Education Spending in Africa: The impacts of COVID-19 and possible recovery pathways

2024

African Union

unicef for every child

Foreword

Education is a fundamental human right. The right to education has been highlighted in national constitutions globally and across the African continent. As the learning crisis continues to slow and reverse education gains across Africa and across the globe, it has become imperative to address all facets of learning so that human capital is not lost, and that no child is left behind. Urgent prioritization of domestic and external resources is key to improving the quality of education in Africa.

This report is the result of an ongoing partnership between the African Union Commission (AUC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) that aims to improve learning outcomes for all African children. Under the partnership, the AUC and UNICEF want to facilitate engagement and high-level policy discussions with African Union (AU) member states, regional economic communities, development partners, and other stakeholders, around renewing commitments for education financing.

Recovering educational opportunities and learning lost to the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens to undermine the human capital base and development potential of Africa, needs to be one of the highest policy priorities for governments across the continent. This report intends to encourage decision makers to make education a chief concern. It unpacks the major spending deficiencies across the education sector, both before, during and after the pandemic, especially the lack of attention to early learning services and budget execution challenges. It also identifies practical options for governments to boost investments in education systems, which will accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-25 in line with the African Union Agenda 2063.

As we celebrate the AU Year of Education in 2024 under the theme *"Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa,"* this report comes at an opportune time. It challenges AU member states to keep education financing at the core of public policies in Africa, with a strong message of re-committing to make education a budget priority. This includes a call to action for actors in the education sector, from the national level down to individual schools, to maximize the design, implementation, and ultimately, the impact of their budgets to improve learning outcomes.

The AUC, UNICEF and partners stand ready to support AU member states to improve the quantity and quality of their investments in education.

H.E. Prof Mohammed Belhocine
Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation

Robert Jenkins
Global Director, Education and Adolescent Development

Acknowledgements

This report was jointly prepared by the AUC and the UNICEF under the leadership of Robert Jenkins, Global Director Education at UNICEF Headquarters.

The team that prepared the report include:

AUC: Pr. Mohammed Belhocine (Commissioner for Education Science, Technology and Innovation - ESTI), Mr. Adoumtar Noubatour (Director, Institut Panafricain de l'Education pour le Development), and Mrs. Sophia Ndemutila Ashipala (Head of Education Division).

UNICEF: Matthew Cummins (Social Policy Regional Adviser, UNICEF ESARO), Bob Muchabaiwa (Public Finance Specialist, UNICEF ESARO), Beifith Kouak Tiyab (Education Specialist, UNICEF ESARO), Jephthe J. Mve Mvondo (Policy and Advocacy Specialist, UNICEF Office to the African Union), Michael Castro (Public Finance Specialist, UNICEF WCARO) and Yacouba Djibo Abdou (Education Specialist, UNICEF WCARO).

The preparation of this report was also carried out by Abhiyan Jung Rana (Regional Education Adviser, UNICEF ESARO), Cecilia Baldeh (Regional Education Adviser, UNICEF WCARO), Edward Addai (Representative, UNICEF Office to the African Union) and Paul Quarles Van Ufford (Regional Social Policy Adviser, UNICEF WCARO).Valuable comments and inputs were also received from Alassane Ouedraogo (Education Specialist, UNICEF MENARO), Anna Alejo (Education Consultant, UNICEF NYHQ), Angela Travis (Communication and Advocacy Regional Director, UNICEF ESARO), Annika Rigole (Education Specialist, ESARO), Haogen Yao (Education Specialist, UNICEF NYHQ), Momo Duehring (Education Specialist, UNICEF MENARO), Polycarp Otieno (Education Specialist, UNICEF ESARO), Steinunn Helga Jakobsdottir (Communications Specialist, UNICEF ESARO), Ulugbek Olimov (Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF MENARO), Wongani Grace Taulo (Regional Education Adviser, UNICEF ESARO), Yin Xin (Public Finance Intern, UNICEF ESARO) and Yuki Murakami (Education Economist, Global Education Monitoring Report).

Acronyms

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CCRT	Catastrophe Containment and ReliefTrust
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
DSSI	Debt Service Suspension Initiative
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
G20	Group of 20
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNI	Gross national income
HIC	High-income country
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LIC	Low-income country
LMIC	Lower-middle income country
MENARO	Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
ODA	Official development assistance
PBB	Programme-based budgeting
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PPPs	Public Private Partnerships
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDR	Special Drawing Right
UMIC	Upper-middle income country
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WAEMU	West Africa Economic and Monetary Union
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office

CONTENTS

List of Figures

Executive Summary

This report discusses the impacts of COVID-19 on government spending on the education sector in Africa. It does so by presenting a comprehensive picture of education expenditure over the 2017-19 period, which, combined with analysis of the macroeconomic and fiscal effects of the pandemic, together with recent survey information from education ministries, helped estimate education spending over the 2020-22 period. The paper also reviews evidence of education funding gaps and opportunities for the continent.

Over the past two decades, African Union member states have made significant efforts to ensure that no child is left behind when it comes to learning and skills. Progress in many areas has been impressive. For instance, between the early 2000s and 2019, the proportion of primary school-age children not attending school was halved, dropping from 35 per cent to 17 per cent on average. Similarly, over the same period, the gross intake ratio for the last year of school jumped from 33 per cent to 48 per cent on average for primary school, and from 59 per cent to 73 per cent for lower secondary school. But despite the positive momentum, remaining challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, nearly six out of every 10 children aged 10 in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and/or understand a simple story. Going forward, investment in quality education – and not just school attendance – will be critical to ensuring member states get back on track.

Early learning received the least investment attention.

2% of education budgets were directed to pre-primary education services, on average. This contradicts evidence that says investment in early childhood education produces better outcomes than those made later in life. The investment also falls short of the 10 per cent recommended to be spent on pre-primary education.

Overall, this report points to three main findings:

1. Most government investments in education systems were insufficient even before the pandemic.
2. COVID-19 caused a significant decline in education spending across the continent.
3. Although funding shortfalls continue growing in many places, governments have options to immediately boost investments in their educational systems.

Moreover:

Most African governments only partially fulfilled their financial commitments to education prior to COVID-19.

Whether comparing to the size of the economy **(4-6 per cent of gross domestic product [GDP], on average),** the budget (15-20 per cent of total expenditure, on average) or on a per person basis (around US$234 in purchasing power parity [PPP] constant 2017 values, on average), only a dozen of the AU's 55 member states – which have reliable data – achieved at least one of the Incheon Declaration[1] spending targets during 2017-19.

Education budgets mainly supported salaries.

On average, 90 per cent of expenditure was spent on recurrent items – largely staff compensation – with little invested in capital items, such as learning infrastructure and equipment, which are critical to enhancing access to, and the quality, of educational services.

Significant amounts of education funding were not spent, especially for capital budgets.

Driven by low absorption capacities, late disbursements, and other implementation bottlenecks, around 30 per cent of approved budgets for capital items was not utilized based on data from 14 countries.

Education spending patterns also exacerbated inequities.

Children from wealthier households and urban areas benefited from significantly higher levels of investment than those from poorer families and rural areas. Moreover, education spending favoured boys over girls, as well as older age groups over younger ones.

COVID-19 led to a large reduction in education expenditure across Africa.

In 2020, per capita spending is estimated to have declined by 8 per cent, on average, and as much as 25 per cent in some countries. Projections further indicate that spending increased by only 1 per cent between 2020 and 2022, on average. These trends are confirmed by recent survey information from education ministries. The pandemic set back investment in education by a decade.

Education funding gaps continue widening.

The pre-pandemic shortfalls have since grown significantly due to lower levels of spending alongside rising needs, both in unrealized education gains from school closures and from new demands for digital learning services.

The African learning crisis will become a development challenge if investments in education are not enhanced.

Countries have yet to recover from the economic contraction recorded in 2020. At the same time, the growth outlook continues to be revised downward due to climate shocks, rising interest rates, the cost-of-living crisis, COVID-19, basic health emergencies and political instability. In this context, the potential for domestic resource mobilization will remain extremely limited, which means that governments will be required to maximize value for money in education sector budgets as well as secure external funding support.

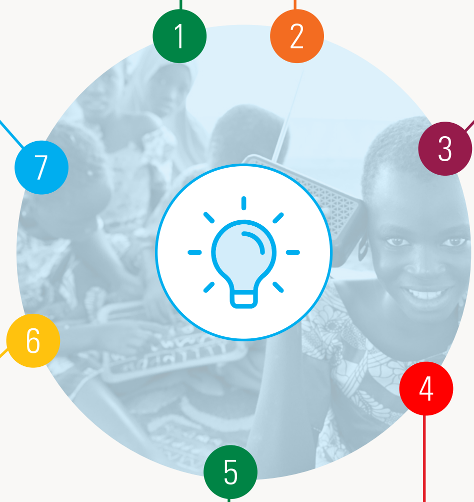
To catalyze an education recovery, AU member states are encouraged to prioritize seven actions:

Recommit to making education a budget priority:

As an immediate step to reverse under-investment in education systems and declining spending trends, all governments are encouraged to progressively increase annual spending on education to reach 20 per cent of their total government expenditures by 2025. Multiple and overlapping shocks, including COVID-19, political instability and climate shocks, have widened the funding gap for delivering quality education costs.

Increase policy and budgetary attention to early learning:

In several countries, early learning programmes do not receive a fair share of available resources. It is recommended that AU member states commit at least 10 per cent of their education budgets to early learning in line with the Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education.[2] In addition, when considering fiscal space challenges, governments should explore public and private partnerships (PPPs) to finance pre-primary education.



Enhance efficiency and effectiveness of spending by strengthening the credibility and execution of education budgets, especially for capital items:

Governments should streamline budget execution, strengthen procurement, and ensure timely teacher payments to avoid disruptions. Regular dialogue between education and finance ministries, along with legislative and civil society involvement, is crucial for efficient progress.

Make the case for greater external support for the education sector:

Amid lackluster economic growth, domestic revenue constraints and debt challenges, especially in lower income countries, governments might leverage international public and private resources, especially grants and concessional loans from international financial institutions (IFIs). Other options available include seeking debt relief that directly benefits education (e.g. debt-for-education swaps).

Invest more in the education workforce:

The lack of qualified teachers continues to be one of the major challenges to improving learning outcomes across the continent. In response, governments might refine plans for funding the recruitment, retention, training and professional development of teachers and support staff.

Improve equity of education spending:

Governments could take measures to ensure no child is left behind in accessing quality learning. For example, governments could reform resource allocation formulae, including capitation grants and transfers to sub-national authorities. Governments might also consider the unique needs of learners with disabilities and other deprived and marginalized groups.

Enhance transparency, accountability and public participation in planning, budgeting, and managing the education system:

Governments should enhance transparency in education spending through regular measurement and reporting. Inclusive planning involving local communities, including youth, is crucial. While additional funding is needed, maximizing resource impact through strengthened accountability systems is equally important. Governments should also consider utilizing tools like performance-based or results-based budgeting for improved planning and delivery.

The stakes could not be higher. If implemented swiftly, these actions can transform the current learning crisis into an opportunity to build back quality and equitable education. If actions are delayed or not properly pursued, the human capital base will continue to deteriorate along with the economic growth and development potential of the continent.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This report discusses the **impacts of COVID-19** on government spending on the education sector in Africa.

It does so by presenting a comprehensive picture of education expenditure over the 2017-19 period, which, combined with analysis of the macroeconomic and fiscal effects of the pandemic together with recent survey information from education ministries, helped estimate spending over the 2020-22 period.

The report also reviews evidence of education funding gaps and opportunities. It concludes by offering recommendations for AU members states to catalyze an education recovery for the continent.

1.1 Background

Governments in Africa face major challenges to ensure no child is left behind and misses out on learning and skills development.

The list of challenges to education was long prior to COVID-19, which contributed to a learning crisis across much of the continent. In a 2021 publication,[3] the AUC and UNICEF highlighted some of the main challenges:

Children not attending school

Despite progress in recent decades, the proportion of children out-of-school remains high across Africa. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence demonstrated that 100 million school-aged children in African countries were out of school, with girls disproportionately affected.

Specifically, in 2019, around 20 per cent of primary school-age children, 33 per cent of lower secondary school-age adolescents and more than 50 per cent of upper secondary school-age adolescents were not in school, on average. During the peak of the pandemic, schooling was disrupted for 236 million students across the African continent. After schools reopened, millions of students remained affected with female learners at a higher risk of not returning to school.

Low completion rates.

As of 2019, the latest figures available during the writing of this report, completion rates for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education for the continent stood at around 65 per cent, 41 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively, on average. These figures confirm that one out of every five children in Africa completed 12 years of basic education.

Poor learning outcomes.

Before COVID-19, six in every 10 children aged 10 from low- and middle-income countries, of which Africa is overrepresented, were unable to read and/or understand a simple story. Among older students, more than one in every five adolescents (aged 15 to 24) was illiterate across Africa, on average. Moreover, one in every three adults (aged 25 and 64) were illiterate on the continent. Parental illiteracy is a key factor that hinders both school attendance and the quality of learning, especially among marginalized groups.[4] It is also estimated that 23 per cent of girls were out of primary school compared to 19 per cent of boys. By the time they become adolescents, the exclusion rate for girls is 36 per cent compared to 32 per cent for boys.

Shortages of qualified teachers.

Estimates indicate that the continent needs 17 million additional teachers to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.[5] Inadequate investment and ineffective teacher management practices in areas such as teacher training, deployment, compensation, and career management constitute major barriers to expanding the pool of good teachers.

Challenges grew exponentially during COVID-19.

At the start of the pandemic, **schools were closed nearly everywhere across the globe. In Africa,** around 236 million students were forced out of classrooms, many for longer than a year. Despite the efforts of governments, nearly half of all students were not able to connect to remote learning services through radio, television, or the internet.[6]

The major impact was on learning.

While learning losses are difficult to quantify, it is estimated that, globally, students lost at least half a year's worth of learning during the first wave of the pandemic.[7] Since COVID-19 came in multiple waves, the estimated loss is most likely conservative considering that in some countries schools stayed closed for nearly two years. UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank[8] further showed that four out of every five countries experienced learning loss in terms of academic performance during the pandemic

The number of out-of-school children increased.

Post-pandemic estimates indicate that Africa below the Sahara is the only region where the number of children and youth not going to school continues to rise.[9] This reflects two factors: one, that millions of students did not return to the classroom since schools reopened and, two, low enrolment rates exist among a growing group of new school-age children. These trends are exacerbating the pre-pandemic learning challenges, especially among students in rural areas and those from vulnerable households.[10]

School closures had additional nutrition, mental health, and protection consequences.

At the peak of school closures in mid-2020, more than 50 million students in 40 African countries below the Sahara were missing out on a daily meal,[11] with potential long-term implications on physical growth and learning potential. Millions of students further missed out on mental health, psychosocial support and other services provided through schools, as well as the protective environment offered by schools, which had contributed to notable decreases in violence against children, teenage pregnancies and early marriage in many African communities.[12]

In summary

The pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing learning challenges.

The compounding impacts mean that a large portion of the current generation of school-age children are now **"learning poor."**

They are unable to read and understand simple text or are out of school.[13]

Addressing the challenges and putting the continent back on track to achieve SDG 4[14] will require governments to urgently begin increasing investments in quality education systems.

1.2 **Methodology**

This report is based on a desk review and analysis of information on **education financing and spending issues in Africa**.

Most of the historical expenditure data is drawn from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This is accompanied by information from select national and global sources, including budget briefs produced by UNICEF and Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs), especially related to the efficiency, equity, and transparency of education spending. Additional information was drawn from recent studies that assess the impacts of COVID-19 on learning, as well as simulations on education funding gaps, before and after the pandemic.

As more recent expenditure estimates are unavailable for most countries, the evolution of education spending since 2020 is based on projections.

Specifically, the report applies the methodology developed by Muchabaiwa,[15] which looks at the elasticity of education spending to changes in per capita gross domestic product (GDP). The elasticity analysis conducted for this report consisted of several steps. First, per capita education expenditures were calculated for 49 countries in Africa from 2000 to 2020. Here, the share of GDP spent on education – drawn from UIS – was applied to GDP per capita in PPP (constant 2017 international dollars).[16]

Missing education expenditure data points were estimated using nearest neighbour imputation and interpolation techniques. Second, natural logarithms were calculated for per capita education expenditures and GDP per capita for all countries and years. Third, the log per capita spending was regressed against log GDP per capita using a fixed effects regression model, which generated an elasticity coefficient unique to each country. Lastly, the elasticity coefficients and the projected percentage change in GDP per capita from the IMF were used to forecast per capita education spending for 2020 (where data were unavailable), 2021 and 2022.

1.3 **Limitations**

1 Education expenditure data was drawn from global sources and presented in constant international dollars.

As a result, there are likely discrepancies with national data in government budget papers.

2 Gap-filling techniques were used to address missing education expenditure information.

This was the only way to derive a comprehensive picture for most African countries that would allow cross-country and time series analyses. Per capita spending on education for most countries should, therefore, be understood as estimates rather than actual expenditures.

3 The education spending projections are based on a simple linear regression model.

Specifically, GDP per capita growth was used as the main factor that influences the size of education spending (via elasticity coefficients). In practice, there are many factors that impact the levels of government investment in education, which makes this approach overly simplistic. Moreover, GDP projections by the IMF are highly uncertain and subject to change.

4 There is minimal data disaggregation by gender to allow for meaningful analysis of the gender responsiveness of budgets across the different levels of education.

This challenge also made it difficult to highlight the plight of boys and girls across different education outcomes including exclusion rates and completion rates. Also, and mainly because of lack data, the report did not discuss financing on technical and vocational skills development.

5 It was difficult to obtain cross-country data on the equity of education expenditures and on budget credibility.

This information is critical to understand a range of value for money and quality of spending issues. Given this constraint, a case study approach was adopted whereby a small set of data points was used to illustrate general trends.

Despite the above challenges, the estimates presented in this report provide a general picture of historic and recent education spending trends in Africa. The analyses and conclusions resonate with other studies, as well as findings from education budget analyses produced by UNICEF offices and partners across the continent.

1.4 **Structure of the report**

The rest of the report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 2 examines education spending trends before the pandemic, including the size, priorities, execution, equity, and transparency of education budgets over the 2017-19 period. Chapter 3 unpacks the macroeconomic and fiscal effects of COVID-19, which were also used as a basis to estimate education spending over the 2020-22 period. In Chapter 4, the report reviews the literature on education funding gaps globally and discusses possible options for governments to boost education spending. Chapter 5 concludes with the main findings and recommendations.

Chapter 2

The Education Spending Context in Africa Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

This chapter presents an overview of **education spending trends in Africa prior to 2020**.

It starts by looking at total investment in the sector, including by comparing expenditure on education to total government expenditure and the size of the economy as well as on a per capita basis.

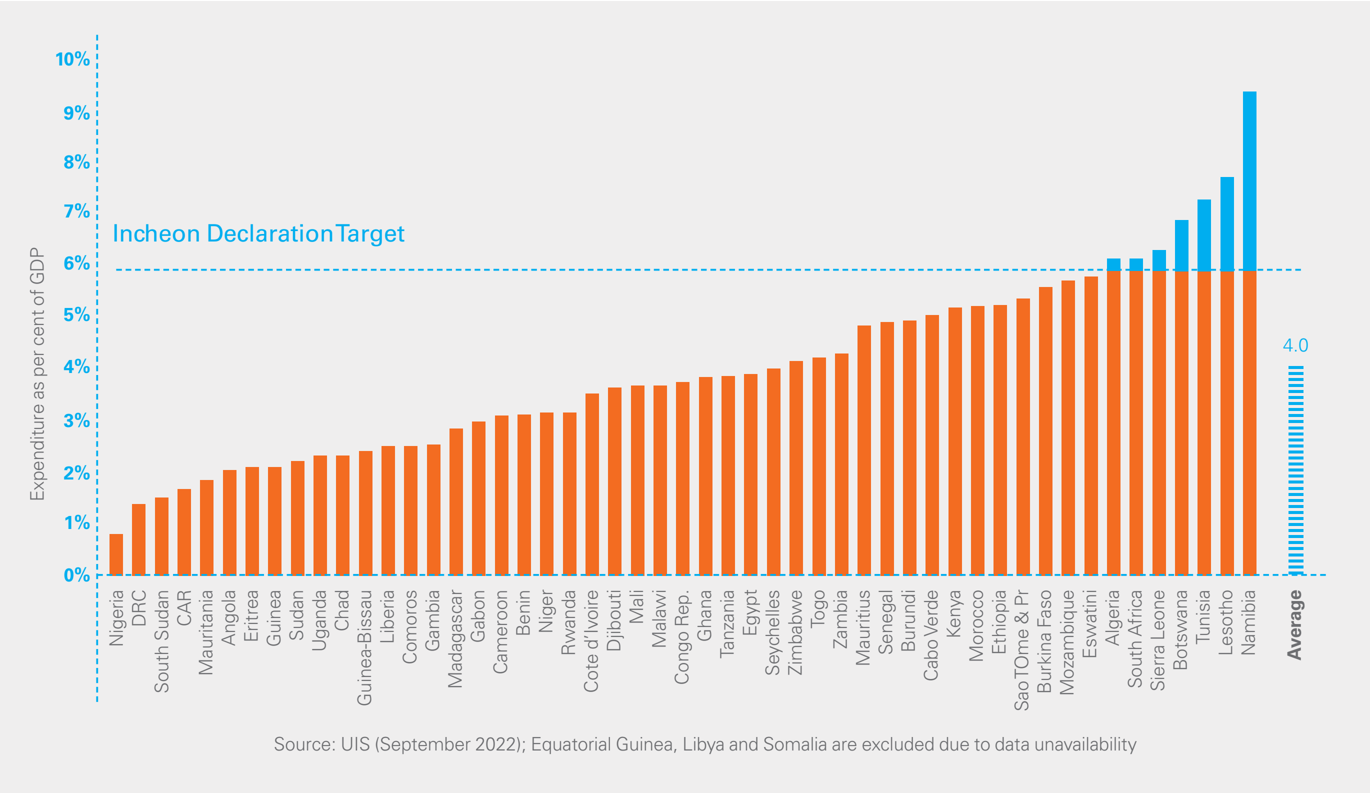
It then unpacks the expenditure on education, specifically by the type of expenditure and level of education, which is followed by a review of budget credibility and execution. Next, the chapter briefly discusses different equity dimensions of education spending, including by age, income status and geography. This segues into a short discussion on budget transparency, both overall and within the education sector.

2.1 **Total spending on education**

Spending on education in most African countries was below international benchmarks prior to the pandemic.

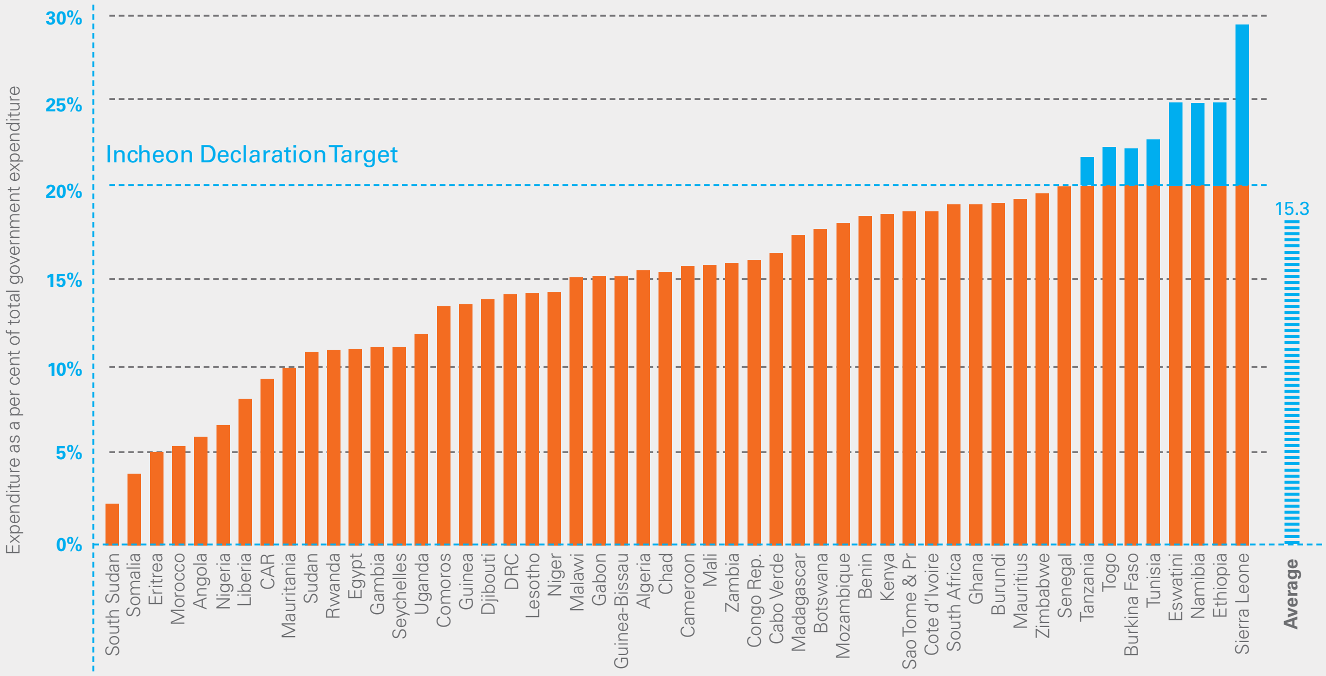
Through the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of SDG 4,[17] governments across the world re-committed to invest at least **4-6 per cent of their GDP to education** and/or allocate at least **15-20 per cent** of national budgets to education. At the same time, low-income countries (LICs), which characterise most of Africa, agreed to reach or exceed the higher threshold. Looking at spending patterns over the 2017-19 period, governments in Africa invested 4 per cent of their GDP in education, on average (Figure 2.1). Only seven out of the 51 African countries assessed achieved the 6 per cent target. A similar trend is observed when considering the share of total government expenditure dedicated to education; only 8 out of 51 African countries assessed met the 20 per cent commitment, with the average spending on education being 15 per cent of total government expenditure (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1: Total government expenditure on education in African countries as a per cent of the GDP, 2017-19 average or latest available



Source: UIS (September 2022); Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Somalia are excluded due to data unavailability

Figure 2.2: Total government expenditure on education in African countries as a per cent of total government expenditure, 2017-19 average value or latest available



Source: UIS (September 2022); Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Somalia are excluded due to data unavailability

The expenditure on education was insufficient to address the learning crisis facing the continent.

Africa spent an average of

$234

(median of US$ 110) in PPP

constant 2017 values across all levels of education over the **2017-19 period**

(Figure 2.3).

There is a strong relationship between income and investment levels, with low-income countries (LICs) spending an average of $60 per capita on education versus $250 in lower-middle income countries (LMICs) and $900 in upper-middle income countries (UMICs). At least three countries in Africa spent only $16 per person, compared to others where spending amounted to around $1,100. But even the investment levels among the best performers are behind high-income countries (HICs) globally, which spend around $8,000 annually per school-age person.[18]

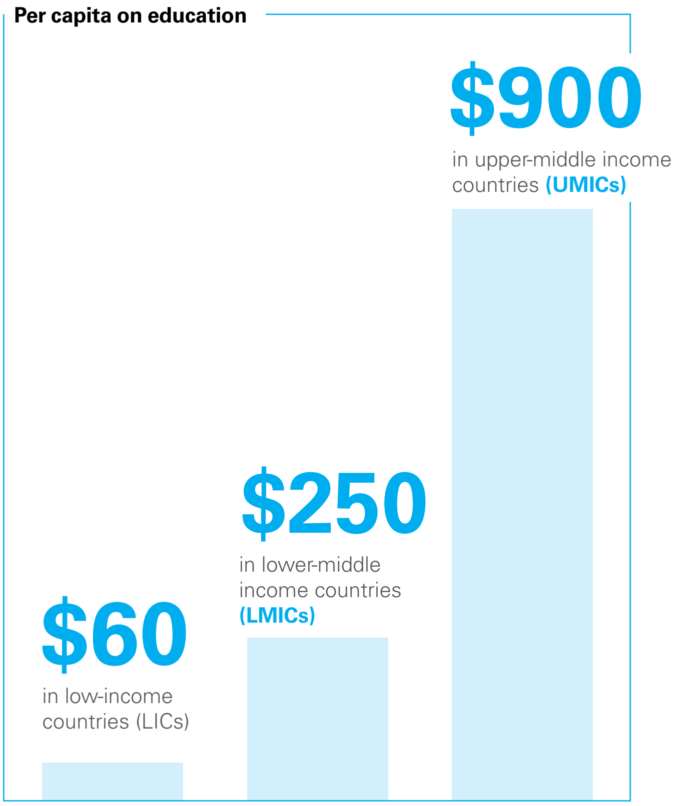
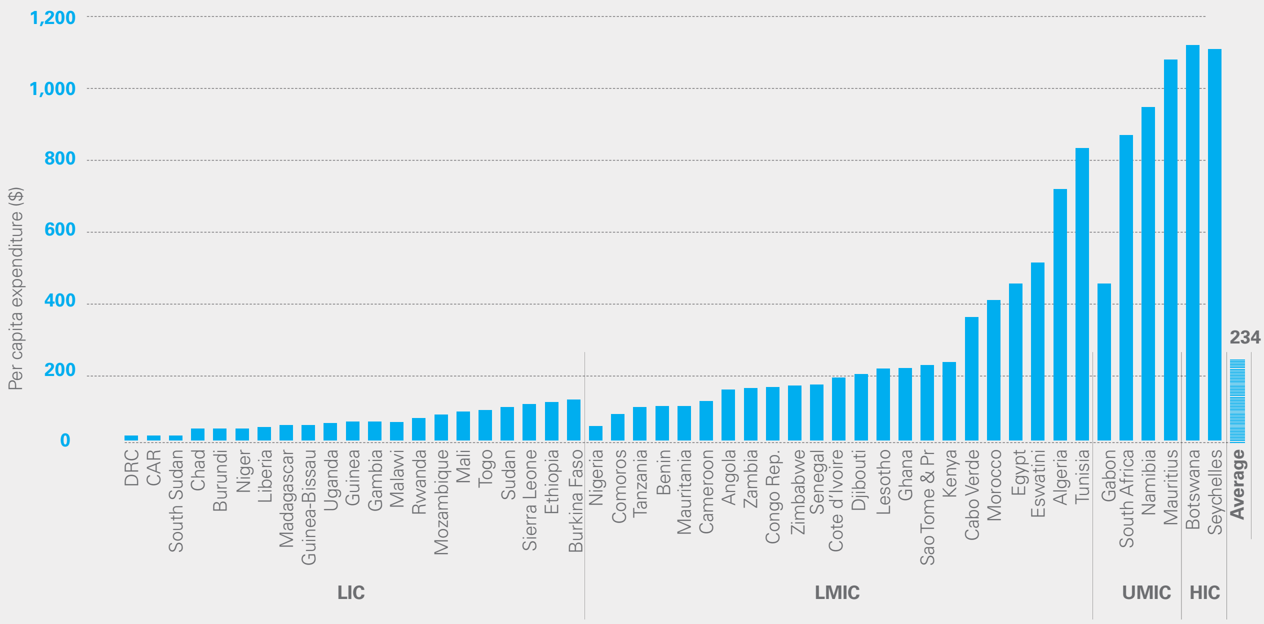


Figure 2.3: Per capita education expenditure in African countries by income groups, 2017-19 average value or latest available (in PPP, constant 2017 international dollar)



Source: UIS (September 2022); Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Somalia are excluded due to data unavailability

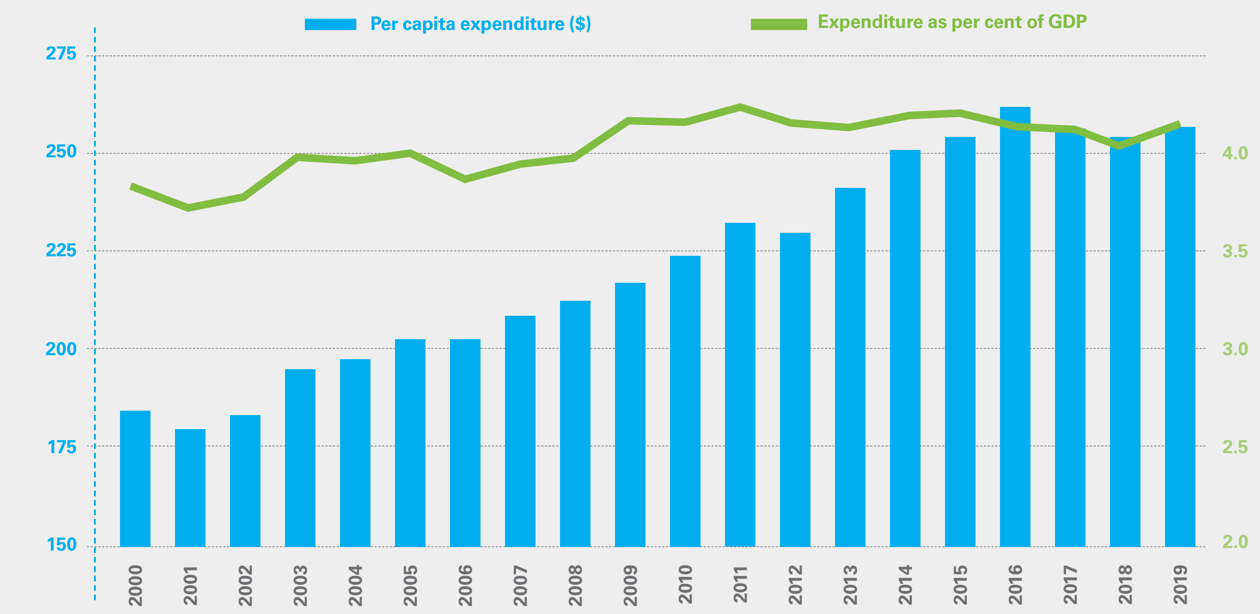
Education spending has been on an upward trend over the past two decades.

Between 2000 and 2019, per capita expenditure rose from **$185 to $257** on average, which amounts to a nearly

40%

overall increase or around **2 per cent on an annual basis** (Figure 2.4). Compared to GDP, the average share of expenditure on education marginally improved over the same period, from **3.8 per cent to 4.1 per cent**.

Figure 2.4: Average education expenditure in Africa, per capita (PPP constant 2017 international dollar) and as a per cent of GDP, 2000-19



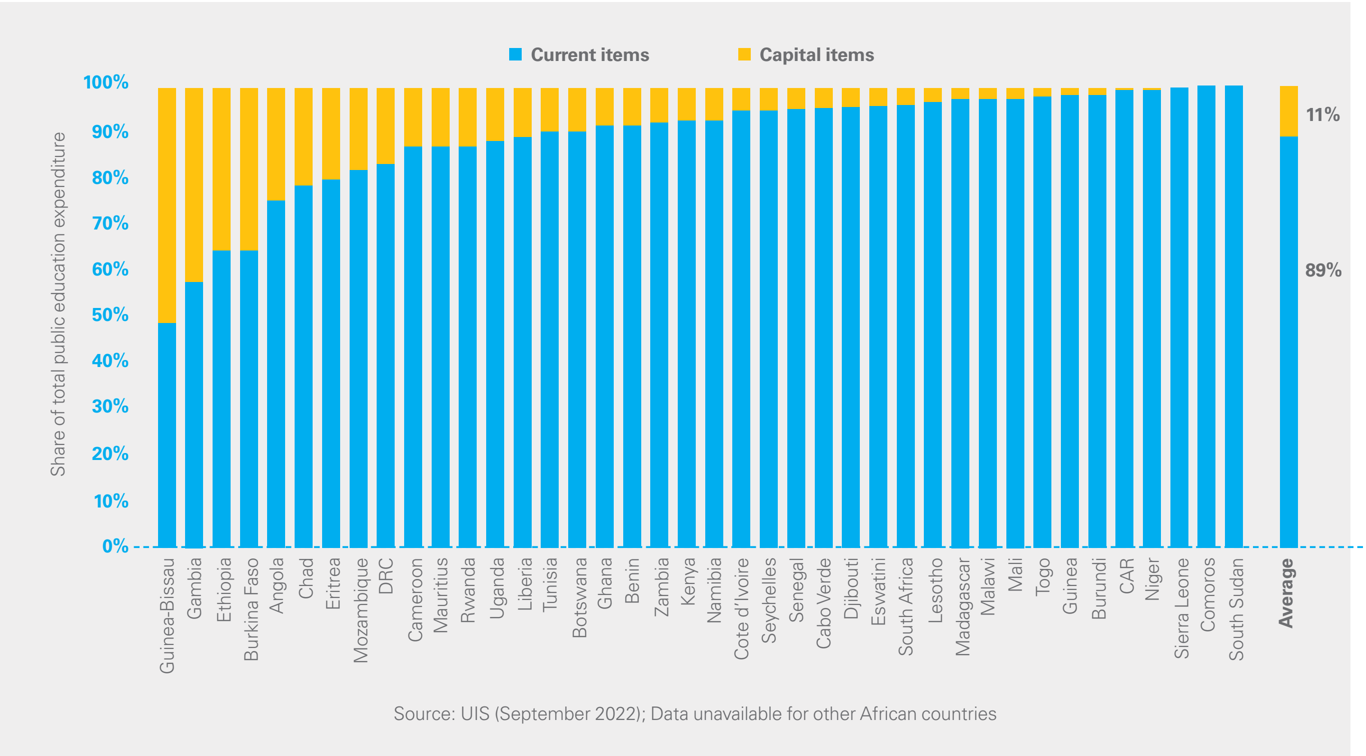
Source: Authors' calculations based on UIS (September 2022) and World Development Indicators (2022) Note: The analyses exclude Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan due to data unavailability

2.2 **Education spending priorities**

Recurrent expenditure dominated **public spending on education**.

African countries invested around 90 per cent of their budgets in current items before the pandemic, which largely consisted of salaries for teachers and education administrators (Figure 2.5). In many countries, nearly the entire education expenditure was consumed by current items. Of the 40 countries that have reported some information in recent years, only 14 spent at least 10 per cent of their education budgets on capital items. This means that most governments were investing only limited resources into infrastructure and related items (new classrooms, chairs and desks, laboratory equipment and other learning materials, drinking water facilities and latrines/bathrooms). While investment in teachers is key, it is equally important to create an enabling infrastructure to improve education outcomes.[19]

Figure 2.5: Current and capital education expenditure in African countries as a per cent of total education expenditure in public institutions, 2019 or latest available.

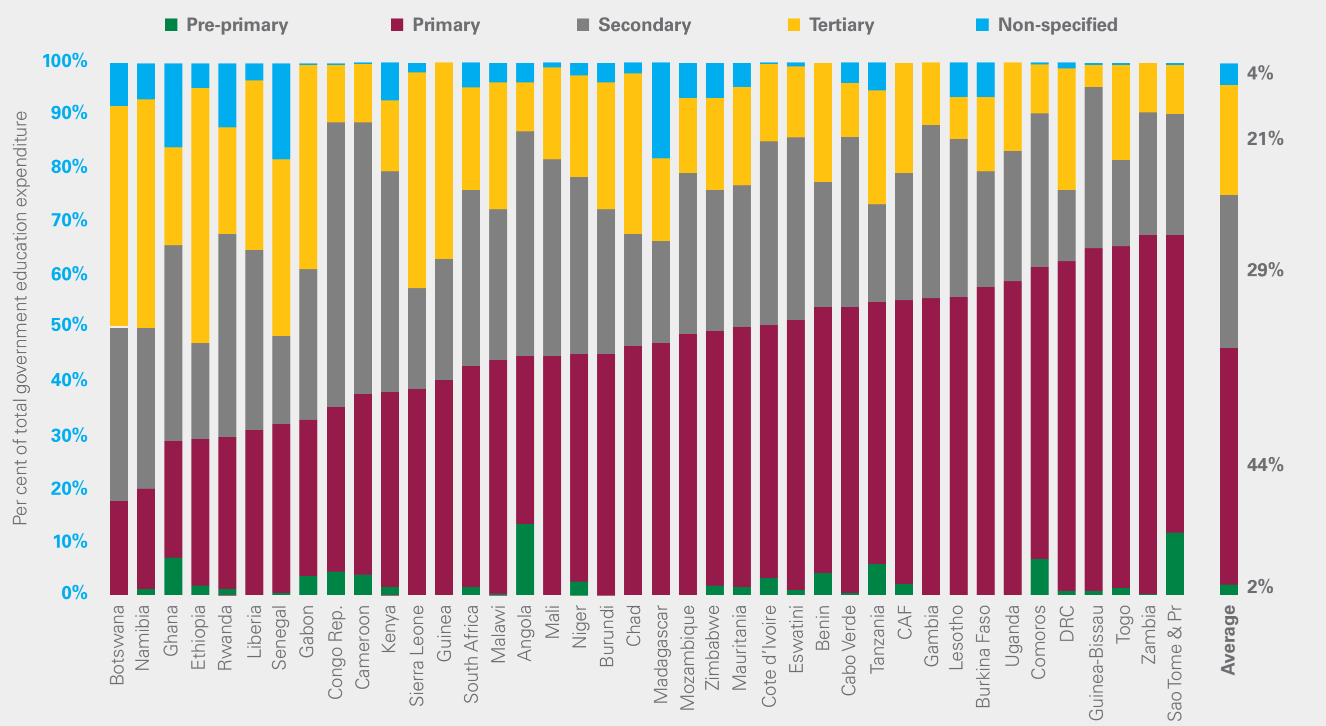


Source: UIS (September 2022); Data unavailable for other African countries

When looking at levels of education, most African governments invested the bulk of their resources in primary and secondary education

with close to half of education expenditure **(around 44 per cent, on average)** going towards primary education. Except nine countries, all other African governments spent a third or more of their education budgets on primary education. Similarly, around one-third of total education expenditure went to secondary education, on average.

Figure 2.6: Expenditure by level of education in African countries as a per cent of total government expenditure on education, 2019 or latest available



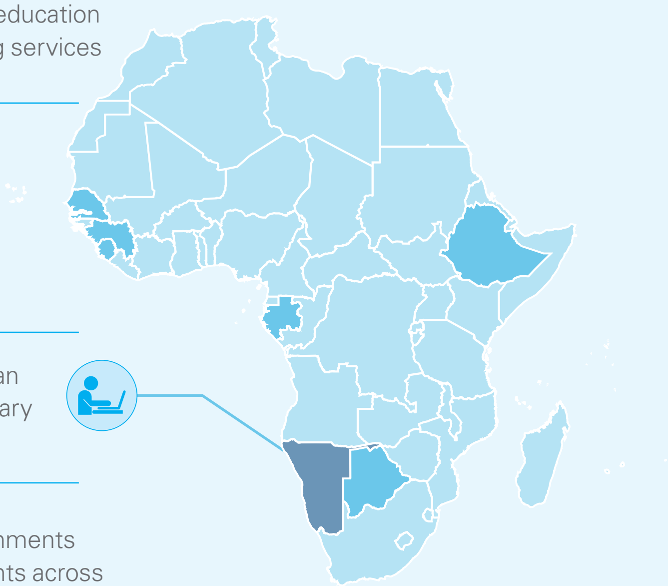
Source: Authors' calculations based on UIS (September 2022); Data unavailable for other African countries

A significant share of education expenditure also went to tertiary education.

On average, more than **20 per cent** of education investments supported tertiary learning services

In six countries (Botswana, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Senegal), between one third and one half of total investment went to the tertiary level with education.

One country **(Namibia)** spent more than half **(56%)** its education budget on tertiary education.



It is, however, notable that most governments believe they need to balance investments across different levels of education. This is a step in the right direction when considering that only a fraction of students that enter the education system complete secondary school and transition to the tertiary level.[20]

Pre-primary education, in contrast, remained neglected.

African governments invested only 2 per cent of their overall expenditure on education into pre-primary education services.

This is considerably lower than the international recommendation for governments to allocate at least 10 per cent of their education budgets to early learning.[21] Also, the allocations to pre-primary education tend to favor either salaries or construction costs without paying adequate attention to other areas such as teacher training and on-the-job support, curriculum development, teaching and learning materials, and quality assurance mechanisms.[22]

Moreover, of the 40 governments that reported this information, 15 (or close to 40 per cent) invested no resources in pre-primary education. This trend contradicts the overwhelming evidence that investing in the early years delivers significantly higher returns than those made later in life, especially around building the foundation for future learning.[23]

2.3 The credibility and execution of education budgets

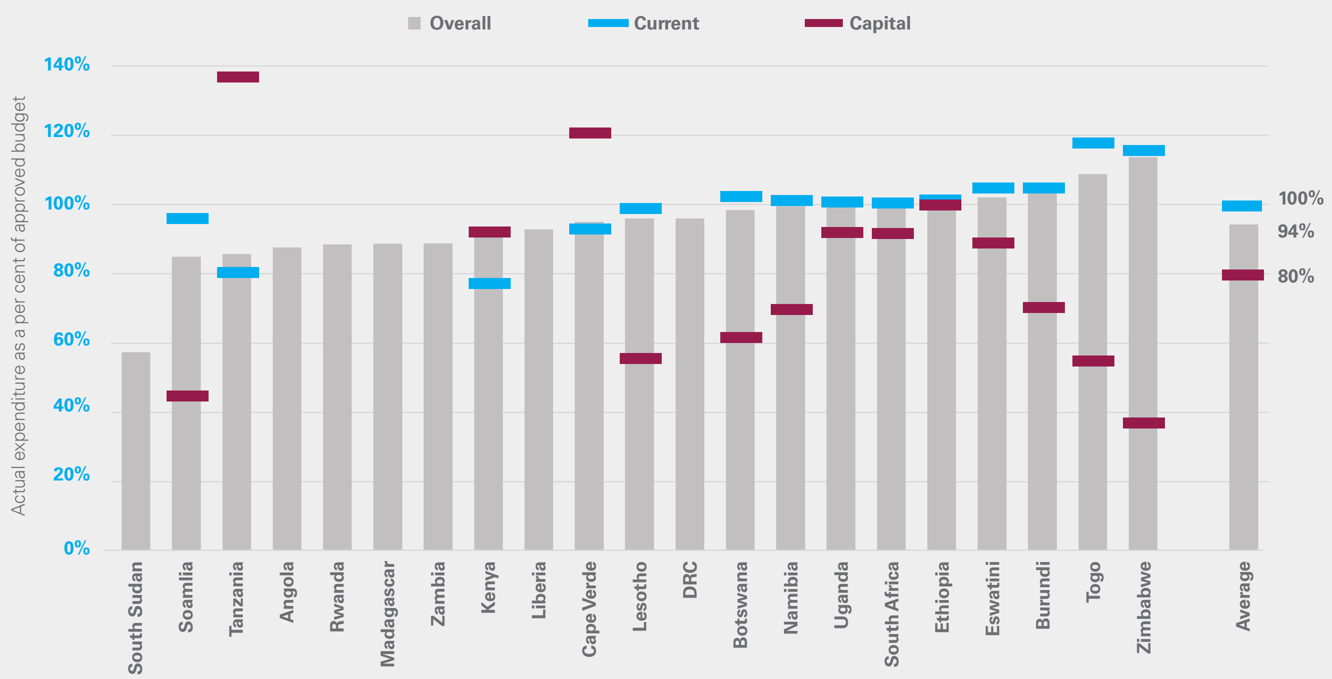
While the preparation of education budgets and allocation of resources are important steps in public policy, approved budgets need to be disbursed, spent, and spent well.

Many African governments face challenges both releasing the approved budgets to ministries of education, which in turn have another challenge of fully spending the disbursed funds. There are two ways to measure the overall extent that higher-level spending bottlenecks may be impacting the education sector. The first is to compare the approved budget to the actual year-end expenditure, which assesses budget credibility. The second is to look at the difference between the resources that are disbursed to education ministries during the year and the amount spent, which is called budget execution.

For the education sector as a whole and for current items, budget credibility rates were generally high across the continent.

In 21 countries with recent information, the average credibility rate for education budgets was 94 per cent during the 2017-19 period (Figure 2.7). Some countries like South Sudan go as low as below 60 per cent. A similarly positive picture emerges when focusing on current spending, with budget credibility rates for these items at almost 100 per cent in most countries. In fact, two governments spent well beyond their approved current education budgets, with budget credibility rates exceeding 110 per cent.

Figure 2.7: Education budget credibility rates by item in select African countries (actual expenditure as a per cent of approved budget), 2017-2019 average value or latest available



Sources: Authors' calculations based on data from finance ministries collected by UNICEF and Government Spending Watch (2021)

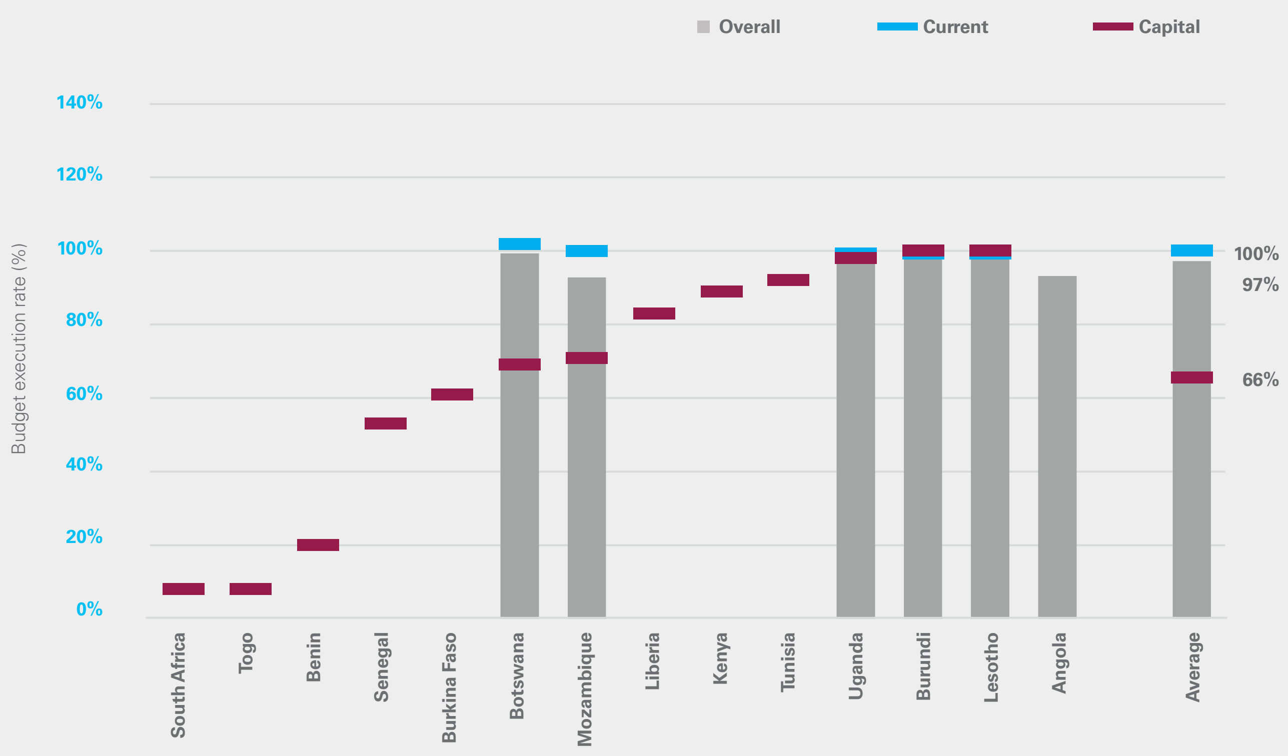
For capital items, in contrast, budget credibility was lower across countries.

In the 14 countries that have recent data, the budget credibility rate for capital items was 80 per cent during 2017-19, on average (Figure 2.7 above). This means that approximately 20 per cent of capital budgets approved at the start of the year did not materialize as improved school infrastructure or learning equipment and materials. Some countries, however, performed much worse than the regional average. For example, four countries with data were spending less than 60 per cent of their approved capital budget. The under-spending of capital budgets is explained by several factors. These include delayed release of funds by ministries responsible for finance, poor planning, protracted contracting processes, and weak project management by ministries responsible for education in part because of shortages of staff.[24]

Budget execution trends revealed additional spending challenges for capital items.

While it is difficult to acquire comparable data across countries, merging different information sources[25] provides a broad picture of budget execution performance overall and for current and capital items across 14 countries in 2019. For the five countries with data on current items, budget execution rates were 100 per cent, on average (Figure 2.8). This is expected since most of these funds go to salaries, which makes the spending process simple. For the 13 countries with data on capital items, however, the average budget execution rate was 66 per cent, which confirms general challenges. Half of the sample had rates above 80 per cent and half had rates at 70 per cent or below, with one country at 20 per cent and two under 10 per cent.

Figure 2.8: Education budget execution rates by item in select African countries, 2019 or latest available



Sources: Authors' calculations based on data from finance ministries collected by UNICEF and Government Spending Watch (2021)
Some data points are missing for some countries.

2.4 The equity of education spending

The **design and delivery of education budgets** often undermine the ability of specific groups of children to access quality learning services across Africa. The most common concerns relate to;

- Age
- Income status
- Geography

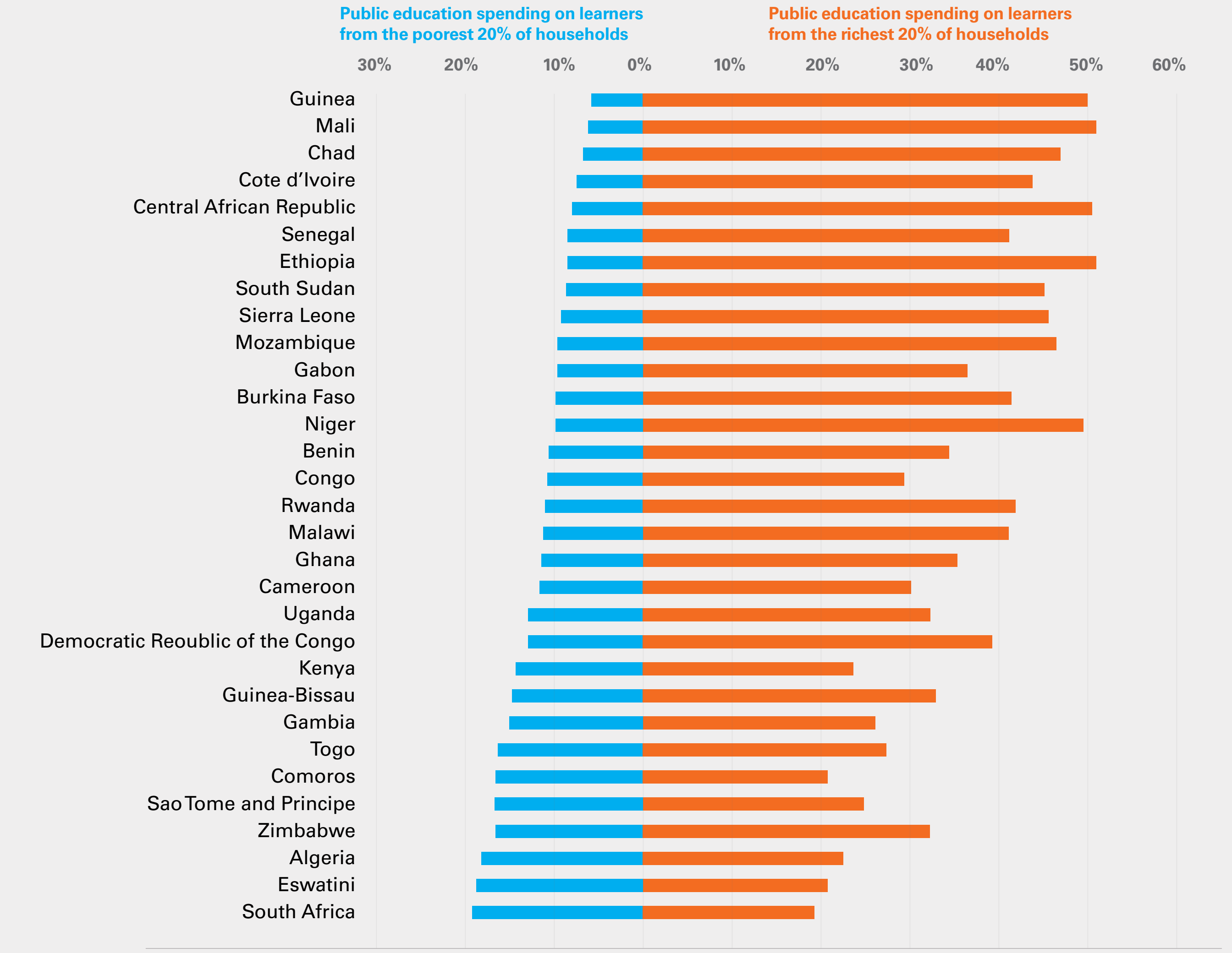
Education spending patterns generate age-related learning inequities in many places.

As recently detailed in countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, older children (e.g., those in secondary school) commonly benefit from significantly more public investments than younger children, including investments in education.[26] For instance, about half of public expenditure on education in one country is consumed by post-secondary students who represent just 15 per cent of the school-age population. Compare that to primary and secondary school students who form 75 per cent of the school-age population yet benefit from only 50 per cent of education expenditure.[27]

Education spending patterns generate income-related learning inequities.

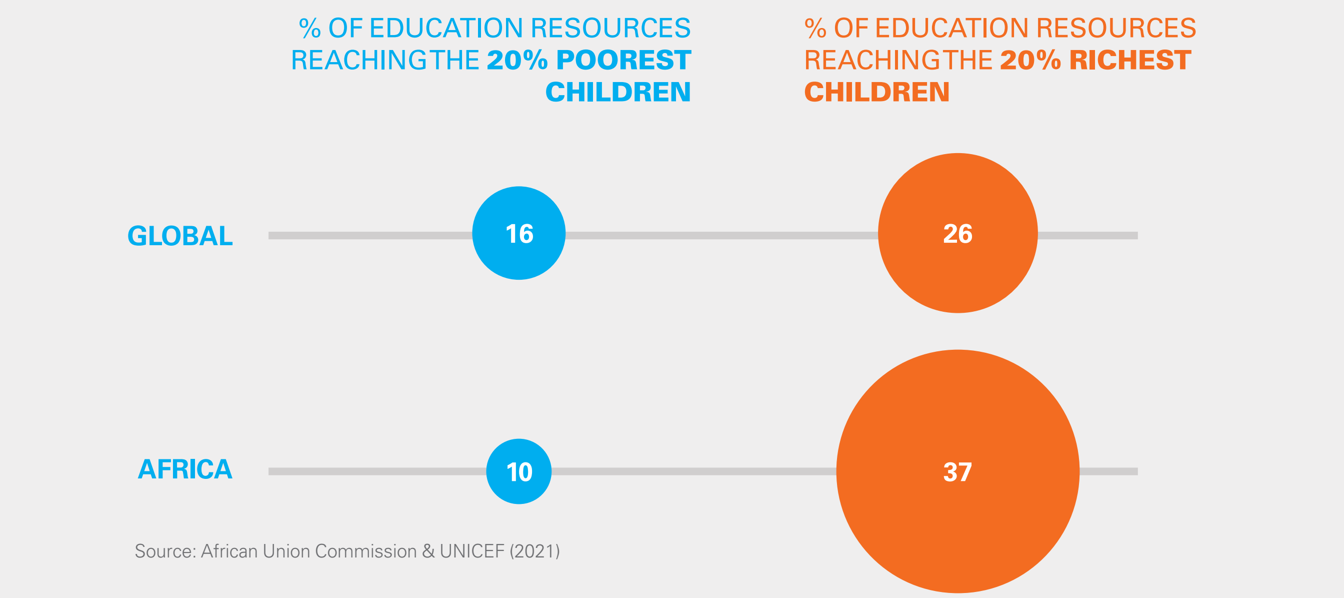
Specifically, students from richer families tend to benefit from much more education expenditure than their counterparts from poorer families. Among the 31 African countries with data available, only a quarter or eight countries delivered more than 15 per cent of their public education spending to students from the households of poorest quintile (Figure 2.9). Also in eight countries, students from high-income households benefited from over four times more education resources than their peers from low-income households. Overall, in Africa, the public education spending reaching the richest student was nearly four times the amount reaching the poorest student, which is a much larger gap than the global average (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.9: Percentage of public education resources going to learners from the poorest and richest quintiles, Africa, 2022



Source: UNICEF (2023)

Figure 2.10: Average share of public education resources for children from the poorest and richest quintiles



Source: African Union Commission & UNICEF (2021)

These spending distortions have led to inequitable learning outcomes.

In all countries listed in Figure 2.9, there are more children from the poorest 20 per cent of the population who do not attend school compared to the richest 20 per cent.[28] There are similar patterns elsewhere. For example;

37 per cent of children from the poorest decile[29] in one country did not attend school compared to 13 per cent of children from the richest decile.[30]

There is a country where although **69 per cent of youth** in the richest quintile attended upper secondary school, it falls to less than 10 per cent for students in the poorest quintile.[31]

There is another country where the proportion of children achieving the minimum proficiency level in reading at the end of primary education was **50 times higher** among children from the richest families when compared to the poorest.[32]

Lastly, geographic-related inequities in expenditures were also widely observed.

In many countries in Africa, education spending is disproportionately concentrated in urban and peri-urban centers at the expense of rural areas, which drives learning disparities. In Tanzania, for example, there are huge variances among regions in the availability of teachers and classrooms because of skewed investments in education infrastructure.[33]

In Malawi, the pupil qualified teacher ratio varies immensely by location, from 46:1 in Zomba District (urban) to 84:1 in Machinga District (rural).[34] In Sudan, the net primary school atttendance rate is around 30 per cent lower among rural children compared to their urban counterparts.[35] And, when looking at the continent, around 12 per cent of children living in rural areas completed upper secondary education, on average, versus 34 per cent in urban areas.[36]

2.5 The transparency of education spending

Many governments in Africa had **inadequate routine tracking and reporting mechanisms of expenditure in the education sector**.

This challenge is particularly seen in pre-primary education. For example, the expenditure data presented earlier in Figure 2.6 is outdated for many countries and/or based on gap-filling techniques. In fact, only 13 of the 55 AU member states have reported this information since 2018. Other cross-cutting issues commonly lack reporting, such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in schools – both the capital investments and routine maintenance costs – and school meals.

As demonstrated by Figure 2.8, budget execution is another vital source of information that is not often collected and reported by education or finance ministries across the continent. One of the big challenges is that budget classification structures and/or chart of accounts do not enable a clearer identification of these types of expenditure.

To improve the visibility of spending information in budgets and expenditure reports, many governments have introduced new budget management tools like programme/ output-based budgeting (PBB).

While some countries, however, continue to use line-item based budgeting, the introduction of PBB in many countries has improved resource allocation and monitoring of performance by ensuring that resources allocated respond to the desire to achieve specific policy objectives and/or programme results. The Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), for example, have issued directives to their member countries to transition from traditional line-item based budgeting, which only report on general inputs like salaries, electricity costs, infrastructure, etc. to PBB, which report on programmes and activities alongside performance indicators and targets.

Budget transparency in the education sector was commonly a symptom of broader open budget challenges.

As confirmed by the Open Budget Survey 2021, only two countries out of the 42 African countries included were generating and publishing sufficient information throughout the budget cycle, which is denoted by a score of more than 60 points (out of 100) (Figure 2:11). Eight countries scored less than 10 points, which means they were producing very limited or no budget information.

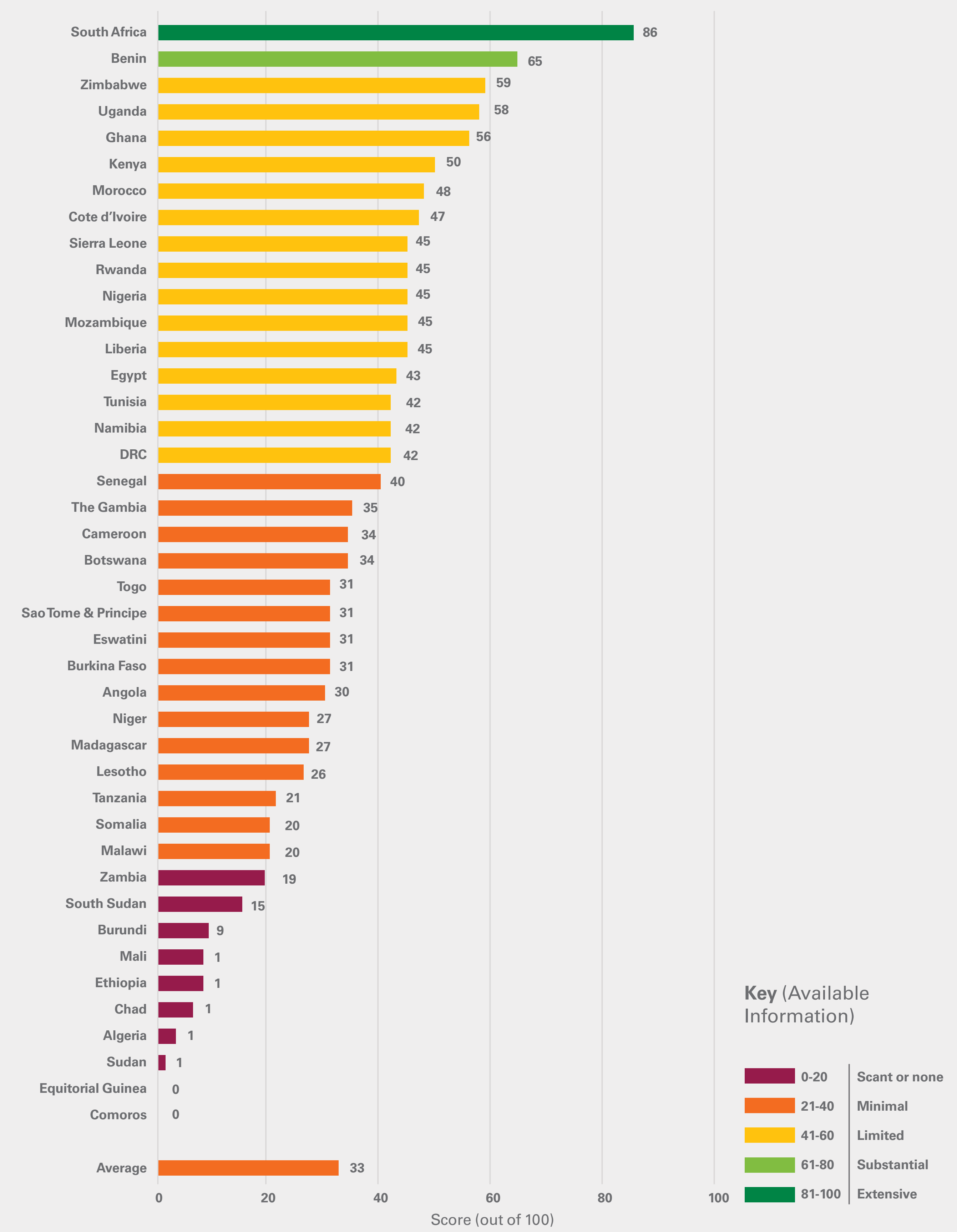
2021 Budget Cycle

5%

of assessed countries

generated and published sufficient information throughout the budget cycle

Figure 2.11: Open Budget Index scores in African countries, 2021 (out of 100)



Source: International Budget Partnership, Open Budget Survey 2021

2.6 **Key takeaways**

- Before COVID-19, most governments in Africa were underinvesting in their education systems, which meant that reaching the SDG 4 targets on inclusive, equitable and quality education was already going to be a challenge.
- In addition to low investment levels, available funds mainly supported teacher salaries, with limited attention to the growing needs for more and improved learning infrastructure, equipment, and materials.
- Analysis of data across many countries South of the Sahara suggests that the design of education budgets tended to be heavily skewed in favor of tertiary and primary or secondary education at the expense of pre-primary.
- Although overall budget credibility was high, challenges persisted with regards to capital budgets. This led to delays in construction of classrooms and procurement of desks, chairs and other materials.
- Education spending patterns often perpetuated learning inequities among disadvantaged students, especially in terms of age, income status and location.
- Many governments in Africa had inadequate routine tracking and reporting mechanisms of expenditure in the education sector, including on pre-primary learning, WASH services and school meals as well as budget execution, which undermined the ability of governments to improve budget allocation and accountability.

Education Spending Trends in Africa Since COVID-19

This chapter assesses the **impacts of COVID-19 on public spending on education** over the 2020-22 period in Africa.

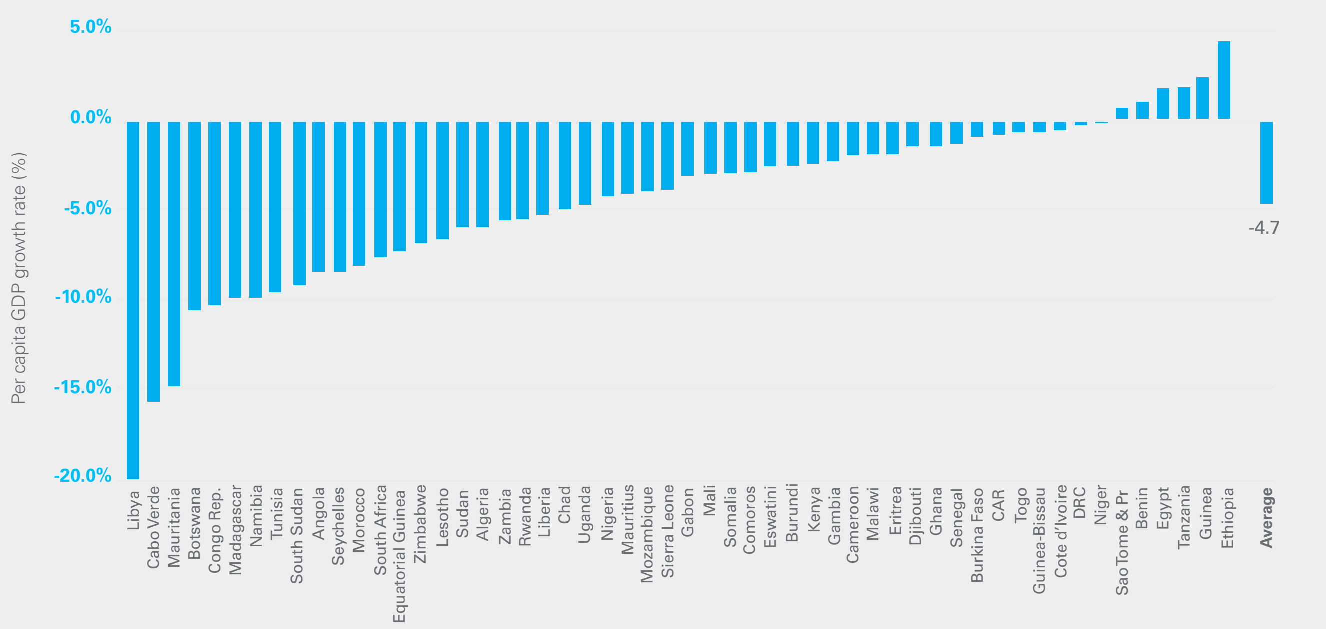
To get a sense of the overarching investment context, it starts by looking at economic growth, government revenue and borrowing trends. It then applies the methodology from Muchabaiwa[37] to estimate total education spending in 2020, 2021 and 2022, both for individual countries and for the continent.

3.1 Economic growth and government revenue in 2020

COVID-19 induced an unprecedented economic decline across most of Africa. In 2020, most countries experienced negative per capita economic growth rate (Figure 3.1).

In fact, 2020 marked the first time that the continent had ever recorded negative growth, at least since 1980 when comprehensive information became available.[38] Forty-eight of the 55 AU member states experienced downturns.

Figure 3.1: Per capita GDP growth rates in African countries (%), 2020

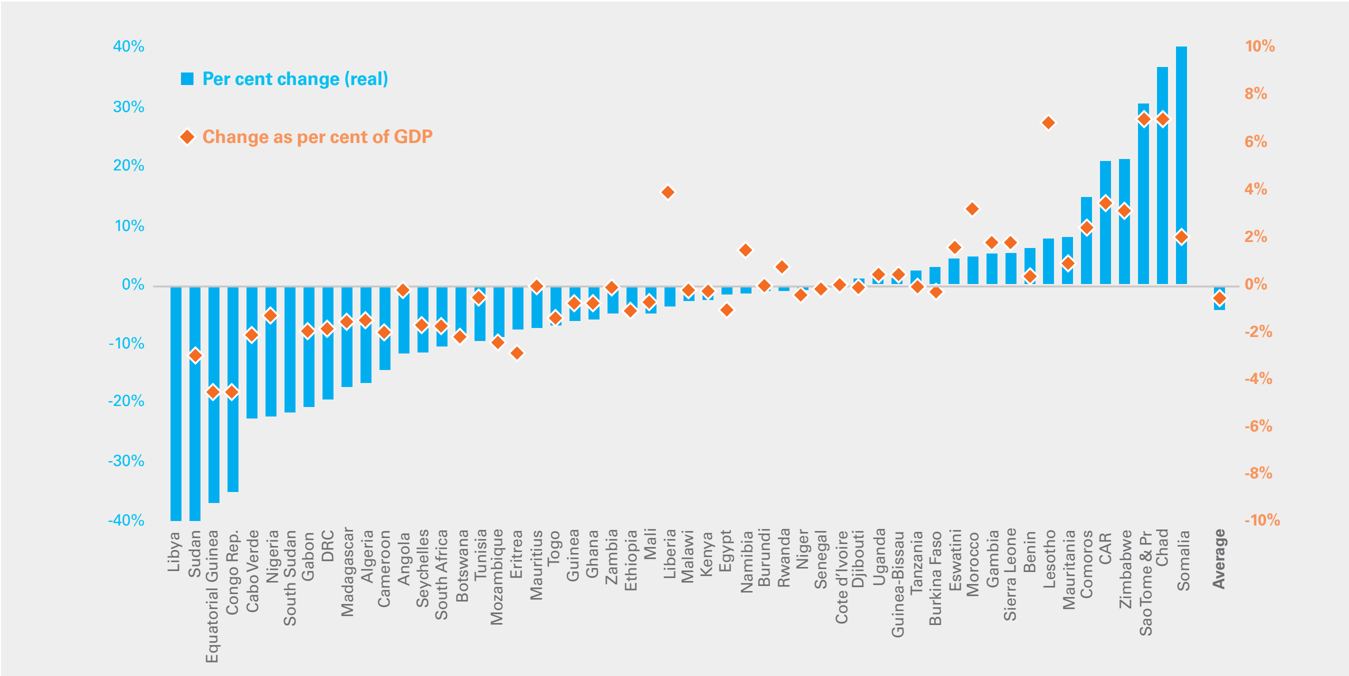


Source: Authors' calculations based on IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2022 Edition)

The **economic contraction had severe knock-on effects on government revenue**, and subsequently on public spending on education.

In 2020, general government revenue, which captures taxes, social contributions and grants, among others, declined by nearly 5 per cent in real terms or 0.5 per cent of GDP, on average (Figure 3.2). Under both indicators, revenue fell in 36 of the 55 countries on the continent, by an average of 13 per cent in real terms and 2.2 per cent of GDP. In addition to shrinking overall government revenue, education sector funding was additionally affected by the reprioritization of official development assistance (ODA) away from education as well as decreasing household contributions via informal and formal education fees.[39]

Figure 3.2: Change in general government gross debt in African countries, per cent change in real terms and as a per cent of GDP, 2020 versus 2019



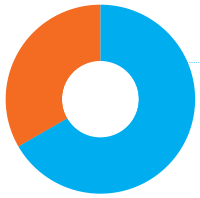
Source: Authors' calculations based on IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2022 Edition)

The loss of revenue forced governments to borrow and seek concessional loans and grants, where possible, to support spending for the COVID-19 crisis response.

Between 2019 and 2020, total public debt jumped by 12 per cent in real terms or by more than 10 per cent of GDP, on average (Figure 3.3).

Debt accumulation was nearly universal across the continent, skyrocketing in five countries, where it ranged between 30 per cent to 60 per cent of GDP.

The crisis-induced borrowing accelerated a decade-long trend of debt accumulation across the continent, which reached 72 per cent of GDP in 2020, on average (Figure 3.4).

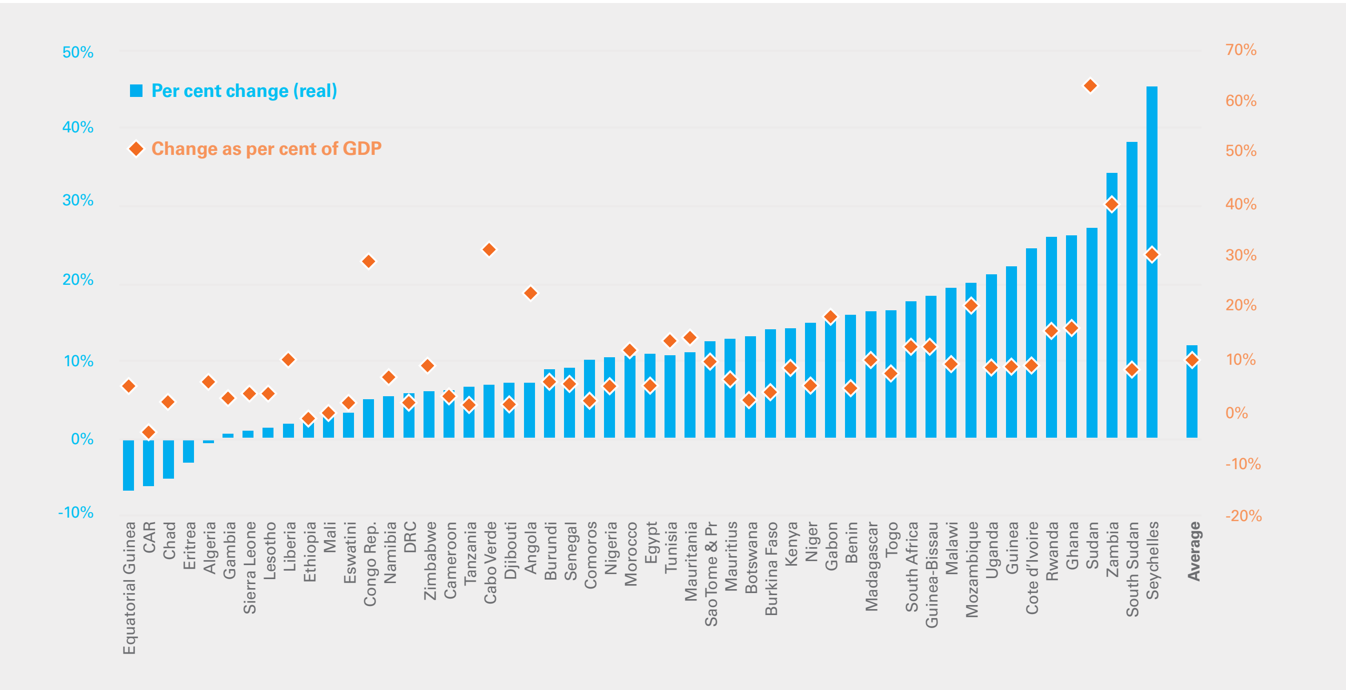


66%

of African countries in or at high risk of debt distress

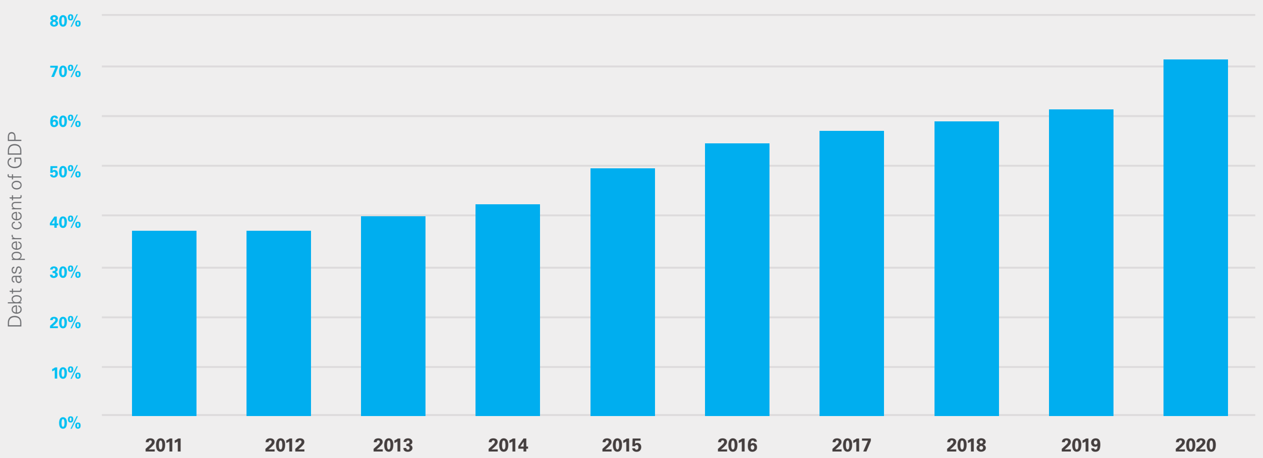
By the end of 2022, around two out of every three countries in Africa were either in debt distress or at high risk of distress, which is especially pronounced among LIC contexts.[40]

Figure 3.3: Change in general government gross debt in African countries, per cent change in real terms and as a per cent of GDP, 2020 versus 2019



Source: Authors' calculations based on IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2022 Edition) Note: Libya and Somalia are excluded due to data unavailability

Figure 3.4: General government gross debt in Africa, regional average as a per cent of of GDP, 2011-20



Source: Authors' calculations based on IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2022 Edition) Note: The analysis excludes Libya and Somalia due to data unavailability

3.2 **Education spending in 2020**

Education expenditures for most countries are estimated to have **declined sharply** during the first year of the pandemic.

Between 2019 and 2020, per capita spending on the education sector is projected to have fallen from $257 to $238, on average, which amounts to an 8 per cent drop (Figure 3.5).

Relative to the size of the economy, average expenditure is estimated to have marginally increased from 4.1 per cent to 4.2 per cent of GDP between 2019 and 2020, which is unsurprising since spending and economic output contracted simultaneously.

Overall, 37 of the 49 countries with available data are estimated to experience education spending cuts, with ten countries by more than 10 per cent (Figure 3.6).

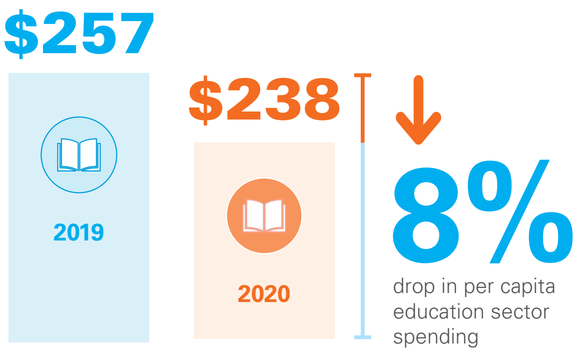
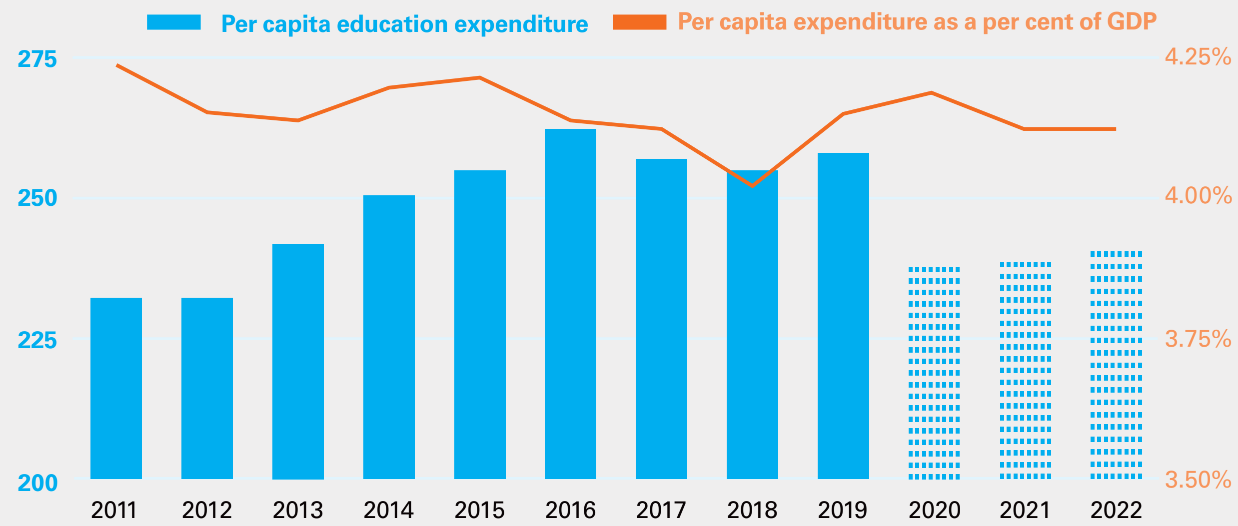


Figure 3.5: Education expenditure and projections in Africa per capita (PPP constant 2017 international dollars) and as a per cent of GDP, 2011-2012



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from UIS, World Bank and IMF

Notes: (i) The analyses exclude Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan due to data unavailability; i) The blurred bars in 2020, 2021 and 2022 represent the projected results

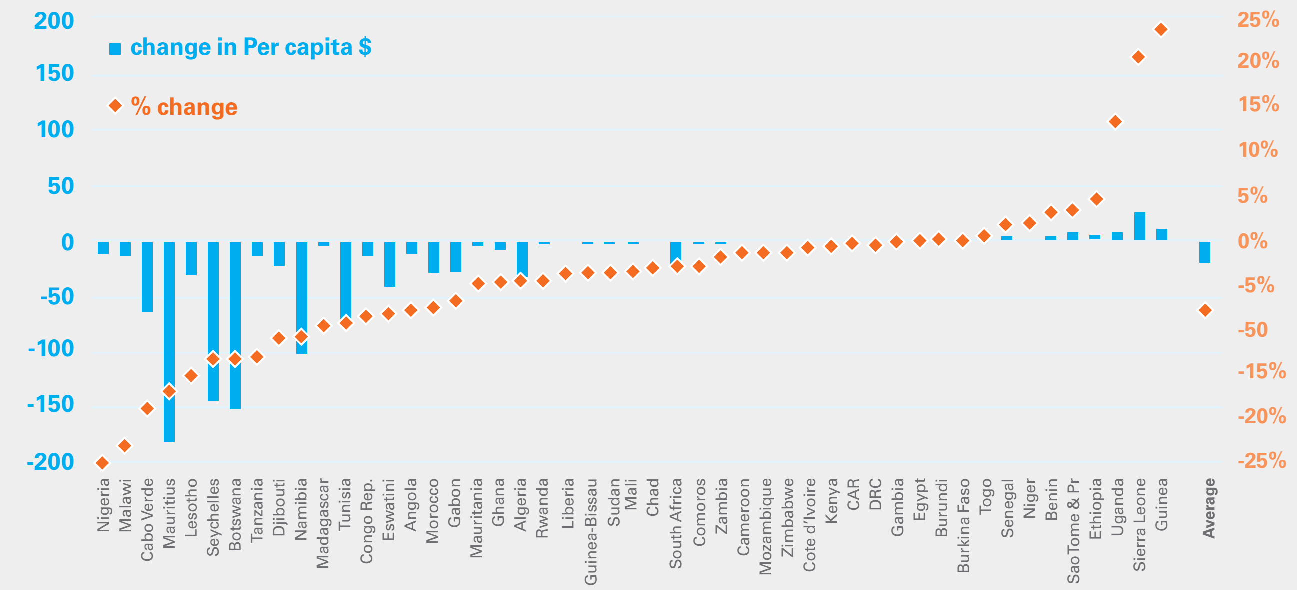
Schools closures and lockdowns at least partly explain the major **downtrend investment.**

As learning came to a standstill, some current transactions were scaled back, such as operational expenses.

At the same time, movement restrictions caused delays in infrastructure projects and other procurement processes, which made it difficult to utilize capital budgets.

This led many governments to reallocate education sector resources to support emergency health, social protection and other responses.[41]

Figure 3.6: Projected change in education expenditure in African countries per capita (PPP, constant 2017 international dollars) and as a per cent



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from UIS, World Bank and IMF
Note: Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan are excluded due to data unavailability

3.3 **Education spending trends in 2021 and 2022**

Since 2020, **spending on the education** sector likely flatlined and **remained far below pre-pandemic levels**.

Estimates indicate that per capita expenditure on education only marginally rebounded, rising from $238 in 2020 to $241 in 2022, on average (Figure 3.5 above).

This amounts to just over a 1 per cent increase, with 2022 projections showing that investment levels remain more than 6 per cent below 2019 levels.

Relative to the size of the economy, overall investment in education declined from 4.2 per cent of GDP in 2020, on average, to 4.1 per cent of GDP during 2021-22.

In practice, the pandemic appears to have pushed investment levels back a decade, **with real per capita education expenditure in 2022 equaling levels last experienced in 2012-13.**

As of 2022, most African governments are estimated to have invested **less in education than before the pandemic**.

Of the 49 countries with data, 27 (or 55 per cent) are estimated to have spent less in 2022 than in 2019, by more than -10 per cent, on average, on a per capita basis (Figure 3.7).

This is mainly attributed to the under performance of government revenue due to economic contraction induced by COVID-19.

The average decline in spending in these countries is close to $30 per person. Based on these estimates, the recovery in education spending is expected to be especially long in the 13 countries where per person spending in 2022 was projected to be -10 per cent or more.

While these estimates present a general picture of how expenditures may have evolved since 2020, they are based on projected changes in GDP and do not consider other factors that influence resource allocation decisions.

Importantly, the **education expenditure estimates** are confirmed by recent information from African education ministries.

The joint survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, which was administered by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and OECD, collected responses on spending changes in the education sector between 2020 and 2021.

In the surveyed African countries, only three out of eight reported an increase in budget allocations for the pre-primary level.

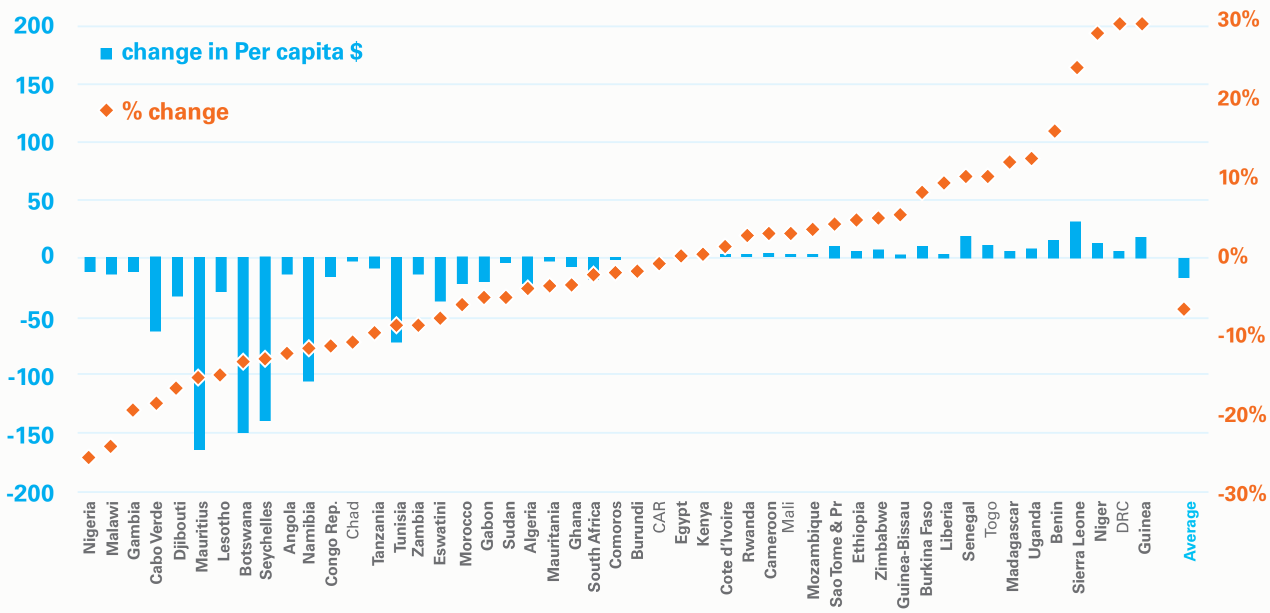
- Four out of nine African countries indicated a rise in budgets for the primary to upper secondary levels, according to Figure 3.8.

- For the tertiary level, two out of six countries reported a budget increase, as highlighted in the data.

- Remarkably, the majority of African countries maintained their budget allocations at the same nominal level, with little to no change.

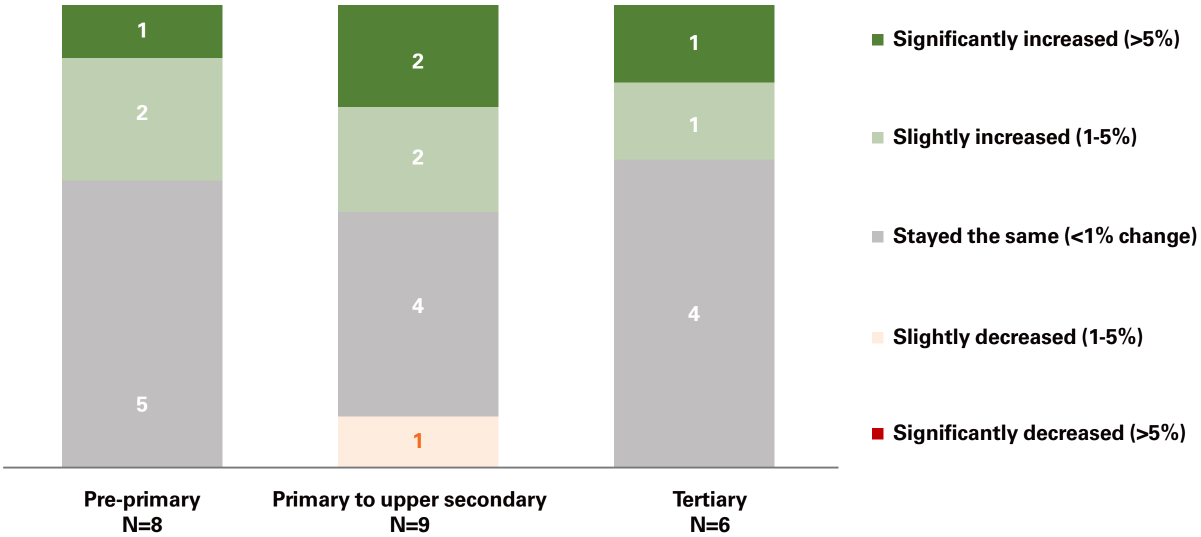
Notably, one country reported a slight decrease of 1-5 per cent in its budget for primary to upper secondary levels, indicating a potential shift in funding dynamics in this specific area.

Figure 3.7: Projected change in education expenditure in African countries, in per capita PPP constant international dollars and as a per cent, 2022 versus 2019



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from UIS, World Bank and IMF
Note: Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, South Sudan and Somalia are not included due to data unavailability

Figure 3.8: Changes in public education resources in fiscal year 2021 in select African countries (in number of countries reporting year-on-year nominal changes)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from UIS, UNICEF, World Bank & OECD (2022)
Note: Country names are anonymous for this survey

3.4 Key takeaways

- The impacts of COVID-19 on economic growth, government revenue, spending priorities, school operations and budget implementation capacity, especially for capital items, caused a dramatic decline in education investment across Africa.

- Since 2020, education investment has not rebounded, with projected spending in 2022 remaining far below pre-pandemic levels and on par with levels from a decade ago, on average.

- In addition to expanding funding gaps, the knock-on effects of COVID-19 have hurt the delivery of quality education services and significantly increased the risk of further hampering learning outcomes in Africa.

- Unless quickly redressed, the current investment situation will further erode the human capital foundation of the continent with severe long-term development implications.

Chapter 4

Education Funding Gaps and Options in Africa

This chapter explores the literature on **education funding gaps** and opportunities for mobilizing additional resources for the education sector.

It starts by reviewing different cost estimates for developing countries to achieve SDG 4 targets.

Although information is unavailable by geographic regions, global trends offer a general picture of the likely resource needs across Africa.

This is complemented by a discussion of how the pandemic significantly expanded the pre-pandemic funding shortfalls.

The chapter then highlights seven broad options that most governments on the continent can explore to increase resources for the education sector.

4.1 **Education funding gaps**

Long before the pandemic, the funding gap facing the education sector in Africa was enormous.

Although there are no specific estimates for the continent, global costing models suggested that the total resource shortfall for all LICs and LMICs to achieve SDG 4 by 2030 amounted to $39 billion/year in 2015, which was updated and re-estimated at US$148 billion/year in 2020.[42]

Other methodologies estimate the annual resource gap to be between $44 billion (Education Commission 2016) and $75 billion.[43] Financing gaps were identified in a wide range of areas including on research, quality assurance, digitalization of learning, and strengthening of education data and information systems.[44]

COVID-19 immediately added to the education funding deficit.

As described in Chapter 3, the collapse in economic growth in 2020 impacted government revenue just as rising debt limited borrowing options. ODA flows further amplified the income challenges, as bilateral donor direct support to the education sector declined by US$359 million in 2020.[45] These forces, coupled with the reprioritization of national resources to contain the health emergency, led to a historic contraction in education spending across the continent, which significantly widened pre-pandemic shortfalls.

Education funding gaps have continued to widen in 2021 and 2022.

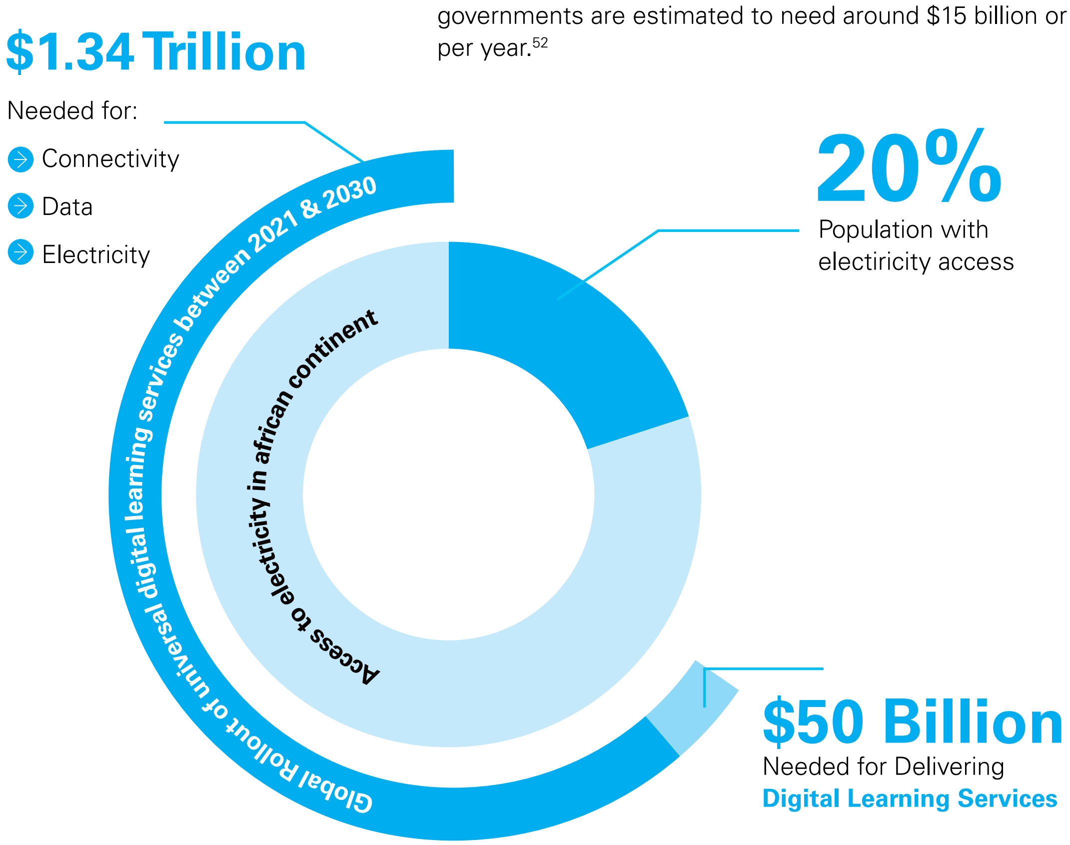
The anticipated recovery in economic growth and domestic revenue was short-lived and highly disappointing, while the expiration of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI)[46] at the end of 2021 followed by the rapid rise in interest rates globally increased debt servicing costs and further constrained government resources.[47] At the same time, although ODA to Africa may have increased in 2021 to some countries, grant support to the continent is likely declining.

This reflects many factors among donor governments, including the global economic slowdown, which has constrained their revenue base and the potential pool for ODA, the reallocation of humanitarian assistance to support the conflict in Ukraine, including for hosting refugees, and the growing demands to cushion their citizens from the high energy costs during the winter period.[48] The result is that education spending has not returned to pre-pandemic levels in much of the continent just as the investment needs continue rising to address the accumulated learning losses and school dropouts. In short, **the overall education funding gap is still expanding**.

COVID-19 also created new funding needs for the education sector, especially for digital learning.

While around two-thirds of governments in Africa used radio, television and/or the internet to ensure continuity of learning when schools were closed, it was impossible to reach nearly half of all learners on the continent with digital platforms.[49] One of the biggest challenges is infrastructure.

For example, **less than 20 per cent of the population has access to electricity in nine countries on the continent.[50]** Responding to the demand for digital education services therefore requires major new investments. Globally, the rollout of universal digital learning services between 2021 and 2030 is estimated to cost around $1.34 trillion for connectivity, data, and electricity, which should be mainly financed by the telecommunications and energy sectors, as well as close to $50 billion for delivering digital learning services, which should be financed by the education sector.[51] Of the latter, African governments are estimated to need around $15 billion or $1.5 billion per year.[52]



There are additional funding demands for human resources.

For example, if government spending on teachers at the pre-primary level does not increase in Eastern and Southern Africa, **the average pupil-to-teacher ratio is projected to increase from around 40:1 in 2020 to more than 110:1 in 2030** as classrooms absorb the growing number of school-age children as well as out-of-school children. To achieve global goals throughout the education system would require governments in this sub-region to pay for more than five million new teachers by 2030, which amounts to doubling the pre-pandemic levels of spending on teacher salaries, on average.[53]

In total, the **pandemic** may have caused the annual education funding gap to reach more than $50 billion in Africa especially Countries below the Sahara.

In 2022, UNESCO updated its costing model for LICs and LMICs to achieve SDG 4 targets by 2030, which accounts for recent changes driven by COVID-19, including slower government revenue growth, lower ODA for the education sector and delayed graduation rates.

This approach points to annual funding needs of approximately $400 billion over the 2020-30 period, with domestic resources and ODA able to cover around $200 billion.[54] This results in a global funding gap of slightly more than $200 billion/year, which is a large jump from the pre-COVID estimate of $148 billion/year.[55] Focusing on Countries below the Sahara, the annual resource requirements from 2020 to 2030 were estimated at US$118 billion, with an annual gap of US$53 billion.[56] Although these projections are underpinned by a range of methodological caveats, they generally confirm that the education funding needs for the continent are massive and rising.

Focusing on Countries below the Sahara, the annual resource requirements from 2020 to 2030 were estimated at

US$118 Billion

4.2 **Funding options**

Despite the widening gaps and weak macroeconomic outlook, there are funding options that African governments can pursue to expand investments in their education systems. Seven of the main opportunities are summarized below.[57]

Re-prioritize budget allocations:

The budget is inherently a political process, and more resources can be devoted to the education sector if there is political will. During the design, debate and approval of the annual budget, this requires convincing senior policymakers to allocate fewer resources to high-cost education services, and more to low-cost but effective interventions.

Improve spending efficiencies:

While more funding is direly needed, it is equally important to maximize the impact of resources already released to the education sector. As a start, governments can focus the annual budget on the right priorities, removing budget implementation bottlenecks, especially within procurement systems, tackling waste (e.g. removing ghost teachers, selecting market-based cost proposals), and ensuring salaries are paid on time to avoid strikes. Addressing inefficiencies in other sectors can also create savings that could potentially be redirected to the education sector.

Increase tax revenue through progressive measures:

Expanding domestic tax revenue is the most sustainable strategy to ensure adequate funding of education services. For example, it was estimated that a two-percentage point increase in the tax base (from 16 per cent of GDP to 18 per cent) could close the SDG4 funding gap in Africa.[58] This can be achieved by increasing existing tax rates or introducing new taxes, such as on corporate profits, financial transactions, property, tourism, natural resources, the digital economy, etc. Given the high and rising levels of income inequality, which were exacerbated by COVID-19,[59] it is important that new approaches are progressive and focus on economic actors that have more income rather than penalizing vulnerable populations.

Make the case for more ODA:

This requires engaging with different donor governments, international financial institutions, and regional organizations to increase the amount of external support provided to the education sector through grants and/or highly concessional loans. Importantly, the share of 'allocable aid' that went to education was declining long before COVID-19, falling from 15 per cent of total ODA in 2003 to less than 10 per cent in 2012 and averaging 9 per cent over the 2010-19 period.[60] If all donor countries achieved the SDG 17.2 target of committing 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) for ODA, and if 10 per cent of those resources were transferred to education, the current education funding gap could be closed significantly.[61]

Convert and spend Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)

In August 2021, the IMF approved a general allocation of SDRs equivalent to $650 billion to help member countries address their rising funding needs due to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.[62] Governments in Africa received around $33 billion or 5 per cent of total allocations.[63] SDRs can be used by governments to shore up central bank reserves, pay down debt and support the national budget, including for education. Based on available data as of July 2022, 31 of 47 African governments with available data had converted at least a portion of their SDRs to support spending.[64]

However, only 13 governments used some of these resources for social services, while most went to general budget support and/or to service debt.[65] To highlight a positive example, one country withdrew $311 million of its $958 million SDR allocation in the second of half of 2022 to support socioeconomic investments, including to construct education infrastructure in vulnerable regions.[66]

Moreover, most Group of 20 (G20) members along with China pledged to re-channel around $50 billion worth of SDR holdings to vulnerable LICs and MICs, most of which are in Africa.[67] If these commitments are fulfilled and/or if the IMF were to issue another allocation of SDRs as many groups have called for,[68] these additional resources could go a long way to addressing current resource gaps in the education sector.

Explore public-private partnerships (PPPs) and blended finance arrangements:

Through PPPs and strategically using government revenue and/or ODA to attract private capital, African governments can develop mutually beneficial relationships with the private sector to deliver education services. If well designed and operated, PPPs and blended finance approaches can extend the reach and effectiveness of government funds, encourage innovation in the education sector and enhance learning outcomes.[69]

However, it is imperative that governments carry out comprehensive due diligence before moving forward with a partnership to ensure value for money and that there are no access, quality or accountability issues, which have failed vulnerable students and deepened inequality in many contexts.[70]

Restructure debt:

There are five general strategies for governments to reduce sovereign debt: (i) debt relief/cancellation; (ii) re-negotiating debt; (iii) debt swaps/conversions; (iv) debt repudiation; and (v) defaulting. In recent years, more than 60 governments globally have successfully re-negotiated debts, over 50 have implemented debt swaps and more than 20 have defaulted or repudiated public debt following social audits.[71]

Each of these approaches has distinct trade-offs but can effectively lower debt servicing costs and free resources for other priorities, including education. During COVID-19, the G20's DSSI and the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) provided some temporary debt service relief to highly indebted poor countries. While these were steps in the right direction, they could be extended and significantly expanded, which could free up large resources for education.

4.3 Key takeaways

- The funding gaps facing the education sector in Africa were massive before the pandemic.
- Driven by lower spending, new demands, including for digital learning and more teachers, and a shrinking resource base, the funding gaps have widened significantly since 2020.
- Despite the challenging context, there are ways governments can boost education spending, including re-prioritizing the budget, improving spending efficiencies, increasing tax revenue, attracting more grant and concessional lending support, taking advantage of SDRs, exploring PPPs and blending financing opportunities, and/or restructuring debt.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report analyzed education spending trends in Africa before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analysis of available data and the macroeconomic and fiscal context of the region, coupled with an expenditure projection exercise, revealed three main conclusions.

First, most African governments did not invest enough, effectively, efficiently, or equitably in their education systems before the pandemic.

Whether comparing to the size of the economy (4 per cent of GDP, on average), the budget (15 per cent of total expenditure, on average) or on a per person basis (around $234 in PPP, constant 2017 values, on average), African governments only partially fulfilled their financial commitments to education. Moreover, education budgets mainly supported salaries with limited investments in learning infrastructure and equipment.

They also tended to overprioritize tertiary education, commonly at the expense of pre-primary services, which were severely neglected (only around 2 per cent of education budgets, on average). Moreover, due to low absorption capacities, late disbursements, and other operational bottlenecks, substantial available funding was not spent, especially for capital budgets (based on the average of 15 countries, around 30 per cent of capital funds were not utilized). Another worrisome trend was that education expenditure often perpetuated learning inequities among disadvantaged students in terms of age, income, gender, and location, while many governments did not routinely track and report on critical expenditure information from the education sector.

Second, COVID-19 caused a huge decline in education expenditure across the continent.

Between 2019 and 2020, the impacts of the pandemic on economic growth, government revenue, budget priorities, school operations and budget implementation capacity likely caused education spending to fall by an average of 8 per cent in per capita terms.

Thirty-seven of the 49 countries with data are projected to have experienced spending declines in education, which may have reached as high as 25 per cent in some countries. Since then, a spending rebound has remained elusive, with education investment levels in 2022 equaling the same levels from a decade ago, on average.

Third, education funding gaps are widening across Africa, but there are options for governments to immediately boost investment levels.

The education sector faced major funding shortfalls long before the onset of COVID-19. These have since expanded significantly due to the decline in education spending and the rising needs to address lost learning from school closures and the new demands for digital learning services.

Despite the challenging macroeconomic and fiscal situation in most countries, there are at least seven options that can enable governments to increase education spending. These include: (i) re-prioritizing the budget; (ii) improving spending efficiencies; (iii) increasing tax revenue; (iv) attracting more grant and concession lending support; (v) taking advantage of SDRs; (vi) exploring PPPs and blending financing opportunities; and/or (vii) restructuring debt.

To catalyze an education recovery and reinforce the recommendations from the 2022 Transforming Education Summit 2022,[72] African Union Member States are encouraged to prioritize seven actions:

Recommit to making education a budget priority: As an immediate step to reverse under investment in education systems and declining spending trends, all governments can progressively increase annual spending on education to reach 20 per cent of their total government budget by 2025. The multiple and overlapping shocks including COVID-19, conflict and climate disasters have widened the funding gap for delivering quality education.

Increase policy and budgetary attention to early learning: In several countries, early learning programmes do not receive a fair share of available resources. AU member states are recommended to commit at least 10 per cent of their education budgets to early learning in line with the Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education.[73] In addition, when considering fiscal space challenges, governments should explore public and private partnerships (PPPs) to finance pre-primary education.

Enhance efficiency and effectiveness of spending by strengthening the credibility and execution of education budgets, especially for capital items: Among other measures, governments should address inefficiencies throughout the spending chain, strengthen procurement processes as well as planning and implementation of capital projects, and ensure that teachers are paid on time to avoid strikes and learning disruptions governments. Regular dialogues between education and finance ministries on the above and many other issues can help identify and remove spending bottlenecks. There are also important roles for Parliament and civil society to review new proposals and track progress.

Make the case for greater external support for the education sector: In a context of lackluster economic growth, domestic revenue constraints and debt distress, especially in lower income countries, governments need to leverage international public and private resources, especially grants and highly concessional loans from international financial institutions (IFIs). Other options available include negotiating for debt relief that directly benefits education (e.g., debt-for-education swaps).

Invest more in the education workforce:
The lack of qualified teachers continues to be one of the major challenges to improving learning across the continent. In response, governments may refine plans for funding the recruitment, retention and professional development of teachers and support staff.

Improve equity of education spending:
Governments could take measures to ensure no child is left behind in accessing quality learning. Among other measures, governments should reform resource allocation formulae, including capitation grants and transfers to sub-national authorities, and also consider the unique needs of learners with disabilities and other deprived and marginalized groups.

Enhance transparency, accountability and public participation in planning, budgeting, and transforming the education system:
Governments should establish robust mechanisms for regularly measuring, monitoring, and reporting on education expenditures to improve transparency and accountability.

Opportunities should also be created for the public, including children and young people, to participate in education planning and budgeting. While more funding is urgently required to close widening gaps, it is equally important to maximize the impact of available resources by strengthening accountability systems. Moreover, it is recommended that governments explore opportunities offered by budgeting approaches such as performance/programme-based budgeting (PBB) to enhance the comprehensiveness of budgets.

The stakes could not be higher.

If implemented swiftly, these actions can contribute to transforming the African learning crisis into an opportunity to accelerate learning outcomes. If actions are delayed or not pursued comprehensively, the human capital base will continue to deteriorate along with the economic growth and development potential of the continent.

References

African Development Bank (2022a). African Economic Outlook 2022: Supporting Climate Resilience and a Just Energy Transition in Africa. Abidjan: African Development Bank.

African Development Bank (2022b). "FAQS: What are Special Drawing Rights and Why do They Matter for Africa?"

African Development Bank (2020). African Economic Outlook 2020: Developing Africa's Workforce for the Future. Abidjan: African Development Bank.

African Union Commission & UNICEF. (2021). Transforming Education in Africa: An Evidence-based Overview and Recommendations for Long-term Improvements. Addis Ababa and New York City: African Union Commission & UNICEF.

Arauz, A. & Cashman, K. (2022). "Special Drawing Rights One Year Later, by the Numbers." Center for Economic and Policy Research Article, 24 August 2022.

Aslam, M., Rawal, S. & Saeed, S. (2019). "Public-Private Partnerships in Education in Developing Countries: A Rigorous Review of the Evidence." Education Partnership Group.

Barrett P., Treves A., Shmis T., Ambasz D. & Ustinova, M. (2019). The Impact of School Infrastructure on Learning: A Synthesis of the Evidence. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Bous, K. M. (2019). "False Promises: How Delivering Education Through Public-Private Partnerships Risks Fueling Inequality Instead of Achieving Quality Education for All." Oxfam International Briefing Paper.

Camaione, D. & Muchabaiwa, B. (2021). "Quantifying Heckman: Are Governments in Eastern and Southern Africa Maximizing Returns on Investments in Early Childhood Development?" UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy and Early Childhood Development Working Paper.

Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI) (2011). Making Budgets Work: The Implementation Challenge. Pretoria: CABRI.

Cummins, M. (2023). Macroeconomic and Fiscal Volatility in Eastern and Southern Africa: Protecting Children from Rising Risks. Nairobi: UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office.

Cummins, M. (2021). Estimating the Teacher Gap and Funding Requirements in Eastern and Southern Africa. UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.

Cummins, M. (2020). COVID-19: A Catastrophe for Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dakar and Nairobi: UNICEF West and Central and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices.

Education Commission (2016). The Learning Generation: Investing in Education for a Changing World. New York City: The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity.

Global Education Forum Secretariat (2022). "The Urgent Case to Invest in Education and Children." Background Memo 6 for the Global Education Forum High-Level Meeting.

Heckman, J.J. (2006). "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children." Science: 312(5782), pp. 1900-1902.

IMF (2022a). Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa - Living on the Edge, October 2022. Washington, DC: IMF.

IMF (2022b). Regional Economic Outlook: Middle East and North Africa - Mounting Challenges, Decisive Times, October 2022. Washington, DC: IMF.

IMF (2022c). Zimbabwe Country Report No. 2022/112. Washington, DC: IMF.

IMF (2021). "2021 General SDR Allocation." IMF Factsheet, Version 23 August 21.

Jenkins, R. & Steer, L. (2020). "Educating the COVID recovery." Global Partnership for Education Blog Article, 04 June 2020.

Lewin, K. (2020). "Beyond Business as Usual: Aid and Financing Education in Sub-Saharan Africa." International Journal of Educational Development (78), pp. 1-14.

Meinck, S., Fraillon, J. & Strietholt, R. (Eds.) (2022). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education: International Evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS). Paris: UNESCO.

Muchabaiwa, B.L. (2020a). "Financing the Recovery from COVID-19: Building Education Back Better." UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.

Muchabaiwa, B.L. (2020b). "COVID-19 Upending Investments in Human Capital across Eastern and Southern Africa." UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.

Narayan, A. et al. (2022). "COVID-19 and Economic Inequality: Short-Term Impacts with Long-Term Consequences." World Bank Policy Research Paper No. 9902.

Ortiz, I., Chowdhury, A., Durán-Valverde, F., Muzaffar, T. & Urban, S. (2019). Fiscal Space for Social Protection: A Handbook for Assessing Financing

Options. Geneva and New York: ILO and UN Women.

Ortiz, I. & Cummins, M. (2022). "End Austerity: A Global Report on Budget Cuts and Harmful Social Reforms in 2022-25." Initiative for Policy Dialogue, GSJ, ITUC, PSI, ActionAid International, Arab Watch Coalition, The Bretton Woods Project, Eurodad, Third World Network and Wemos Working Paper.

Patrinos, H.A., Vegas, E. & Carter-Rau, R. (2022). "An Analysis of COVID-19 Student Learning Loss." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 10033.

Patrinos, H.A., Barrera-Osorio, F. & Guáqueta, J. (2009). The Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Shalal, A. (2022). "IMF Should Issue New Reserves to Help Countries Tackle Overlapping Crises." Reuters, 07 October 2022.

Theirworld (2021). The Education Finance Playbook. London: Theirworld.

UNESCO (2022). "New Estimation Confirms Out-of-School Population is Growing in Sub-Saharan Africa." GEMR and UIS Policy Paper No. 48.

UNESCO (2021). When Schools Shut: Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2020a). "Act Now: Reduce the Impact of COVID-19 on the Cost of Achieving SDG 4." UNESCO Policy Paper No. 42.

UNESCO (2020b). Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: Inclusion and Education - All Means All. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2019). "New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescents and Youth Are Out of School." UNESCO Fact Sheet No. 56.

UNESCO (2017). Education 2030: Incheon Declaration: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO UIS, UNICEF, World Bank & OECD (2022). "From Learning Recovery to Education Transformation: Insights and Reflections from the 4th Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures."

UNICEF (2023) "Transforming Education with Equitable Financing." New York City: UNICEF.

UNICEF (2022). "UNICEF on Financing Education Recovery and Transformation." UNICEF Position Paper.

UNICEF (2020). "COVID-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?" UNICEF Remote Learning Factsheet.

UNICEF (2017). Early Moments Matter for Every Child. New York City: UNICEF.

UNICEF, Education Commission & LEGO Foundation (2022). Add Today Multiply Tomorrow: Building an Investment Case for Early Childhood Education. New York City: UNICEF.

UNICEF, UNESCO & World Bank (2022). Where Are We on Learning Recovery? New York City: UNICEF.

UNICEF Lesotho (2020). Education Budget Brief. Maseru: UNICEF Lesotho.

UNICEF Malawi (2019). 2019/20 Education Budget Brief. Lilongwe: UNICEF Malawi

UNICEF MENARO (2022). "COVID-19: Financing for Child Rights and Equity in the MENA Region." UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office Working Paper.

UNICEF Namibia (2019). Education Budget Brief: 2020-21. Windhoek: UNICEF Namibia

UNICEF Tanzania (2018). Education Budget Brief: 2018. Dar es Salaam: UNICEF Tanzania

United Nations (2022). "Thematic Action Track 5: Financing of Education." United Nations Transforming Education Summit Discussion Paper.

Vinga, A. (2022). "Zim Gobbles US$311m from IMF Special Drawing Rights." New Zimbabwe, 20 August 2022.

Warah, R. (2022). "Africa's Lost Generation: The Impact of School Closures on Girls' Education." One, 13 January 2022.

World Bank (2022). Global Electrification Database.

World Bank (2020). "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education Financing." World Bank Education Policy Brief.

World Bank (2019). Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take? Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2018). "What is Learning Poverty?" Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank & UNESCO (2022). Education Finance Watch 2022. Washington, DC and Paris: World Bank and UNESCO.

Yao, H., et al. (2021). "How Much does Universal Digital Learning Cost?" UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti Policy Brief.

Endnotes

1. UNESCO (2017). Education 2030: Incheon Declaration: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All. Paris: UNESCO.
2. Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education
3. African Union Commission & UNICEF. (2021). Transforming Education in Africa: An Evidence-based Overview and Recommendations for Long-term Improvements. Addis Ababa and New York City: African Union Commission & UNICEF.
4. Cummins, M. (2021). Estimating the Teacher Gap and Funding Requirements in Eastern and Southern Africa. UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.
5. ibid
6. UNICEF (2020). "COVID-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?" UNICEF Remote Learning Factsheet.
7. Patrinos, H.A., Vegas, E. & Carter-Rau, R. (2022). "An Analysis of COVID-19 Student Learning Loss." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 10033.
8. UNICEF, UNESCO & World Bank (2022). Where Are We on Learning Recovery? New York City: UNICEF.
9. UNESCO (2022). "New Estimation Confirms Out-of-School Population is Growing in Sub-Saharan Africa." GEMR and UIS Policy Paper No. 48.
10. Meinck, S., Fraillon, J. & Strietholt, R. (Eds.) (2022). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education: International Evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS). Paris: UNESCO.
11. Cummins, M. (2020). COVID-19: A Catastrophe for Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dakar and Nairobi: UNICEF West and Central and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices.
12. Warah, R. (2022). "Africa's Lost Generation: The Impact of School Closures on Girls' Education." One, 13 January 2022; and UNESCO (2021). When Schools Shut: Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures. Paris: UNESCO.
13. World Bank. (2018). "What is Learning Poverty?" Washington, DC: World Bank.
14. SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."
15. Muchabaiwa, B.L. (2020a). "Financing the Recovery from COVID-19: Building Education Back Better." UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.
16. International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook database (April 2022 edition)
17. UNESCO (2017). Education 2030: Incheon Declaration: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All. Paris: UNESCO.
18. United Nations (2022). "Thematic Action Track 5: Financing of Education." United Nations Transforming Education Summit Discussion Paper.
19. Barrett P., Treves A., Shmis T., Ambasz D. & Ustinova, M. (2019). The Impact of School Infrastructure on Learning: A Synthesis of the Evidence. Washington, DC: World Bank.
20. UNESCO (2019). "New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescents and Youth Are Out of School." UNESCO Fact Sheet No. 56.
21. UNICEF (2017). Early Moments Matter for Every Child. New York City: UNICEF.
22. https://www.unicef.org/reports/add-today-multiply-tomorrow#:~:text=The%20'Add%20Today%20Multiply%20Tomorrow,in%20the%20ECE%20sub%2Dsector. Today Multiply Tomorrow: Building an Investment Case for Early Childhood Education. New York City: UNICEF.
23. Heckman, J.J. (2006). "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children." Science: 312(5782), pp. 1900-1902.
24. Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI) (2011). Making Budgets Work: The Implementation Challenge. Pretoria: CABRI.
25. These include annual financial statements from ministries responsible for finance, data from the Government Spending Watch, Sector accounts, and public expenditure reviews.

26. Camaione, D. & Muchabaiwa, B. (2021). "Quantifying Heckman: Are Governments in Eastern and Southern Africa Maximizing Returns on Investments in Early Childhood Development?" UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy and Early Childhood Development Working Paper.

27. UNICEF Lesotho (2020). Education Budget Brief. Maseru: UNICEF Lesotho.

28. UNICEF (2023) "Transforming Education with Equitable Financing." New York City: UNICEF.

29. Decile here refers to one-tenth of the population, with "poorest decile" thus referring to the poorest 10% of the population.

30. UNICEF Namibia (2019). Education Budget Brief: 2020-21. Windhoek: UNICEF Namibia

31. UNICEF MENARO (2022). "COVID-19: Financing for Child Rights and Equity in the MENA Region." UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office Working Paper.

32. African Union Commission & UNICEF. (2021). Transforming Education in Africa: An Evidence-based Overview and Recommendations for Long-term Improvements. Addis Ababa and New York City: African Union Commission & UNICEF.

33. UNICEF Tanzania (2018). Education Budget Brief: 2018. Dar es Salaam: UNICEF Tanzania

34. UNICEF Malawi (2019). 2019/20 Education Budget Brief. Lilongwe: UNICEF Malawi

35. UNICEF MENARO (2022). "COVID-19: Financing for Child Rights and Equity in the MENA Region." UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office Working Paper.

36. African Union Commission & UNICEF. (2021). Transforming Education in Africa: An Evidence-based Overview and Recommendations for Long-term Improvements. Addis Ababa and New York City: African Union Commission & UNICEF.

37. Muchabaiwa, B.L. (2020a). "Financing the Recovery from COVID-19: Building Education Back Better." UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.

38. Cummins, M. (2020). COVID-19: A Catastrophe for Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dakar and Nairobi: UNICEF West and Central and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices.

39. World Bank (2020). "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education Financing." World Bank Education Policy Brief. ; Jenkins, R. & Steer, L. (2020). "Educating the COVID recovery." Global Partnership for Education Blog Article, 04 June 2020.

40. IMF (2022a). Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa - Living on the Edge, October 2022. Washington, DC: IMF.; IMF (2022b). Regional Economic Outlook: Middle East and North Africa - Mounting Challenges, Decisive Times, October 2022. Washington, DC: IMF.

41. Meinck, S., Fraillon, J. & Strietholt, R. (Eds.) (2022). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education: International Evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS). Paris: UNESCO; and Muchabaiwa, B.L. (2020b). "COVID-19 Upending Investments in Human Capital across Eastern and Southern Africa." UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.

42. UNESCO (2020a). "Act Now: Reduce the Impact of COVID-19 on the Cost of Achieving SDG 4." UNESCO Policy Paper No. 42.

43. Theirworld (2021). The Education Finance Playbook. London: Theirworld; and African Union Commission & UNICEF. (2021). Transforming Education in Africa: An Evidence-based Overview and Recommendations for Long-term Improvements. Addis Ababa and New York City: African Union Commission & UNICEF.

44. African Union Commission & UNICEF. (2021). Transforming Education in Africa: An Evidence-based Overview and Recommendations for Long-term Improvements. Addis Ababa and New York City: African Union Commission & UNICEF.

45. World Bank & UNESCO (2022). Education Finance Watch 2022. Washington, DC and Paris: World Bank and UNESCO.

46. For further information, please see: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/debt/brief/covid-19-debt-service-suspension-initiative

47. Cummins, M. (2023). Macroeconomic and Fiscal Volatility in Eastern and Southern Africa: Protecting Children from Rising Risks. Nairobi: UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office.

48. African Development Bank (2022a). African Economic Outlook 2022: Supporting Climate Resilience and a Just Energy Transition in Africa. Abidjan: African Development Bank.

49. UNICEF (2020). "COVID-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?" UNICEF Remote Learning Factsheet.

50. World Bank (2022). Global Electrification Database.

51. Yao, H., et al. (2021). "How Much does Universal Digital Learning Cost?" UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti Policy Brief.

52. Calculated from the costing tool accompanied to Yao et al. (2021).

53. Cummins, M. (2021). Estimating the Teacher Gap and Funding Requirements in Eastern and Southern Africa. UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Social Policy Working Paper.

54. Global Education Forum Secretariat (2022). "The Urgent Case to Invest in Education and Children." Background Memo 6 for the Global Education Forum High-Level Meeting.

55. UNESCO (2020a). "Act Now: Reduce the Impact of COVID-19 on the Cost of Achieving SDG 4." UNESCO Policy Paper No. 42.

56. Global Education Forum Secretariat (2022). "The Urgent Case to Invest in Education and Children." Background Memo 6 for the Global Education Forum High-Level Meeting

57. This section draws from Ortiz & Cummins (2022) and Ortiz et al. (2019).

58. Lewin, K. (2020). "Beyond Business as Usual: Aid and Financing Education in Sub-Saharan Africa." International Journal of Educational Development (78), pp. 1-14.

59. Narayan, A. et al. (2022). "COVID-19 and Economic Inequality: Short-Term Impacts with Long-Term Consequences." World Bank Policy Research Paper No. 9902.

60. World Bank & UNESCO (2022). Education Finance Watch 2022. Washington, DC and Paris: World Bank and UNESCO.

61. UNESCO (2020b). Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: Inclusion and Education - All Means All. Paris: UNESCO.

62. IMF (2021). "2021 General SDR Allocation." IMF Factsheet, Version 23 August 21.

63. African Development Bank (2022b). "FAQS: What are Special Drawing Rights and Why do They Matter for Africa?"

64. Arauz, A. & Cashman, K. (2022). "Special Drawing Rights One Year Later, by the Numbers." Center for Economic and Policy Research Article, 24 August 2022.

65. Authors' calculations based on Arauz & Cashman (2022).

66. IMF (2022c). Zimbabwe Country Report No. 2022/112. Washington, DC: IMF.; Vinga, A. (2022). "Zim Gobbles US$311m from IMF Special Drawing Rights." New Zimbabwe, 20 August 2022.

67. Arauz, A. & Cashman, K. (2022). "Special Drawing Rights One Year Later, by the Numbers." Center for Economic and Policy Research Article, 24 August 2022.

68. Shalal, A. (2022). "IMF Should Issue New Reserves to Help Countries Tackle Overlapping Crises." Reuters, 07 October 2022.

69. Aslam, M., Rawal, S. & Saeed, S. (2019). "Public-Private Partnerships in Education in Developing Countries: A Rigorous Review of the Evidence." Education Partnership Group; and Patrinos, H.A., Barrera-Osorio, F. & Guáqueta, J. (2009). The Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education. Washington, DC: World Bank.

70. Bous, K. M. (2019). "False Promises: How Delivering Education Through Public-Private Partnerships Risks Fueling Inequality Instead of Achieving Quality Education for All." Oxfam International Briefing Paper.

71. A social audit refers to a citizen-led scrutiny or analysis of expenditures.

72. UNICEF (2022). "UNICEF on Financing Education Recovery and Transformation." UNICEF Position Paper; and United Nations (2022). "Thematic Action Track 5: Financing of Education." United Nations Transforming Education Summit Discussion Paper.

73. Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education, available here.

African Union

unicef
for every child