation of the concerns and issues captured in the

9 The number of participants in one of the focus group is unknown.

sub-regions. Some countries with unique issues are highlighted. However, challenges to PBE should not be generalized as it would lead to missing out on key aspects of youth's experiences. Each country has its own set of norms, cultures, linguistics, demographic, socio-economic and political climates affecting PBE.

As mentioned earlier, this publication synthesizes background studies undertaken in the sub-regions. It is, therefore, important to note that while the methodology was the same in all regions, there were some differences in the way data was collected and the quality of data varied across the sites. For instance, the participants were probed to expand on their answers, but it was not done to the same extent by all enumerators. The sample sizes were also different. Consequently, the breadth and depth of information were not the same in all the countries.

While respondents for the FGDs and interviews were selected to capture some of SSA's diversity in terms of location, economic means, age, gender, educational status and types of schools; it was not possible to meet with representatives from every school type nor could the participants fully capture the diversity of post-basic learning experiences of SSA's youth. The study aimed to be inclusive of youth with different characteristics. For example, individuals with disabilities were part of the sample. However, it was not possible to achieve the same level of diversity in all the regions and in all settings. While youth may face common challenges, they experience them in their own unique and personal manner.

Overview of the subsequent chapters

Youth's experiences are diverse and there were differences in the way the different case studies were conducted and documented. Consequently, it was not possible to cover all the aspects of youth's experiences in this synthesis report and the authors regrettably had to limit its scope to four main themes: financing of PBE, barriers to PBE, skills for work and life, and educators' capacities.

Chapter 1 discusses PBE's financing and how it influences equality in access. It begins by providing a general overview of the situation in the region including how demographic trends can influence PBE's delivery, how the costs related to PBE affect access, and why governments and development partners should increase their funding to PBE. Then it presents what participating youth said about economic inequalities, the challenges they face, and the negative impacts of their financial burden on their learning. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main financing challenges, some suggested actions to improve the situation and themes deserving further exploration.

Chapter 2 presents the main barriers to youth's participation in PBE and how they can be overcome. It starts with a presentation of the main trends and patterns in the region and discusses more specifically the participation of young women and vulnerable youth. Then, it presents youth's perspectives on the different barriers they face and what they feel is important to address socio-cultural, personal and physical barriers to PBE. It concludes with some recommendations.

Chapter 3 addresses the question of how to equip youth with relevant skills for work and life. First, it provides a brief overview of the situation in SSA and discusses the importance for PBE's curricula to be relevant to youth's employment and life needs. Secondly, it discusses what participating youth said about their aspirations, their motivations and their learning needs. Then, it presents youth's

perceptions of the relevance of PBE for work and life and how they see the main shortcomings of PBE. Finally, it presents possible paths to improvement and a list of issues that should be further explored.

Chapter 4 reflects on educators and how their capacities influence learning. It initially discusses the situation of PBE educators in SSA and the challenge of teacher shortage. After, it summarizes what the participating youth mentioned about the availability of educators, the quality of their learning experience and their opinion of the teaching methods used in class. It also summarizes the views of the few educators that were interviewed and concludes with suggestions to improve educators' capacities and the main themes deserving further exploration.

> Youth cannot be considered a homogenous category. While they may share common hurdles and challenges, the extent to which they are able to overcome hardship varies greatly. Youth aspirations, hopes and dreams are also diverse. So are the actions they are willing and able to undertake to achieve their goals. As a result, youth experiences will always be greater than what can be captured in a report.

Finally, the publication concludes by synthesizing the main findings of the study, including a summary of the key messages expressed by the young respondents. It also highlights some additional issues that should be considered when thinking about ways to improve PBE and presents the main recommendations that emerged from the study.

© UNESCO/Kattie Lussier

Chapter 1

Financing to promote equity in access to post-basic education

1.1 Introduction

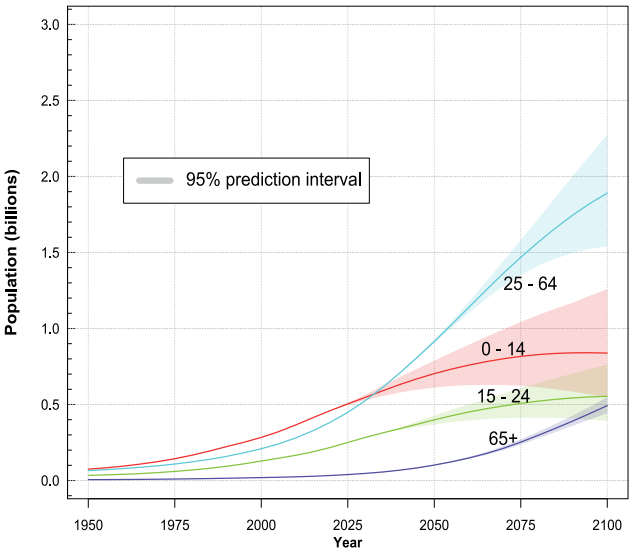
PBE can play a key role in enabling youth to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to make a contribution to society. That said, it can only make a difference if it is of good quality and can be obtained by a high number of young people regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity or other personal characteristics. Both conditions are dependent on sufficient financial means. Education service providers need sufficient financial resources to hire enough qualified educators, maintain their infrastructure, obtain teaching and learning materials of good quality, and provide the educational services that learners need. States need funds to develop and implement programmes that are relevant to youth and society's needs, to increase educators' capacities and to oversee the proper delivery of educational services. Consequently, the financing of PBE is critical to achieve equality in access and ultimately enable African countries to overcome the challenges they face.

This chapter will present an overview of the situation in the region in relation to demographic trends and their implications for PBE provision, the cost of post-primary education, government spending and the contribution of development partners. Then it will present youth's perspectives and recommendations on economic inequality and the financial challenges they face, the implications of their financial burden on learning, and the gender aspects related to PBE and financing access. It will conclude by summarizing the main challenges and good practices and present themes that deserve further exploration.

1.2 Regional overview and situation analysis

Keeping up with demographic trends: a challenging task for SSA countries

Figure 1. Sub-Saharan Africa: Population by broad age groups



Source : © 2019 United Nations, DESA, Population Division. Licensed under Creative Commons license CC BY 3.0 IGO. United Nations, DESA, Population Division. World Population Prospects 2019. http://population.un.org/wpp/

In 2000, there were 128 million youth living in SSA. Twenty years later, this number has risen to 217.7 million, which represents 19.9% of SSA's 2020 population. SSA's youth population is expected to continue growing throughout the remainder of the 21st century (see Figure 1). As more adolescents decide to continue their studies beyond basic education, governments and other providers of PBE services need to prepare for the inevitable rise in demand.

Many countries with rapidly increasing youth populations are struggling to provide quality education and training to their young people. In the Central African Republic, for example, where 38% of youth were literate in 2018, the youth population is projected to grow by 22% in the next 15 years. Similarly, Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Nigeria, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia are also anticipating rapid growth of their youth population in a context of low youth literacy and limited infrastructure. Africa's fast-growing population is both an opportunity and a threat. While 54.9% of SSA's people are within the working-age population (ages 15–64), 42.1% of its population is 14 years or younger (UNDESA, 2020). Although SSA has the larger share of the working-age population, it also has a very high proportion of young dependents[10], limiting its potential for a sustainable economic growth.

With more than half of the population under 20 years of age, proper financing of education in SSA countries is more important than ever. Yet, keeping up with demographic trends may prove

10 SSA's child dependency ratio, the number of dependents per 100 persons of working age, was 176.8 in 2020 (UNDESA, 2020)

particularly challenging for the PBE sector because both human and physical resources necessary to provide quality education and training are lacking. Across the region, the funds required to cover the implementation costs of PBE programmes are stretched to their limit. It is, therefore, unlikely that the actual financing mechanisms will be sufficient to properly support the expansion of services that such demographic changes mandate.

Towards affordable access to post-basic education in SSA?

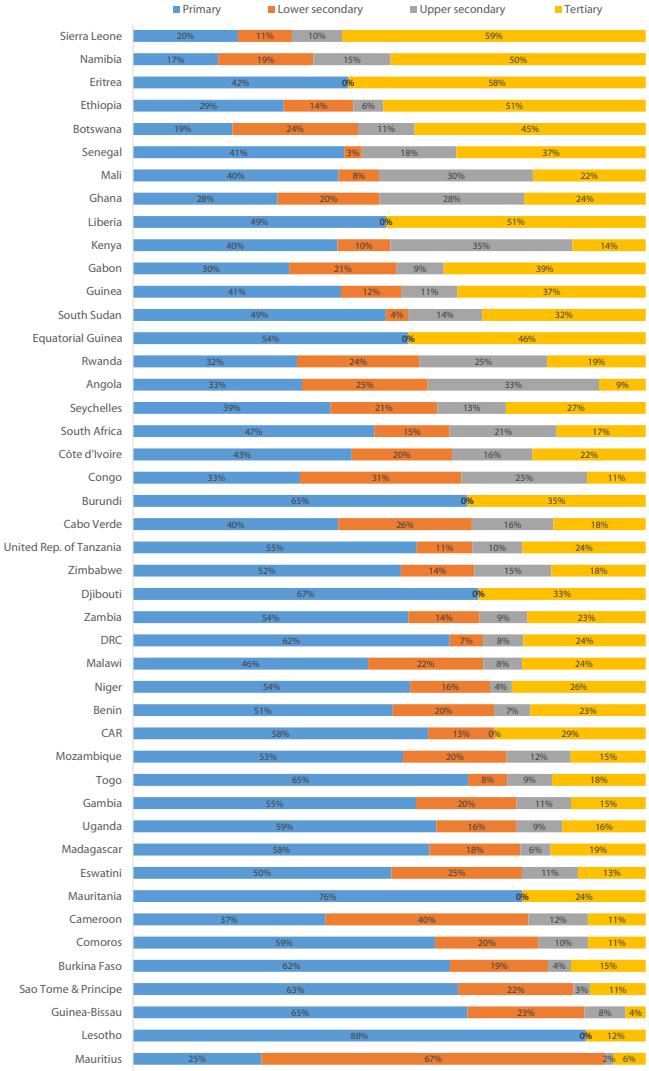
The costs of PBE can be prohibitive for a broad segment of the youth's population. This is particularly the case for young women, whose family often fail to recognize the benefit that PBE would bring. In all the countries where case studies took place, respondents mentioned financial constraints as a main reason for dropping out of school or choosing not to pursue further education. While an in-depth discussion of the costs of PBE is beyond the scope of this synthesis report, it is important to mention that there are a lot of differences between countries.

As of 2019, many countries, such as the Central African Republic, Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Mali, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal, Seychelles, and South Africa, offered free upper secondary education while 10 countries only pay for primary education (UIS, 2020). However, providing tuition-free secondary education in itself is rarely enough to guarantee access because there is often a range of other costs to consider as well. These vary by country and type of school attended but often include uniforms, school furniture, books and other learning materials, parents' association fees, travel expenses, and so forth.

Moreover, students from rural areas often have to pay for boarding houses or other types of accommodation because upper secondary and tertiary education are rarely provided in remote areas. The costs of vocational and tertiary education can also be prohibitive especially for youth from marginalized segments of the society. Affirmative actions and scholarship programmes have been put in place in several countries, but such interventions are still too few and they need to be expanded in order to take into account a broader range of factors of marginalization such as language, ethnicity, disability, and others. While legal frameworks guaranteeing free secondary education are an important step in the right direction, they are not sufficient. In order to raise attendance and enrolments in PBE in the region, other factors such as gender-related norms, the perceived value of education, as well as other social and personal determinants also need to be considered. These will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Consequently, ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, as per SDG Target 4.3, will require a variety of interventions therefore a significant investment from national governments and education partners.

Government spending on post-primary education in SSA

Figure 2. Share of government expenditure on education by level, primary, secondary, and tertiary (percentages) 1998–2018



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Sustainable Development Goal 4, http://data.uis.unesco.org/

One of the main reasons put forward to explain the failure to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals in 2015 was the lack of adequate financing (UNESCO, 2015b). In an attempt to prevent this happening again, the Education 2030 Framework for Action proposed two benchmarks to guide public expenditure on education. The first is an allocation of at least 4% to 6% of the gross domestic product (GDP) to education. The other is to allocate at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education. Out of the 46 SSA countries, 24 had government expenditure on education within or higher than the recommended range. Some countries, such as South Sudan, Zambia, CAR, and DRC,

invested less than 2% of their GDP in education, while Botswana, Zimbabwe and Eswatini invested more than 7% of theirs (see Graph F in Annex IV).

The distribution of government expenditure between different levels of education varies significantly from country to country as illustrated in Figure 3. In some countries, including Sierra Leone (69%), Namibia (65%), Eritrea (58%), Ethiopia (57%), Botswana (56%), Senegal (55%), Mali (52%), Ghana (52%), and Liberia (51%), the government invested more in PBE than in basic education. Among these countries, the share of the government investment in upper secondary education ranged from 0% in Burundi, CAR, Djibouti, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia and Mauritania to more than 30% in Angola, Mali, and Kenya.

Some countries devoted more than 50% of their government's education budget to tertiary education, including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Namibia, and Sierra Leone. These choices reflect distinct priorities and perceptions of the return on investment of the different levels of education. However, considering that the number of students attending tertiary education is much smaller than for secondary education, the public expenditure for a university student can be 10 times as high as for an upper secondary student. Such decisions are therefore too important to be taken lightly.

Although external support is still greatly needed for many SSA countries, it is also essential to identify ways to increase and better manage domestic funds. At the beginning of the decade, prospects were relatively good for the region and in some SSA countries with high natural resource revenues, aid dependency had begun to decline (Africa Progress Panel, 2013). However, SSA's economic growth has remained below three percent since 2015 due to insecurity, global trade uncertainty, weaker oil exports, price volatility, low business confidence, and shortages in national macroeconomic policy frameworks (World Bank, 2019). Some countries have also been facing problems with illicit financial flows (IFFs) that translate into a loss of domestic savings that could be used for education[11]. The World Bank (2020) also projects that, as a result of COVID-19, SSA may see its first recession in 25 years, with countries depending on mining and oil exports being hit the hardest. This is likely to put additional strain on national budgets and impact negatively on PBE funding.

The 2013/14 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) argued that resource-rich countries can make huge strides in education if they manage their resources better, improve redistribution measures and devote themselves to finance education. For example, countries, such as Angola, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, United Republic of Tanzania Uganda and Zambia could eliminate out-of-school children and improve PBE by using their natural resource revenues (UNESCO, 2014). Doing so may require better negotiating with multinational companies in order for governments to get a fair share of the profit, introduce risk-sharing agreements and impose royalties on production or taxes on profit (ibid).

To make the most out of their domestic funds SSA countries will need to strengthen their governance, improve transparency, eliminate corruption, enhance redistribution measures, better manage revenues and invest them in productive sectors such as education. Strengthening tax

11 Between 1970 and 2008, Africa lost 854 billion US$ in IFFs, which would be enough to repay their external debt and contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth (AU & UNECA, 2012). Reducing IFFs would increase national funds and these could be reinvested in PBE.

systems, diversifying the tax base and stopping illegal tax practices, especially for multinational companies, could also provide some of the financial resources that PBE requires (UNESCO, 2014). All the above measures necessitate competent civil services and with the additional hardship that COVID-19 brings to the region, SSA's future is more likely than ever to depend on the capacities of its people. The World Bank urges policy-makers and development partners to "***sow the seeds of future resilience***" in Africa (2020, p.80). We suggest that PBE is key to this endeavour because it is where most essential workers acquire their knowledge and skills.

The contribution of development partners

In order for SSA countries to reach the ambitious education goals set out in SDG 4, official development assistance (ODA) earmarked for education will play an important role. In 2018, ODA amounted to an average of 3% of GDP in SSA countries with the exception of CAR, Liberia, Malawi and Somalia where it remained high[13] (UNESCO, 2020a). While the international community recognizes the importance of education for sustainable development, the proportion of official assistance to education in Africa is still low. Globally, ODA disbursements to education reached their highest in 2018 with US$15.6 billion. Of this amount, SSA received US$ 3.7 billion. In 2018, only 7% of all multilateral assistance went to the education sector. Similarly, 9% of sector allocable ODA for SSA was for education (UNESCO, 2020a). While ODA is rising globally, its progression is still too slow to meet the SDGs and, so far, only 7 aid providing countries are meeting the recommended target of dedicating 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to development assistance. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion of ODA dedicated to education could decline.

International support to the education sector is distributed differently in each country. Among the 10 SSA countries who received the most education assistance in 2016, six allocated more than half of their aid to PBE (Table 2).

Table 2. Top 10 education aid recipient countries, US$ millions, 2016[12]

	Country	Total Education	Basic education	Secondary education	Post-secondary education	Share of PBE
1	Ethiopia	314	194	71	48	38%
2	United Republic of Tanzania	179	85	70	24	53%
3	Ghana	178	58	86	35	68%
4	Mozambique	170	105	38	26	38%
5	Nigeria	155	68	40	47	56%
6	Senegal	140	52	27	61	63%
7	Mali	112	64	22	26	43%
8	Malawi	106	64	17	26	41%
9	Cameroon	100	12	12	77	89%
10	Kenya	100	48	16	37	53%

Source: Adapted from UNESCO, 2018 (pp. 346-347)

12 Between 2015 and 2018 ODI for these countries exceeded 20% of GDP, on average.

Despite a small increase in 2017 and 2018, SSA's education ODA is still lower than it was a decade ago. In 2018, the SSA region received a total of 2.23 US$ billion in ODA for education which included 614.9 US$ million for post-secondary education, 228 US$ million for vocational training, and 110.6 US$ million for secondary education (OECD, 2020). While primary education still received the biggest share (699.8 US$ million), there were also big investments in higher education. During the focus groups, a high proportion of respondents said they would like to attend university, yet several thought their dream unrealistic due to a lack of funding. As pointed out by the Education Commission (2016), education aid is not always targeted towards those with the greatest need. For example, a large portion of funds go to scholarship recipients attending higher education institutions in donor countries. This can be problematic because while it benefits the individuals, it does little to support African universities and may, in some cases, contribute to the continent's brain drain.

In addition to longer-term development investment, SSA's education sector has an urgent need for humanitarian assistance. Schooling tends to be particularly disrupted in areas affected by conflicts and crises. Yet, peace in the region is far from achieved with violence intensifying in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, entrenched fighting in Northern Nigeria, peace deals hanging by a thread in South Sudan, CAR and Mozambique, and mounting political tensions in other countries. Sadly, SSA's education systems do not have the means put in place adaptation measures that would protect learners and educators alike, neither can they fully respond to the education needs of displaced populations. Donor countries should therefore increase the share of humanitarian assistance dedicated to education. When teaching and training establishments are closed for long periods of time, young people's learning trajectories are disturbed which significantly increases the risks of dropout and underachievement. While it is too soon to tell what impact the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic will have on PBE in the region, it is likely that the pandemic has increased the severity of the challenges already faced. It is therefore likely that substantial support will still be required in the years to come.

Households' expenditures for education

Even if governments provide free education, another important issue is household expenditure, which constitutes a significant source of education spending. These include costs of textbooks, supplies and transport, as well as other forms of payment to schools, including informal fees, contributions to parents' or students' associations, private school tuition and supplementary private tuition. The lack of reliable information on various households' contributions to education makes the analysis of education finance in SSA difficult. However, available data form UIS suggests that households may carry a large share of education expenditure in some low- and middle-income countries. Data on the contribution of households to secondary education expenditures is available only for 17 SSA countries so there is no regional average. However, household funding per secondary student in constant purchasing power parity dollar (PPP$) for the latest year available ranged from 24 PPP$ in Kenya to 637 PPP$ in Côte d'Ivoire and 2,018 PPP$ in Burundi (UIS, 2020).

In order for young women and men to take part in PBE, their families must often make important sacrifices. One way that family members support each other financially is through remittances, which are a considerable part of household income in many SSA countries. In 2017, within SSA,

Nigeria received the largest amount of remittance with $22 billion and Liberia received the largest remittances as a percentage of GDP with 27% (World Bank, 2018). Although lowering remitting costs could increase household education spending, effects of remittances on private spending vary (we do not know what households spend money on), and correlation between remittance and education outcomes are not particularly robust (UNESCO, 2018)..

1.3 Youth's perspectives on financing and equality of access to PBE in SSA

Financial inequalities: economic factors as a main cause of drop out

SDG4 expresses a commitment to free primary and secondary education (Target 4.1), as well as affordable and quality TVET and tertiary education, including university (Target 4.3), but fees remain one of the biggest barriers to youth's participation in education. During the FGDs, the reason most mentioned for not continuing education or dropping out was financial problems. Although several respondents were fortunate enough to have family members assisting them with the various costs of their studies, money was a genuine concern to participating youth in every country where a case study was conducted. The citations below are illustrative examples:

> I stopped school because I live and come from a very far neighbourhood. I need to take a lot of transportation. Transport costs are at least 400/500 ETB [Ethiopian birr] per month. I live in a place named Sululta, and before that I used to live in Kechene. It wasn't so bad when I lived there. My daily transport costs were from 3-4 ETB. But once I changed home, it became very difficult for me to pay that much every month. So that's why I dropped out. But I definitely want to continue my education if I can get enough money after this. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> Finance was the reason why I left school two years [ago]. It is difficult for me like other students to meet the daily expenses. [Laugh] most of the costs are high. Costs related to school fees and accommodation and daily cost for meals and other basic needs. (Youth from South Sudan)

> You know, there is a serious problem with books here. Many people give up going to school because they cannot continue to buy textbooks due to a lack of financial means. (Youth from Mali)

> I know some people who didn't go to school because they didn't get financial support, but they are willing to go now in order to achieve their goals in life if there is help, you know, to pay the costs. If there is no help, they can't go. (Youth from Ghana)

> It's a lot of stress. The school sometimes chases us from school when we have not finished paying the fees. (Youth from Uganda)

> Once the boys are married their parents stop feeding them as a result, they stop going to schools for them to keep their families. As a result of this, they fail to meet up with the financial requirements of schools and therefore drop out. (Youth from Nigeria)

Most of the students who reported that they would not be continuing education the following year attributed this to school fees and personal financial issues. However, as exemplified above, financial difficulties are not necessarily related to tuition fees. They include all the costs that a young person's family has to bear in order to make sure that learning conditions are met (books, learning materials, clothes, transport or accommodation, and so forth). This observation is important because it has a direct incidence on both access and completion. School fees can seriously undermine the chances of young people from poor families to be educated. That said, even with the same level of family income, youth may face unequal access. In urban areas, where post-basic educative services are more concentrated, it is easier for a young person to go back home after school, thus reducing costs. Youth from rural areas either have to spend on transport and meals or pay for boarding houses or shared accommodation. Those who are lucky enough to stay with relatives often have to repay such kindness by helping out around their host's house or business. Also, youth living with a disability or a medical condition requiring treatments may have to pay more for daily expenditures thus having fewer means to afford the expenses that their education entail. Financial inequalities among youth are therefore compounded by their personal, social and geographical conditions.

The data also highlighted the disparity between public and private schools. On average, one out of five SSA students enrol in private secondary schools. The cost and the quality of education provided in private establishments vary considerably and a higher price tag is by no means a guarantee of better teaching and learning conditions. Private schools, especially in the cities, take many forms. Some institutions are funded by a private trust, others have a religious affiliation. There are low fee private establishments with no quality assurance and others that are well endowed and accountable for their quality. The private provision of education poses an additional financial burden on youth and their families. Some parents find that public schools fail to provide the quality of education they seek and decide to pay more to send their children to the private sector. In other cases, youth and their parents opt for a private school simply because the public ones are full or simply too far from where they live. While private institutions play an important role by increasing the post-primary education offer, thus raising opportunities for youth to acquire the skills and knowledge they need, more has to be done in terms of quality control. Curricula and teachers' qualifications, in particular, need to be checked in order to make sure that the certification provided really has a value and that the qualifications obtained meet the expectations of both employers and society. Some respondents expressed frustration towards private institutions, perceiving them as undermining the opportunities of students from the public sector. Others, simply acknowledged the perceived difference in standard:

> There is a huge problem with private (non-government) and public schools here. Private schools are killing us. In private schools, students that have not even been learning for six months get great grades, get a scholarship and are sent to a better school abroad. They are hurting our chances at public schools. I really think the government needs to think about this. We are hurt. Not everything has to be about money. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> Some of these schools are private and so they are expensive and hard to access in terms of learning requirements. But the public, the government schools, they are not expensive, but they are of low standard. (Youth from South Sudan)

Governments should therefore put in place measures to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms for private and public providers and make sure that the distribution of public funds is equitable, so that marginalized and disadvantaged populations are not left out due to a lack of resources.

Sometimes, young people manage to financially get by until an unforeseen event threatens their economic situation. For example, if a parent gets sick and can no longer work, if a natural disaster destroys the family's crop, or if the household suddenly has to pay a dowry or a funeral, the funds on which the student depended on for his or her education are no longer available.

Consequently, many students do not pursue or do not complete PBE due to their families' economic hardship. The youth who took part in the FGDs identified financial assistance, such as the elimination of school fees and provision of scholarships, as the type of support most likely to enable them to continue their learning.

Some countries have already begun offering such support:

- **Eliminating fees:** Kenya abolished fees for secondary school resulting in increased enrolment from 1.2 million in 2007 to 1.4 million in 2008 (UNESCO, 2012). Ten other countries also provide free upper secondary education[13].
- **Providing student loans:** In United Republic of Tanzania the Higher Education Loans Policy assists students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds by providing loans to attend university. Similar initiatives exist in other countries as well.
- **Implementing affirmative actions:** to facilitate access to education for maginalized youth some universities in Ghana and other countries give special considerations to disabled students and provide them services to ease their access and increase their retention. Universities in several countries use affirmative actions to facilitate entry to certain programmes to youth whose chances of being accepted would otherwise be compromised. For example, some STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programmes accept women and youth from poor neighbourhood with a lower grade point average (GPA) to compensate for the poor quality of teaching they often receive in sciences and maths in their secondary schools.
- **Offering scholarships:** Some universities in Rwanda, Nigeria and many other countries offer scholarships covering full tuition, travel, housing, as well as a stipend to cover food and other living expenses for students from rural areas to pursue their post-secondary education. However, the demand for scholarships far outweighs their availability. Well targeted financial assistance and scholarships can increase access to education and narrow economic disparities in SSA, especially for women and financially vulnerable youth.

Other possible measures include:

- **Increasing payment flexibility:** It is a fairly common practice for schools to expel students who have not completely paid their fees until they do so. It is perceived as a way to encourage students to pay their tuition on time. However, this results in marginalizing poorer students who are forced to miss class or drop out completely. Increasing flexibility in the payment of school fees could help such students to complete their studies.
- **Providing alternative opportunities:** So far, only Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa

13 Central African Republic, Congo, Mauritania, Mauritius, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mali, South Africa, Senegal and Seychelles.

have a completion rate higher than 70% at lower secondary school. Without completing basic education, youth cannot move on to the post-basic level. Second chance schools and alternative education programmes are therefore particularly important to respond to the needs of youth who must supplement their basic knowledge and skills. Such programmes must recognize and adapt to the realities of older youth, including their need to work and offer flexible scheduling accordingly.

- **Funding and expanding TVET:** In many countries, TVET resources and opportunities are limited due to underfunding. Access to TVET programmes varies considerably depending on financial constraints and geographical proximity. Yet, they are important for youth to access decent employment. Increasing funding to TVET could therefore be particularly valuable.

An economic burden that impacts on learning and academic performances

Youth respondents from the East and West Africa regions, including those both in and out-of-school, talked about their involvement in non-academic work within and outside of their home. In SSA, very few families have access to organized childcare, paid parental leaves or other such services common in wealthier nations. Consequently, most youth have family obligations that include a range of activities such as household chores, collecting water, taking care of younger siblings, agricultural activities, or engaging in the family business. The prevalence of such tasks and their corresponding time commitment depends on several factors. The first is gender. Across the region, gender stereotypes are still quite strong concerning the domestic roles of men and women. As a result, young women often have a disproportionate workload compared to their brothers. Another important factor is the number, age and gender of siblings living in the house. Theoretically, the more children there are in a family, the more domestic tasks can be distributed. In practice, however, age and order of birth can matter a great deal. While there are a lot of differences between families, older siblings tend to be entrusted with more responsibilities. Similarly, a young man may be asked to help his mother clean the house or cook (roles traditionally perceived as more suitable to women) in absence of a sister of a suitable age to do it. More children also mean that family income dedicated to education must be divided into smaller parts, thereby reducing the chances of siblings to have all the materials they need to succeed in PBE.

> Many youth suggested that scholarships and financial assistance would encourage school participation, especially for women.

Often, the financial burden of a young person's education weighs heavily on his or her extended family. This presents many challenges for youth and their access to education depends largely on their family's financial situation and dedication to sending them to school. Many students who reported that they would be continuing their education in the upcoming year reported receiving a scholarship or sponsorship for school fees. Those who do not have such a chance have to engage in income-generating activities in addition to their studies. Both youth in and out-of-school engage in work outside their homes. Among the youth that engaged in non-academic activities, there were no clear distinctions between students in school and those out-of-school. In other words, students who were in school also took on work that wasn't different from out-of-school youth.

> Work affects my education because sometimes when you are attending to customers, at the same time you have to go to school, and it is a challenge for me. (Youth from Ghana)

> I do have to work [to pay for school]. I ride a ***boda boda*** (motorcycle taxi) to earn money to support my school needs. (Youth from Uganda)

> I sell charcoal to earn a living. No, [it doesn't interfere with school] but I have to plan my time well. (Youth from South Sudan)

> I sew clothes (tailoring) and this does not allow me to read at home. I apply my knowledge in Mathematics to take measurements while sewing clothes. (Youth from Nigeria)

> Yes [I work and study at the same time]. I have a boutique where I sell dresses. It interferes with my education because sometimes I have to go and look for some of the things and bring them into the shop which affects my education. (Youth from Ghana)

A study conducted by Burkina Faso's Ministry of Education revealed that domestic work has a negative effect on the results of post-primary students in mathematics and French (Burkina Faso. MENA, 2017). In our case studies, a little over half of youth respondents expressed that their work interfered with school and undermined their learning. They commented on the break of concentration it creates when they are called by their family members to do work. They also complained about lacking time to do their assignments, read and prepare for exams due to other obligations. Work is also a frequent cause of absenteeism. In more severe cases, work outside of the home became a major factor leading to drop out.

> I do farming and trading, these interfere with my studies because I do not have time to read at home after school. If one complains to his parents that he has an assignment and therefore wants to stay at home to do it, he will face the consequence of being withdrawn from the school. (Youth from Nigeria)

> Our household chores interfere with the schoolwork. They really disturb our studies. At times your parents will come and call you to join them to farm so you have to go. This disrupts us and makes us lose focus. (Youth from Ghana)

> In the morning I have to take care of housework, washing the dishes, washing clothes, etc. That is part of the reasons why I am frequently late in school. In the evening I also have many things to do so I do my readings very late and sometimes I am really tired. (Youth from Senegal)

> Yes, I do household chores like fetching water normally keeps me out of learning opportunities. For all of us housework activities usually overlap with our learning time. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

Financial considerations also affect the quality of education provided. Both youth and educators stressed the need to make school environments safer and more conducive to learning, which is difficult to do without sufficient funds. Underfunded post-basic institutions also lack teaching and

learning materials. For example, textbooks are often old and their number insufficient to meet students' demands. Vocational schools don't have sufficient tools and equipment.

> We have a big problem with school supplies here, especially books. If someone could equip our schools with books, it would help us a lot. Otherwise, we have to recopy entire books by hand in our notebooks. […] We lose a lot of time doing that and if someone makes a mistake, he studies the wrong thing. (Youth from Mali)

> Sometimes I feel demotivated to come to school because I know there are not enough teachers but what discourages me most in this school is the fact that we lack some equipment like during practical we don't have the tools we need. (Youth from Uganda)

> Sometimes the lack of equipment in the school can hinder our motivation. For example, if something breaks it is not replaced and it can take a long time before they fix it so during that time we cannot learn. (Youth from Senegal)

Many PBE providers also struggle to afford the wages of their staff, making the recruitment and retention of qualified and committed teachers difficult. The lack of well-trained educators is particularly acute in remote and conflict-affected areas. Even in cities, classrooms are often overcrowded rendering active forms of learning and formative assessment particularly difficult.

In many countries, the pay of teachers is low and the working conditions difficult. As a result, strikes are frequent, and teachers often feel the need to supplement their income by providing private tuition or taking a second job. In some cases, this results in a lack of preparation and absences. Teacher absenteeism, lack of materials and the poor quality of public schools' infrastructure are factors inciting parents to send their children to private schools even though the cost may be much higher.

The following measures could contribute to reducing the impact of financial struggles on learning.

- **Raising awareness of parents:** Many parents did not have the chance to take part in PBE. They are often unaware of the importance of their child to do assignments, read and study at home. Local initiatives by parents' associations in Burkina Faso have shown promising results in inciting parents to distribute domestic chores more evenly between their children and reduce their workload when necessary to increase their chances of success at school.
- **Organizing sessions to teach youth to better organize and manage their time:** Several of the respondents who did not think that their work interfered with their studies said that they were well organized and knew how to manage their time. Such skills are helpful throughout life; however, they are not always acquired naturally. Teaching youth simple concepts and techniques to help them organize and better manage their time could help working students to overcome some of the challenges they face.
- **Increasing the provision of quality textbooks and other teaching and learning materials:** Books and other learning materials are essential for youth to develop the knowledge and skills they require. It is therefore essential to keep them affordable and invest in libraries. Book loans and buy-back programmes should be put in place to reduce the financial burden they represent for students.

Gender, finances and access to PBE

While financial constraints affect all youth from a low socio-economic background, young women tend to be disproportionately affected. This is partly due to the lingering belief that men are meant to be the breadwinners and provide for their families, while women are supposed to take care of the house and the children. When placed in a situation where they have to choose which child will continue their education, many parents prefer to send their son to school because they expect that once a daughter gets married, she will move with her husband. Significant progress has been made and 23 countries have managed to bridge the gender gap in completion of primary education. However, in many SSA countries, investing in a son's education is still considered a better investment. Consequently, if a family doesn't have enough money for the schooling of all the children, the boys will be prioritized.

Youth reported that limited resources, overcrowding in schools, shortage of qualified teachers, and lack of safety were major barriers to learning.

The lack of funding in PBE also affects the state of school facilities. While the quality and cleanliness of toilets may not affect retention at school, having access to clean water and separate latrines can be important for young women and reduce young women's absenteeism during their periods.

> The school I went to have no separate facility for boys and girls. We used the same facility. It was not a good thing to share, in particular considering the needs of girls. The existing facility was having an inadequate water supply. Worst of all it was not clean. (Youth from South Sudan)

> The school has access to water from roof catchment, but we have to fetch water from the stream during dry spells and it takes time away from study because it takes one hour every day during the dry season. Yes, the latrines are separate but in bad condition. (Youth from Kenya)

While this study did uncover gender differences in youth's realities, some of them will be discussed further in Chapter 2, it did not manage to get the level of depth such a discussion might require. This is due, in part, to transcripts omitting the sex of the respondents. While more research is required to identify policies and measures to improve young women's experiences of PBE, the literature on gender and education suggests the following interventions can make a difference:

- **Multiplying community awareness initiatives** on the importance of young women's education.
- **Implementing affirmative actions** to facilitate young women's entry to non-traditional education programmes.
- **Improving data collection at national and institutional levels** to better capture gender differences in access, achievement and completion and how they intersect with socio-economic status.

1.4 Conclusions

The demographic trends in sub-Saharan countries have major financial implications because the growing number of children and youth also increases demand for education services. So far, education financing is not sufficient to meet all the needs. Analysts are therefore forecasting troubling times for PBE unless governments manage to put in place financing solutions that enable providers to meet the increasing demand. Although rising numbers of teenagers are expected to transit to PBE in the near future, government expenditure on PBE remains inadequate in several countries. Public spending on education is below international benchmarks in 22 SSA countries and higher secondary education remains largely underfinanced in spite of their need for specialized teachers, laboratories and other teaching and learning materials. While SSA receives close to US$ 3 billion a year in official development assistance for education, it accounts for less than 10% of the aid it receives, and the share allocated to PBE varies considerably between countries.

Due to the numerous crises in the region, international assistance dedicated to the education sector does not always reach youth with the greatest needs. It is therefore important, in addition to long-term development investments and support to economic diversification, to increase funding for education-specific humanitarian assistance, including contributions to global funds for education in emergencies such as Education Cannot Wait.

The costs of PBE are often too high for low-income families to afford and financial problems are the reason youth mentioned the most for not pursuing PBE or dropping out of school. Financial pressures force many students to engage in income-generating activities during their studies which reduces the time they can dedicate to assignments, readings and other course requirements. The situation is particularly problematic for young women in rural areas, who also have to do domestic work and are under constant pressure to get married and start a family.

Many participants also complained about the shortage of learning and teaching materials, in particular the scarcity of textbooks, the lack of qualified teachers in some specialized fields of study, and the poor condition of infrastructure. These influence the quality of the learning and the overall educative experience. Adequate funding will be critical to address such problems.

Youth respondents frequently called for more learning opportunities, especially for vulnerable populations who had been left out of the education system. The promotion of equal access to quality education must therefore remove existing divides based on sex, ethnicity, religious belief, geographical location and socio-economic status. While they did not expressly mention psychological barriers, some youth survey responses pointed to the psychological effects that certain beliefs have on attitudes towards individuals' capacity to achieve their goals. For example, in Angola, youth denigrated their education system which is believed to favour those who have connections or can pay for access rather than those who merit it. The same was also expressed around formal employment. One youth bluntly stated, "We study to learn; we pay to pass." Another stated, "There are people who are intelligent and work hard, but they don't get into university. The slot goes to those who have relatives who can pay. There are resources here but no opportunity" (UNESCO, 2016).

In order to succeed in making PBE affordable and accessible to all youth, business as usual will not work. It will require national governments and donors to think creatively and find innovative modes of financing. Solutions have already been proposed but their implementation will require a high level of commitment and leadership that will only be sustained if they are adequately funded. The pandemic has revealed just how vulnerable SSA's education sector can be, but it also highlighted the importance for essential workers to be well educated. Quality PBE is essential to make SSA countries more resilient to emergencies and therefore deserves to be better financed.

Suggested actions to improve the financing of PBE

The literature suggests that the following actions may help to improve PBE's financing:

(1) **Encouraging countries with low education investment to increase public funding to allocate at least** 4–6% of GDP to education, ideally by widening their tax base and preventing tax evasion.

(2) **Providing funds for alternative forms of education on a long-term basis** rather than on a short-term project-by-project basis.

(3) **Reviewing resource allocation between different levels of education** to ensure an equitable distribution and prioritize according to the country's needs. **National governments must plan and budget adequately for the transition from primary to upper secondary levels**, including the recruitment and training of an adequate number of teachers, and allocate them more equitably in both rural and urban areas.

(4) **Increasing external resources to support PBE on a long-term basis** and call for a Global Fund for Education with the aim of universalizing secondary education and broadening access to PBE in SSA. External **financing should be better targeted at supporting neglected subsectors, low-income countries and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups**.

(5) **Encouraging countries rich in natural resources to finance education from domestic revenues from natural resources**, ideally by eliminating corruption, preventing illicit financial flows, better negotiating with multinational companies, introducing risk sharing agreements and imposing royalties on production or taxes on profit (UNESCO, 2013).

(6) **Mobilizing and engaging the *diaspora* for educational development in SSA**, and work with the private sector to reduce the transaction cost of remittances.

(7) **Encouraging governments, communities, and the private sector to support more financial programmes** targeted towards youth with the aim of assisting them in reaching their educational and professional goals.

(8) **Strengthening monitoring systems to improve financial and programme accountability for all the stakeholders** to improve their delivery systems by eliminating obstacles and corruption to ensure the financial aid is accessible to the neediest and most vulnerable students.

(9) **Making PBE a pillar to develop future resilience in SSA**. Policy-makers and development partners need to factor the role that PBE plays in educating and training essential workers in their strategies to prevent future crises such as the one generated by COVID-19. Ideally, they should increase their funding to PBE programmes and establishments enabling youth to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to play an active role in times of emergency.

Box 1. Themes deserving further exploration

Financing PBE in situations of crisis

Several countries in the region are affected by conflict in at least part of their territory. These often result in school closure or high levels of absenteeism. It can also be particularly challenging to find qualified personnel to occupy positions in these areas. Even government officials are sometimes reluctant, or simply unable to travel to those regions to provide support and supervise educators. The cost of organizing such missions are also often higher. With questions of education financing in crisis-affected areas comes the challenge of making sure that funds provided reach where they are meant to go and are used for their intended purpose. The question, therefore, deserves further exploration and studies should be commissioned in an attempt to find viable solutions.

Impact of work on youth's academic achievement

The case studies conducted in three of the SSA regions clearly demonstrated that a majority of young people have to work in order to remain at school. Some studies on post-primary and higher education in SSA have documented the challenges that working while studying pose. However, much less is known about the actual impact of different forms of work on students' achievement in SSA and what can be done to increase the chances that working youth can both complete their education and develop the competencies they need to fulfil their goals. Further research would help to identify suitable actions.

Ways to reduce the vulnerability of PBE establishments during sanitary emergencies

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of education systems, but also the importance of PBE education and training in developing, amongst other things, the capacities of essential workers. Further studies should therefore be conducted in order to identify ways to make SSA's PBE more resilient and reduce establishments' vulnerability to sanitary emergencies. In particular, the financing of measures to protect young people and educators, including means to put in place remote learning opportunities adapted to the local context and socio-economic environment.

Source: Authors

Dominic Chavez/World Bank

Chapter 2

Breaking down barriers through appropriate infrastructure and inclusive policy implementation

2.1 Introduction

Equality of access is one of the key pillars of the SDG4. For example, SDG Target 4.3 promotes equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. Similarly, Target 4.5 focuses on inclusivity and seeks to eliminate gender disparities and provide equal access to all levels of education and training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations. This is in addition to Target 4.1 on universal primary and secondary education, which, while concerned with access, also focuses on completion and the quality of learning outcomes of primary and secondary education. Achieving these targets would ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. That said, promoting access and inclusion means proactively identifying the various barriers that individuals face in pursuing education, and then addressing them, in full acknowledgement of their complexities, through appropriate measures and equitable resource allocation. Therefore, access is not achieved by simply ensuring that every community has a school within reasonable distances, but by addressing the economic, socio-cultural, personal and physical barriers that individuals might face when taking part in the educational activities.

UNESCO's guidelines for inclusion and equity in education (UNESCO, 2017a) state that in order to ensure inclusion and equity for all students, it is important to acknowledge that the design of the education system and the way it is structured can lead to exclusions. It is therefore essential for PBE to be accessible to students with different needs, including ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees, people living with a disability or a chronic illness, and those marginalized by extreme poverty. Forms of teaching, the learning environment, and the ways in which students are supported and evaluated can all contribute to exclusions. The system, therefore, needs to change to accommodate the needs of all students.

This chapter will present the main trends and patterns in youth's participation in PBE and discuss, more specifically the gendered nature of participation and the involvement of vulnerable youth. Then it will present youth's perspectives on the different barriers they face and what they feel is important in order to address sociocultural, personal and physical barriers to PBE.

2.2 Regional overview: trends and patterns in youth's participation in PBE

The gendered nature of school participation

Education in SSA has improved on many aspects in the last 20 years, but participation in PBE remains low. At the upper secondary level, nine countries still have net enrolment rates (NER) lower than 15% and 15 countries have a NER below 25%. In the region, only Mauritius has a net enrolment rate over 60% (UIS. Stat. 2020). The completion rates of upper secondary schools are also problematic. According to UIS's latest available figures, only Nigeria has a completion rate of over 50% at upper secondary (59%) and 11 countries[14] have completion rates below 10%.

One of the reasons for the limited enrolment in upper secondary education is the low number of teenagers reaching the end of their lower secondary. An interesting indicator of potential continuation to PBE is the gross intake ratio (GIR) at the last year of lower secondary. In other words, the number of entrants into the last grade of basic education as a percentage of youth who have the intended age of entrance. SSA's regional average is 43.55%, the lowest in the world (UIS. Stat, 2020). This means that less than half of SSA teenagers who would have the age to enter the last year of lower secondary actually enrol. This has an incidence on the transition to PBE and, ultimately, on how prepared youth are to enter the job market. Encouragingly, some countries do a very good job at keeping children in school throughout their basic education. Nine SSA countries have a GIR at the last year of lower secondary above 70% including Botswana (98%), Comoros (97.54%) and Angola (91.16%).

That said, the situation is not the same for boys and girls. The regional average of the gender parity index for the GIR to the last grade of lower secondary is 0.89% which means that there are much fewer girls than boys entering the last year of basic education. Consequently, girls have fewer chances to continue to PBE. There is, however, a lot of diversity between countries. Statistically, parity between boys and girls is achieved when the gender parity index (GPI) is between 0.97 and 1.03. In SSA, 17 countries have a higher intake of girls than boys, eight countries have an intake parity and 20 countries have more boys than girls with a GPI varying from 0.40 in Chad and 0.97 in Sierra Leone (see Graph G in Annex IV). Such a high level of variation raises a lot of questions. While economic, social and cultural factors most definitely play a role, they cannot explain everything. More attention should therefore be placed on the effectiveness of the national policies put in place.

More male students are enrolled in upper secondary schools in most SSA countries, but in 17 countries, such as Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Lesotho, Mauritius and South Africa, more female students are enrolled than males. When it comes to completion rates, however, while they are very low for all students, only eight countries have more girls completing their studies. This is less than half the countries where more girls gained access. Gabon has gender parity in completion and 34 countries have GPI below 0.97 which means that more male students complete upper secondary

14 These countries are Sao Tome and Principe, Benin, United Republic of Tanzania, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, South Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger.

(see Graphs H and I in Annex IV). While regional averages are not available, national data shows that girls who manage to enrol at upper secondary level, overall, have fewer chances to complete their studies than boys in the same situation. In the region, more girls of the upper secondary age are out of school (regional GPI average of 1.10) except for 10 countries where the number of males out of school is higher and 6 countries where there is gender parity (See Graph J in Annex IV).

When it comes to tertiary education, the differences between countries are important but overall SSA's tertiary education is still not well developed. The regional average of tertiary enrolment was only 9.03% in 2018. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) in the region ranges from 0.82% in Malawi to 40.6% in Mauritius. Only five countries (Botswana, Cabo Verde, Namibia, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa) have a GER higher than 20%. Once more, women's participation is significantly lower with a GPI average for SSA of 0.74. Only eight countries receive more women in the tertiary sector. They include the five countries with highest enrolment (See Graph C in Annex IV).

While looking at the gender distribution of enrolment at the tertiary level is important, it is also critical to interrogate patterns of admission and completion in different programmes. Even in countries where women seem to be doing better than men, if women predominantly gain access to programmes leading to lower-paid careers, or if women have lower prospects of employment after graduation, access to tertiary education in itself will not equate to gender equality. Similarly, it is important to investigate further the way different structures of exclusion, such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, immigration status, and so forth intersect with gender to shape educative opportunities. For example, earlier studies conducted in Ghana and United Republic of Tanzania (Morley and Lussier, 2009) have shown that even in university programmes with a relatively high number of women, when intersecting gender and poverty, the number of women shrinks considerably. At the moment, data to conduct such analysis is scarce. PBE providers and national governments should therefore make an effort to collect gender-disaggregated figures not only at the school level but by programme of instruction.

The proportion of youth enrolled in vocational education is below 5% in every country aside from Cameroon and is higher for men (see Graph E in Annex IV). Enrolment in post-secondary non-tertiary education is also very low, with 20 countries having a gross enrolment rate below 5%. Seychelles is an exception with a GER of 49.3% in 2016. Gender-related disparities also appear here. These may be related to the nature of the programmes offered. Considering the importance of TVET and non-formal education to youth's transition to employment, it appears important to make the sector more attractive to youth and to strengthen informal and traditional apprenticeship systems who have substantial value but remain highly gendered and class-based.

Box 2. Second chance schools

Some non-formal learning initiatives also include 'second chance' schools or schools for students who have interrupted their cycle, started late or face other barriers. In Ethiopia, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, out-of-school programmes run by government, NGO or faith-based organizations help to keep learners engaged. The flexible nature of these programmes, which include sports and arts, combined with the absence of male peer pressure and bullying often found in formal schools, enable female youth's active participation and self-discovery. Female youth also shared that their relationship with programme educators are better than with formal schoolteachers.

For more information, see Ahmimed (2017). Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370912/PDF/370912eng.pdf.multi

Participation of youth from vulnerable groups

There is little reliable data on education of youth from vulnerable groups because their situation hasn't been systematically monitored by governments. Approximate figures from the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that there are roughly 1 billion people worldwide living with some form of disability, most of them in low-income countries. In 2011, WHO estimated that the number of children living with a disability was between 93 and 150 million. Assuming that those estimates were right and that the majority of those children survived until now, we can realistically expect that the number of youth living with disabilities is within a similar range. However, we know almost nothing about their education status. Young people living with a disability or a chronic health condition are rarely mentioned in access and retention statistics making it difficult to know how many of them manage to participate in PBE. The stigma associated with such conditions and the lack of recognition of these people by society, especially in low-income countries, contribute to the information gap.

Similarly, official lists of enrolment do not include information on poverty, which makes it difficult for education providers to disaggregate data based on socio-economic status. Of course, there are ethical issues related to the collection of personal information, but the lack of specific data makes it difficult for service providers and governments to put in place adequate measures to increase participation of vulnerable youth.

Another vulnerable group is refugees and internally displaced people. SSA hosts more than a quarter of the world's refugees and according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the continent has over 6.3 million refugees originating primarily from the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and South Sudan. Violence in some parts of Nigeria, Burundi, Mali, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia also caused forced displacements. There were 17.7 million internally displaced people in Africa at the end of 2018 (UNHCR, 2019). With 57% of the affected population under 18 years of age, the provision of education to displaced children and youth is particularly challenging. Globally, only 61% of refugees attend primary school, and 23% take part in secondary education. These figures fall to 50% and 9% respectively for refugees in low-income countries. Only 3% of refugees are enrolled in tertiary education (UNHCR, 2019).

Box 3. Providing online tertiary education to refugees in Rwanda

In order to help youth from the Kiziba refugee camp in Rwanda to study towards their associate and bachelor's degrees, UNHCR and Kepler have put in place a blended learning university programme. An online tertiary education platform pairs digital content from an accredited US university with a team of expert local teachers.

This programme is part of the joint UNHCR-UNICEF-UK aid Humanitarian Education Accelerator that also provides internships, on-the-job learning and professional skills training to help graduates preparing to enter the workforce to develop soft skills in leadership, language and computer literacy

For more information see UNHCR (2018). Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5e4ff98f7.pdf

Natural disasters, such as famine, floods and droughts, have also uprooted many families from their homes and are being exacerbated by climate change. This will continue to have repercussions on populations' mobility choices especially among vulnerable communities. A study conducted among refugees in the East and Horn of Africa revealed that many of the refugees noted shifts in weather in their home countries over the past decade, such as prolonged drought, disrupted rainfall patterns and intense flooding. These weather changes had tangible negative impacts on their farming and livestock. Many studies have shown a correlation between climate change and violence, the refugees consulted said these conditions worsened pre-existing conflicts (Afifi et al., 2012). Migration from rural to urban areas has left city planners with the challenge of meeting the educational needs of large numbers of slum dwellers. Refugees often arrive with low education levels to countries with limited resources. As a result, host countries' capacity to provide educational services are stretched to their limit. For example, refugees from South Sudan in Uganda settled in the poor West Nile region, where the secondary net enrolment rate was only 9% in 2016, less than half the national average (UNESCO, 2018).

2.3 Youth's perspectives on barriers to PBE

Socio-cultural barriers to PBE

Even though enrolment has improved across the region, PBE remains unattainable for many youth in SSA. Responsibilities in the home as well as social and cultural barriers, such as norms that effectively discriminate against females, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and linguistic minorities are among the common barriers standing between youth and their educational and career goals.

Youth respondents from across SSA noted that a young person's gender, in conjunction with socio-cultural traditions and family pressure, is a significant factor enabling or preventing access to PBE and opportunities for employment. This is largely attributed to economic factors and sociocultural norms, because families often have different expectations for their sons and daughters' futures (UNESCO, 2016).

The young women who took part in the focus groups mentioned various reasons to explain why girls are significantly more likely than boys to drop out of school. The first is unplanned pregnancies. Girls who become pregnant outside of wedlock face social stigma and are often teased or even bullied. They sometimes fear that teachers would look down on them if they went to school.

> My friend was studying but got pregnant from school and she was 17 years of age, so she dropped out at S2. (Youth from Uganda)

> Some girls prefer to give up after having a child in order not to be teased. Boys and even other girls can be mean to them and call them bad things. (Youth from Mali)

The childcare responsibilities resulting from pregnancy are another major obstacle to education and employment for young women. The belief that the care of a baby is the mother's responsibility is still widespread in the region, which means that even when they are around, young fathers rarely share the burden that comes with a newborn child. Since it is not customary in most SSA countries to send your child to the nursery, young mothers who do not have a family member to take care of their baby often see no other alternative than to drop out of school.

The study respondents also identified early marriage as a significant barrier to continued education, especially for girls since the pressure to get married and have children is stronger for young women. According to UNICEF (2020), 37% of young women in SSA marry before they reach their 18th birthday. In some countries, it is the majority of young women. For example, in Niger 76% of women are married before adulthood, in CAR 68% and in Chad 67%. In this study, several youth mentioned marriage as a reason for girls to drop out of school. In all the countries where FGD took place, respondents said that girls get married younger than boys with girls sometimes getting married as young as 14 or 15 years old. While several respondents said that it is possible for both boys and girls to continue to study after marriage, there was no consensus regarding who was more likely to withdraw even among respondents from the same country, as illustrated in the quotes below. A newly married man may withdraw in order to work and provide for his wife. A newly married woman may withdraw, willingly or not, to have children and take care of her husband.

> In my community, girls marry at 15 while boys marry as old as they wish. In my village girls can continue with school after marriage. I have a sister who continued with school after marriage. So, it depends on the type of husband a girl is married to. Even me, my husband has given me the go-ahead to go back to school if I wish which I am presently preparing for. (Youth from Nigeria)

> I know girls do not continue with education after marriage while the boys continue. I have not seen any girl who continues with school after marriage. I have seen like three boys who continued with their school after marriage. (Youth from Nigeria)

> Once the boys get married, they do not continue. The girl if her husband knows the importance of education, she can continue. (Youth from Nigeria)

> For a girl, the age of marriage is from 18 and boys from 25 and so on. Most girls do not continue with school after marriage because of home activities or getting a child but boys can continue. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

While both male and female youth experience challenges when they try to continue their education after getting married, their situation is perceived differently by society. Young men are expected to earn money to take care of their families which can either motivate them to stay at school in order to increase their chances of getting a better job or, on the contrary, push them to find a job right away thus abandoning their education to provide for their spouse. Young women are expected to dedicate themselves to have children once married and, as mentioned earlier, the decision to return to school or not generally depends on their husband. Youth from Benin also discussed the phenomenon of human trafficking of youth, more specifically girls sold by their families in order to earn money (UNESCO, 2016).

In order to reduce child marriage, many countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, Botswana, and others have introduced legislation preventing youth from marrying before they reach the age of majority. However, the extent to which such legislation is enforced varies. Some of the respondents also commented that youth, especially in rural areas, are often unaware of the laws. For this reason, even in countries with legislation against child marriage, underage weddings are still preventing girls from continuing their education.

> According to Ethiopian law, underage marriages are not allowed. Of course, there are still underage girls that are getting married in the countryside, but this is not going to continue for much longer in Addis Ababa. Addis has changed since the past, we are more developed now. Ethiopian law states that any girl under the age of 18 is not allowed to get married. Those that know the law can avoid this. Not to say that everyone is aware of this law, but this is what it is. In the countryside, there are some girls who are already spoken for before they are even born because of an agreement their families have made. This is how some of society thinks. But in Addis Ababa, it is important for both partners to consent and be of age. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> There are so many colleagues like us who dropped out of school due to many factors like financial constraints, insecurity, conflict. However, the majority of those who dropped out at primary level are due to early marriage or forced marriage for young girls at the age of 13 to 18 years. They don't continue [to study] because they have to commit themselves in family responsibilities. (Youth from South Sudan)

> Among us, the Peuls, the girl is given in marriage at a very young age and some of us are even raised by our mother-in-law. Me, personally, I moved to my home when I was only 12 years old. (Youth from Mali)

> It was a forced marriage that forced me out of school. But now my husband is willing to allow me to return to school. With this I can say that I do not foresee any challenge to my completion. (Youth from Nigeria)

The social pressures that youth face after they reach puberty can also lead them to drop out of school. Some respondents commented on the difficulties of focusing on education once they started thinking about the opposite sex. Beyond the awakening of sexuality commonly experienced by youth globally, there is also the pressure to comply with gender stereotypes and behave the way your peers expect you to. This includes dating and finding a suitable person to marry. For youth having to leave their families to attend PBE in the city, the added freedom is both an advantage and

a threat. Living independently can enable youth to make their own life choices and learn how to be autonomous. However, some parents, fearing the disgrace that an unwanted pregnancy would bring on the family, sometimes prefer to withdraw their daughter from school rather than taking the risk that she begins having sexual intercourse once in the city.

> When a boy begins to have stories with girls, his knowledge decrease and his thoughts are divided between school and girls. He is no longer able to focus on school. (Youth from Mali)

> I know a girl, she was my relative, both her parents died early so she didn't have anybody to help her. She rushed into early sex and got pregnant. Even our custom didn't allow that, but because of her stubborness she didn't take our advice. […] Yes, she had to quit school. (Youth from Ghana)

> Honestly if you're a man, I don't think anyone cares whether you've gone to school or graduated or dropped out. Nobody expects anything from you. But if you're a female, you have to sacrifice those things to finish school because if you're not in school as a woman, you're immediately expected to get married. I mean [people think] you can't do anything else useful. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> My cousin dropped out of school and he regrets it. He was influenced by friends that were not going to school. (Youth from Senegal)

Social norms are often rooted in patriarchal values and beliefs. For example, in the study conducted in the southern Africa region, some respondents reported that people in Zambia often perceive girls as having fewer intellectual capabilities than boys. Similarly, girls in Malawi said they were less productive than their male colleagues due to mental and physical weaknesses (Ahmimed, 2017). Another common belief that undermines girls' chances to achieve their educative goals is the perception that girls are not good at maths. The consequences of such stereotypes should not be underestimated, because, on the one hand, they affect girls' self-confidence and the perception of what they can achieve, and, on the other hand, they can result in teachers and parents demanding less from female students or providing them with less support than they would give to male students. While women are often victims of biased perceptions, their expectations of men and how they see their role can also be stereotyped. As exemplified in the quotes below.

> Yes, a girl can get married with or without a job because she will be taken care of by her husband. Men, on the other hand, have to make sure, they have to wait until they are financially stable. (Female youth from Senegal).

> Most times in our society, the man is expected to be the breadwinner so there's more pressure on him to be educated and working. Even if women are not educated it is okay since in our culture, their role is mainly in the house. (Female youth from Ethiopia)

Studies conducted in Burkina Faso and Mali also revealed that, in general, young women have much less time to study at home than their male colleagues because they have more domestic tasks to perform. Sometimes, female students are so busy during daytime that they can only study and do their school assignments when it's dark. This is problematic because their fatigue limits their concentration and reduces their retention. For young women living in houses without electricity, this

is particularly worrying because they are sometimes forced to study under streetlamps which makes them vulnerable to aggression. (Burkina Faso. MENA, 2017; Mali. MENA, 2018)

> At home I take care of my siblings. I have four of them. They are all younger. I cook, I also fetch water and firewood. I clean the house too. […] I have things to do before going to school and when I come back. (Young woman from Uganda)

> I do subsistence farming and charcoal making. In our culture men don't cook or fetch water. The farming time is in the morning. (Youth from South Sudan)

Other gendered traditions, such as initiation ceremonies, can increase the likelihood of disengagement from schools. In the youth survey (UNESCO, 2016), female respondents from Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia explained that traditional practices and coming-of-age traditions marking the entry into adulthood can prevent girls from returning to school because of the long periods of absence caused by such ceremonies. In the case of Malawi, the initiation rites were widely interpreted as a sign that young women were physically ready for sexual activity, and with parents fearing unwanted pregnancies, the daughters were often withdrawn from school once they reached puberty. For boys, such initiatory rites of passage often involve being circumcised by a person without proper medical training. In some countries, initiation camps can last several weeks, and the respondents who talked about them said they were interfering with their studies. Participants mentioned instances where young people come back to school after the initiation but have fallen so much behind academically that they cannot catch up and eventually drop out. In the southern Africa study, youth also mentioned stories of boys dropping out of school to join the ceremonial dancers that were part of the ritual (Ahmimed, 2017). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is another example of initiation with often harmful consequences on girls' health and education. One participant pleaded for authorities to stop the practice.

> [The government] has to stop those who are performing FGM practises for girls because it takes time for a girl to heal and she will not be attending classes during this time. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

Another cultural barrier mentioned by survey respondents has to do with intergenerational dynamics, more specifically the expectation of deference towards older persons. Although the situation differs between countries, youth are generally expected to respect the opinion of their elder and expressing disagreement can be perceived as an act of defiance. For example, mentioning a mistake from the teacher in class can be seen as impolite and worthy of punishment. With little opportunity to voice their opinions, youth often feel a lack of decision-making power even when it concerns their own life. Youth from Burkina Faso reported that they were not consulted in major decisions since the strong social framework of the family is based on values of obedience, discipline and respect. Rwandan youth said that they lacked opportunities to express their ideas and collaborate with key decision-makers. In most countries, respondents argued that the status of youth in society is generally quite low (UNESCO, 2016).

Some existing initiatives have proven to be effective to address barriers to education:

- **The involvement of parents' association in awareness-raising campaigns** has contributed to initiating shifts in mindsets regarding early marriage and the importance of education (Burkina Faso. MENA, 2017).

- **The Gender Responsive Pedagogy model** developed by the Forum of African Women Educationalists is helping teachers from different countries to better understand gender issues in their classroom, reduce their belief in gender stereotypes, and identify ways to better respond to the gender-specific needs of their students. Over 6,600 teachers have been trained since 2005 and the model has led to improvement in girls' retention and performance, greater participation of girls in the classroom, and improved gender relations within schools[15].
- **The inclusion of a gender theme in the Education Sector Support Programme** in Kenya helped to ensure that education policies would actively take gender into account (UNESCO, 2017b).
- **The Gender Budgeting Initiative** in the United Republic of Tanzania has helped to reduce the time that girls spend to fetch water thereby increasing the time they can dedicate to studying at home by providing communities with water facilities (UNESCO, 2015b).
- **The production of gender-sensitive teacher training material** by the Commonwealth of Learning and UNICEF helped to promote gender inclusive education delivery in Botswana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zambia and other sub-Saharan African countries (UNESCO, 2017b).
- **Menstrual Hygiene Management programmes** have contributed to improving retention and grade promotion for girls while addressing harmful beliefs and taboos surrounding the issue (Burkina Faso. MENA, 2017).

Other suggestions were also made:

- Some youth suggested **using participatory approaches and community volunteers to raise community awareness on socio-cultural barriers to education** and explain how supporting young people's participation in PBE can benefit the community.
- Eritrean respondents proposed **training more female teachers** in order for PBE providers to be able to hire more women.
- **Making access to childcare easier for students who have children** by opening nurseries close to schools and training centres.
- **Enforcing legislation preventing early marriage**, particularly in rural areas.
- **Developing educators' capacity on gender responsive pedagogy**.

Personal barriers to PBE

Personal characteristics can also act as barriers to PBE. For example, a person's immigration status can prevent enrolment in school. Living with a disability or a chronic health condition can limit access to classes and school attendance. A student with learning difficulties may struggle to succeed unless some adaptations are made. An inclusive education system should be able to address the needs of such students. However, in SSA, responding to special needs is a major challenge.

Youth living with disabilities need the opportunity to be fully contributing members of society. This can be possible if they have access to quality education and healthcare. Unfortunately, they are often left out. In the UNESCO Youth Survey, respondents with disabilities said they had never attended PBE. This was confirmed by other youth in the surveyed communities (UNESCO, 2016). Out of 47 youth respondents with disabilities in Liberia, 27 reported having attended some formal

15 http://fawe.org/our-programmes/interventions/gender-responsive-pedagogy/

education, but only 19 went beyond primary school. Very few have received assistance related to their disabilities or were members of an association for people with disabilities. When asked what they would prefer to do as an alternative to begging, training and schooling were the most popular choices. Only six out of 47 respondents with disabilities reported facing discrimination because of their disability but due to the small number of respondents, further research would be needed to fully appreciate the extent of exclusion they face. It is also important to realize that youth living with disabilities are not a homogenous group and different forms of disabilities bring different challenges and needs. For example, it may be easier for a school to accommodate a student with a missing arm or leg, than it is to address the needs of a blind person.

Unfortunately, there are still preconceived perceptions about the intellectual capacities of youth from marginalized groups and the role they can play in society. They often face intolerance in the community and sometimes even in their family. Prejudices are sometimes perpetuated in schools by peers, teachers and even administrators.

> Schools that have classes for children with special needs are viewed in a negative way. (Youth from Zambia)

Some health conditions are also associated with stigma and marginalization. For example, while HIV and AIDS was not mentioned during discussions with youth in West and East Africa, respondents from southern Africa commented on the additional hurdles that students with HIV and AIDS have to face such as discrimination and being ridiculed in class, having to take time off of learning to receive medical treatments and collect medication and the visible side effects from treatments.

> When you are HIV positive, you will just die of loneliness and isolation. (Youth from Namibia)

Sickness can also lead to poor academic performances due to absences. For some youth, going back to school after missing several classes can be particularly difficult, especially without remediation measures or support from teachers. This raises the need for extending the availability and supply of second chance and bridge programmes that could allow youth to come back to school and continue their education.

> I stopped going to school because I got sick for a little bit of time, and then when I got back, I had missed a lot of classes. I could not make the grades. I would love to go back to school (...) There's nothing like school. (Youth from Ethiopia)

Epidemics can also pose a significant threat to education. During the Ebola crisis, many youth were deprived of education. In Sierra Leone, schools were closed for eight months. During that time, young people began engaging in other activities and many simply dropped out of school. Other ailments such as water-borne diseases are also frequent in the region due to lack of sanitation and often impede on education. The data from this study were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore not possible to present our respondents' view about this crisis. However, the pandemic has highlighted just how vulnerable SSA's education systems are. When schools began to close around the world, wealthy countries began shifting their classes online but that was simply not an option in SSA where 89% of learners don't have access to the internet. Fortunately, remote delivery of education has been used in SSA for a long time, for example, radio broadcasts have been used

successfully for basic education in countries such as South Africa, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, Zambia and Sudan but so far, they are rarely used for PBE. Mobile phone applications and television broadcasts are other potential means of distance learning, but measures would need to be put in place to reduce the risk of further excluding youth from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, displaced youth are particularly vulnerable. Due to their migration status and the instability of their condition, they are often prevented from pursuing their studies. The compact for young people in Humanitarian Action report recommends that young refugees have access to quality education that spans from primary to tertiary levels and includes both formal and non-formal education (Agenda for Humanity, 2016). In a crisis, education brings a sense of normalcy. However, refugee camps often lack qualified teachers, established TVET programmes and adequate secondary school infrastructure. The curriculum should support the psychosocial needs of the students by providing conflict-sensitive educational content. Beyond conflict, people are also likely to be affected by natural disasters such as landslides, floods, drought, and so forth. Experiences of crises have a disillusioning effect on youth, making it more difficult for them to believe that their aspirations are attainable. During the focus groups, out-of-school youth from areas affected by conflict expressed uncertainty and disenchantment. Youth's experiences from South Sudan, in particular, shed light on the devastating consequences of conflict on their capacity to aspire, and mentioned the need to provide learning opportunities for youth in a targeted manner.

> The ongoing conflict displaced us from [our] town and since then [I'm] not attending school. (Youth from South Sudan)
>
> I do not think I have dreams for the future. I am still waiting for some new opportunities. (Youth from South Sudan)
>
> We [the youth] are very disadvantaged. Conflicts have deprived us of many things, which we thought would give us a better life. However, we see what is happening in South Sudan. Many youth are unemployed. (Youth from South Sudan)

Examples of approaches put in place in SSA to address personal barriers to education according to UNESCO (2015d):

- **Strengthening legal frameworks** to assert and protect the right to education of youth from vulnerable groups. (Ethiopia)
- **Mainstreaming inclusive education** into all teacher training programmes. (Ethiopia)
- **Inspecting and improving educational facilities** to make education more accessible to youth living with a disability and remove physical obstacles that could prevent them from enjoying their right to education. (Mauritius)
- **Instituting a special monitoring team within education ministries** to monitor the implementation of the right to education of students from vulnerable groups. (Mauritius)
- **Organizing awareness-raising activities** on the right to education for all and how youth from vulnerable groups can contribute to society. (United Republic of Tanzania)
- **Developing special programmes for youth living with disabilities,** including education programmes conducted in sign language and using braille. (United Republic of Tanzania)
- **Providing education in refugee camps.** (Rwanda)

Other measures that should be put in place:

- **Organizing anti-discrimination campaigns at the school level.**
- **Mobilizing all school actors** in the protection of the rights of students from vulnerable groups.
- **Investing in information technologies** and broadening internet access to enable youth with special needs to access knowledge and to provide an alternative means of instruction in case of school closure.
- **Providing financial support** to the schools that need to provide special services such as sign language and braille.

Physical barriers to PBE and learning

Many youth respondents mentioned problems related to educational infrastructure. The first barrier is the location of PBE services. Youth from remote areas often have to travel long distances to reach schools or leave their families to stay with a relative, in a boarding home or in a rented room. Because of their location, schools in rural areas also have problems recruiting qualified teachers, particularly in specialized topics such as sciences which can limit the quality of instruction.

The primary modes of transport mentioned in East and West Africa were walking and riding bicycles. Some youth, especially in urban areas also reported using public transports, riding motorcycles and cars. The time respondents from the focus groups required to reach school varied from ten minutes to two hours. However, 10% of the respondents to the survey reported travelling from two to five hours. A few respondents had dropped out or knew of other youth who had dropped out due to distance to schools.

Teachers reported that the long commutes of students to reach schools located far out of town represent a danger, especially for girls, who sometimes have to leave school earlier in order to walk home before it gets dark.

> The education site is not easily accessible due to distance. For example, I live at Kagobole which is very far off our school, you need to cross bushes, [in] previous days we used to meet wild animals like hyenas which is more dangerous. [. . .] It takes me 2 hours to reach school. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

> Generally, there are challenges against the motivation of one to attend classes regularly. The factors include insecurity and transport issue because many have to travel far [to go to class] and teachers don't teach regularly, also there is economic hardship currently in South Sudan. (Youth from South Sudan)

In addition to the location of schools, youth also raised the issue of transport infrastructures such as roads and community transportation that may further restrict access to education. Further inquiry would be needed to really understand the extent to which the time needed to travel to school influences absenteeism and retention.

The second physical barrier reported is the inadequacy of infrastructure including lecture halls, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and so forth. Some respondents mentioned the need to create school environments that can enhance learning. Not all youth were dissatisfied with the quality of their

school's infrastructure. However, the data highlights some recurring problems such as overcrowded and ill-equipped classrooms. Many youth saw overcrowding as a significant constraint to their education. A situation exacerbated by shortages of resources and learning materials. For example, according to the survey, Tanzanian classrooms have on average only one textbook for every five students. In Zambia, secondary schools lack space in nearly all districts and a classroom can hold up to 170 pupils (UNESCO, 2016).

The last physical barrier mentioned by youth relates to water and sanitation facilities. The provision of separate toilets and latrines for boys and girls is important to keep girls in school and promote gender equality. For this reason, many countries have included the provision of improved water and sanitation facilities for girls in their plans to improve girls' attendance (Fast Track Initiative, 2017). However, many schools still lack running water, adequate sanitation and electricity, especially in rural areas. Youth from West and East Africa noted that while most schools have access to gender separated latrines, the facilities are often not maintained properly or need refurbishing. This sometimes discourages youth from using the facilities at all.

> Latrines must be rebuilt at our school. They are in very bad condition and don't have doors. There is just a wall between the latrines of the boys and those of the girls. (Youth from Mali)

> No, the toilets are out of use. They are too dirty and have no doors. We use the toilets of the neighbours instead. (Youth from Guinea)

> Poor sanitation and hygiene in schools can lead students to miss school, particularly female students whose biological needs require these facilities. (Youth from Zambia)

Most of the schools visited in the East and West Africa country case studies have access to water, although the channels through which they receive their water vary from taps, boreholes, streams and roof catchment for the rain. Some of the educators interviewed reported that access to water facilities were sometimes affecting student attendance.

> Yes, it has a borehole in the compound but due to overusing; the water table is now low. But the borehole has gone a long way to support attendance. (Educator from South Sudan)

> We rely on roof catchment when it rains. In dry spells, students fetch water from the stream. They are affected as they lose some time. (Educator from Kenya)

In response to physical barriers, respondents suggested the following:

- **Investing in public transport** to reduce the commuting time of students.
- **Improving sanitation facilities** in schools and make hygiene products available to help girls attend class during their menstruation.
- **Reducing the number of students in each classroom** to enhance the learning experience.
- **Increasing the budget allocated to the maintenance of school** infrastructure.

Other possible interventions:

- **Facilitating the purchase of bicycles by students** through the provision of small loans or buy-back initiatives.

2.4 Conclusions

SDG Target 4.5 urges education actors everywhere to eliminate gender disparities and provide equal access to all levels of education and training to the vulnerable. The young people who took part in this study faced various challenges and identified key barriers that must be addressed in order to reach this target. Socio-cultural barriers include stereotypes about gender roles within a family, social pressures related to marriage and pregnancy, social norms around puberty and initiation ceremonies as well as inter-generational dynamics. Personal barriers to PBE include disabilities and chronic health conditions, immigration status, being part of an ethnic or linguistic minority group, and other forms of social exclusion. Physical barriers include the location of PBE services, the inadequacy of infrastructure, and the quality of water and sanitation facilities. All these factors increase the probability of adolescents dropping out of school.

Barriers to PBE can be overcome and equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education (SDG Target 4.3) can be reached but in order to do so, several measures must be put in place. It is essential to raise parents' awareness of the value of enrolling their teenage girls in PBE instead of urging them to marry early. Education actors also need to increase the number of schools that welcome and are equipped for the participation of children and youth with disabilities. Governments must make sure that there are multiple entry or re-entry points into different types of formal and non-formal education to guarantee that everyone, including youth who may have previously dropped out or who have never been in school, have opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that will improve their livelihoods and capacity to participate in civic life. To increase access and inclusion, it is also necessary to make PBE as affordable as possible. As stated in Chapter 1, primary and secondary education should be free, and tertiary education should be affordable. For example, abolishing user fees can have a tremendous positive impact on access, as has been the case in Kenya, for example. Significant efforts will also be required to build and upgrade educational facilities in a way that takes into account the different needs of youth and by providing safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all as proposed in SDG Target 4.a.

Suggested actions to increase access to PBE

(1) **Making upper secondary education genuinely free**, **and TVET and higher education affordable** by increasing financial assistance and scholarships.

(2) **Improving infrastructure to enhance the learning environment,** including the construction and retrofitting of lecture halls, classrooms, laboratories, libraries and spaces for technology.

(3) **Supporting community transportation initiatives** to make the journey to school safer and reduce student's commuting time.

(4) **Providing safe sanitation facilities** separate for boys and girls and making sure that they are maintained adequately.

(5) **Strengthening legislation preventing child marriages** and enforcing them even in rural communities.

(6) **Strengthening legal frameworks** to guarantee the right to education of vulnerable youth.

(7) **Removing physical obstacles and introducing technology to help integrate youth with disabilities** into mainstream education, including through access to low-cost glasses, large-print books, hearing aids, and initiatives such as labs for the blind and text-to-speech technology.

(8) **Developing laws and policies for continuation and re-entry to education for pregnant students** and raising awareness of these instruments among communities, girls, teachers, and school officials. (HRW, 2018)

(9) **Giving a higher priority to issues faced by vulnerable populations**, such as orphans, youth with disabilities, displaced people and refugees, and people from ethnic or linguistic minorities.

(10) **Working with telecom and hardware companies to expand outreach** to rural and remote places including access to the internet.

Box 4. Issues deserving further exploration

Drawing a more comprehensive portrait of vulnerable youth

Unfortunately, there are several groups of youth that haven't been given the attention they deserve in this synthesis report. They include, among others, youth from ethnic and linguistic minorities, orphans, LGBTQIA+ students, and youth belonging to other groups of people facing discrimination or social exclusion. This is mainly due to a lack of national and institutional data and the fact that some groups were not mentioned at all during the data collection. Their absence in itself is valuable information because it highlights the need for national governments to collect data about their situation and prompts education partners to conduct more comprehensive studies about their situation, their needs and their aspirations.

Identifying possible actions to meet the needs of youth with learning difficulties

Anecdotal information suggests that across the region, youth with learning difficulties are given little attention in schools and often go unnoticed in a sea of underachieving students. Confronted with large groups, teachers have little time to adapt their interventions to learners with special needs and often lack the knowledge and skills required to so do. Considering that some countries have extremely low success rates, studies should be undertaken to better understand the prevalence of learning difficulties in SSA, identify good practices and propose interventions that are adapted to the region.

Exploring the Intersection between gender and other characteristics

Statistics can easily mask the complexity of patterns of exclusion and over-representation of women on some programmes may hide absences in others. Similarly, women are not a homogenous category, and even in countries where girls have a high level of enrolment in PBE, certain subgroups may still face significant difficulties to access and complete their education. The intersection between gender and other characteristics such as socio-economic status, age, belonging to a minority group, and so forth should be explored. Institutional data on access, completion and achievement should also be disaggregated based on different structures of exclusion in order to make such analysis possible.

Inclusive distance learning strategies adapted to SSA's PBE

COVID-19 has put pressure on PBE providers worldwide to put in place distance modes of teaching and learning to protect educators and learners from the pandemic. However, making remote education accessible to all learners can be particularly challenging. The issue should therefore be further explored in order to identify mechanisms to provide distance PBE services that are inclusive, affordable and adapted to SSA's context. This is important to make PBE systems more resilient to future crises.

Source: Authors

© UNESCO/Kattie Lussier

Chapter 3

Equipping youth with relevant skills for work and life

3.1 Introduction

One of the main purposes of education is to prepare for work and life. Youth who decide to pursue PBE generally do so in order to enhance their employment prospects and increase their chances of living the kind of life they aspire to. However, studying longer does not necessarily lead to improved well-being nor does it guarantee that a person will fulfil his or her dream. In this study, we sought to explore how youth perceive PBE in relation to their plans for the future. What are the ambitions of SSA youth? Are the PBE options available really enabling them to develop the capacity needed to reach their goals? What are the challenges they face with the current offers and what else would they need? Given the diversity of youth experiences this chapter cannot provide a complete picture of the situation in the region. However, the views expressed by the study's participants are helpful to paint a broad picture of the situation and identify key areas of concern that deserve to be further explored.

First, the chapter will provide a brief overview of the situation in the region and discuss why the alignment between what is taught in school and what is needed for employment and life matters so much in the SSA context. Secondly, it will present in more details what youth said about their aspirations, what motivates them and their perceptions of the learning opportunities they need. Then it will present how youth perceive the relevance of PBE for work and life followed by what they think the main problems and shortcomings of PBE are. Finally, it will present possible actions that could improve the relevance of PBE accompanied by a list of issues that should be explored further.

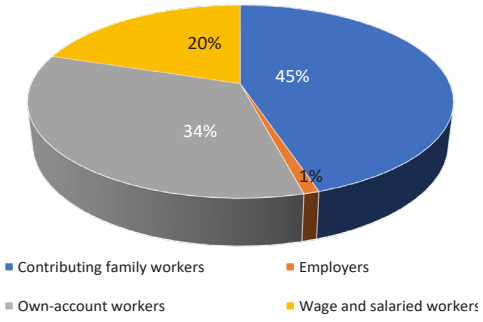
3.2 Regional overview and situation analysis

Equipping youth with relevant, work-ready skills and support to respond to the changing world

Young people are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed than adults. According to ILO (2020a) this is due, in part, to their limited work experience, which reduces their chances when competing for entry-level positions, as well as the higher turnover rate among youth attempting to access better jobs. The youth unemployment rate in SSA was 8.7% in 2019 (8.2% for males and 9.2% for females). Although it has remained fairly stable over the last decade, the sharp increase in youth population and large numbers of youth in the labour market means that there are a million more unemployed youth now than there was in 2010. As a result, more young people compete for the jobs that are available to them. Youth unemployment in SSA has been compounded by the intersection of multiple issues affecting their lives. The most perverse are poverty, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and dropouts from secondary school. These circumstances are exacerbated by conflict, political instability,

weak governance and effects of climate change (Walker et al., 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the world of work to an extent that may take years to fully appreciate.

Figure 3. Employment status of youth in SSA (percentages) 2019



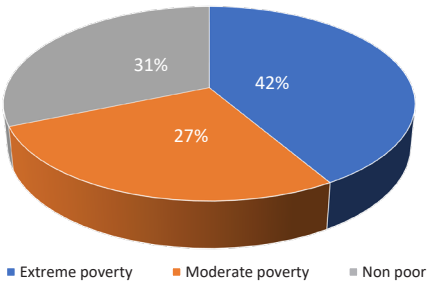
Source : Adapted from ILO, 2020a, p.43

Youth also tend to have jobs associated with socio-economic vulnerability because they often work on their own account or contribute to family work (Figure 3). Both of these situations provide limited income stability and social security coverage. Working poverty among youth, although it has improved, is also very high. In 2019, young workers in SSA were the most likely to be living in extreme poverty. There were 38.6 million young people (41.5%) living on an income below US$ 1.90 per day. Meanwhile, over a quarter of young workers, that is 25.3 million, were in moderate working poverty (Figure 4). This means that many young people are earning enough not to be considered extremely poor, but still not enough to leave poverty (ILO, 2020a).

The potential of youth in the region is not being fully harnessed. The rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) was 19% in 2019 and was much higher for women (23.5%) than men (14.5%), signaling the high proportion of young women staying at home. Those figures are likely to increase given the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on sub-Saharan African economies. Youth that are NEET are not developing the kind of skills and experiences that the labour market values. As a result, they are less likely to secure the kind of work that would allow them to exit poverty. It would be tempting to assume that youth NEET should simply stay at school longer. However, data from ILO suggests that the prevalence of NEET status in SSA tends to be almost constant across all levels of education, which means that promoting higher education will not be enough to solve the problem. There is also a need to create more employment opportunities for youth with a higher level of education. The capacity mismatch between the labour supply and demand needs to be addressed too (ILO, 2020a).

Figure 4. Working poverty rate of youth in SSA (percentages) 2019

Another indicator that youth represent a missed opportunity for SSA countries is their labour underutilization, or combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force. It was 16.1% in 2019 and nearly 4% higher for young women (ILO, 2020a). It shows that the demographic dividend made possible by the expansive growth of the youth population is yet to materialize, which is problematic because these young people are not contributing to their respective countries' economic development. Youth



Source : Adapted from ILO, 2020a, p. 46

are unemployed for various reasons. Some of them simply do not know where or how to look for a job. Others are just waiting for opportunities that match their aspirations. Occasionally, when youth fail to find work they get discouraged and begin to think that there is nothing out there for them. Finally, other young people cannot work due to family responsibilities, a medical condition or a disability (ILO, 2020a). Over 90% of entrepreneurs in Africa are in the informal sector (UNESCO, 2020a), which means that these microenterprises need workers with knowledge and skills that are relevant to their specific situation in order to survive. In this context, it is critical for youth to be well prepared for employment.

SDG Target 4.3 is a call to provide equal access for all to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, which imparts job skills and stimulate critical and creative thinking. SDG Target 4.4 further emphasizes the importance for such skills to be relevant for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. Reaching those two targets could significantly increase youth's opportunities to achieve their employment goals.

One of the indicators of Target 4.4 is the proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills. ICT skills are considered particularly important because of the changing nature of employment and rapid pace of technological innovations. Increasingly, even daily communication requires basic ICT skills, and the number of professional and life situations where such skills are required will only continue to grow in the future. The specific skills that have been monitored under Target 4.4 so far vary in complexity. They include being able to send emails with attached files; copy or move a file or folder; connect or install new devices; create electronic presentations with a presentation software; find, download, install and configure software; transfer files between a computer and other devices; use basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet; use copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document; and write a computer program using a specialized programming language.

While the role of ICT skills is now recognized worldwide, they remain unevenly distributed. Wealth disparities are particularly acute and further inequalities can be attributed to age and gender. So far, data on the proportion of youth and adults possessing the different skills mentioned above is only available for seven SSA countries. These are Botswana, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Niger, Togo and Zimbabwe. On most skills, the results are very low. In all these countries, less than 30% of the target population has sent an email with an attachment. Cabo Verde and Botswana are doing slightly better on the skills of moving and transferring files and folders and using the copy and paste tools (between 30% and 40%). However, it is clear that basic ICT skills are still extremely limited for the majority of the population. Although the number of countries for which information on ICT skills is available is too low to draw regional conclusions, the scarcity of computers and electronic equipment in SSA schools makes it reasonable to assume that youth from other countries are also lacking those skills. This, therefore, raises the question of how best to address this gap?

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is meant to address the skills requirements of the workplace and can therefore play an important role in the preparation of young people to the labour market. Data on TVET programmes in SSA is limited[16]. ILO (2020a) estimates the average rate of youth participation in TVET in the region to be around 1% with young men being more

16 As of June 29th 2020, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics had TVET data for only 21 SSA countries. The average rate of youth participation in those countries was 3%.

strongly represented. Such a low level of participation is problematic because skilled trades and technician roles can be hard to fill for employers. Youth are therefore missing on opportunities that could potentially be life-changing. The availability of TVET programmes varies by location and their duration, mode of delivery and cost depend on the trades taught and the service providers. With the increasing mobility of staff and learners, the comparability, recognition and quality assurance of qualifications have become growing areas of concern.

3.3 Youth's perspectives on knowledge and skills for work and life

Motivation, aspirations and needs for learning opportunities

In order to appreciate the extent to which the PBE opportunities offered to SSA's youth are adequate to support them in the remainder of their lives, it is important to understand their ambitions and hopes for the future. When youth were asked about their goals and aspirations, they often responded by stating professions. Most of the respondents mentioned jobs involving some form of service to others such as doctor or medical worker, teacher, nurse, engineer, various forms of civil service as well as successful business people.

When youth discussed their aspirations, it was clear that role models were influential in shaping their goals and identifying the professions they wanted to pursue. In most cases, role models had character traits and qualities that youth valued and desired. Overall, the respondents admired their family members. Fathers and mothers were role models frequently mentioned. Youth also mentioned uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, and in fewer instances, cousins. Below are various examples of what youth from different countries said about their role models.

> My father [is my role model], because apart from the family stuff he really takes responsibility for the things he's involved in. He also always takes initiative to start and do things. He's a person I look up to because I want to be just like that. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> I am inspired by my uncle. He was a lawyer well known for his intellect and hard work. I wanted to be like him, but I could not continue with education. I still want to be a police officer. (Youth from South Sudan)

> I am studying dressmaking to be like my mother. She is really good at it and works really hard. She advises me on good behaviour. (Youth from Kenya)

Few youth referred to well-known personalities such as national heroes, political figures, athletes or people they had seen on television.

> Dr. [name][17] is my role model. He used to educate the community on general health issues on a TV channel. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

> My role model is Ms [name] an architect – she was a true inspiration for people who wanted to go into architecture. For starter, she's a woman that chose architecture which is not usually a field known for women in Ethiopia. The things she did were exceptional and notable. (Youth from Ethiopia)

17 The names of individuals/schools/organizations have been replaced by [name] to protect their anonymity

Many youth talked about people they admired in their community as a source of inspiration. Sometimes these people led them to continue their studies but, in some cases, their personal situations did not permit it.

> My role model is mister [name]. He is knowledgeable. He had a pharmacy but presently he is doing something else for the benefit of people. I intend to be like him and do even more than what he did in terms of education. (Youth from Nigeria)

> My role model is our pastor. He is a kind and loving person. He teaches gospel songs to youth and the songs always touch the hearts of many believers. He inspired me to take music training, but I have no money to enrol. (Youth from South Sudan)

> Yes, I have a role model whose name is [name]. She is a hairdresser and I want to become like her. (Youth from Ghana)

> There is a community member, mister [name] who is a businessman and well educated. He has a high standard of living. He is a leader in most community work. He is very popular and rich. He pays his fee and gives advice to youth. (Youth from Kenya)

> In my village I admire mama [name]. She is kind and takes care of orphans. She is a hard-working lady. She is such a wonderful person who smiles with a big heart to serve. (Youth from South Sudan)

Sometimes, youth meet a person once and decide to follow in his or her footsteps.

> I want to be an architect in construction. I had this experience when they were constructing under EXCEL. I met someone from the construction company. He was called [name] and he said he could get a lot of money [from his work] so he advised me to study to get technical skills. (Youth from Uganda)

> I met a person who has established a lot of businesses and is managing them by himself, so I want to be like him. (Youth from Ghana)

Teachers were also mentioned several times.

> [My role model is] the electrical instructor at the school. He is disciplined, teaches well and practises what he teaches by opening a cybercafe in the community. He is an entrepreneur. He has a different lifestyle from the rest of the people because of his hard work. (Youth from Kenya)

Some respondents also talked about colleagues who had done well.

> I want to become a teacher because when I sat for O level I did not continue with school. There is someone whom I sat with and he is now a teacher enjoying life. I also want to be like him and enjoy my life. (Youth from Uganda)

The reasons that youth gave for admiring their role models include the services and help those people provide to others, admirable character and qualities, professional or technical skills, and the way youth perceived that person's success (professional, personal or financial). The comments

respondents made about role models during interviews and focus groups show how one's environment and surroundings can influence personal dreams and goals.

Role models were influential in shaping youth's aspirations, revealing how important environment and surroundings are in the discovery of personal dreams, goals and choice of profession.

Beyond professions, many respondents expressed a desire to help others. Some talked about their duty to give back to their village, their community or their country but helping their family members and being able to support their own family one day was the aspiration youth mentioned the most and the main reason for them to pursue education. This stemmed from a keen awareness of their families' financial situations. When asked about their life prospects, youth answered with a strong sense of service for others and their community. The life dreams often mentioned are fighting poverty; doing work that has a positive impact on society; setting up businesses or organizations to support the poor and orphans; and improving their families' lives as well as their own. Learning a skill, completing studies, or securing a job were mostly mentioned as a means to an end.

Some respondents perceived their dreams to be conflicting with gender norms. For example, one female respondent from Malawi said she would like to be a politician despite what her community considers appropriate for women. Another young woman in a TVET afterschool programme in Nigeria was seeking ways to enter a medical profession. Unfortunately, many young women are unaware of all the possibilities they have because they only see women in a limited number of professions. Exposing girls to other models of successful women can therefore be particularly powerful in helping them to look beyond traditional career options.

> I chose to become a medical doctor because it impresses me if I see female doctors. I know one female medical doctor called [name]. She is from my community, but she lives in Zaria now. (Female youth from Nigeria)

The range of professions mentioned by youth during the focus groups was somehow limited. This seems to indicate that aspirations are shaped by the opportunities and professions that lie within a young person's awareness. However, to be able to follow the global pace of technological and scientific advances, the region will need a diversity of professionals beyond traditional career paths. It would therefore be worthwhile to take measures to expand youth's level of awareness of career opportunities and promote non-traditional role models. Evidence from the survey also suggests that youth can become jaded in their belief that education and hard work can lead to better opportunities as they move through the education system. In Kenya, for example, 83% of youth with only primary education believed that they would succeed if they worked hard, compared to only 50% of youth with postgraduate education (UNESCO, 2016).

The decisions that youth made about their life trajectory, including the choice of continuing PBE or not, were not influenced only by income and employment prospects but also social status. For example, youth respondents from the East and West Africa regions expressed mixed feelings on the take-up of agricultural work. Some youth saw farming as a default profession, something they could easily go back to if other things did not work out. For others, however, succeeding in agriculture was their life goal.

> I like farming because my region is a green belt in South Sudan with plenty of natural resources and minerals. I would like [to] have a huge farm of thousands of acres of agricultural land. (Youth from South Sudan)

In the southern Africa regional study, secondary school students from rural areas thought there was a gap between what they aspired to and what they could realistically achieve considering real employment opportunities.

A majority of the young people who took part in this study saw education as a means of personal and social advancement. For them, achieving their dreams meant completing their studies to be able to get to their desired job and eventually achieve their goal. They frequently mentioned that they wanted to continue their education, go to university, complete their studies and pass their exams. Unfortunately, for many youth, this was not a guaranteed path and, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, many obstacles stood in their way. The desire to continue education was common among all the groups of youth met during this study, whether they were currently in formal education, non-formal education, second chance/bridge programmes, vocational programmes or out-of-school. It stemmed primarily from the recognition that their desired professions and jobs require achieving certain degrees. However, some respondents expressed concerns about employment opportunities. In the Southern African region, both female and male participants agreed that PBE was not enough to obtain decent jobs. Some youth also considered delaying their tertiary education in order to engage in farming and community work to earn money and a reputation, as well as to gain some technical skills through computer courses before joining university.

Youth's motivation and aspirations were often derived from altruistic feelings. They wanted to help others, including their family and community.

When asked what they considered to be the most valuable knowledge and skills to achieve the future they desired, youth from the East and West Africa regions mentioned technical skills as their top priority followed by soft skills and sometimes character or personality traits necessary for success. The answers from the different respondents were closely aligned with the profession they hoped to practise one day. The technical skills talked about related to the following fields: fashion, finance, entrepreneurship, marketing accounting, medicine, engineering, architecture, mechanics, teaching, ICT, construction, carpentry and agriculture. Youth also highlighted the importance of soft skills such as interpersonal skills, time management, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability, decision-making, conflict resolution, respect, leadership and other social skills. Finally, they brought up personal qualities such as patience, independence, courage, respect, confidence, diligence and discipline.

> The most valuable thing I ever learned here is that one has to be independent, courageous and confident in doing things in a different way. Above all, I learned to show respect to my teachers, parents and schoolmates. (Youth from South Sudan)

> I think the best skill is my trial and error and my acceptance of criticism. In our society, we're always so worried about doing things perfectly and it ends up in us becoming conformists, doing everything the same as one another. Be okay with failing! We don't have to self-destruct in order to be perfect. We can try things and

> be accepting of whatever people say and try to improve. Don't always stay in one place, try to change. (Youth from Ethiopia)
>
> The most valuable thing I have learned is health education, I have learned at secondary school and I normally apply this knowledge in my daily life. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

The answers that youth gave when questioned about the most valuable thing they had learned from their studies were nearly the same as above but in addition to these skills they also added an understanding of the real world such as knowledge related to the environment, disease and health, gender relations, and children's rights. They also talked about self-worth (believing in oneself, confidence, self-reliance, self-awareness), communication, critical thinking and academic knowledge such as reading, languages, mathematics and research. Some respondents shared that their most important lesson came from outside the classroom. These included lessons learned from families such as the importance of hard work and being 'your best self' or that money is not everything.

> I didn't learn the most valuable thing in my studies or in this programme, but in my old life, when I lived a hard life. Near the Ministry of Education, this professor used to come out of his car, and I was a shoeshine boy. I used to shine his shoes for him. And every day he would talk to me about different things. One day he told me: "Anytime you want to change the way your life is headed you first have to believe you can do it. If you think this is all that life has to offer you, then you can continue as normal. But if you want a better life, you have to believe that you can do it." He used to teach me different things like this. (Youth from Ethiopia)
>
> For me, the most important is my knowledge of the Koran. It helped me a lot. I have learned it from a young age and now people come to me asking for Koranic reading. (Youth from Mali)

The youth who took part in the study also shared their needs and the learning opportunities they wanted. These ranged from broad categories of vocational training, to financial assistance and scholarships to attend formal secondary and tertiary education, to volunteer opportunities and internships with ministries or enterprises. Some respondents asked for mentorship and other forms of assistance to help them make the transition to the labour force. Learning to use a computer and other ICT skills was one of the themes mentioned most often and in nearly every country. Several respondents saw ICT skills as something that could help them in various jobs and would be necessary in the future.

In order to better address their needs and give them a chance to fulfil their dreams, youth made the following suggestions:

- **Providing and promoting a wide range of vocational training** aligned with the changing needs of the labour market.
- **Providing flexible employment opportunities.**
- **Making sure employers offer decent working conditions.**
- **Putting in place services to help youth find jobs.**
- **Create flexible education and training opportunities** to respond to the needs of students having parental or work responsibilities.

- **Including life skills in training curricula.**
- **Providing mentorship opportunities.**
- **Providing financial assistance to youth returning to school.**
- **Providing information about possible careers.**
- **Providing additional opportunities,** especially for youth out-of-school and those at risk of dropping out.

Perceived relevance of PBE for work and life

Interviews and FGDs confirmed that youth from urban areas have access to a wider variety of learning opportunities than their counterparts from rural areas, highlighting once more the influence of the place where a person grows up on his or her life prospects. Inequalities based on location are common across the region and also intersect with inequalities of wealth since rural populations often tend to be poorer and have less disposable income to allocate to education services. Consequently, disparities of access influence youth's perceptions of PBE and its relevance to employment and life.

During case studies, youth were questioned about the availability of learning opportunities in their communities. Most of them referred to their formal schools when asked about the activities they had participated in to prepare for their future. However, they also mentioned various informal programmes, including TVET. Overall, the young people who took part in this study were exposed to a range of technical, social, academic and life skills as well as opportunities to work as volunteers to gain experience. Youth in formal schools referred to clubs or extracurricular activities, such as Model United Nations, book clubs, STEM clubs, and short workshops on life skills or finance and banking. Such extracurricular activities were mentioned more frequently in urban areas. Vocational training programmes were present in various locations, ranging from fashion design and sewing centres, mechanical, carpentry and welding workshops, hairdressing salon, electrical work, and so forth. Youth also mentioned learning from community centres and madrasahs (non-formal religious school). In addition to these programmes, youth also talked about programmes organized by international organizations, especially on health, reproduction, prevention of HIV/AIDS, and other social themes.

There was a consensus among youth that education improves employment opportunities, and they recognized the value of PBE to enter the labour market. The majority of students considered education as very important to earn money and felt that knowledge and skills were the most important factors in getting a job. However, many respondents expressed frustration about the difficulty of accessing formal PBE. Nearly all respondents said the knowledge and skills they acquired through education were useful. However, some expressed concerns that what they were learning in school was not practical enough or lacked relevance to workplace requirements, especially when it came to technologies. In the FGDs, youth who attended technical training all felt that what they were learning was relevant to their career. Answers were more diverse among youth who attended secondary schools. Several respondents who attended formal education, especially in urban areas, mentioned the importance that extracurricular activities and clubs had on their life.

> I was an active student leader in my former school. I have participated in many educational activities or extracurricular. Those activities helped shape me and gave me the skills to do things for myself independently. (Youth from South Sudan)

> Organizations at school helped me develop and achieve the things I wanted. More than school, I believe that extracurricular activities are more impactful. (Youth from Ghana)

> There are a lot of organizations that we are involved in and almost all of us are in at least one. I do believe I personally get a lot of things from them. Usually in our country, there are only a few tracks selected for us. It's a closed box how we learn. The fact that in most schools we're only limited to those options harms us. But here we have a lot of clubs available based on our passions. I'm in a lot of clubs myself. Everybody is used to paper and pen but once we're outside and work in our clubs, we get the time to see things and understand that it's not just pencils and pen, reading books, etc. It's more knowing how to do things without supervision. That helps us understand how we're going to work once we're outside of school. As students, we always feel like someone needs to tell us what to do and that "this is right, or this is wrong". But because these clubs are students led, we are deciding what to do ourselves. (Youth from Ethiopia)

Across all countries, there was a clear desire among youth to gain skills valuable for employment through vocational training or by improving their education in order to transition to meaningful work afterwards. Youth from secondary schools often reported lacking vocational skills. Some of them believed there is a misalignment between school curriculum and the skills demanded in the modern job market. For example, many would have liked to learn to use computers and other ICT skills which they found important to get good jobs. Social, interpersonal and organizational skills were also mentioned several times as well.

Some youth mentioned them among the most important benefits from their education.

> While at school, I learned teamwork and socialization, respect and hard work. I learned through practical and individual work and through demonstrations from teachers. We appreciate the learning methodologies and strategies our teachers used to impart knowledge to us. (Youth from South Sudan)

> We have learned the most important things for example respect, seriousness and how to behave and to speak to people in daily life. (Youth from Senegal)

There were also several mentions of training courses and other events organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

> I participated in a seminar by [name of NGO] on how to keep and use money properly. That skill helped me in knowing how to manage my money better and I even practised it when I was doing small business. (Youth from Mali)

> I went to an NGO's activities promoting education and road safety. This was several times. It helped in sending more children to school and in advising people in avoiding accidents on the road. I also participated in a course from a foundation dealing with sex education for 3 days. The skill helped me to avoid sex abuse from others and to protect myself. (Youth from Uganda)

The UNESCO Youth Survey showed that young people's perception of skills needed for employment aligned well with most of the skills valued by employers: reading and writing, numeracy and mathematics, computer skills, as well as industry-relevant technical skills. Respondents encouraged more youth involvement in STEM subjects and suggested the institution of award systems at all levels of education to promote these subjects. However, some people cautioned that the impact of STEM programmes in SSA could be uneven depending on the type of school, the quality of teaching and the equipment available. Some believed that STEM subjects were elitist and thought they might benefit primarily students from better schools (UNESCO, 2016).

The socio-economic situation in the region pushes many young people to work in the informal sector. This is a trend particularly common in urban settings. However, many youth are entering the sector without the foundational knowledge and skills needed to maintain themselves out of poverty. As a result, many are at risk of being exploited by their employer. To avoid this, youth interested in skills training such as tailoring and weaving, which are not taught through a formal TVET programme, need basic education and certification. In many SSA countries, traditional apprenticeships provide the skills needed to make a decent living in the informal sector. Finding ways to link the TVET centres with apprenticeship models and providing recognized certifications would help to reach out to those marginalized by distance and/or financial barriers.

Desired opportunities included vocational training, religious practice, volunteer work, computer courses, internships, and professional training.

In the light of youth's comments, it is clear that identifying means to make learning opportunities more relevant to young people's lives and prospective careers is as crucial whether learning takes place in a formal, a non-formal, or a technical programme. A better alignment between what is taught and the capacities needed in life matters not only to make youth's transition to the world of work easier and meet the needs of the labour market, but perhaps more importantly to encourage youth to persevere and make the necessary efforts to attain the level of competency they need.

Youth's perceptions of the problems and shortcomings of PBE

The respondents of the survey expressed their views about the shortcomings of the education system and the learning opportunities offered to them. The first problem raised was the breadth of the curriculum and how schooling is often too theoretical and exam-oriented. The second problem they mentioned relates to the way content is taught. For example, some of the youth surveyed dropped out of school because of problems with the teachers or because they were not able to follow in class and understand the content. This is, of course, an issue of quality of teaching, but beyond that it also has to do with the pedagogical approaches used in class. These two issues will be discussed further in Chapter 4 but the quotes below illustrate the feeling that some youth have.

> I know a guy who dropped out of school in the ninth grade. He dropped out because he did not see the point in learning anymore. I think a lot of people feel that way. This education system is not really relatable; it's not given on an individual basis. They don't give you a reason to learn, you're just told to learn, cram, take a test, if you fail you repeat a grade. Nobody really cares about you.

> Nobody cares enough to say: "Let me help you, let me organize a support group, let's study together." It's either you make it on your own, or you don't make it at all. A lot of people kept undermining my friend and he couldn't take it after a while. I don't think he dropped out because he didn't have potential. It's because of his psychology. When he was repeatedly told he was dumb by his peers, teachers, and society, he decided there was no point and dropped out. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> There are so many challenges in achieving my training for my dreams. During our normal classes, we are being trained in theory only and it's not practical. This makes it difficult for someone to be competent. I advise the government, if someone wants to become a medical doctor then he should be trained from form one (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania).

The third difficulty reported is the disparity of learning opportunities provided. Some youth said they had to pursue their studies in fields that they did not really like because the programmes they would have preferred were not offered in their areas or they could not gain access to them. This problem is particularly acute in remote areas and economic sectors affected by conflicts due to the difficulties in recruiting specialized teachers. When it comes to access to PBE and the variety of programmes offered, the difference between urban and rural areas is significant across the SSA region. This is the case for formal education as well as TVET. Young people from rural areas are at a disadvantage because the vast majority of education institutions and financial resources are in urban areas. In the East and West Africa region case studies, the youth respondents who were not exposed to vocational training or did not have access to such programmes within their communities were all from rural areas. This can contribute to further polarizing life chances while also undermining the fight against poverty and disempowerment of rural youth. For example, in the survey, youth living outside of Dakar reported feeling disenfranchised and marginalized from the rest of Senegal. In the focus groups with youth from rural areas, some respondents also commented on the difference of quality between schools in rural and urban areas.

> The opportunities are limited here. Even the standard of the school we went to was very low compared to the schools in town. (Youth from South Sudan)

> The comfort level in school hinders my school attendance. It's not like city schools. For instance, here there is no material for sciences. (Youth from Nigeria)

The fourth shortcoming raised in the youth survey (UNESCO, 2016) is the lack of correspondence between the knowledge and skills learned and the requirements of the labour market. This question was discussed in the previous section. The fifth difficulty mentioned was the lack of recognition and certification in some of the programmes, which is problematic in two ways. Firstly, these programmes often have weaknesses in their curricula due to a lack of quality control and oversight from a higher authority. Secondly, they may not be recognized by prospective employers and therefore are of a lesser value when youth seek to enter the world of work. Generally, the supply of TVET programmes providing high school-equivalent diplomas is limited. Some youth were worried that their certificates or diplomas from TVET programmes may not be accredited.

Another key area of concern is the lack of mentoring opportunities for young people. Many youth expressed their desire to have more career guidance and wished to explore different training options.

The high frequency of youth responses related to social and emotional support or stressing the importance of encouragement and developing positive attitudes such as self-worth, motivation, determination and other similar attitudes all point towards the need of many youth for guidance and support to help them navigate through the difficult task of defining personal and professional futures in an economically unstable landscape.

Despite various initiatives in the region to align curricula to identified competency areas, youth expressed mixed feelings regarding their usefulness in preparing them for the future as well as the relevance and applicability of what they learned to everyday life.

Finally, the question of the lack of integration of technology in education was also a cross-cutting theme across the region. Many youth from different countries recommended an increase in technology investments in order for youth to have better access to information and communication abilities. Some young respondents talked about the advantages of ICT to connect to the globalized world and access international information, the role of computers in simplifying research methods, and the increasing importance of technology for all kinds of occupations. Despite the great potential of ICT, the interview responses also reiterated the problems related to the lack of resources and funding necessary to properly integrate technologies in schools and maintain the equipment. Several youth believed that the lack of computers in schools was placing them at a disadvantage in their attempts to enter the labour market.

> Technology helps a lot these days. It has made the world a global village. If you want any information you can go on the internet to do your research, you can go the internet to get any information that you need from there, so it has made learning easy through research. It is so important for many jobs. (Youth from Ghana)

Only a few respondents made specific recommendations to solve the problems they identified. Nonetheless, the following suggestions are derived from their comments:

- **Improving education and training programmes** to include the skills and knowledge valued in the labour market;
- **Improving the quality of teaching**;
- **Diversifying learning opportunities for youth in rural areas** by providing more programmes;
- **Investing more in technologies** to increase the number of youth who can learn to use computers and the Internet and integrate ICT into the teaching;
- **Making sure every school has the proper material to teach STEM** subjects adequately;
- **Putting in place official accreditation mechanisms** for apprenticeship and TVET;
- **Assigning advisors in schools** to provide mentoring and career advice to youth.

Some countries have already put in place initiatives to deal with some of the problems mentioned above. Here are some examples:

- **Reviewing curricula in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)**
  The adoption of the Protocol on Education and Training by SADC Member States in 1997 led to curriculum review processes in various countries in the region. Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe were among the countries that reviewed their curricula to ensure that the

education system would respond to the needs of the labour market as well as those of their young people. These reforms included structural changes on the number of core and elective courses in Malawi, refocusing content to a new post-colonial education agenda in Namibia, integrating local content to British-developed curriculum in Zambia, and emphasizing STEM and skills for the job market in Zimbabwe (Ahmimed, 2017).

- **Providing certification for apprenticeship in Senegal**
  The Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education of Senegal is experimenting with a certification scheme for apprentices in the informal sector. The informal sector is asked to develop curricula to facilitate certification. The Natangué Art La (NAL) programme experiment with this approach in Dakar. They have apprenticeship in music, fashion, dance and multimedia, graphic design and photography, disc jockey, and circus. All the programmes include learning life skills, entrepreneurship, technical training. They also provide coaching to the students and organize networking events and other thematic workshops (Synapse Center, n.d.).
- **Changing teaching methods in Uganda**
  In Uganda, efforts were made to step away from an exam-oriented form of instruction and improve teaching methods in order to allow more students from various backgrounds to succeed, especially in key subjects like mathematics and physics. With the financial support of the World Bank, Uganda's Minister of Education contracted an international consultancy firm to assess the needs of the national labour market, and consulted learners, headteachers, NGOs, teacher trainers and political leaders. Based on the results, curricula were revised to include more locally relevant content. These efforts aimed to better reflect the social and economic needs of the country while being flexible enough to include emerging fields of knowledge and skills needed to equip a 21st-century workforce, such as digital literacy and metacognitive skills. (Mott MacDonald, 2017).

While adapting the provision of education to emerging needs is a good thing, it is also important to reflect on whether such reforms address the right priorities. This intervention was in large part driven by calls for international competitiveness and philosophies embedded in the World Bank's Education for the Knowledge Economy initiatives. The extent to which these initiatives are the best way to address the needs of countries that are still striving for self-determination and whose economies remain primarily driven by domestic activities is therefore uncertain (Kuyini, 2013). Whether such ambitious reforms are achievable in contexts where education systems are largely supported by international donors, whose contributions have declined in recent years, remains to be seen. However, it is clear that such a major change process requires significant buy-in and participation from stakeholders at all levels.

3.4 Conclusions

Beyond the issues and challenges previously discussed, the data also revealed that youth's perceptions of different careers influence their educational choices and learning trajectories. These are not necessarily accurate and can be biased by a lack of information about career alternatives and the labour market as well as mistaken assumptions about less common professions and their entry requirements. Moreover, jobs perceived as less desirable or having a lesser status in society might in fact be particularly needed or an excellent stepping-stone to achieving one's career goals. As discussed earlier, evidence from the FGDs demonstrated clearly that youth's career choices are often based on role models they admire. Yet, due to evolving national development needs, the requirements of the labour market are changing at a rapid pace and yesterday's models may not suit tomorrow's societies' needs. It is therefore important to actively inform youth about emerging

career paths and promote lesser-known or perhaps less prestigious professional opportunities when appropriate. This includes challenging gendered social norms and stereotypes preventing youth from following their dreams.

> Despite their optimism, many youth are uncertain of getting a decent job after graduating from school and believe that education does not prepare them adequately for the labour market.

Despite various initiatives across the region to better align curricula to needed areas of competency, a lot of work is still required before the different programmes can really prepare youth for the future they want. Young people from SSA want their learning to be relevant and applicable to everyday life. They also seek a better integration of the different subjects as well as more flexibility in their academic progression.

Suggested actions to better equip youth with relevant skills for work and life:

(1) **Assessing the skills likely to be in demand in the medium- and long-term and including them in training programmes** alongside business skills and knowledge of entrepreneurship, access to business networks, mentorship, credit facilities, and so forth.

(2) **Conducting a detailed analysis of curricula** from secondary schools, higher education and TVET institutions, and assessing their alignment with the labour market's demands and priority areas at national and sub-national levels.

(3) **Identifying ways of ensuring that different forms of training are recognized** through the integration of recognition, validation and accreditation mechanisms in national education plans for lifelong learning strategies.

(4) **Making curricula more flexible to allow students to choose subjects that provide a combination of both functional and transferable skills** to provide a stronger educational foundation to the youth. Reform efforts should also involve consultation with youth, their families and communities, educators, and employers, particularly those from sectors expected to grow.

(5) **Establishing connections between secondary school curricula and apprenticeships** to make learning more relevant and equip young people with skills they can use for their livelihoods.

(6) **Investing further in innovative methods of delivery and ICT** to better respond to the changing environment and needs, especially in rural and marginalized communities where access is lacking. Developing distance education programmes could increase the chances that youth are able to learn even if they are unable to be physically in school.

(7) **Raising awareness about the benefit of various forms of PBE**. Improving the image of TVET and other informal and non-formal programmes by paying attention to the general negative attitude of parents and students towards them. Promoting opportunities offered by science and technology among young people, particularly girls.

Box 5. Aspects deserving further exploration to increase the relevance of PBE

Connections between basic and post-basic curricula

Some of the data collected suggest that there is a disconnect between the curricula of primary and secondary schools in some countries, especially when the official language of instruction changes between the two levels. This discrepancy is believed to accentuate the difficulties of many students leading to low levels of achievement and completion. The matter should be investigated in order to determine whether such a gap exists between basic and PBE and how best to address it if it does.

The place of religious education

Although faith-based institutions are present in many SSA countries, they are often not recognized by governments and rarely have a standard curriculum. As a result, many youth attending these schools are not counted as being enrolled in formal educational institutions. In our data, youth's perceptions about the value of religious education varies considerably and we do not have sufficient information to draw any conclusion or recommendation about them. Senegal and Mali have attempted to integrate faith-based schools by developing a national curriculum for them. The effects of such initiatives deserve further exploration since they may provide interesting avenues from which other countries can learn.

Promotion of role models

An interesting finding from the FGDs is the influence of role models on youth's decisions regarding their education and their career trajectories. At the moment, little is known about the specific mechanisms through which such influence operates and the best ways to harness this for educational and developmental purposes. Further research should therefore be undertaken in order to better understand the power of role models and the best ways to promote positive role models for youth.

Role of PBE in addressing post-COVID-19 needs

As the region slowly begins to recover from the effects of the pandemic, new needs will emerge, and adaptations are likely to be required in different sectors of activity. Consequently, the knowledge and skills that youth will need in order to contribute to the sustainable development of their communities and countries may be different from what PBE establishments offer at the moment. Studies should therefore be conducted in order to identify how PBE can contribute to address the needs of SSA's youth and society post-COVID-19.

Source: Authors

i_am_zews/Shutterstock.com

Chapter 4

Increasing educators' capacity to improve learning

4.1 Introduction

An education system cannot function without teachers. Whether we look at upper secondary, tertiary, TVET or other formal and non-formal PBE provision, educators are at the heart of the learning process and most of the weight of the quality of instruction rest on their shoulders. For SSA's educational institutions, securing a sufficient number of qualified and motivated educators can be challenging and attracting new people into the profession is not always easy. This is particularly true for instructors in the scientific and technological fields and in remote or crisis-affected areas. As more youth are entering PBE, improving educators' capacities has become critical in order to enable students to acquire the competencies they need to take their rightful place in society, help shaping a sustainable future, and contribute to the development of their respective countries.

Target 4.c

Every education system is only as good as the teachers who provide the hands-on schooling. Study after study have confirmed their critical role in improving education quality and learning outcomes, which is why SDG 4 calls specifically for a major increase in the supply of qualified teachers and more support from the international community for teacher training in developing countries

Source: UNESCO, 2015a

SDG Target 4.c addresses the urgent need to increase the supply of qualified teachers in a context where the equity gap between urban and rural education is exacerbated by an uneven distribution of professionally trained educators. This chapter will discuss the challenges related to PBE educators in SSA. Afterwards, it will summarize what the youth who took part in the study said about the availability and qualifications of educators, the quality of their learning experiences and their perceptions of the teaching methods used in class. It will then present the view of some teachers who were interviewed and conclude with suggestions to improve educators' capacities and the main issues that deserve further exploration.

4.2 Regional overview: educating youth in challenging conditions

Situation analysis

While educators play a key role in helping youth to improve their life, their working conditions are often difficult. The last two decades have seen a rise in completion at primary and lower secondary levels, which means that more students are now entering upper secondary and tertiary classes. The resources, however, are still limited and teachers often have to deliver their lessons without the necessary teaching material.

Even though the share of government spending on PBE varies considerably from one country to another, upper secondary schools rarely receive enough funding to function at their best. This is due, in part, to their need for specialized teachers, laboratories, textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. The recruitment of upper secondary teachers can be particularly difficult because of the complexity of subject-based teacher deployment as well as the lack of qualified people coming up through the system, particularly female teachers. According to UIS (2016), 90% of SSA countries face acute shortages of secondary teachers and in order to reach universal secondary education by 2030, SSA countries must recruit approximately 10.8 million teachers including 7.1 million for new teaching positions and 3.7 million to replace those leaving education. Few countries have released their data on teacher attrition at upper secondary, however, the data available reveals that the rate of teachers leaving the profession varies considerably and can be quite high. For instance, it was 36% in Rwanda and Comoros in 2018, but 4% in Mali in 2017. Even though some countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Eswatini should have enough teachers and classrooms to achieve universal secondary education in the next decade, most SSA governments will need to significantly increase their teacher recruitment if they wish to meet SDG Target 4.1. According to Taylor and Robinson (2019), four main reasons explain SSA's teacher shortage problem: there are too few qualified students applying to become teachers, teaching is not seen as a desirable profession, the rate of population growth increases the number of teachers needed, and training colleges do not have enough enrolment capacity to train the number of teachers required.

While the numbers of missing educators in tertiary and post-secondary non-tertiary institutions are unknown, the number of teachers recruited should be at least proportional to the growth of students' intake, taking demographic factors into account. Unfortunately, it is not the case everywhere. Moreover, the situation of female educators in the region deserves particular attention. According to UIS (2019a) only 30% of secondary school teachers in SSA are female and this proportion falls to 24% at the tertiary level (UIS, 2019a). The gender gap is even more significant in rural areas. For example, Mulkeen (2010) found that urban secondary schools in Malawi had on average 36% of female teachers, while rural schools only had 13%. This is important because female educators can act as role models and motivate girls to continue to study. Data from UIS has shown a correlation between the percentage of female teachers in primary education and girls' gross enrolment ratio (GER) in secondary education. Also, countries with the lowest secondary GERs for girls typically have the lowest shares of female teachers[18]. The link between the gender of educators and female youth's completion and achievement at secondary and tertiary levels in SSA hasn't been empirically demonstrated yet. That said, there is ample evidence of the importance of role models and teachers' support on decisions affecting youth's future. Therefore, since youth's aspirations influence the level of engagement and efforts they put in their studies, we can confidently say that the effect of increasing the number of female teachers will also be positive for PBE.

It is important for SSA countries to monitor their number of PBE teachers because a shortage of educators often translates into recruitment problems when new classrooms are open or when there is a need to replace teachers. It also leads to overcrowded classrooms which undermine the quality of the education provided. Unfortunately, in some countries, the situation of teachers is deteriorating rather than improving. If current trends in teacher recruitment and attrition continue, countries such

18 http://uis.unesco.org/en/visualisations (Accessed July 3rd 2020.)

as Burundi, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles and Uganda will have more youth in need of PBE educators in 2030 than they do now (UIS, 2016).

Many factors can influence the need for educators. Some of them relate to changes affecting enrolment to PBE and the demand for teachers, for instance, the number of youth with the age of entry, the percentage of completion of lower secondary education, and the average number of students in each classroom. Other factors are linked to the supply side such as the number of educators recruited each year, how long they remain in their teaching function and how many leave the profession (attrition rate). These parameters are useful to policy-makers to identify general needs of the workforce. However, in PBE, the subject of specialization of each educator is also very important. Increasing the number of teachers is not enough in itself, their allocation is also critical, which means that there needs to be a sufficient number of teachers qualified to teach the different subjects and that's often where the problems are. Within the same territory, there may be teachers looking for work while vacancies in other disciplines or in rural areas remain unfilled.

The situation is particularly complex in STEM subjects where the lack of good teachers in some areas has created a vicious cycle: poor quality STEM teaching leads to less knowledgeable students who cannot, or do not wish to, continue their education in STEM subjects thus limiting the number of candidates to become STEM teachers. PBE establishments wanting to hire STEM graduates also have to compete with industries in the private sector and since they tend to offer higher salaries, the best candidates are less likely to join the teaching profession. The lack of teachers in such disciplines can lead to subjects being taught by non-specialists or not being taught at all.

Teacher distribution can be a major challenge because the most qualified educators, particularly female and STEM teachers, are hard to recruit in rural areas (Mulkeen, 2010). Educators from higher socio-economic backgrounds, for example, generally prefer to remain in urban settings due to issues such as security, diseases, isolation, and the desire to maintain a certain lifestyle that would be difficult to uphold in rural communities. Another difficulty in deploying qualified teachers to remote locations is the language skills of the teachers. Even though the language of instruction at PBE is typically English, French, or Portuguese, poor language skills among students often require educators to clarify concepts in a language the students understand, which becomes impossible when the teacher does not share the same local language (Mulkeen et al., 2007). A common solution is to hire teachers on temporary contracts using school or community funds. However, such solution can lead to other challenges like instability of employment and working conditions less favourable than regular civil service teachers. Such situation may lead to a precarious and demotivating teaching career resulting in absenteeism and poor retention rates. PBE establishments located in remote areas and crisis-affected zones can therefore face significant difficulties in retaining their educators, which means that they frequently have to recruit and train new teaching staff.

The shortage of educators, while problematic on its own, is also affecting quality since more classrooms than ever are led by teachers lacking the proper qualifications. One key lesson from the drive towards universal primary education and the second-millennium development goal is that while a country can significantly increase its recruitment of teachers to improve access to education, it is not enough. Teachers must also meet the required standards of training and qualifications. Similarly, the qualifications of new PBE educators are essential in order to achieve a good-quality

education. In SSA, only 50% of secondary school teachers received at least the minimum organized teacher training pre-service or in-service required for teaching in their country in 2017-18 compared to 79% in 2005. This proportion has been declining since 2000 as a result of the rising demand for education and a tendency to lower hiring contracts' requirements to meet staffing imperatives (UIS, 2019a). The percentage of trained teachers in upper secondary education was slightly higher at 53% but data were available for only 30 SSA countries. At the post-secondary non-tertiary level, the regional percentage of trained teachers was 40% based on data from 18 countries. There are significant differences between countries. As the data do not take into account variations between the subjects taught or differences between urban and rural areas, some countries may seem to be doing well while still facing major challenges.

Another parameter that can be used to assess the quality of education is the pupil-teacher ratio. This is different from a measure of class size, which is not widely available across countries. The pupil-teacher ratio is a reflection of the capacity of an education system's human resources. Typically, high ratios (more than 25:1 in secondary education) mean that classrooms are overcrowded, and the teaching workforce is overstretched.

According to the latest year of data available, pupil-teacher ratios at the formal upper secondary level are relatively small in SSA. The regional average was 20 in 2016 and national rates range from seven in Comoros in 2018 to 44 in Ethiopia in 2015 (see Graph K in Annex IV). When the training of teachers is taken into account, however, the situation is somewhat more problematic.[19] A qualified teacher was available only for every 48 students in Ethiopia in 2015 (see Graph L in Annex IV) and a trained teacher was available only for every 139 pupils in Niger (2017) and every 97 students in Madagascar (2017) (see Graph M in Annex IV). At the post-secondary level, even though there are fewer data available, there is evidence that some countries face a serious teacher shortage. For example, in Cameroon, the pupil-teacher ratio for the tertiary level was 52 in 2014 while the pupil-teacher ratio for post-secondary non-tertiary level was 61 in Namibia in 2017 and 155 in Lesotho in 2014 (see Graphs N and O in the Annex IV). These figures illustrate clearly the need to increase teacher training provision in PBE, as well as encouraging more people to become professional educators. However, few SSA countries have put in place policies and adequate strategies to recruit sufficient numbers of educators into the teaching profession.

Teacher preparation for PBE in SSA

Having enough educators in PBE is only one step in the process of improving the quality of youth's learning experience. Teachers need to be adequately trained, supported through professional development, motivated and ready to improve their teaching practices. Unfortunately, reliable information on training programmes for PBE educators is hard to come by because requirements to teach at PBE varies not only between countries but also by education provider. There is therefore no standard expectation in terms of mastery of content, duration of training, level of experience or teaching qualification required. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that not all educators working in PBE establishments are trained or qualified to teach, and not all the teaching personnel who are trained or qualified have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to adequately support students in their learning.

19 National requirements for teachers differ between countries and teachers' education programmes vary in content, duration and qualification levels. As a result, comparisons should be interpreted with caution.

Part of the problem with the preparation of PBE teachers is that the material taught is more specialized. Consequently, if there are not enough qualified graduates to enter the system each year, the needs cannot be met. The quality of prospective teachers therefore depends on the quality of learning within the education system. In addition, it can be particularly difficult to attract candidates for the teaching profession amongst SSA's best university graduates because of the low social status often associated with teaching, relatively low career prospects, high workload and remuneration levels that rarely keep up with the cost of living. Hence, the importance of finding ways to increase educators' status and improve working conditions in order to address teacher shortage.

Although teacher training is conducted differently across the region, it can be divided into two main categories, pre-service initial teacher education programmes (ITE) and in-service continuous professional development (CPD). Lewin (1999) has identified four main pathways to become a qualified teacher in anglophone SSA countries. The first is a full-time college-based training in a dedicated institution lasting three to four years and leading to a certificate or a diploma. This is a common route for secondary teachers. The second is a full-time postgraduate training from a higher education institution following the acquisition of a degree-level award. This is generally the preferred path to teach at tertiary level. The third pathway follows an apprenticeship model based on service in school with in-service support leading to certification as a qualified teacher. Finally, the last route is a direct entry as teachers, without training, who are subsequently certified. ITE programmes generally include some content that is specific to the discipline to be taught, some pedagogical content – how to teach, and a practical teaching component in classrooms. The number of hours spent on each type of content varies greatly with some programmes allocating more time to theory and others focussing on practice (Taylor and Robinson, 2019).

One problem often seen with ITE is that even in systems where prospective teachers are expected to spend more time learning how to teach and how to present their subject in a way that makes sense to their students, teacher training colleges are often forced to dedicate more hours to disciplinary content in order to fill gaps in the subject knowledge of the future teachers. As a result, less time is spent on things such as didactic, formative assessment, evaluation, effective communication and how to support learners with special needs. Another issue is the quality of support and supervision provided to teachers in learning during their practicum. Due to the staff workload and the lack of experienced educators in some schools, the supervision of interns is rarely optimal, and they sometimes have to act as substitute teachers rather than learning from working alongside an experienced mentor.

Continuous professional development takes place when educators are already in-service and often focus on addressing the practical needs of teachers on aspects related to pedagogy or their subject matter. They can be grouped in three broad categories: updating knowledge and skills; reflection; and collaboration with colleagues (de Vries et al, 2013). CPD opportunities are important because they enable educators to keep up with changes in their fields and to modernize their teaching practices in alignment with the changing needs of society and the labour market. This is essential to make sure that teaching remains relevant to students' needs in a fast-changing world.

According to the literature, the most effective way to improve teachers' capacities is to treat teachers' development as a continuous process beginning with a focus on recruitment then initial teacher

training, intensive ITE that covers both pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge, a supportive induction in the schools, performance management systems, continuous and regular professional development, and merit-based promotions in order to motivate teachers and make sure that there are quality educators in leadership positions (Taylor and Robinson, 2019).

Finally, the institutional capacity of ministries of education should not be neglected either because they are responsible for predicting needs, developing policies, and making decisions that have a significant influence on what educators can do.

Box 6. Examples of rigorous programmes to improve educators' capacities

Transforming Teacher Education and Learning in Ghana

Ghana's Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) programme, funded by UK Aid is an example of a rigorous national programme aimed at improving teachers' capacities. The four-year programme targeted all of Ghana's 38 public Colleges of Education and relevant national governing bodies to more effectively equip 35,000 teacher trainees to deliver quality learning experiences in their classrooms. The programme developed a set of free teaching and learning materials for teacher tutors and trainees, available on the T-TEL websites "Learning Hub" (T-TEL, n.d.).

TVET Centres of Excellence

The Regional TVET initiative of the World Bank seeks to develop specialized flagship institutes in 16 sub-Saharan TVET institutions in order to train technicians, teachers and managers, develop short-term courses recognized by industries, target regional priority sectors, and support quality assurance and curriculum development. During the first phase, selected TVET institutes in Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania and Ethiopia have been exposed to best practices around the world and national capacities for TVET policy development and implementation have been strengthened. The TVET Centres of Excellence will also develop and implement competency-based training programs integrating technologies.

For more information, see The World Bank. n. d. Skills Development/ TVET. Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/paset/brief/skills-developmenttvet

Lifelong learning through teachers' networks in rural Uganda

Using peer networks and role modelling, district officials in Uganda – supported by STiR Education – organize training sessions for school leaders who then put in place termly learning improvement cycles in the different schools. Each cycle focusses on a specific theme and includes action, feedback and reflection. Teachers receive monthly coaching and support and regular meetings at district and state levels enable stakeholders to share learning and plan together to improve delivery. The process has contributed to improve teaching practices and shown improvement in teachers' motivation (STiR Education, n.d.).

Source : Authors

4.3 Youth's perspectives on educator's capacities

Availability and qualification of teachers

During the discussions, youth often talked about their teachers. Some of the respondents mentioned a teacher who had inspired them. In Nigeria, for example, several youth had teachers as role models.

> Yes, I have a role model who is one Mr. [name]. He was a teacher in [name of school] he likes assisting people. (Youth from Nigeria)

> Mr. [name] is the one who made me want to study. Everyone respects him and he is always fair and listen to us. (Youth from Nigeria)

> I am inspired by my English teacher. He is always smart and teaches English well. Always punctual for his lessons. (Youth from South Sudan)

> The most supportive person to me is Mr. [name], the school dean. It's not that my family isn't supportive, but he better understands what I want to do and what I have to do to get there. He realizes my potential and he pushes me further to do better. He has access to my grades so he also tells me what I should do. I always go to him for advice if I have a new idea. And he's always made me think about it from different perspectives. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> I am motivated by my teacher who always advises me to work hard in my studies. (Youth from Uganda)

However, issues related to the teaching force were also frequently raised. A problem often mentioned is teacher shortages. It is perceived to undermine youth's opportunities to learn and, in some cases, even lead to failure when not enough instruction has been provided on some subjects. Students also noted teachers' competencies. They mentioned that some educators were not trained in the particular subjects that they were teaching.

> There is no teacher for physics and a few for other science subjects. How can we learn? (Youth from Ghana)

> There are challenges with the teaching of some subjects. For example, here in school, they have introduced a new program and we don't have a teacher to teach us AutoCAD. (Youth from Uganda)

> Teachers take forever to be placed into a class. Sometimes we go for two months without having a teacher. Last year, in Chemistry, the teacher only came in once a week and we barely learned. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> There were many times when the teacher did not enter my class especially our Physics teacher. In fact, I did not have a Physics teacher from SS1 [senior secondary 1] to SS3 [senior secondary 3]. (Youth from Nigeria)

> Schools need to have enough teachers, especially science teachers, with well-equipped laboratories, they need to be trained with modern technology of agriculture and helped with equipment. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)

The respondents also talked about teacher absenteeism and tardiness. Youth mentioned various reasons for this situation such as health issues, family commitments, social obligations, poor weather and lack of transportation, personal emergencies, meetings and administrative duties. Of course, teachers shortages was also mentioned as a cause of absenteeism because few teachers need to teach many classes thus spreading their time and leaving gaps in the instruction of each group of students. Examples of teachers' absences reported include skipping class, strikes, holding multiple jobs that interfered with class time, and conducting incomplete classes with very short lessons that did not fill the class time. Some youth even reported that teachers sometimes went to school without entering the classroom and simply sent notes to students from the staff room without explanation or teaching. As a result, students may finish the year without having completed the programme for all their classes and the gaps in learning are simply carried through to the next year.

> Our biology teacher sometimes is not in class because he is alone for the whole school. He normally attends once per week per class. (Youth from United Republic of Tanzania)
>
> The teachers skip class more than us. Especially math classes, we haven't learned anything. Our English teacher is also a real estate broker, and he always gets phone calls and leaves. (Youth from Ethiopia)
>
> Teachers are absent very often. Sometimes we come to school and we cannot be taught. We just play throughout the day and go back home. (Youth from Mali)
>
> Our teacher is a head of department and sometimes he has meetings away and then that makes us miss learning. (Youth from Uganda)

Students believed that these absences led to poor academic performance and some complained that there was no one to report these issues to, therefore nothing had changed. However, addressing absenteeism may be difficult for some headteachers and parents living in small rural communities since parents and teachers all live among each other, therefore, there may be a reluctance to cause tensions among the population (Mulkeen, 2010). Problems of teachers' attendance can also be linked to their motivation and commitment.

> Of course, teachers are absent twice a week or even more. Our teachers are not motivated in South Sudan, they are the least paid civil servants. They are suffering, many have even left the teaching profession to do business or work with NGOs. (Youth from South Sudan)
>
> We had a problem with our civics class last year. The teacher never came to class. When we took exams, we got poor grades and were not able to succeed. Sometimes the teacher came into the school compound just to collect his paycheck, but he didn't teach us. (Youth from Ethiopia)
>
> There are so many times that the teacher is not in class. It seems like they are not motivated to teach. Since I am in secondary school, we have never managed to complete the programme. (Youth from Mali)

In certain remote areas in Liberia and Zambia, some schools shut down for a week each month in order for teachers to travel and collect their pay. In Liberia, some teachers can spend up to a

quarter of their salary on transportation costs to withdraw their payment (Mulkeen, 2010). Ensuring that education systems pay teachers on time and through means convenient for them can have a significant impact on teachers' motivation and attendance. Different solutions have been put in place in the region. For example, Uganda encourages teachers to open bank accounts closer to their schools instead of their home areas, and in Lesotho, the government is encouraging the extension of banking services to local post offices (Mulkeen, 2010). Other solutions include using mobile banking to pay teachers, using computerized systems to improve linkages between payroll and Education Management Information System (EMIS) data, and involving civil society in audit functions (Dolan, et al. 2012).

The young people who took part in the study did not make specific suggestions to improve teachers' availability and qualifications. They simply reiterated the importance of having enough qualified teachers who know how to communicate their subject in an engaging way and wanted PBE institutions to make sure that teachers would deliver their lessons. Other studies, however, have proposed some possible paths of intervention[20].

- Developing teacher mentoring and induction programmes to provide guidance and orientation for new teachers;
- Increasing the level and quality of support that early-career educators receive at work;
- Making sure that teachers are paid on time;
- Improving working conditions such as the quality of classrooms, access to teaching materials and size of groups;
- Promoting the teaching profession and encourage youth from rural and remote areas to join the profession;
- Hiring more local teachers;
- Reviewing teachers' incentives structure to make the teaching profession more appealing and encourage educators to remain in post.

Quality of the learning experience

While some respondents were satisfied with the quality of their learning experience, several youth reported shortcomings in the teaching they received. In the East and West Africa region case studies, for example, youth recalled uncomfortable learning experiences such as not being able to understand the content, feeling lost or worthless in class, or experiencing humiliation from their teacher. They also expressed frustration about having to memorize rather than understand the content. The issue mentioned most by the youth who took part in the study is the quality of the teaching, in other words, the delivery of the content. They claimed that educator's explanations are often unsatisfactory. For instance, some teachers go through the content too quickly during lessons, sometimes without paying attention to those who might be lagging behind in class. On occasion, teachers are not using the medium of instruction that students prefer. There were also cases of students not understanding the dialect used by the teacher in class.

20 See for example the literature review of Taylor and Robinson (2019)

> We have teachers who do not know how to share their message. They just write and very often they speak in Bamanakan. Our maths teacher is a typical example of that. He doesn't help us to understand. (Youth from Mali)
>
> Some teachers don't teach properly, I mean for our comprehension, and it discourages me to attend their class. (Youth from Guinea)
>
> Some teachers teach too fast and if you don't get what they are teaching they discourage you. Sometimes, the medium of instruction discourages me from attending classes, for example, our French tutor, he speaks French without giving explanations in English. (Youth from Ghana)
>
> I think we are growing up to be good test-takers, not good citizens. We are growing up in this tightly scheduled learning environment where we do not have any other options but to study what we are told to study in order to prepare for an exam. We take tests both in schools and nationally and it is always cramming for those things alone. We do not grow up to be citizens that have internalized all that we are learning. For example, we learned civics but how many of us are actually doing anything that has to do with civics? We are all just writing whatever we are told to. We are being more technical, and someday we are going to be out of school and will be expected to work in Ethiopia and try and change it. I do not think we are learning in a way that prepares us for that kind of responsibility. With the way we are learning, it looks like we are just going to be taking tests after we join the real world. (Youth from Ethiopia)

The attitude of educators in class was also mentioned frequently. Young people want to feel respected in class and it isn't always the case. The students mentioned that some teachers are discouraging those who have started school later in life, as well as criticizing students for their lack of knowledge. Youth participants also found some of the teachers' punishments or teaching styles to be too severe, which discouraged them from being in class. Corporal punishment, although officially banned in many countries, is still practiced by some teachers and may lead to students dropping school. Sexual harassment, although not discussed in the case studies, is also a problem in some schools and contributes to youth not enrolling at PBE, low attendance or dropping-out.

The way youth feel in class influences their learning. They want to be respected by their teachers.

> The presence of discrimination in the classrooms constitutes an obstacle that hinders our motivation, for example students are not equal in front of the teachers and this situation pushes the student to hate the subject. (Youth from Senegal)
>
> Teachers being annoyed or unhappy in class really reduces my motivation. (Youth from Uganda)
>
> The teachers sometimes discourage us from coming to school by telling us 'if you come what are you going to learn, you are weak in class, you are not good enough', etc. Also, some teachers use old age to discourage those who are late starters in schools. (Youth from Ghana)
>
> The teacher always skips. He'll come in the class, tell us a story, and then leave. When we take exams later on, we get zeros. We never learned; how can we

> perform well in exams. Most teachers talk to us by disrespecting us and insulting us. In the 11th grade, it didn't matter as much. We weren't exam takers – we didn't care if he didn't come in the class or not. But now we're in the 12th grade, and we have to get good grades in order to get into universities. (Youth from Ethiopia)

In order to increase youth's participation and achievement, the quality of the learning experience is particularly important. Quality teaching is more than just delivering content, it is also about maintaining a positive climate in class, mutual respect and making sure that learners needs are addressed. This can be difficult for new educators, especially in overcrowded classrooms and without the proper teaching material. Teachers, therefore, need to be well supported and supervised in order to detect problematic situations and remediate to them. As more young people with special needs begin to access PBE, educators also need to know how to support them.

Youth did not make specific recommendations to improve the situation. Nonetheless, the following suggestions can be inferred from their comments:

- Developing a learning environment based on mutual respect.
- Investing in teachers' continuous professional development.
- Putting in place mechanisms for students to express their concerns without fear of being sanctioned, with particular attention on female students.
- Putting in place performance management systems for teachers that emphasize quality teaching.
- Increasing the time dedicated to didactic and pedagogy in initial teacher training.
- Reducing the number of students per class.

Perception of teaching methods

As discussed in Chapter 3, the relevance of school curricula to young people's lives and to their future aspirations was a key preoccupation of the participants of this study. However, relevance is more than just content, it is also about teaching methods. Youth were generally preoccupied with the lack of application of theories and concepts in class. Some complained about memorizing content without understanding it or spending entire classes recopying notes from the blackboard. Unfortunately, the amount of data on teaching methods collected during this study is not sufficient to discuss the suitability of the pedagogical approaches used in the region, especially considering the diversity of PBE programmes. That said, youth's comments draw our attention to three elements that deserve particular attention.

First, the importance for teachers to engage students in their learning by increasing their reflections and making them engage with the objects of their studies. Youth want to be active learners not passive recipients. Second, the learning benefits of organizing classes in a way that enable students to gain both knowledge and skills. Although the lack of resources can be a serious constraint for educators, the young people who took part in the study strongly felt that a better balance between theory and practice is needed in class in order for them to make the most out of their studies and achieve their life goals. Finally, a better integration of contents and references to real-life contexts can enables youth to make connections with their reality and see how course content can be applied. This can both enhance youth's motivation and increase learning.

> I think the biggest thing I've learned is the fact that learning can go on outside of the classroom. It's something I've literally never thought of until I enrolled in [name of school]. I remember my first physics class here; we went to the movie theatres and watched a sci-fi film. We even talked about what happens in class outside and we carry debates. Learning is not limited to the four walls. I can learn at any time any place. (Youth from Ethiopia)

> I think there is a need to design an integrated syllabus for South Sudan, especially on entrepreneurial and business skills, not only academics. We need to learn computer skills in our schools at this time not later when in universities. (Youth from South Sudan)

> Course integration is very important. It allows us to understand one thing from many perspectives. Course integration makes us think about things while we're learning something else; it makes us think from different angles and makes us critical thinkers. It would help us understand each other. So, seeing things from different angles. Second, there's a program called experiential learning. When we pass from 10th grade to the 11th grade, we work in the school. This program had us function not as students but more as employees. Usually, for those in our age group, we are considered minorities whose opinions are not as valid as our elders. But this program allowed us to explore to what extent we knew what to do. It also showed us how to work with others. It helped us understand how people working in the real world are functioning. (Youth from Ethiopia)

4.4 Educator's views

In order to put youth's comments into perspective, the research teams interviewed one educator in each country. This sample is, of course, much too small to allow any form of generalization but those interviews still provide valuable insight because they offer an alternative point of view.

Educators had slightly more positive views on the relevance of the curriculum to their students' lives than youth. Educators mostly thought that the instruction they provide is both relevant and applicable to students' lives. A TVET instructor, for example, explained how a technical skill like embroidery and the use of sewing sheets, which is taught in his school, was being applied by women at home as they sold sheets to earn money. Another said:

> Students are already practicing in the community and earning a few coins. The skills offered target the job market, and through their own passion, they practise in the community and come to perfect the skills at our institution. (Educator from Kenya)

The use of foreign countries' curricula is another theme that appeared during interviews, but perceptions of their relevance varied. One educator felt that adopting an international curriculum is confusing for students and does not address the country's context specifically enough to prove relevant in the lives of students.

> South Sudan is yet to roll out a national curriculum that is distinct and unique to its context. At the moment, the curriculum I use for teaching in class is a mix of East Africa (Uganda and Kenya) as well as aspects of teaching from Sudan. As a result, it

> is somehow confusing and may as well proved not relevant in the long run given the context of the country with the ever-evolving situations…. For social science classes, most of the examples are not related to issues to do with South Sudan. However, the incorporation of "citizenship" sessions in the teaching is relevant because it is instilling a sense of patriotism in the students. The relevance of the materials is minimal. As I have expressed earlier, they are not contextual to a greater extent to the South Sudan situation. (Educator from South Sudan)

Another educator, who teaches from the British curriculum, highlighted the positive aspects of using that curriculum and its benefits to students.

> We are following [the] British curriculum and it is relevant in most parts of the world. It is not the Ethiopian curriculum. So, whenever the students finish school, they have a good opportunity to join different universities. The required educational grades from the school can be met. It is so relevant to the universities so it's more helpful. (Educator from Ethiopia)

Some educators said their curriculum was relevant and their students well prepared to enter the labour market. However, many felt that the educational programmes were providing students with only part of the skills they would need to get a job due to insufficient funding, lack of teaching and learning materials and inadequacies in the curriculum. Some educators also believed that extracurricular activities or other channels of learning were helpful in filling the gaps in formal education.

The motivation level of teachers is significantly undermined by the limited support they receive, an acute lack of resources, and low salaries.

Lack of motivation was another recurring theme mentioned by educators during interviews. Most teachers reported that they wanted to become teachers because of their love for children, and a desire to share knowledge, help others and make an impact on the lives of their students and their community. However, a few of the teachers interviewed pursued a career in education simply to earn a living. Regardless of their reason to become teachers, respondents agreed that their working conditions are difficult. The lack of teaching and learning material was a common concern along with remuneration which is perceived to be unsatisfactory given the amount of work they do. Most of the teachers reported having additional career interests that they hoped to pursue in the future or that they were already pursuing alongside teaching.

Most teachers in the East and West Africa case studies said that they were late or absent to classes at times, which seems to support what students mentioned. When asked how teachers' roles could be improved and made more manageable, educators suggested that governments provide greater incentives for teachers through higher salaries, more teaching support and learning materials, and improve infrastructure and classroom space.

Finally, although the sample of educators interviewed is very small, it seems that some teachers are experiencing difficulties dealing with students with special needs and that many PBE institutions are not equipped to support students with disabilities. Forms of teaching, the learning environment, and the ways in which students are supported and evaluated can all contribute to exclusion. Therefore,

the education system needs to adapt to accommodate the needs of all students. This would require further investigation.

4.5 Conclusions

The quality of PBE is directly linked to the training, the qualifications and the motivation of its educators. While it's easy to put the blame on teachers when students' achievements are low, teachers should not be held accountable for what they haven't been prepared to do. They need to be supported and provided with the material they need to do their work properly.

What students learn from their educators goes far beyond academics. They learn about who they are and who they want to be. They learn what is important to them, they discover the role they want to play in society, and they become more aware of their values. These are all important to prepare those who will soon inherit the responsibility for taking care of the world.

> I learned that I am more than an exam. I am more than just a grade. Usually if we get 5/10, we're considered bad. If we get a 10/10, we're superheroes. We've categorized ourselves by top students, mediocre students, low grade students. I've moved away from that mindset. Now whenever I see a result, I don't see what I am. I see a portion of my efforts and works. It makes me understand that I have potential. Another thing – whenever situations come, I learn a part of me that I had previously not known. There's more to who I am than whatever I've seen thus far. (Youth from Ethiopia)

Suggested actions to increase educators' capacities

(1) **Identifying the causes of ineffectiveness in current teacher development initiatives**, and explore the following areas: *What policies need to be put in place? How can CPD be institutionalized and better supported? How can the quality of initial teacher preparation be improved?*

(2) **Improving the quality of ITE candidates** by raising the profile of the teaching profession and **enhancing ITE programmes' content;**

(3) **Making continuous professional development a standard practice;**

(4) **Identifying ways to Improve the management of teachers** by exploring the intersection between teacher management and teacher development, and examining existing models, such as teacher upgrading, teacher licensing and relicensing, and other models;

(5) **Strengthening teacher professionalization and professional teaching standards both in pre-service and in-service training**, drawing on the work done by UNESCO in West and Central Africa and Southern Africa, as well as other partners and teacher unions. Professional codes of ethics developed and enforced by teachers and their organizations can help address some of the challenges raised, including teacher absence and relations with students;

(6) **Improving structural issues, such as school management, the delivery of teachers' salaries, and teachers' requirement to undertake non-teaching duties;**

(7) **Providing teachers with a robust support from school leadership, as well as broader incentives** (salary, learning materials, and improved school conditions);

(8) **Raising awareness among educators on how to fully support young people** not only in academically, but also in developing their confidence and resilience;

(9) **Put in place measures to protect teachers during sanitary emergencies such as COVID-19**, including the provision of protective equipment such as face masks, reducing the number of students per class to make distancing easier, and distance teaching.

Box 7. Issues deserving further exploration to improve teaching

Raising the social status of teachers
In order to increase teaching standards and improve the quality of education, it will be necessary to recruit more and better candidates to the teaching profession. That implies making teaching more appealing than it is at the moment. It would therefore be important to explore ways to improve the social status of teachers and identify mechanisms to attract the best students into education.

Reduction of teacher's absenteeism
Reducing teacher's absenteeism is frequently mentioned as one of the main problems of education in the region yet there is no solid evidence to really appreciate the scale of the issue. Whether the problem is overrated or not, it needs to be explored further in order to be better understood. Only then can we identify appropriate solutions to improve the situation.

Attracting and retaining teachers in remote and crisis-affected areas
Quality education in remote and crisis areas, including in camps for displaced people and refugees is a right. That said, attracting and retaining teachers in these zones can be extremely difficult. The problem should be further explored in order to identify innovative ways to insure the quality of teaching in such contexts.

Developing educators' capacity for remote teaching
COVID-19 has highlighted the benefit for educators to be able to teach remotely in order to reduce the spread of a pandemic. However, in most SSA countries, educators have not been trained to use remote teaching and learning strategies. ICT skills are still low amongst teachers and issues remain in terms of access to technologies. More research is therefore needed in order to identify the knowledge and skills most likely to be useful to PBE educators in the specific context of SSA.

Source: Authors

michaeljung/Shutterstock.com

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides indicative strategies and steps that will guide the various actors towards achieving SDG4 and reasserts the importance of paying attention to youth's learning in the process. Yet, progress in addressing the needs of young people, more specifically towards Targets 4.3 and 4.4, has been slow. In the last two decades a lot of emphasis – and investment – has been placed on basic education and work on PBE has been fragmented at best.

The different sub-sectors composing PBE are constantly being compartmentalized and discussed separately in studies, reports and policies yet they are meant to address the needs of the same age group and respond to the same socio-economic conditions. They are all part of a broader offering of educational services that may respond, or not, to young people's learning needs. Has the segmentation between upper-secondary, TVET, tertiary, post-secondary non-tertiary, and so forth really been helpful, or has it contributed to greater confusion? Has the separation between the different types of PBE providers helped us to understand youth's trajectories and how best to support them or has it simply contributed to oversimplify a complex reality to make resource allocation easier? This publication attempted to look at PBE as a whole and embrace its complexity and messiness because young people's lives do not belong to one sub-sector and their learning trajectories rarely fit into one box. It also sought to be a space where young people themselves could speak and share their experiences.

This regional synthesis report explored the perspectives of young people from SSA on the PBE and training opportunities. By giving youth the chance to talk about their challenges and their perceptions of the relevance of PBE opportunities to work and life, the research sought to better understand the gaps in educational provision and how to address them. This publication is not an exhaustive presentation of the concerns and issues captured in the sub-regions but a reference document highlighting regional cross-cutting themes as expressed by the youth who took part in the studies. It documented factors of take-up of education and training among young people in SSA, examined the subjective dimensions of youth's demand for education and provided policy suggestions.

Youth's experiences are diverse and there were differences in the way the different studies were conducted and documented. Consequently, it was not possible to cover all the aspects of PBE and youth's experiences. The publication therefore focussed on four prominent themes: financing of PBE, barriers to PBE, skills for work and life, and educators' capacities.

As mentioned in the introduction, the study was conducted before the onset of COVID-19, which means that field data do not take the pandemic into account. It is likely, however, that the barriers and challenges identified in this publication will be exacerbated by COVID-19. An attempt was therefore made to keep in mind the likely implications of the pandemic when discussing the future of PBE.

The following sections reflect on the findings of the research and synthesise the main lessons from the studies. The summary presents the main messages from the four chapters. It is followed by a brief discussion of the contribution, and limitations of the synthesis report, the overall findings and messages and a presentation of areas deserving more attention. Then, there is a discussion on rethinking PBE in SSA, more specifically the reasons for such rethinking, what it would entail and possible policy implications. The chapter concludes with overarching policy suggestions.

5.1 Summary of the synthesis report

Financing to promote equity in access to PBE

More than half of SSA's population is under 20 years of age and the youth population is increasing across the region (UNDESA, 2020). The need for financing of education in SSA countries is, therefore, more important than ever. With more young people completing basic education, the demand for PBE is also rising rapidly (UIS, 2020). Yet, data reveals that human and physical resources necessary to provide quality education and training are still lacking. SSA countries therefore need more than a simple increase in ODA, they need better and more reliable means of financing. While donors should increase their spending on PBE, relying on such funds is not sustainable in the long run. National governments should therefore think about creative and durable ways to finance PBE such as using revenues from the responsible use of natural resources and taxation of large enterprises.

The reason youth mentioned most often for not continuing education or dropping out is financial problems. Although several respondents were fortunate enough to have family members assisting them with the various costs of their studies, money was a genuine concern for participating youth in every country where a case study was conducted. Although the cost of PBE varies significantly by country, type of schools attended, and programmes of study, our findings reveal that it can be prohibitive for a broad segment of the youth population. Costs include much more than school fees and may comprise, for example, school furniture, books and other learning materials, uniforms, parents' association fees, travel expenses, and so forth. Such expenses can prevent parents from sending their daughters and sons to PBE, especially when there are many children in the household. Young women tend to be particularly disadvantaged, because families often fail to recognize the benefits that a higher level of education would bring to a daughter.

Even with the same level of family income, youth may face unequal access. In urban areas, where PBE services are more concentrated, it is easier for a young person to go home after school, thus reducing costs. Youth from rural areas either have to spend money on transport and meals or pay for boarding houses or shared accommodation. Those who are lucky enough to stay with relatives often have to repay such kindness by helping out around their host's house or business. Also, youth living with a disability or a medical condition requiring treatments may have to pay more for daily expenditures thus having fewer means to afford the expenses that their education entails. Financial inequalities among youth are therefore compounded by their personal, social and geographical conditions.

Financial pressures force many students to engage in income-generating activities during their studies. A little over half of the young respondents expressed that their work interfered with school

and undermined their learning. Some challenges related to working while studying include the break of concentration created when being called by family members to do work and lacking time to do assignments, read and prepare for exams. Work is also a frequent cause of absenteeism. In more severe cases, work outside of the home became a major factor leading to drop out. The situation is particularly problematic for young women in rural areas, who also have to do domestic work and are under constant pressure to get married and start a family.

A need frequently expressed by youth in the FGDs and interviews was for more financial assistance. Sometimes, young people manage to get by financially until an unforeseen event threatens their economic situation. For example, if a parent gets sick and can no longer work, if a natural disaster destroys the family's crop, or if the household suddenly has to pay a dowry or a funeral, the funds on which the student depended on for his or her education are no longer available. Consequently, many students do not pursue or do not complete PBE due to their family's economic hardship. The youth who took part in the FGDs identified financial assistance, such as the elimination of school fees and provision of scholarships, as the type of support most likely to enable them to continue their learning.

Recurring problems identified during FGDs and interviews include the shortage of learning and teaching materials, in particular the scarcity of textbooks, the lack of qualified teachers in some specialized fields of study, and the poor condition of infrastructure. All of these can be linked to insufficient financing and undermine the quality of learning as well as the overall educative experience. In some countries, there are also differences in the quality of services between public and private schools. Governments should therefore put in place measures to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms for private and public providers and make sure that the distribution of public funds is equitable, so that marginalized and disadvantaged populations are not left out due to a lack of resources.

Making PBE affordable and accessible to all youth will require a high level of determination and leadership from governments that will only be sustained if education partners are committed to supporting them in this endeavour.

Breaking down barriers through appropriate infrastructure and inclusive policy implementation

Equality of access is one of the key pillars of Education 2030. SDG Target 4.5 urges education actors everywhere to eliminate gender disparities and provide equal access to all levels of education and training to the vulnerable. However, access requires more than simply making sure that every community has a school within a reasonable distance. It also necessitates addressing the economic, socio-cultural, personal and physical barriers that youth may face when deciding to pursue PBE. These barriers are highly gendered and affect young women and men differently.

PBE remains unattainable for many youth in SSA. Social and cultural barriers, such as norms that effectively discriminate against females, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and linguistic minorities often stand between youth and their educational and career goals. The interviews and FGDs conducted with youth suggest that girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school because

of different social expectations, early marriage, unplanned pregnancies, and a higher domestic workload. Patriarchal norms are still prevalent in SSA and many parents believe that a woman's duty is to get married and have children. Therefore, a girl's education can be perceived as less valuable. Young women also have less time to study at home and do school assignments than their male peers because they have more domestic tasks to perform and are often responsible for taking care of their younger siblings. These insights are consistent with the literature on secondary education, which also suggests that the situation can lead to lower academic achievements and absenteeism. Since it is not customary in most SSA countries to send children to daycare, young mothers who do not have a family member to take care of their baby often see no other alternative than to drop out of school.

A common finding across country case studies is that early marriage can be a significant barrier to continued education. This is particularly the case for girls who face stronger pressure to get married and have children and generally get married younger than boys. Respondents agreed that in some cases it may be possible to continue to study after marriage, but there was no consensus on whether boys or girls are more likely to withdraw as a consequence of marriage. Other gendered traditions, such as initiation ceremonies, and intergenerational dynamics, more specifically the expectation of deference towards older persons can also increase the likelihood of disengagement from schools.

The literature review and interviews suggest that personal characteristics can reduce access to PBE. For example, a person's immigration status can prevent enrolment in school. Living with a disability or a chronic health condition can limit access to classes and school attendance. A student with learning difficulties may struggle to succeed unless some adaptations are made. While it is important to recognize and reduce personal barriers to PBE, it is difficult to assess their prevalence due to a lack of data. Young people living with a disability or a chronic health condition, for example, are rarely mentioned in access and retention statistics making it difficult to know how many of them manage to take part in PBE. Similarly, official lists of enrolment do not include information on poverty, which makes it hard for education providers to disaggregate data based on socio-economic status. The lack of specific data on vulnerable youth means it is more complicated for service providers and governments to put in place adequate measures to increase their participation in PBE.

The case studies brought to light various problems related to educational infrastructure. The first barrier is the location. There are more PBE establishments in urban and peri-urban areas. As a result, youth from rural and remote areas have fewer learning options and often have to travel long distances or pay for accommodation in order to study. This can be particularly challenging for young women and youth from poor families. Because of their location, rural schools also have problems recruiting qualified teachers, which can limit the quality of instruction. Some youth also raised the issue of transport infrastructures such as roads and community transportation that may further restrict access to PBE. Lack of well-maintained water and sanitation facilities can also act as a barrier. The presence or not of separate toilets for boys and girls, for example, can affect girls' attendance.

Barriers to PBE can be overcome but in order to do so, several measures must be put in place. The findings of this study are consistent with the literature suggesting that it is essential to raise parents' awareness of the value of enrolling their teenage daughters in PBE instead of pressuring them to get married. The youth survey and UIS statistics are also in agreement with other reports (see for example

UNESCO, 2020a) suggesting that education actors need to increase the number of schools that welcome and are equipped for the participation of children and youth with disabilities. In addition, the case studies have provided evidence of the challenges faced by some youth from various SSA countries when their trajectory differs from the main learning path. Their stories highlighted the need for governments to make sure that there are various routes to PBE with entry or re-entry points into different types of formal and non-formal education to make sure that all youth, including those who previously dropped out or have never been in school, have opportunities to develop the capacities needed to improve their quality of life and contribute to their country's sustainable development. To increase access and inclusion, PBE must be as affordable as possible. Substantial efforts are also required to build and upgrade educational facilities in a way that takes into account the different needs of youth and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all as proposed in SDG Target 4a.

Equipping youth with relevant skills for work and life

Statistics are showing that young people are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed than adults. Youth also tend to have jobs associated with vulnerability because they often work on their own account or contribute to family work. Both of these situations provide limited income stability and social security coverage. At the same time, the majority of entrepreneurs in Africa are in the informal sector and need workers with knowledge and skills that are relevant to their specific situation in order to survive. In this context, it is necessary for youth to be well prepared for work and life (ILO, 2020a).

When asked about their goals and aspirations, youth often responded by giving professions. Most of them mentioned jobs involving some form of service to others such as doctor or medical worker, teacher, nurse, engineer, various forms of civil service as well as successful business people. In the FGDs and interviews, the participants often expressed a desire to help their family members and be able to support their own family one day. Some respondents also talked about their duty to give back to their village, their community or their country. An interesting insight emerging from the data is the influence of role models in shaping youth's career aspirations. In most cases, role models had character traits and qualities that youth valued and desired. Youth's comments about role models illustrate how one's environment and surroundings can influence personal dreams and goals even when such dreams conflict with traditional gender norms. The range of professions mentioned by youth during the FGDs was somehow limited, reflecting a narrow perception of career options. However, to be able to follow the global pace of technological and scientific advances, the region will need a diversity of professionals beyond traditional career paths. The data also revealed that youth's perceptions of different careers are not necessarily accurate and can be biased due to a lack of information about career alternatives and the labour market. It would therefore be worthwhile to take measures to expand youth's knowledge in terms of career opportunities and promote non-traditional role models.

A majority of the young people who took part in this study saw education as a means to personal and social advancement. For them, achieving their dreams meant completing their studies to be able to get their desired job and eventually achieve their goal. When asked what they considered to be

the most valuable knowledge and skills to achieve the future they desired, youth from the East and West Africa regions often mentioned technical skills as their top priority followed by soft skills such as interpersonal skills, time management, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability, decision-making, conflict resolution, respect, leadership and other social skills. They also brought up personality traits necessary for success such as patience, independence, courage, respect, confidence, diligence and discipline.

Nearly all respondents said the knowledge and skills they have acquired through education were useful. Although some expressed concerns that what they were learning in school was not practical enough or lacked relevance to workplaces' requirements, especially when it comes to technologies. It is therefore important to better align what is taught at PBE with the capacities needed for work and life in order to facilitate youth's transition to employment, better address the needs of the labour market, and encourage youth to persevere and make the necessary efforts to attain the level of competency they need. Other insights from FGDs and youth survey include the need for more quality control, a better integration of the different subjects as well as more flexibility in academic progression.

Several shortcomings of PBE were highlighted in the study. The first problem is the breadth of the curriculum and how schooling is often too theoretical and exam-oriented. The second shortcoming relates to the way content is taught. The third difficulty reported is the disparity of learning opportunities provided between different areas. When it comes to access to PBE and the variety of programmes offered, the difference between urban and rural areas is significant across the SSA region. The fourth shortcoming is the lack of correspondence between the knowledge and skills learned and the requirements of the labour market and society. The fifth difficulty is the lack of recognition and certification in some of the programmes.

Other key insights from the discussions with youth include the need for mentoring opportunities and career guidance; the importance of encouragement to develop positive attitudes such as self-worth, motivation and determination; the need for social, mental and psychological support; and the need for remediation programmes and support for youth facing academic difficulties.

Finally, the question of the lack of integration of technology in education was also a cross-cutting theme across the region. Learning to use a computer and other ICT skills was one of the themes mentioned most often and in nearly every country. Several respondents saw ICT skills as something that could help them in various jobs and would be necessary in the future. Youth from different countries recommended investing more in technologies.

Increasing educators' capacity to improve learning

Educators are at the heart of the learning process but PBE is facing a severe shortage of qualified teachers in many SSA countries (UIS, 2016; 2019a). This is particularly true for instructors in the scientific and technological fields and in remote or crisis-affected areas. As more youth are entering PBE, improving educators' capacities has become critical as they have a direct influence on the attitude and success of students.

Part of the problem with the preparation of PBE teachers is that the material taught is more specialized. Consequently, if there are not enough qualified graduates to enter the system each year, the needs cannot be met. It can also be difficult to attract good candidates for the teaching profession because of the low social status often associated with teaching, relatively low career prospects, high workload and remuneration levels that rarely keep up with the cost of living. It is therefore essential to identify ways to increase educators' status and improve their working conditions.

During the discussions, youth often talked about their teachers. Several respondents mentioned teachers who had inspired them. While some respondents were satisfied with the quality of their learning experience, problems related to the teaching were also identified. The teacher shortage is perceived to undermine youth's opportunities to learn and, in some cases, even lead to failure when there is not enough instruction on some subjects. Not all teachers have been trained in the particular subjects that they teach. Consequently, educators' competencies vary and are not always sufficient to provide quality teaching. Teachers' absenteeism and tardiness can also be problematic in some schools and lead to poor academic performances. The attitude of educators in class is another preoccupation frequently mentioned in the FGDs. The discussions with youth highlighted the importance of feeling respected in class. Examples of unpleasant learning experiences mentioned by the young respondents include not being able to understand the content, feeling lost or worthless in class, or experiencing humiliation from the teacher.

The issue mentioned the most in the FGDs and interviews was the quality of teaching. Some youth claimed that educators' explanations are often unsatisfactory. For example, some educators go through the content too quickly during lessons and don't pay attention to students who might be falling behind in class. Many respondents were preoccupied by the lack of application of theories and concepts in class. Some complained about memorizing content without understanding it or spending entire classes recopying notes from the blackboard.

Three points deserve particular attention. First, the importance for teachers to engage students in their learning by increasing their reflections and making them engage with the objects of their studies. Second, the learning benefits of organizing classes in a way that enables students to gain both knowledge and skills. Respondents strongly believed that a better balance between theory and practice is needed in class in order for them to make the most out of their studies and achieve their life goals. Third, a better integration of contents and references to real-life contexts can enable youth to make connections with their reality and see how course content can be applied. This can both enhance youth's motivation and increase learning.

The quality of students' learning experiences at PBE is directly linked to the training, the qualifications and the motivation of teachers. Educators need support, decent working conditions and suitable teaching materials in order to do their work properly. It is important because students learn more from their educators than what is written in curricula. They also learn about life and the role they can play in society. Quality teaching is more than just delivering content, it is also about maintaining a positive atmosphere in class, mutual respect and making sure that learners' needs are addressed. Educators must therefore be trained to act not only as deliverers of specific subject knowledge, but also as mentors and develop the skills necessary to support youth from various backgrounds

and identify the warning signs of drop-out. This can be difficult for new educators, especially in overcrowded classrooms and without the proper teaching materials. Teachers, therefore, need to be well supported and supervised in order to detect problematic situations and remediate to them. They must also learn how to adapt their teaching to learners with different characteristics, strengths and challenges. As more young people with special needs begin to access PBE, educators need to know how to support them.

5.2 Contributions and limitations of the study

Looking at PBE as a whole has enabled researchers to get a better sense of its complexity and the relation between different sub-sectors. It has also helped to develop a better understanding of the variety and diversity of youth's educational trajectories as well as a better appreciation of the similarities and differences of youth's learning experiences. For instance, an important insight from this study is that many of the challenges faced by youth, whether they be socio-cultural, personal or physical, are similar between the various branches of PBE which suggests that much can be learned by looking at how different branches are addressing these challenges. Also, it appears that the rapid changes in the labour market, which results in new skills and knowledge requirements, are creating a need for more flexibility and a diversification of entry routes to PBE. These findings were made possible by looking at the entire sub-sector. While more studies are needed in order to fully understand the factors influencing youth's trajectories, the different case studies show the potential benefits of researching the issue by looking at PBE in a holistic manner. Integrated studies such as this one also contribute to a deeper understanding of the problems and challenges affecting PBE and identify potential solutions; hence, more studies should be conducted in the future. However, researching PBE as a whole is challenging. In attempting to capture too much information, there is a risk of sacrificing the depth of the information collected. In this study, the quality of the data collected varied considerably between countries and some research questions were only partially answered. In light of this experience, we conclude that studies looking at the entire sub-sector and studies focusing on PBE branches separately are both important and complementary.

The use of focus group discussions gave young people the chance to express their views and share their experiences of PBE. This enabled the researchers to understand issues that were important to the participants in a way that might not have been possible otherwise. Youth have valuable insights and deserve to be listened to. The combination of statistical information with the qualitative data collected in the case studies was essential to appreciate the complexity of the PBE sub-sector and understand the changing realities of youth in SSA. Mixed methods should therefore be encouraged to study PBE and the capacities of local researchers should be reinforced in order to increase the quality and consistency of data collection and analysis in the region.

One of the main limitations of this study is that statistical data on PBE are not available for every country and often does not include information on vulnerable youth. Consequently, due to a lack of data, the situation of youth from vulnerable groups could not be properly explored in this study. This information gap also limited the scope of policy suggestions. More information on gender, age, income and location disparity, for example, could be particularly valuable to policy-makers and education partners. Similarly, data on the situation of youth with disability and displaced youth is

seriously lacking which makes it more difficult to identify measures to support them. Further studies on PBE should make sure to collect enough information on the background of youth to allow proper disaggregation of data during the analysis.

The danger of writing a synthesis report is that of presenting findings in a way that appears to generalize youth's experiences. Consequently, the biggest challenge in writing this synthesis report was to avoid stereotypes when bringing together findings from the different countries and synthesizing insights from youth's diverse realities. In an attempt to present the overall portrait of PBE in SSA, some of the national specificity was lost. It is therefore important to reiterate the necessity to balance local perspectives and regional overview. This synthesis report is therefore meant to complement, not replace, specific national studies.

5.3 Overall findings and main messages

PBE is important because youth are more likely to be unemployed or work in socio-economically vulnerable jobs that keep them in poverty. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 crisis is making things even worse for them. PBE can help young people to acquire the competencies they need to get better jobs and ultimately reach their personal and professional goals. PBE is also important to society because it is where the capacity of a country's labour force is built and where youth acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs they require to shape the destiny of their nation and enable their society to engage in a development path that is truly sustainable. When young people are successful in their careers, their accomplishments contribute to the prosperity of their countries. Youth's capacities will also be key to post-COVID-19 recovery. However, in order to play that role, the PBE offering must be better aligned with the needs of the changing labour market and society. PBE curricula must therefore evolve alongside socio-cultural and technological advancements and youth ought to be informed about emerging career paths and lesser-known professional opportunities. Yet, PBE is frequently overlooked by policy-makers and education partners in SSA.

Consequently, it is essential for governments and education partners to recognize the development potential of PBE. The latest statistics reveal that ODA and national spending on education are still below target and the share going to PBE remains too low to ensure the quality of learning. While development assistance will remain essential to the sub-sector in the coming years, especially beyond COVID-19, it is critical to identify sustainable ways for national governments to finance PBE, including through revenues from natural resources and taxation of foreign and multinational enterprises.

Youth represent a significant segment of SSA's population and deserve more attention than they are traditionally given. Until now, the voices of young people have not been featured as much as they could in policy dialogues related PBE in SSA. Throughout the case studies, the participating youth have shared their views with enthusiasm, and most have demonstrated their eagerness to contribute to society and more specifically, to their communities. Since future leaders will emerge from the youth, it is important to create spaces where young people can be heard, particularly on issues related to PBE. Therefore, local and national consultation mechanisms should be strengthened in order to provide more opportunities for youth to engage and share their views. Many SSA countries

have youth's associations that could be actively involved in policy dialogue, particularly when reflecting on PBE and how to improve it.

The focus groups and interviews conducted with young people during country case studies suggest that youth's aspirations and dreams are a leading factor in deciding to take-up PBE or not. Youth's perceptions of different careers and whether they believe they can bridge the gap between what they aspire to and what they can realistically achieve influence their educational choices and learning trajectories. Youth's decisions are often influenced by role models, their personal circumstances (prior academic achievement, family support and financial means, etc.) their perception of income and employment prospects, gender expectations, and the social status attributed to different professions. The most common barrier youth face is the cost of PBE, including books, transport, and so forth and the availability of PBE services suitable for the fulfilment of their dreams, particularly for youth living in rural areas or belonging to a vulnerable group.

The case studies also revealed that barriers and challenges to PBE are gendered and affect young women and men differently. There have been studies looking at specific branches of PBE from a gender perspective, for example, tertiary education, and this research has begun to identify the main factors influencing youth's decisions to pursue PBE or not. However, more research is required to explore gender dynamics within PBE more specifically and identify possible options to address barriers to PBE including means to challenge gendered social norms and stereotypes preventing youth from following their dreams.

The promotion of equal access to PBE implies the removal of barriers based on health condition, disability, ethnicity, religious belief, immigration status, geographical location and socio-economic status. However, the absence of statistics and other data on how these variables influence access to PBE undermines the possibility to put in place measures to address the challenges faced by youth at risk of exclusion. The lack of data on these issues is evidence that PBE actors and researchers need to pay more attention to youth from vulnerable groups.

The quality of PBE relies, to a great extent, on the competencies of its educators. Due to the level of specialization required to teach in PBE settings, many establishments face challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. More resources and time should therefore be dedicated to developing the capacities of PBE teachers and improving their working conditions, including incentives in order to retain good educators in the profession.

5.4 Areas deserving more attention

This synthesis report is a first step in examining the relevance of educational provision and learning opportunities for youth in SSA. The case studies highlighted different issues deserving further investigation, which are mentioned at the end of each chapter. In addition to these, the overall findings suggest that more studies looking at the complete PBE picture are needed in order to better identify bottlenecks and how to remove them. The following areas deserve particular attention.

Potential synergy within the PBE sub-sector

More research would be needed in order to identify the extent to which more synergy between the different branches of PBE could benefit youth and their prospective employers. That said, evidence from the different case studies reveals that closer correspondence between PBE curricula and the needs of the world of work is desirable. The literature also suggests that several PBE establishments in SSA are still ill-prepared to impart increasingly important skills such as ICT to their students. It would therefore make sense to pursue an investigation into the mechanisms through which PBE can most effectively respond to the demand of youth, employers, and wider society.

Improving the availability of data on PBE

In recent years, much attention has been paid to basic education. While this is understandable, it resulted in fewer data being collected on PBE. For instance, there are limited data available on upper secondary education in the region. Attempts should be made address that gap because reliable data would help the sector to be more responsive and better address the needs of youth.

5.5 Rethinking post-basic education in SSA

Reasons for rethinking PBE

PBE is multifaceted and complex because it addresses a multitude of needs that change constantly in response to transformations within societies. Accordingly, the same thinking that was used to expand basic education cannot be applied to PBE. So far, narrow and fragmented conceptions of PBE have led to oversights both in the factors affecting its effectiveness and its contribution to development. For instance, the recent pandemic contributed to revealing the critical role of PBE in developing the capacities of essential workers in times of emergency, and also brought to light the necessity to address social inequalities in SSA. For this reason, it would be undesirable to keep doing things the way they have been so far. PBE systems need to be transformed and revitalized in order to fully contribute to healthy national economies, social equity, sustainable human development and well-being. Their modernization will also be key to making SSA nations more resilient and reduce their vulnerability to crises.

So far, more attention has been given to the supply side of PBE and how to expand access than on improving its quality and relevance. For instance, education actors often seek to increase infrastructure and widen the reach of PBE in a manner that reminds us of the approach used for basic education. There are three main problems with this. First, the tendency to look at issues of supply, infrastructure and location in a way that is mostly driven by formal PBE means that the provision of services often favours the elites and excludes rural areas and vulnerable learners, including youth living in poverty, with a disability, or being displaced. Second, such an approach fails to appreciate the diversity of needs and contexts and how these evolve over time. Giving priority to supply problems can reduce PBE's effectiveness and responsiveness, thus the necessity to better balance concerns for supply and demand, including the needs of youth and the requirements of employers. Finally, PBE is one of the main pillars on which national capacity is built. Without an immediate focus on the quality and relevance of PBE it will not be possible to address gaps in the competency of

the workforce, including in the health, education, governance, and economic sectors, which will ultimately limit development prospects in SSA.

PBE needs rethinking

The structure of PBE systems has contributed to a polarization of knowledge and skills where formal PBE establishments mainly tend to be responsible for academic and technical content while non-formal and informal institutions deliver practical, 'vocational', content. While there might have been a time when distinguishing between categories of knowledge and skills was helpful, this artificial classification no longer corresponds to the needs of 21st-century learning. Firstly, because the achievement of competencies often requires that learners master all types of content. Secondly, because technological and scientific advances have transcended into every sector of life.

Overcoming the dichotomy between academic and 'vocational' knowledge and skills will therefore be essential to make sure that PBE curricula remain relevant to work and life and that PBE establishments can adapt to changes.

Such refocusing will also require **rethinking how knowledge and skills have traditionally been hierarchized.** The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that societies are highy interconnected. When the world went into lockdown, the perceptions of the importance of workers began shifting. The persons most sought after were not the ones in the highest paid or most respected professions, they were the day-to-day workers enabling economic, health and social systems to survive. This acknowledgement should prompt a reflection on the roles of knowledge and skills in SSA's societies and how PBE can **better integrate content that is often overlooked in SSA's PBE curricula** such as indigenous skills and knowledge, ICTs, environmental and sustainability issues.

As emphasized throughout this publication, the relevance of PBE to learners' work and life is particularly important if PBE is to contribute to human development and wellbeing. That said, learning needs are constantly evolving in response to social transformations and progress in different fields of activity. The adaptability of PBE systems is therefore critical. The need for capacity development goes beyond schooling and is not limited by age. Consequently, rethinking PBE also means **expanding its scope to all youth and adults and adopting a lifelong learning perspective**. In addition to their current offerings, PBE systems must also be able to deliver the broad range of soft skills and transferable skills that a person needs over his or her lifespan to adapt to the changes in their environment and their lives.

Finally, rethinking PBE in SSA will be in vain unless solutions are identified to **make PBE systems affordable and inclusive.** This will entail **a shift of mindset and a willingness to engage and listen to all stakeholders.** In particular, it will be important to give a voice to vulnerable youth and treat them as agents capable of decisions and actions regarding their learnings rather than passive beneficiaries of education services. Learners' priorities matter because they are the ones making the choices leading to the undertaking of PBE or not. Ultimately, solutions to the different barriers to PBE, including financing, need to take into account the specific contexts in which they are experienced. Engaging all stakeholders, youth in particular, in the rethinking of PBE would not only increase chances of identifying bottlenecks and viable solutions, it would also contribute to fostering a shared

commitment towards PBE, strengthen the vision of education as a human right, and help to make the most of societal development programmes and opportunities.

Policy implications of the rethinking

The proposed rethinking of PBE in SSA is closely aligned with earlier recommendations from the International Commission on the Futures of Education (ICFE) (UNESCO, 2020d) as well as the Recommendations on TVET[21] and Adult Learning and Education[22] adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 38th session in 2015. These emphasized the need to make education systems more inclusive, engage all stakeholders, including youth, in policy dialogue, and called for more comprehensive, inclusive and integrated policies. There are signficant policy implications worth considering.

First, PBE should be considered an intrinsic component of the right to education regardless of the age of the learner. Education policies will therefore need to be reoriented in a way that facilitates continuous learning and supports human development throughout the lifespan. This will require a **shift from supply-oriented policies to lifelong learning policies**. This is important because as presented in this publication, the different branches of PBE need to be better interconnected with easier access paths for learners.

Second, PBE has the potential to be a cornerstone to develop capacities in all sectors of activity. For this to happen, we need **policy dialogues that transcend the education sector and involve actors from various fields.** Doing so will help to make learning opportunities more relevant to society, more responsive to employers' needs, better aligned with national development priorities, and also contribute to making countries more resilient to crisis.

Third, a shift towards a conception of PBE as integral to lifelong learning also implies **changing the way PBE is studied.** Research will be necessary to define, implement and monitor a new vision of PBE. However, the scope of such studies will need to be broadened to the entire sub-sector and the methods used adapted. In order to fully appreciate the range of learning experiences that PBE can offer, more studies that combine quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods will be needed.

Finally, the success of PBE cannot be measured the way basic education is. Because traditional indicators of intake, completion and achievement are generally assuming a single path of progression, they are ill-suited to capture lifelong learning. Also, success in PBE cannot be defined by a single metric such as participation or grades. **Monitoring and evaluation systems will need to be adapted** to the complexity of PBE, for example by using participatory methods, and give more attention to the way factors of inequality intersect and influence learning, work and life trajectories.

21 http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49355&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

22 http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49354&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

5.6 Overarching policy suggestions

- **Create councils on PBE with representatives** from different ministries such as health, labour and industries, social affairs, infrastructure, transport, telecommunication, and so forth in order to assist the responsible ministries in developing programmes more responsive to social and economic needs and identify innovative solutions to reduce barriers to PBE.
- **Integrate different branches of PBE in studies and reports** in order to provide a more complete and clearer picture, not only of the supply and demand for PBE but also the structural factors influencing youth's learning options and explore possible synergies between different education and training opportunities.
- **Improve the collection and analysis of data on PBE** by disaggregating it into programmes, locations and different characteristics of the participants in order to better understand how gender intersects with other factors of exclusion such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, immigration status, and so forth.
- **Explore ways to improve PBE for all youth,** including youth with special needs or in situations of vulnerability such as displacement, and improve monitoring and evaluation of PBE.
- **Explore ways to make PBE more accessible to young women** living in rural and remote areas such as means to reduce the economic burden associated with their studies, and mechanisms to ensure the safety of their educational pursuit.
- **Conduct more qualitative studies about PBE**, including participatory methods, so that youth can share their own views on policies that affect them. Views of young people are highly gendered, and more exploration is required to better understand the gendered characteristics of policy decisions.

References

Afifi, T., Govil, R., Sakdapolrak, P. and Warner, K. 2012. *Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility: perspectives of refugees from the east and horn of Africa.* Report No. 1. June 2012. Bonn, Germany, UNU-EHS. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/East%20and%20Horn%20of%20Africa_final_web.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

Africa Progress Panel. 2013. *Africa Progress Report 2013: Equity in Extractives: Stewarding Africa's natural resources for all.* Geneva, Switzerland, Africa Progress Panel. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5728c7b18259b5e0087689a6/t/57ab29519de4bb90f53f9fff/1470835029000/2013_African+Progress+Panel+APR_Equity_in_Extractives_25062013_ENG_HR.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

African Union. n.d. *Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, African Union.

African Union. and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 2012. Illicit Financial Flow. *Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa.* Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, UNECA.

Agence Française de Développment. and the World Bank. 2014. *Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Washington, AFD and the World Bank.

Agenda for Humanity. 2016. *Recommendations on young people in the Global Compact for Refugees*. https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Apr/Position%20paper%20Refugee%20Compact%20-%20Compact%20for%20Young%20People%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

Ahmimed, C. 2017. *Youth's perspective on the relevance of secondary education in Southern Africa.* Paris, UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370912?posInSet=1&queryId=742cd4b8-a72b-4faa-8903-8474e2878071

Burkina Faso Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Alphabétisation. 2017. *Analyse Sexospécifique des Écarts les Apprentissages dans l'Enseignement de Base au Burkina Faso*. [Gender-specific analysis of learning differences in Burkina Faso's Basic Education.] Ouagadougou, MENA and AMC. (In French.)

De Vries, S., van de Grift, W. and Jansen, E. 2013. *Profiling teachers' continuing professional development and the relation with their beliefs about learning and teaching*. Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 213-231.

Dolan, J., Golden, A., Ndaruhutse, S., and Winthrop, R. 2012. *Building Effective Teacher Salary Systems in Fragile and Conflicted Affected States*. Reading, UK, Center for Universal Education at Brookings and CfBT Education Trust. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/09_CfBT_BrookingsReport.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

Education Commission. 2016. *The Learning Generation: Investing in education for a changing world.* https://report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning_Generation_Full_Report.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

Fast Track Initiative. 2017. *Fast Tracking Girls' Education.* Washington, Fast Track Initiative.

Human Rights Watch. 2018. *Leave no girl behind in Africa: Discrimination in education against pregnant girls and adolescent mothers*. New York, Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/06/14/leave-no-girl-behind-africa/discrimination-education-against-pregnant-girls-and. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

International Labour Organization. 2020a. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs.* Geneva, Switzerland, ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf

____. 2020b. ILO *Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work*. Geneva, Switzerland, ILO. (Fifth Edition, 30 June 2020) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749399.pdf. (Accessed 3 August 2020.)

____. n.d. *Where do the world's NEETs live?* Geneva, Switzerland, ILO. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/enhanced/WCMS_598674/lang--en/index.htm%20Accessed%2031%20October%202018. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

____. n.d. *Unemployment rate*. Geneva, Switzerland, ILO. https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_UR_EN.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

Kuyini. A.B. 2013. *Ghana's education reform 2007: a realistic proposition or a crisis of vision?* International Review of Education, Vol. 59, No. 2. pp.157-176.

Lewin, K. 1999. *Counting the cost of teacher education: Cost and quality issues*. Falmer, UK, University of Sussex. (MUSTER Discussion Paper No. 1.)

Mali Ministry of National Education. 2018. *Étude sur les conditions d'apprentissage et les facteurs de réussite scolaire dans l'enseignement fondamental au Mali.* [Study on the Learning Conditions and Schooling Success Factors in Basic Education in Mali] Bamako, MENA et AMC. (In French.)

Morley, L. and Lussier, K. 2009. *Intersecting poverty and participation in higher education in Ghana and United Republic of Tanzania*. International Studies in Sociology of Education. Vol.19, No. 2. pp.71 – 85.

Mott MacDonald. 2017. *Reforming lower secondary curriculum, Uganda*. https://www.mottmac.com/article/2246/reforming-lower-secondary-curriculum-uganda. (Accessed 17 July 2020)

Mulkeen, A. 2010. *Teachers in Anglophone Africa: Issues in Teacher Supply, Training and Management.* Washington, DC, World Bank.

OECD. 2020. OECD.Stat. https://stats.oecd.org (Accessed 13 June 2020)

STiR Education, n.d. Our Vision. http://stireducation.org (Accessed 18 August 2020)

Synapse Center, n.d. Naatange Art La. https://synapsecenter.org/secteurs/arteconomie-creative/naatange-art-la/ (Accessed 20 July 2020)

T-Tel, n.d. *Tutor Professional Development*. http://www.t-tel.org/hub/tutor-professional-development.html (Accessed 18 August 2020.) Mulkeen, A., Chapman, D. W., DeJaeghere, J.G., and Leu, E. 2007. Recruiting, Retaining and Retraining Secondary School Teachers and Principals in Sub-Saharan Africa. Washington, DC, World Bank.

Taylor, N. and Robinson, N. 2019. *Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Teacher Preparation and Support.* London, Varkey Foundation.

The World Bank, n.d. *Skills Development/TVET.* https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/paset/brief/skills-developmenttvet (Accessed 18 August 2020)

The World Bank. 2018. *Moving for Prosperity: Global Migration and Labor Markets.* Washington, DC, World Bank.

_____. 2019. *Africa's Pulse: An Analysis of Issues Shaping Africa's Economic Future*. Washington, DC, World Bank. (Volume 19 – April 2019)

_____. 2020. *Africa's Pulse: An Analysis of Issues Shaping Africa's Economic Future*. Washington, DC, World Bank. (Volume 21 – April 2020)

Tsolakis, M. and McCowan, T. 2013. *Youth and capabilities: the role of non-formal education.* New York, UNDP. (Background report for the UNDP Human Development Report.)

United Nations. 2020a. *The World of Work and COVID-19*. Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations. (UN Policy Brief June 2020.) https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/the_world_of_work_and_covid-19.pdf (Accessed 4 August 2020)

____. 2020b. *Impact of COVID-19 in Africa*. Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations. (UN Policy Brief 20 May 2020)

____. 2020c. *Startling disparities in digital learning emerge as COVID-19 spreads: UN education agency.* https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1062232 (Accessed 4 August 2020)

____. 2020d. *Education during COVID-19 and beyond*. Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations. (UN Policy Brief August 2020)

____. n.d. *Definition of Youth*. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf. (Accessed 17 July 2020)

UNDESA. 2020. *Sub-Saharan Africa Population profile.* https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/Line/947 (Accessed 21 July 2020)

UNESCO. 2011. *International Standard Classification of Education*. Paris, UNESCO.

____. 2012. *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*. Paris, UNESCO. (Global Education Monitoring Report 2012.)

____. 2013. *Turning the resource curse into a blessing for education*. Paris, UNESCO. (EFA Global Monitoring Report Policy Paper 08. May 2013.)

____. 2014. *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality Education for All*. Paris, UNESCO. (Global Education Monitoring Report 2013/14.)

____. 2015a. *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action – Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All*. Paris, UNESCO.

____. 2015b. *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges*. Paris, UNESCO. (Global Education Monitoring Report 2015.)

____. 2016. UNESCO HQ Survey Summary. Unpublished internal document. Paris, UNESCO.

____. 2017a. *A Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education*. Paris, UNESCO.

____. 2017b. *Accountability in education: meeting our commitments.* Paris, UNESCO. (Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8.)

____. 2018. *Migration, Displacement and Education: Building bridges not walls.* Table 3- Development assistance to education by recipient, pges 346-347. Paris, UNESCO. (Global Education Monitoring Report 2019.)

____. 2020a. *Inclusion and Education: All means all.* Paris, UNESCO. (Global Education Monitoring Report 2020.)

____. 2020b. *UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response: TVET Systems and Labour Markets*. Paris, UNESCO. (Education Sector issue note no 5.2 – April 2020.)

____. 2020c. UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response: How many students are at risk of not returning to school? Paris, UNESCO. (Advocacy Paper – 30 July 2020)

____. 2020d. *Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public action*. Paris, UNESCO.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2011. *International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011*. Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics. http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf. (Accessed 16 July 2020)

____. 2016. *The world needs almost 69 million new teachers to reach the 2030 education goals*. Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (UIS fact sheet No. 39.)

____. 2019a. *World Teachers' Day 2019 Fact Sheet*. Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

____. 2019b. *New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescent and Youth Are Out of School.* Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (UIS fact sheet No. 56.)

____. 2020. UIS.Stat. Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics. http://data.uis.unesco.org/. (Accessed 21 July 2020)

____. n.d. Glossary. Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics. http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary. (Accessed 6 June 2019)

United Nations Population Fund. 2016. Demographic dividend. https://www.unfpa.org/demographic-dividend. (Accessed 17 July 2020)

UNHCR. 2019. *UNHCR Global Report 2018.* Geneva, Switzerland, UNHCR.. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5e4ff98f7.pdf

_____. 2020. *UNHCR Data.* https://www.unhcr.org/data.html. (Accessed 17 July 2020)

UNICEF. 2020. *Child marriage.* https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/. (Accessed 17 July 2020)

Walker, G., Millar Wood, J. C., and Allemano, E. 2009. *Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment*. http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Liberia_2009_Youth_Fragility_Assessment.pdf. (Accessed 20 July 2020)

World Health Organization. 2018. *Disability and Health.* https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health. (Accessed 17 July 2020)

Yasunaga, M. 2014. *Non-Formal Education as a Means to Meet Learning Needs of Out-of-School Children and Adolescents*. Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Satistics.

Annexes

ANNEX I: Terminology

Adjusted parity index: Adjusted parity index is a parity index that is symmetrical around 1 and limited to a range between 0 and 2. An adjusted parity index equal to one indicates parity between the two compared categories. In general, a value less than 1 indicates disparity in favour of the category in the denominator (males for GPIA; urban for LPIA; richest quintile for WPIA) and a value greater than 1 indicates disparity in favour of the numerator category (females for GPIA; rural for LPIA; poorest quintile for WPIA). However, the interpretation is different for indicators that should ideally approach 0% (e.g. repetition rate, dropout rate, out-of-school rate, etc.). In these cases, a GPIA less than 1 indicates disparity in favour of females and a value greater than 1 indicates disparity in favour of males; an LPIA less than 1 indicates disparity in favour of those living in rural areas and a value greater than 1 indicates disparity in favour of those living in urban areas; and a WPIA less than 1 indicates disparity in favour of those living in the poorest households and a value greater than 1 indicates disparity in favour of those living in the richest households. (UIS, n.d.).

Basic education: This report adopts "basic education" per UNESCO Institute for Statistics' definition, referring to the "whole range of educational activities, taking place in various settings, that aim to meet basic learning needs as defined in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990). According to [International Standard Classification of Education] ISCED standard, basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary education (second stage). It also covers a wide variety of non-formal and informal public and private activities intended to meet the basic learning needs of people of all ages. (UIS, n.d.)".

Demographic dividend: The demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15–64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older). Countries with the greatest demographic opportunity for development are those entering a period in which the working-age population has good health, quality education, decent employment and a lower proportion of young dependents. Smaller numbers of children per household generally lead to larger investments per child, more freedom for women to enter the formal workforce and more household savings for old age. When this happens, the national economic payoff can be substantial (UNFPA, 2016).

Informal learning: Forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalized. They are less organized and structured than either formal or non-formal education. Informal learning may include learning activities that occur in the family, in the workplace, in the local community, and in daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis (UIS, 2011).

NEET: Not in Education, Employment or Training. The Youth NEET rate is the percentage of people between 15 and 24 years old who are NEETs (ILO, n.d.).

Non-formal education (NFE): Education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning

of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters for people of all ages, but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal qualifications by the relevant national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development (UIS, 2011).

PBE: All public and private activities intended to meet the learning needs of young people beyond lower secondary education or equivalent instruction. It therefore includes upper secondary and tertiary education, including university, post-secondary non-tertiary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), as well as other forms of training and capacity development interventions aimed at the youth.

Rate of out-of-school children (household survey data): Number of children of official primary school age who are not attending primary or secondary school, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary school age. Children attending pre-primary education are considered out of school (UIS, n.d.).

Unemployment rate: The unemployment rate is calculated by expressing the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the total number of persons in the labour force. The labour force (formerly known as the economically active population) is the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed [ILO, n.d.].

Youth: This study follows the United Nations' definition of Youth's as **those persons between the ages of 15–24** in principle, but several UN entities, instruments and regional organizations have somewhat different definitions of youth, which the United Nations Secretariat recognizes. The following terms and definitions summarize these differences: **Youth: 15–24** (UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO), **Youth: 15–32** (UN Habitat Youth Fund), **Adolescent: 10–19, Young People: 10–24 (**UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA); Child until 18 (UNICEF); **Youth: 15–35** (The African Youth Charter) (UN, n.d.). The background papers for East and Western Africa have collected primary data from youth (ages 14 to 27).

ANNEX II: Summary of the sampling process

For the reports prepared by the UNESCO Regional Offices in Africa, the research teams collected primary data from youth aged 14 to 27 years old. The target groups were selected through purposive sampling in order to ensure a wide range of demographic characteristics and be as inclusive as possible. In some countries, access to target groups and feasibility also influenced the selection of participants. While the study protocol defined youth as young people aged 15 to 24 years old, there were regional differences in terms of the age groups considered youth. In some instances the availability of respondents also contributed to determine the age group of the sample. Characteristics such as gender, geographical location (urban/rural), remoteness, and the types of PBE services available were also considered. The researchers attempted to include youth with disabilities when possible.

The groups included adolescent youth attending secondary schools, afterschool programmes, non-formal programmes, youth in integrated non-formal schools, out-of-school youth, youth involved in second chance/bridge course programmes, youth enrolled or who had participated in vocational or technical training programmes and/or other such programmes, as well as working youth.

The individuals also came from various backgrounds such as recently migrated from rural areas, living with their parents, living with aunt/uncle/grandparents, living with HIV/AIDS, studying in private schools, from ethnic minorities, child brides and LGBTQIA+ youth[23]. The background studies included research protocols to ensure that there was equal representation of females in primary data collection efforts.

Country case studies in East and West Africa also included teachers and/or trainers from programmes dedicated to young people. Each FGD included between 8-12 individuals in West Africa.

Summary of the samples by method and region

Regions	Countries	Number of participants FGD	Number of Interviews with youth	Number of Interviews with educators
West Africa	Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal	18 FGD	10	5
East Africa	Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda	20 FGD	9	5
Southern Africa	Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe	202 FGD	23	

23 The sampling strategy included youth from the LGBTQIA+ community, however the regional reports' data did not mention this as a theme due to a lack of specific data.

ANNEX III: Education systems of SSA, 2017

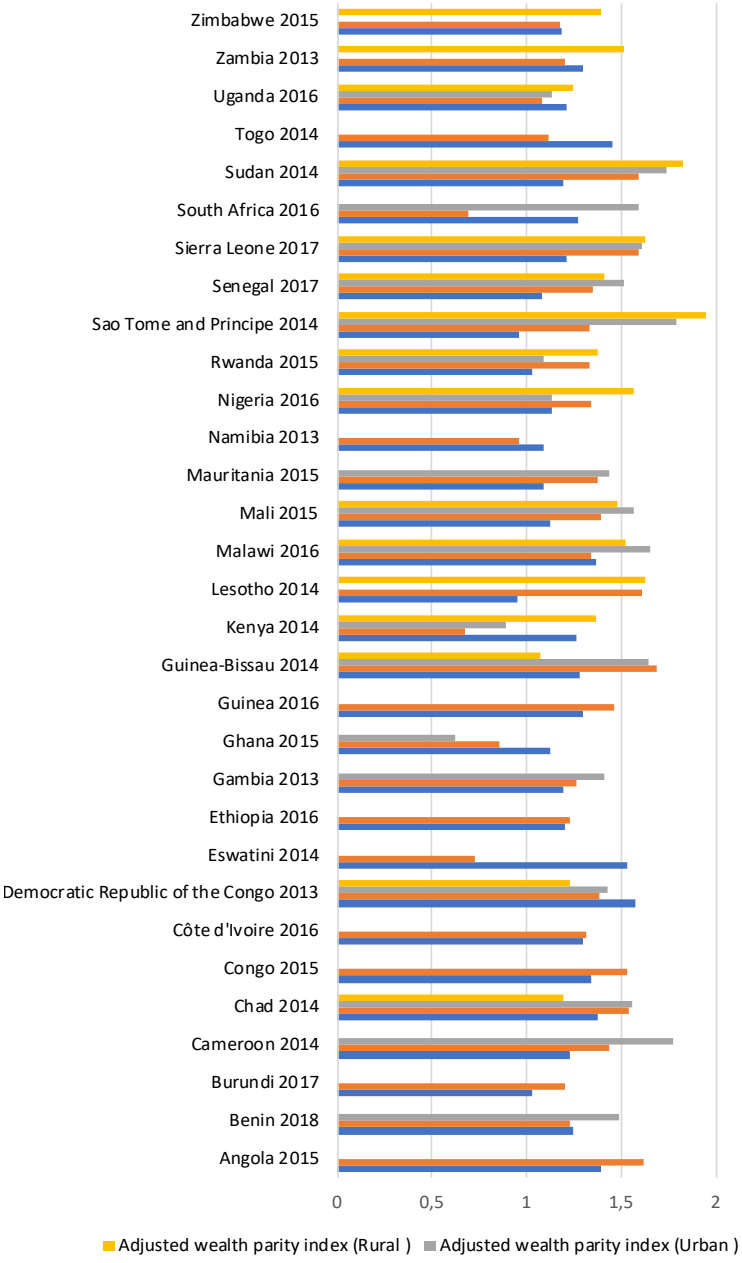
	Compulsory		Free		Official primary school starting age	Duration (years)		
	Years of pre-primary	Years of primary-secondary	Years of pre-primary	Years of primary-secondary		Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary
Angola	-	6	-	-	6	1	6	3
Benin	-	6	-	6	6	2	6	4
Botswana	-	-	…	…	6	3	7	3
Burkina Faso	-	11	-	10	6	3	6	4
Burundi	-$_{-1}$	-$_{-1}$	…	…	7	2	6	4
Cabo Verde	-	10	-	8	6	3	6	3
Cameroon	-	6	-	6	6	2	6	4
CAR	-	10	-	13	6	3	6	4
Chad	-	10	-	10	6	3	6	4
Comoros	-	6	-	6	6	3	6	4
Congo	-	10	3	13	6	3	6	4
Côte d'Ivoire	-$_{-1}$	10$_{-1}$	-$_{-1}$	10$_{-1}$	6	3	6	4
D. R. Congo	-	6	-	6	6	3	6	2
Djibouti	-	10	2	12	6	2	5	4
Equat. Guinea	-	6	-	6	7	3	6	4
Eritrea	-	8	-$_{-1}$	8$_{-1}$	6	2	5	3
Eswatini	-	7	-	7	6	3	7	3
Ethiopia	-	8	-	8	7	3	6	4
Gabon	-	10	-	10	6	3	5	4
Gambia	-	9	-	9	7	4	6	3
Ghana	2	9	-	9	6	2	6	3
Guinea	-$_{-1}$	6$_{-1}$	-$_{-1}$	6$_{-1}$	7	3	6	4
Guinea-Bissau	-$_{-1}$	9$_{-1}$	…	…	6	3	6	3
Kenya	-	12	-	12	6	3	6	2
Lesotho	-	7	-	7	6	3	7	3
Liberia	-	6	-	6	6	3	6	3
Madagascar	-	5	3	12	6	3	5	4
Malawi	-	8	-$_{-1}$	8$_{-1}$	6	3	6	4

	Compulsory		Free		Official primary school starting age	Duration (years)		
	Years of pre-primary	Years of primary-secondary	Years of pre-primary	Years of primary-secondary		Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary
Mali	-	9	4	12	7	4	6	3
Mauritius	-	11	-	13	5	2	6	3
Namibia	-	7	$-_{-1}$	7_{-1}	7	2	7	3
Niger	-	-	…	…	7	3	6	4
Nigeria	$-_{-1}$	9_{-1}	-	9	6	1	6	3
Rwanda	-	6	-	9	7	3	6	3
Sao Tome & Principe	-	6	-	6	6	3	6	3
Senegal	-	11	-	11	6	3	6	4
Seychelles	$-_{-1}$	10_{-1}	-	11	6	2	6	3
Sierra Leone	-	9	-	9	6	3	6	3
Somalia	$-_{-1}$	$-_{-1}$	…	…	6	3	6	2
South Africa	-	9	-	12	7	4	7	2
South Sudan	$-_{-1}$	8_{-1}	-	8	6	3	6	2
Togo	-	10	-	5	6	3	6	4
Uganda	-	7	…	…	6	3	7	4
U. R. Tanzania	-	7	2	7	7	2	7	4
Zambia	$-_{-1}$	7_{-1}	-	7	7	4	7	2
Zimbabwe	$-_{-1}$	7_{-1}	…	…	6	2	7	2

Notes:
Source: UNESCO. 2019. Global Education Monitoring Report. Table 1, pages 280-281.
Aggregates represent countries listed in the table with available data and may include estimates for countries with no recent data.
(-) Magnitude nil or negligible.
(. . .) Data not available or category not applicable.
(± n) Reference year differs (e.g. -2: reference year 2015 instead of 2017).
(i) Estimate and/or partial coverage.

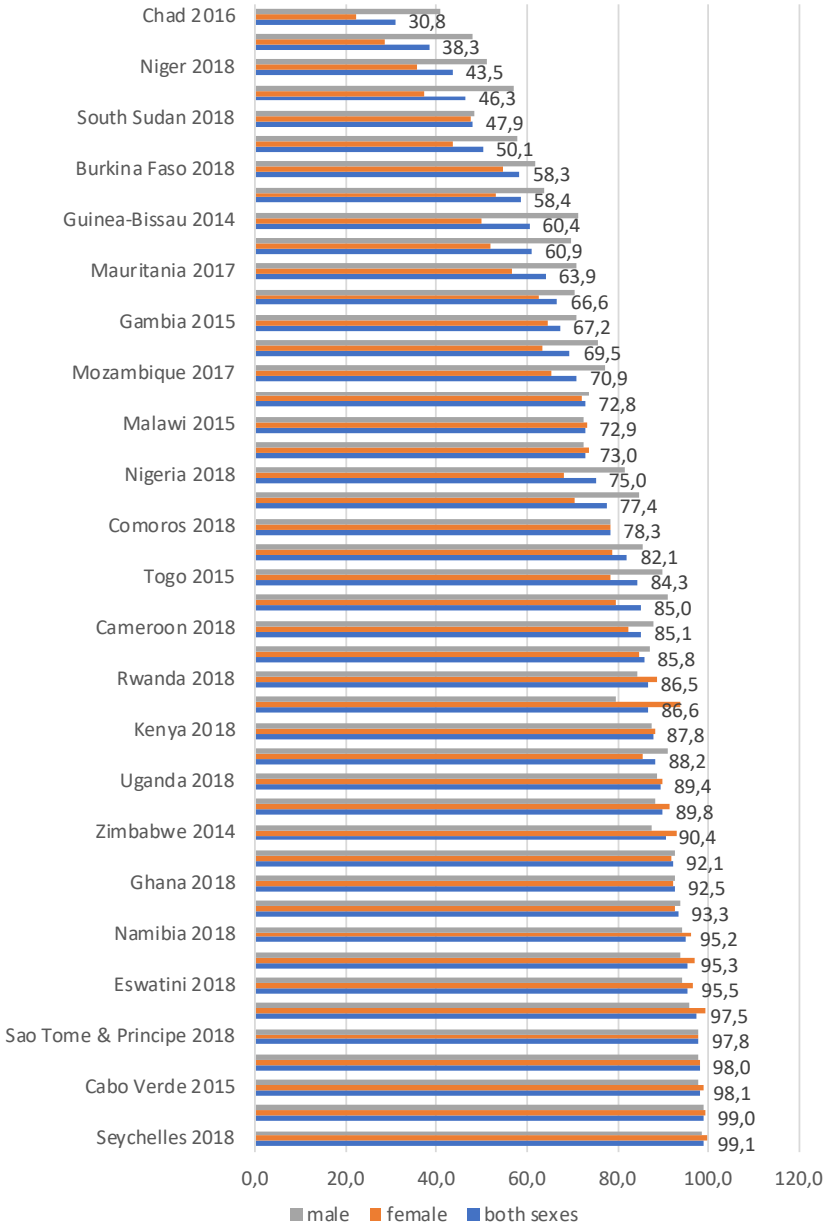
ANNEX IV: Key figures and key graphs

Graph A - Out of school rate for youth of upper secondary school age



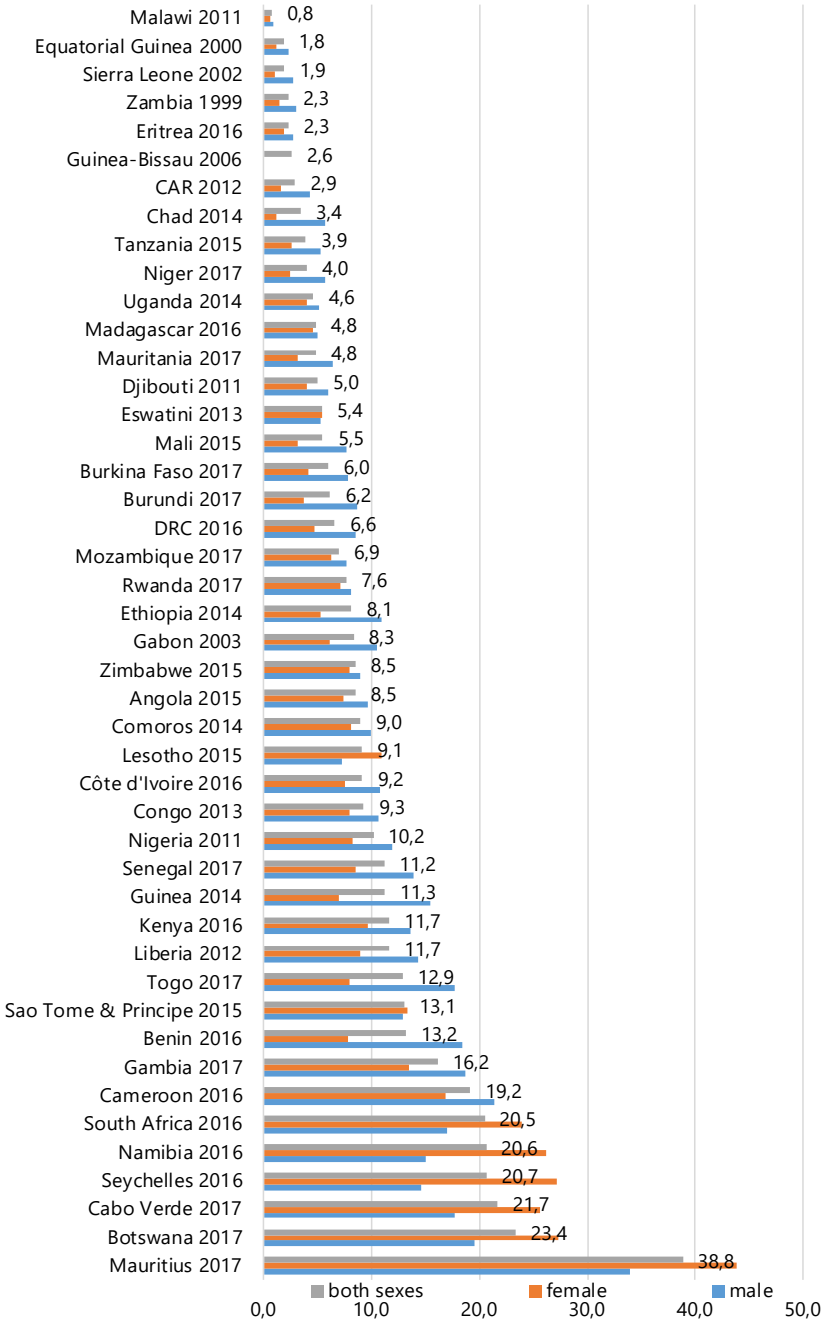
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph B - Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 in SSA



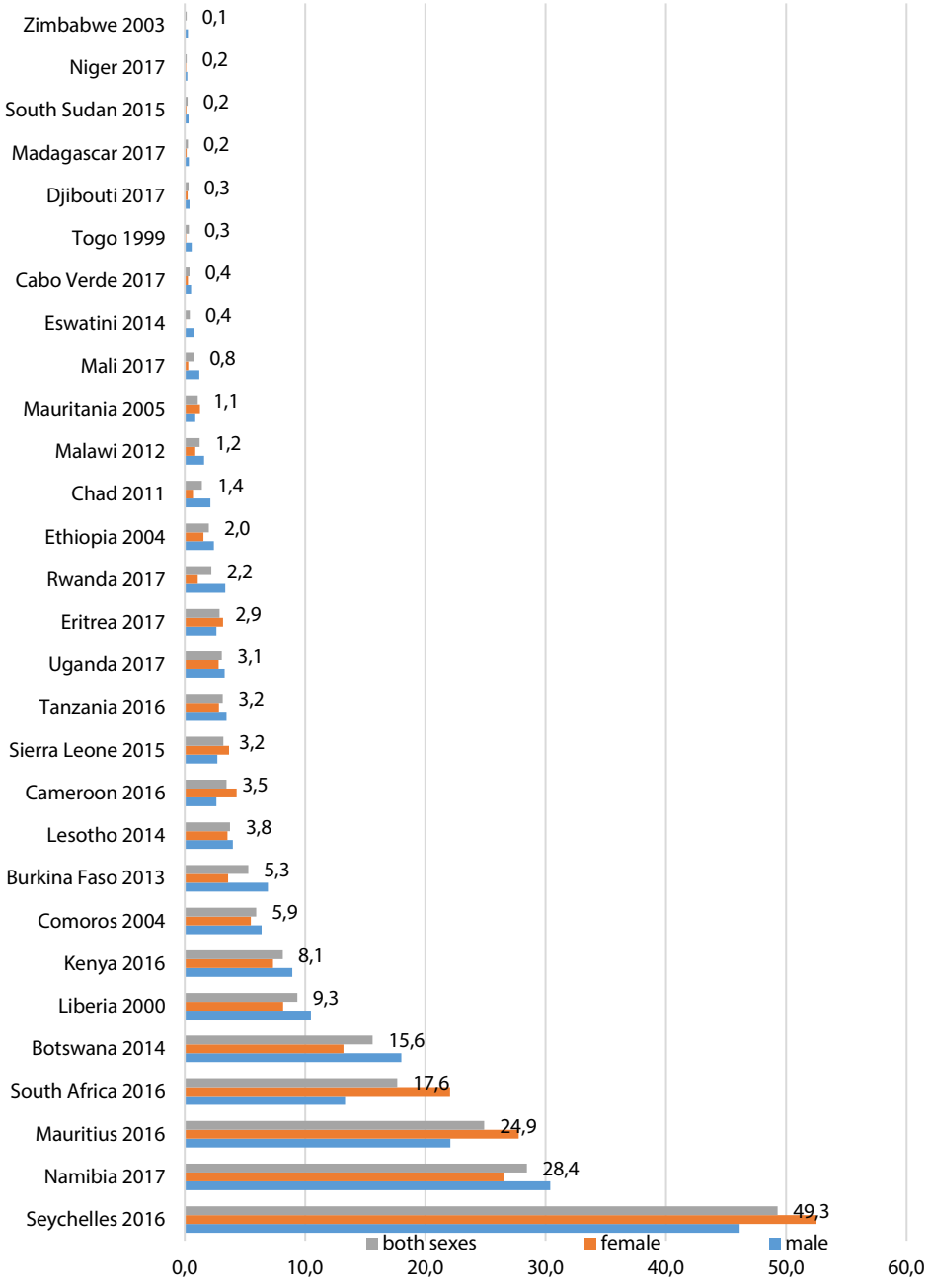
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph C - Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary in SSA



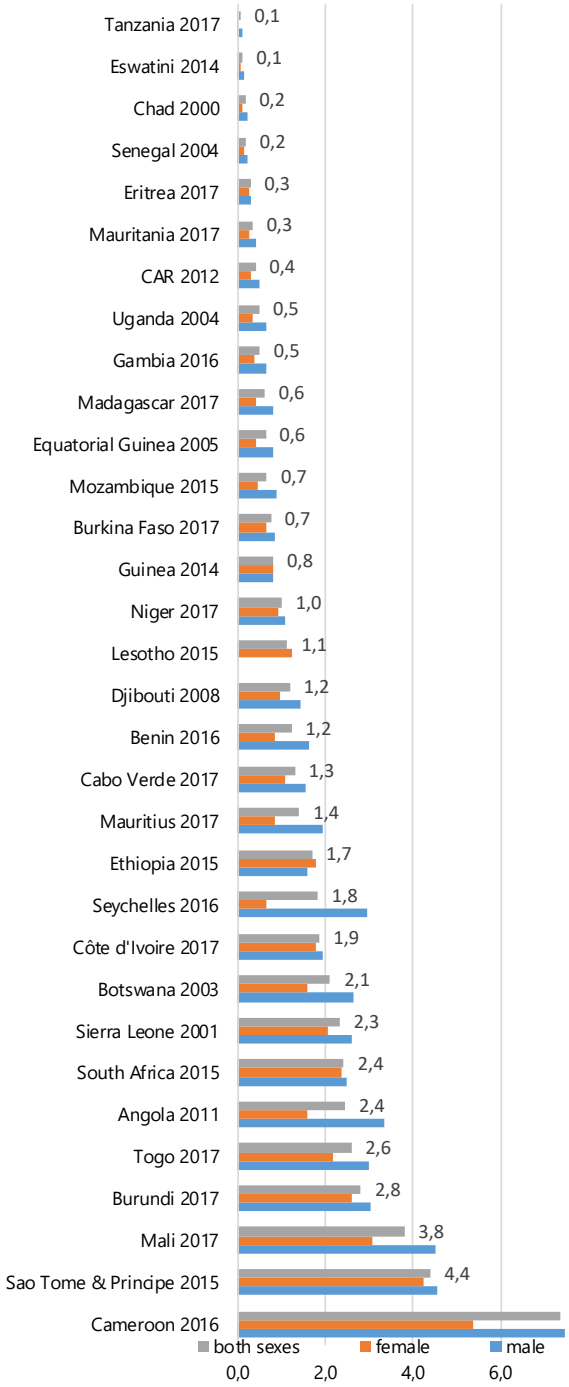
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph D - Gross enrolment ratio post-secondary non-tertiary in SSA



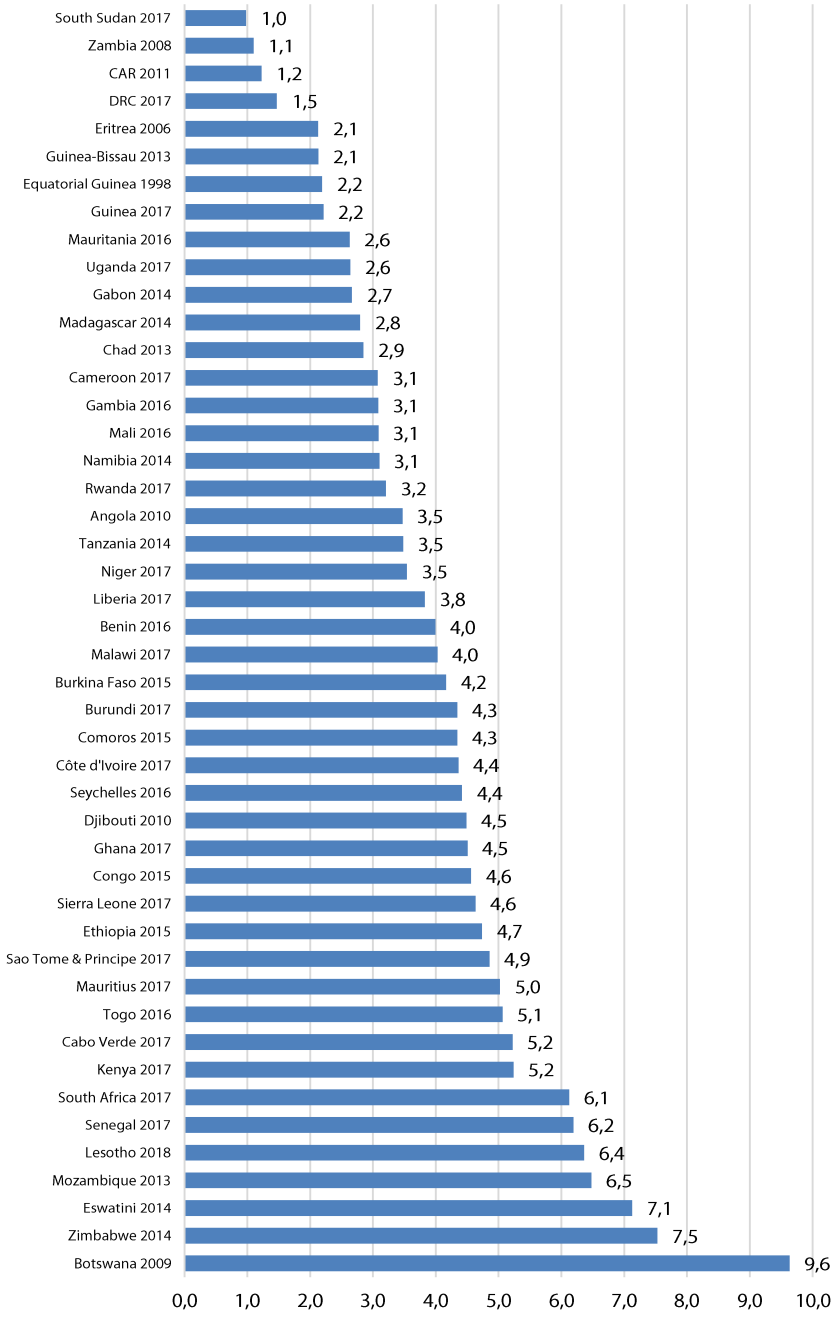
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph E - Proportion of 15-24 year-olds enrolled in vocational education in SSA



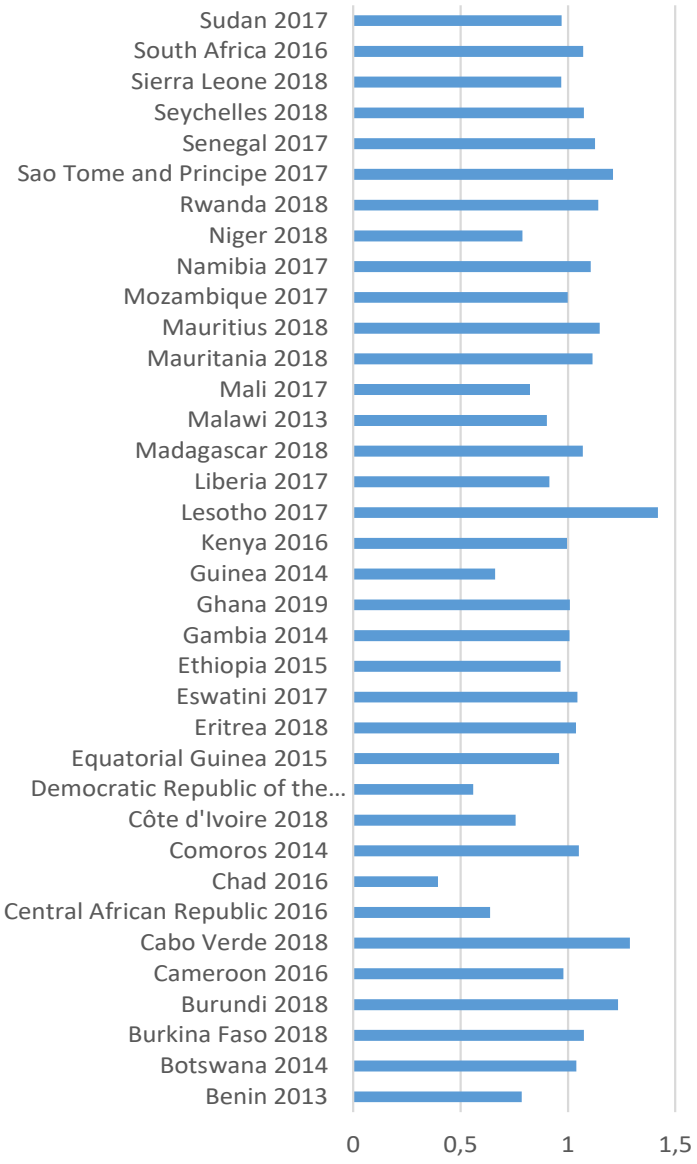
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph F - Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (%)



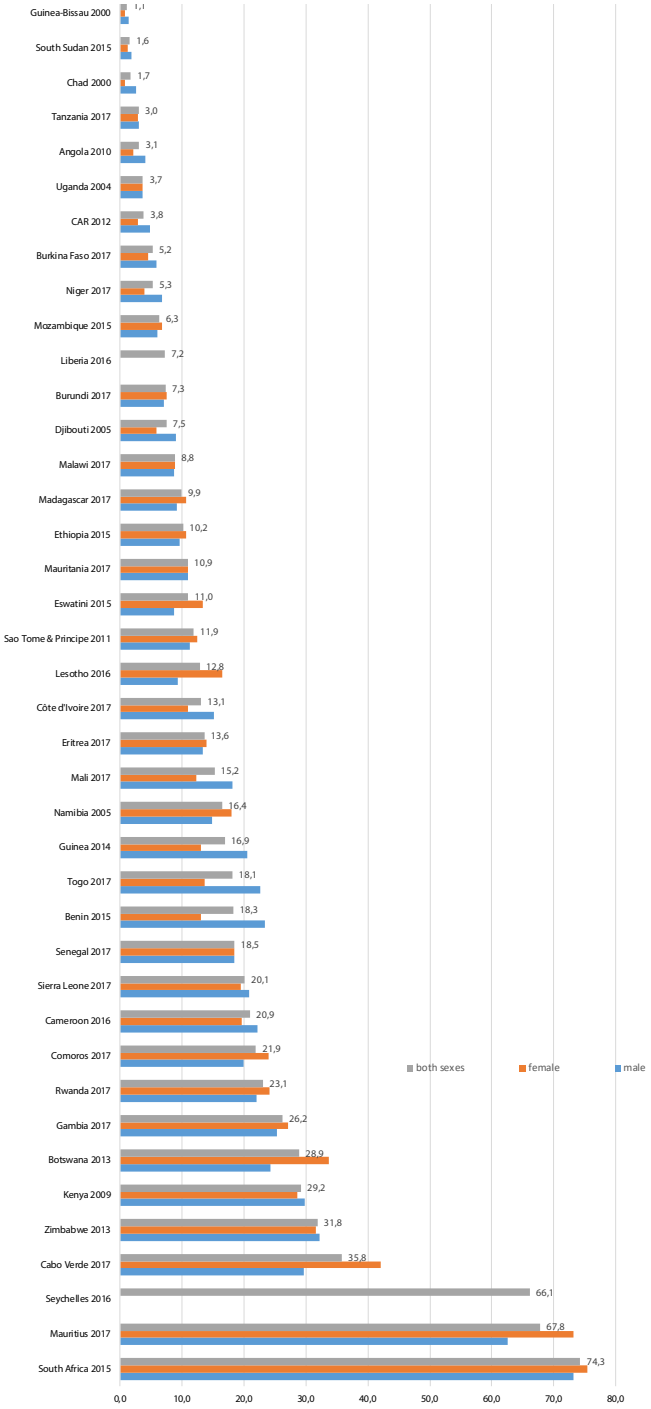
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph G - Gender parity index for the gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary



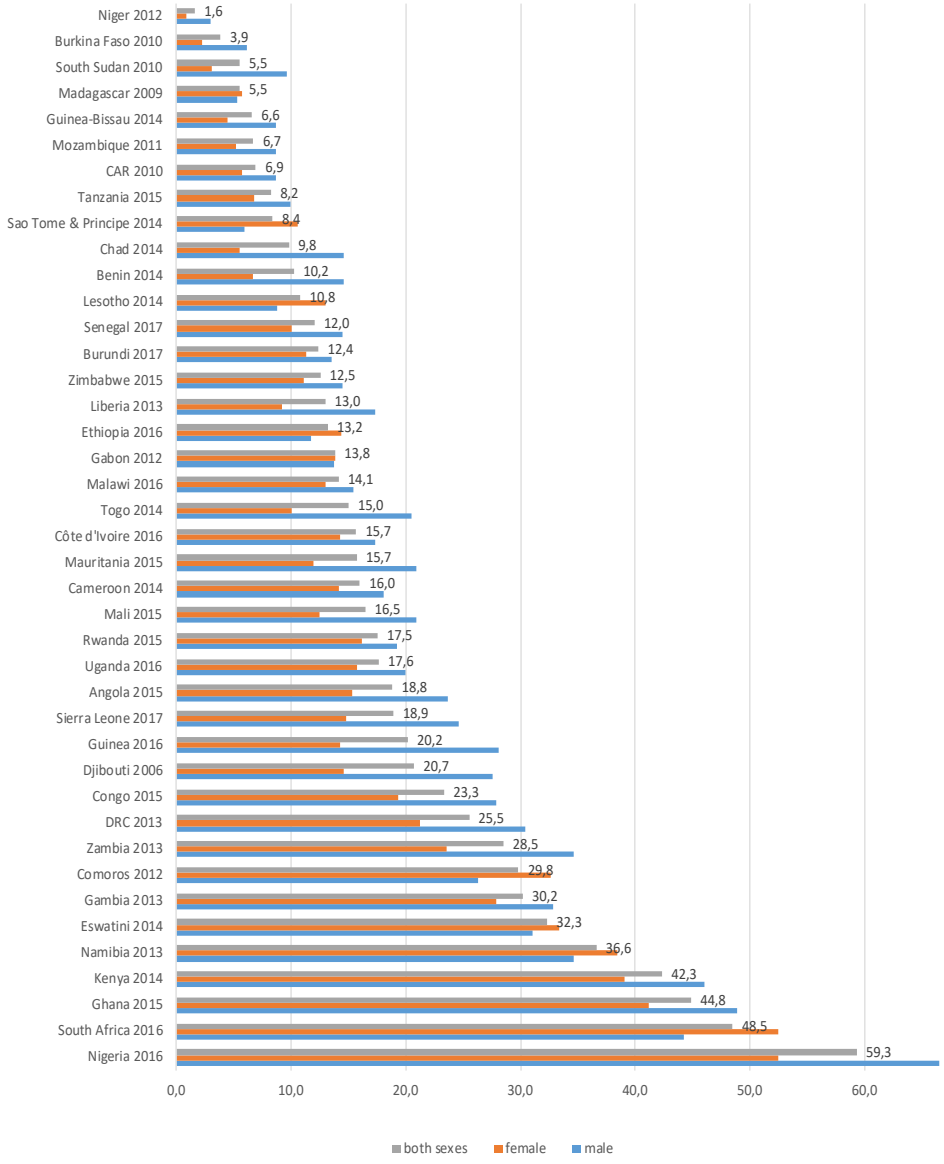
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph H - Net enrolment rate (NER), upper secondary in SSA



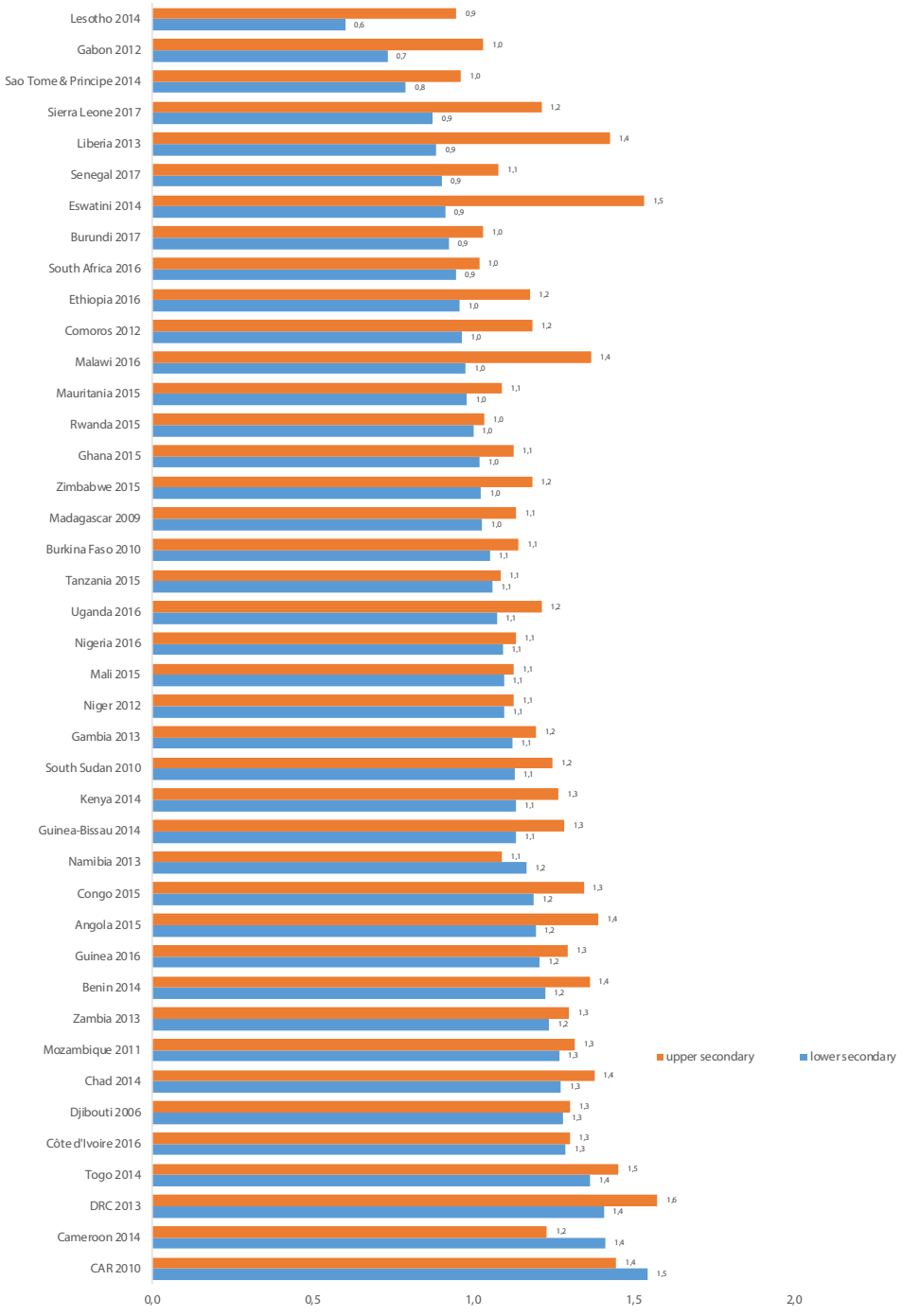
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph I - Completion rate, upper secondary education in SSA (household survey data)



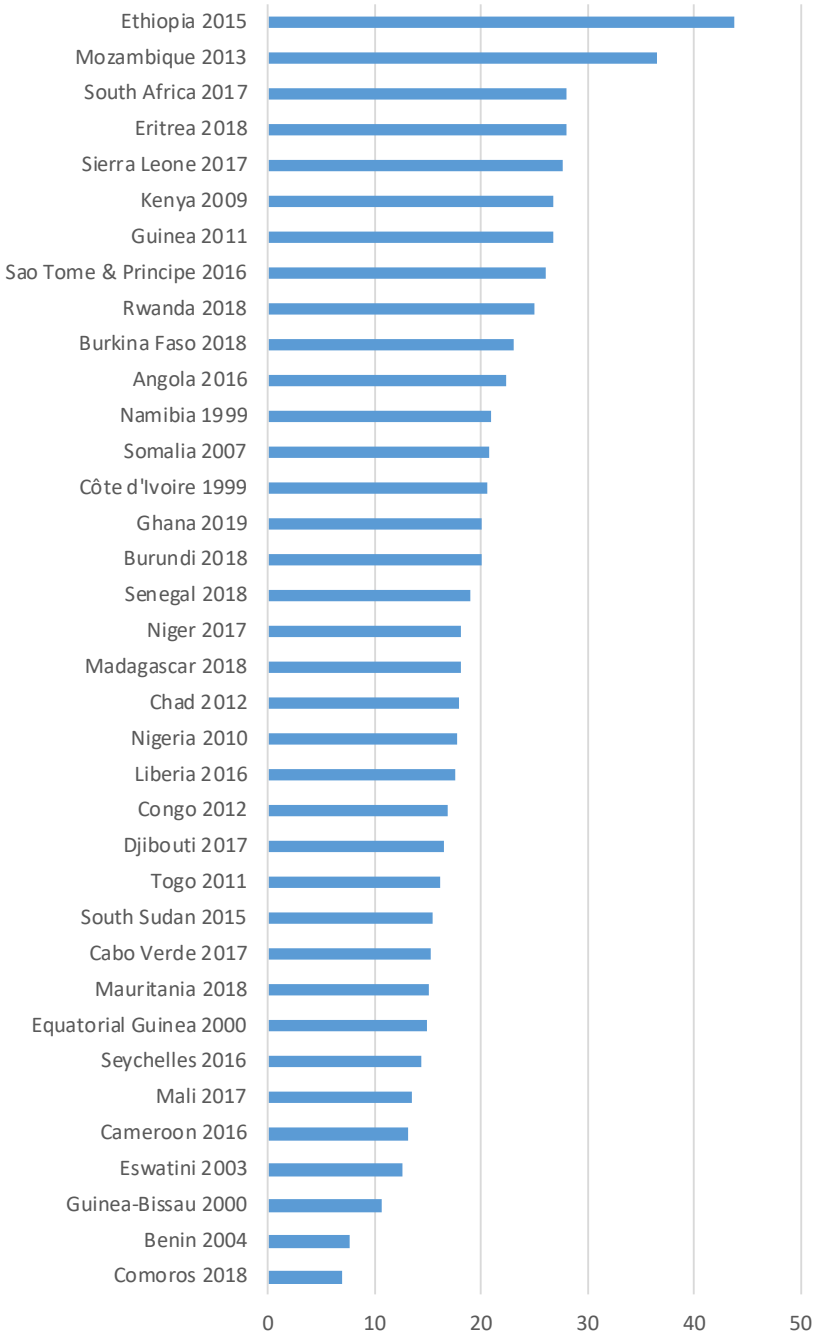
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph J - Rate of out-of-school adolescents of lower and upper secondary age, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA) 2006-2017



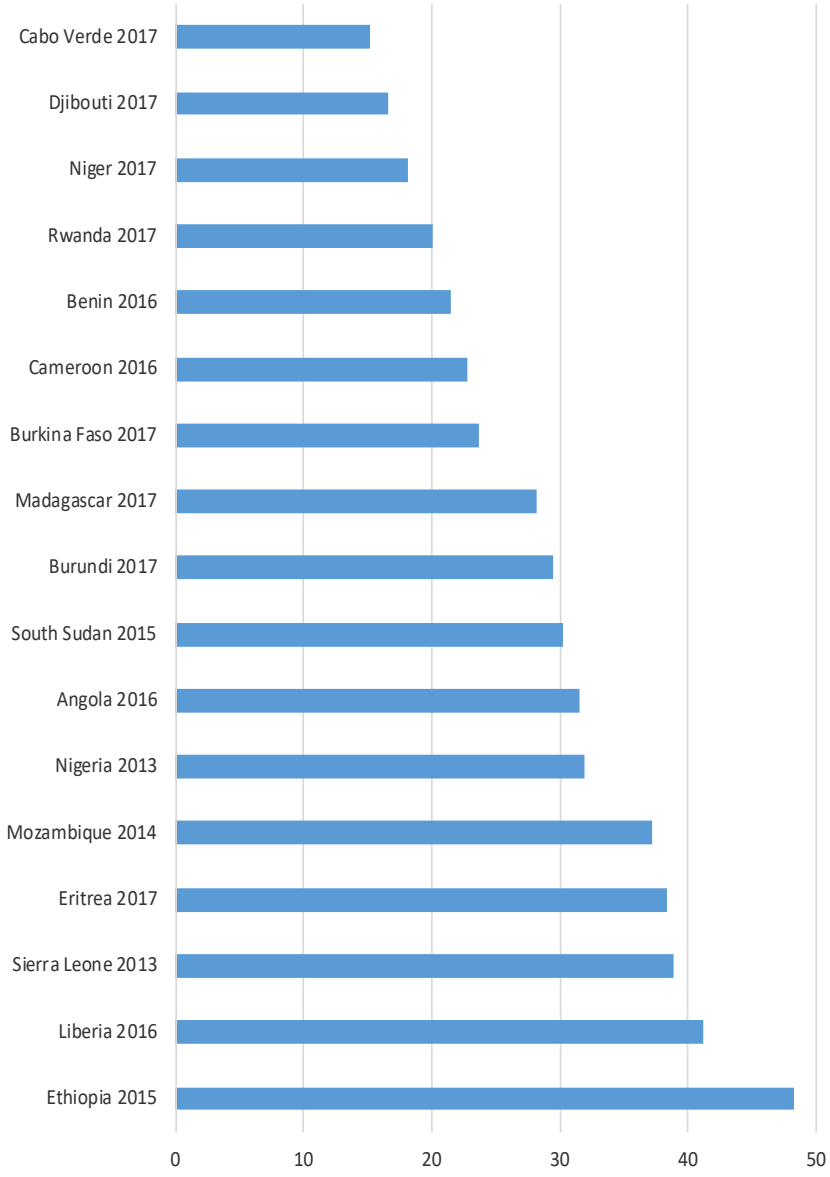
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph K - Pupil-teacher ratio in upper secondary education (headcount basis)



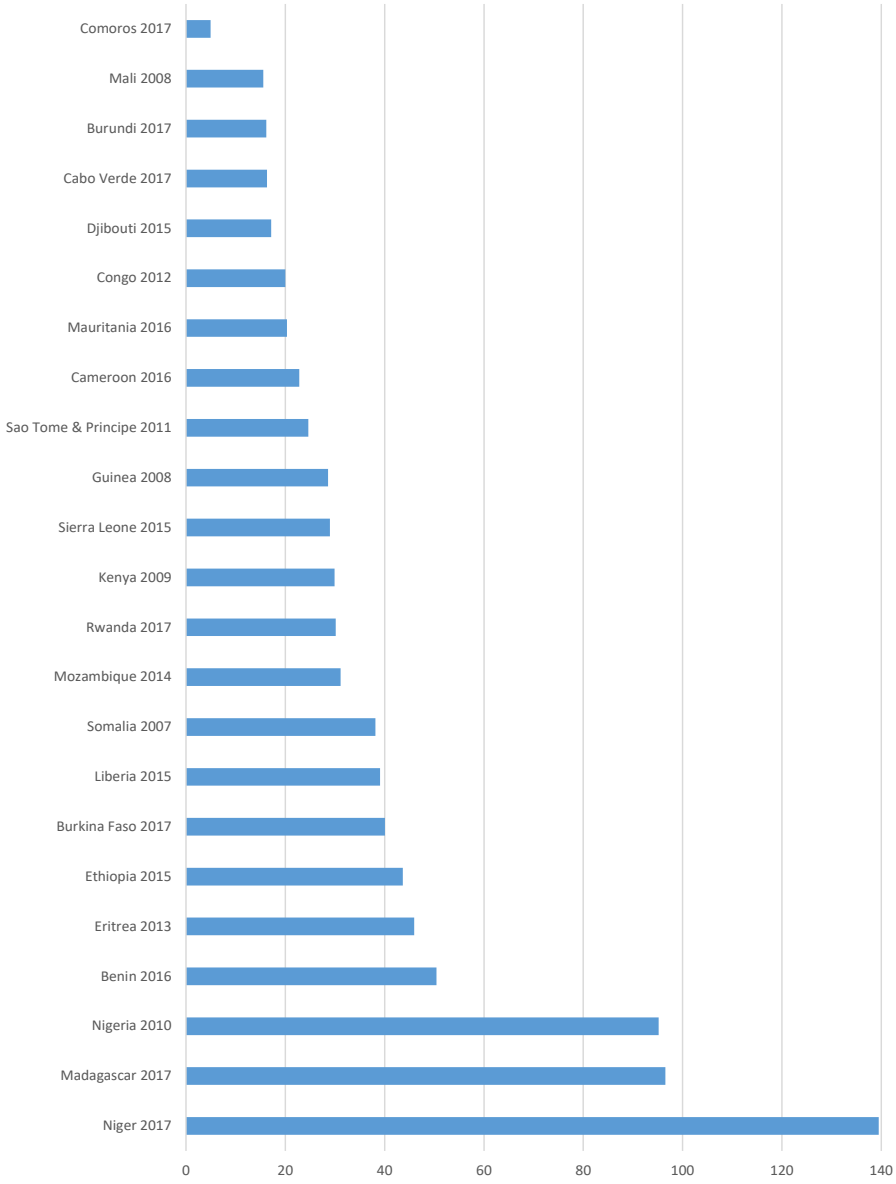
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph L - Pupil/qualified teacher ratio in upper secondary (headcount basis)



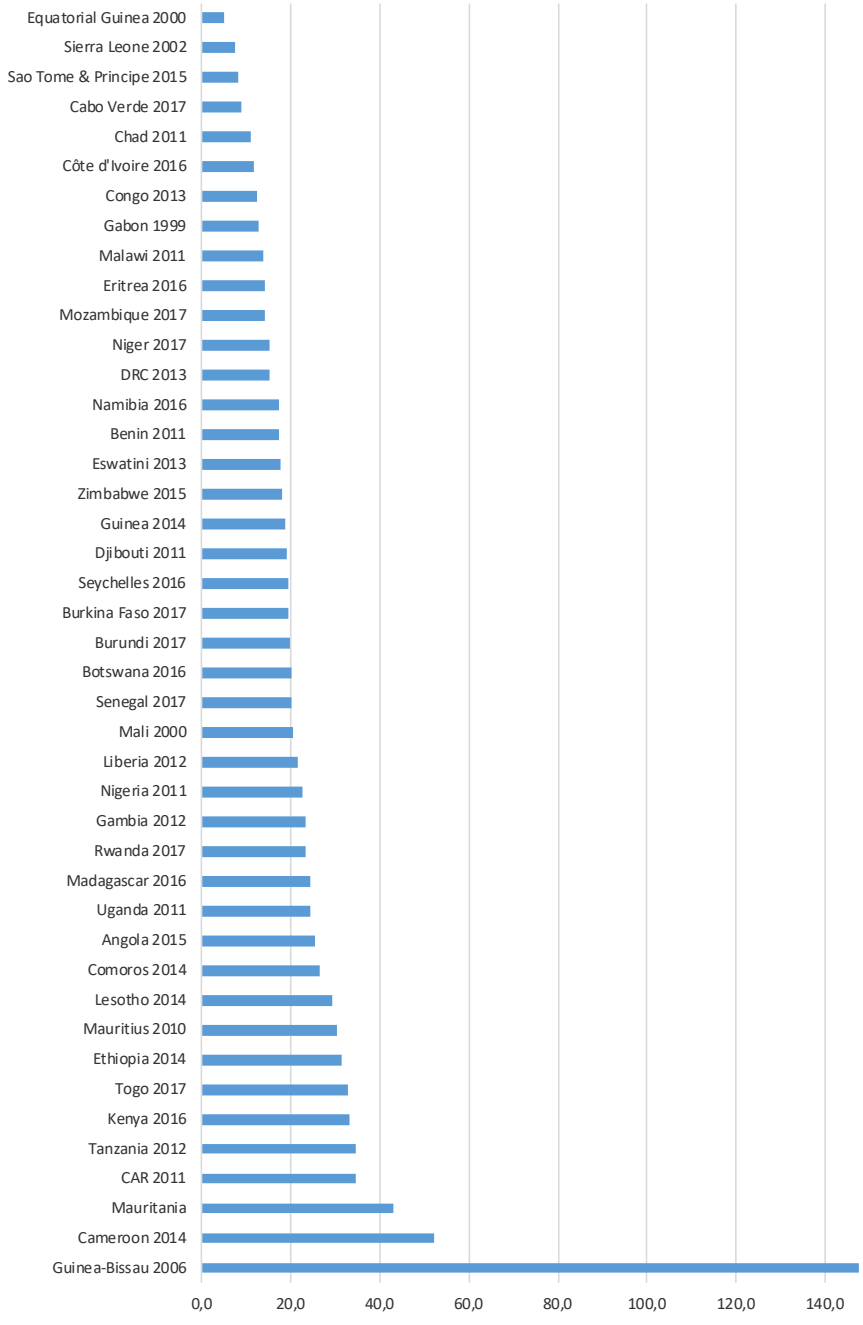
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph M - Pupil/trained teacher ratio in upper secondary education (headcount basis)



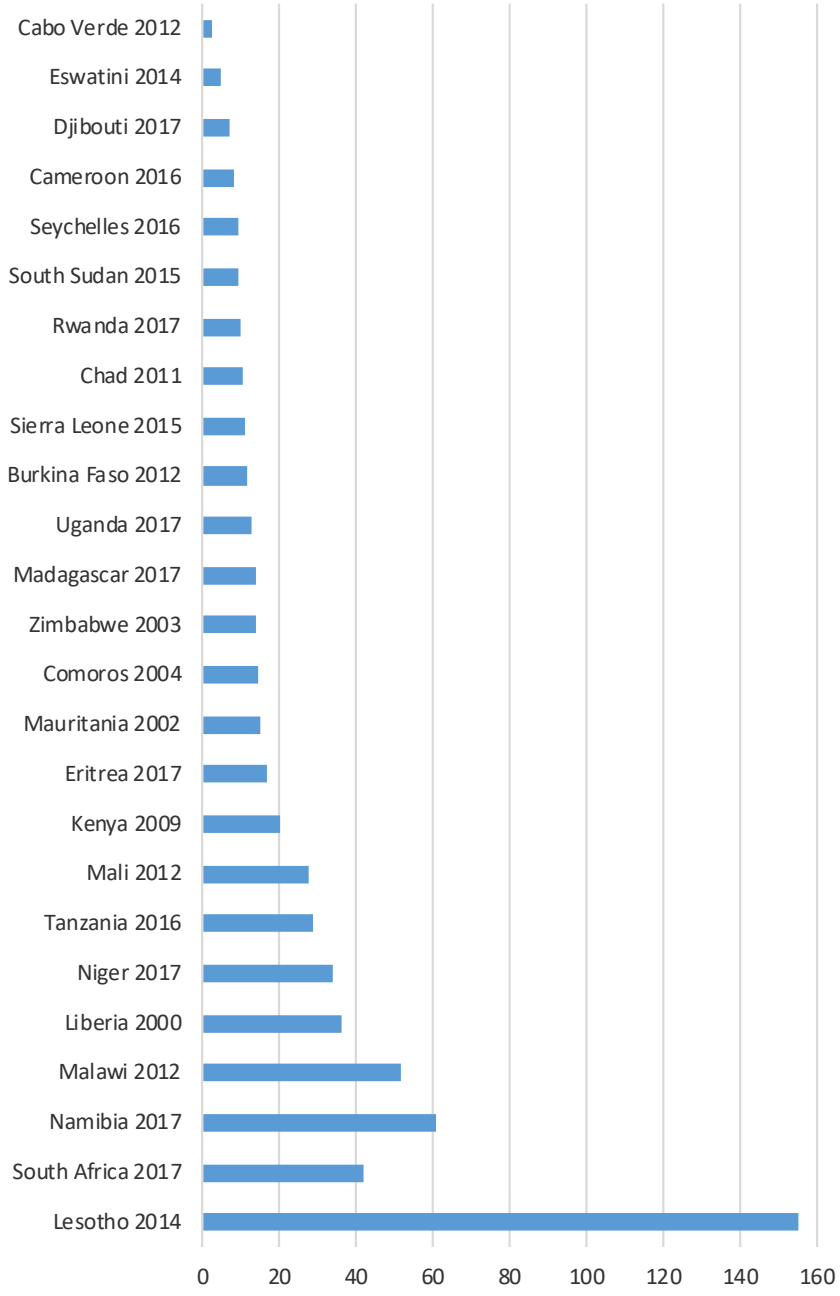
Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph N - Pupil-teacher ratio in tertiary education (headcount basis)



Data source: UIS, 2020

Graph O - Pupil-teacher ratio in post-secondary non-tertiary education (headcount basis)



Data source: UIS, 2020

unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Youth and changing realities

Rethinking post-basic education in sub-Saharan Africa

Education should empower young people for full participation in their societies and education systems should be responsive to their voices, aspirations and actions. At this time of upheaval, it is more important than ever that youth voices are heard. This synthesis report analyses the perspectives of post-basic education of some young people from 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Their voices express diverse experiences, aspirations and expectations. They describe 'changing realities' in which education and training opportunities often seem unable to meet their aspirations and new demands of the world of work and society. It focusses on four crucial themes for post-basic education, with reference to youth's experiences: financing, socio-cultural barriers, skills for work and life, and educators' capacities.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action calls for youth, learners and their organizations to be full partners in the realization of SDG4; to encourage governments and other stakeholders to develop education programmes in consultation with young people; and to help shape policies for relevant and responsive education systems. This synthesis report makes an important contribution towards rethinking post-basic education in sub-Saharan Africa.

9 789231 005152

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Sustainable Development Goals