

Center for Sustainable Development
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Background / Working Paper: Study on Post-Basic education in sub-Saharan Africa

Study Title: Relevance of post-basic education to the changing realities of youth in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the perspectives of young people

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1. Executive summary

The study '**Relevance of post-basic education to the changing realities of youth in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the perspectives of young people**' therefore aims to assess the relevance of educational provision for youth (15-24 years of age) in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in pursuit of the Education 2030 agenda, which calls for building education and learning systems that promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by means of society-wide participation and through all channels - formal, non-formal and informal settings.

This is a qualitative methods study which includes case studies based on interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The study targets youth (15-24 years of age) in selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The study includes three UNESCO defined regions in East and West Africa covered by UNESCO offices in Abuja, Dakar and Nairobi. The study collected field-based data from Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria in the Abuja region; Mali and Senegal in the Dakar region; and from Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda in the Nairobi region.

Interviews and focus group discussions with youth revealed that regardless of specific age, gender, or education status, there is a strong sense of desiring continuation of education, training and building their skills for their future. The youth sampled in the study to represent 11 countries across the sub-Saharan region have ambitions to become doctors, teachers, nurses, engineers and more. A common theme found throughout many of the youth's aspirations was a call to serve others, including their families, communities and countries. In many cases, their role models shaped their aspirations, personal dreams and goals. These role models are teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, successful businesspeople, or their family members. It is noteworthy that the value on helping others and service was a driving factor on who the role models were. Many youth believe that education will help them to reach their desired goals, but many also note that they face considerable barriers in achieving the level of education needed to achieve their goals.

The youth currently not in education, employment or training' (NEET) stated their reasons for being out of school as economic challenges, poor academic performance and among females, pressure to enter into marriage. There were others who joined a trade or a profession, but this was not specific to youth who are out of school. There was no distinction in the take-up of jobs, work or chores outside of school to the enrollment status. Therefore, whether youth were working outside of the home was not a deciding factor in being in or NEET. The youth identified the chores that interfered (but not completely stopped) them from attending the schools as farming, selling, business, trading, harvesting, shop keeping, tailoring, cooking and washing. Youth currently in school believed they had the support they needed from family to be able to complete schooling. The in-school youth stated that economic challenges would stop them from continuing education even if they wished to continue. One clear sense arising from the youth's sharing of experience is that their NEET status is non-voluntary in most cases. Some of the reasons why they dropped out were more cultural and sociological, for example, due to peer influences, being the oldest in the family and having to take care of younger siblings and the household. In some cases it was due to conflict in the area.

Gender discrimination was obvious in the responses where the girls are penalized by being forced into early marriages and then requiring permission from their husbands to return back to school. Childbirth makes it much harder to attend school since the main responsibility of childcare falls on the mother. There are also critical gender-based issues such as female genital cutting that is ongoing as identified by some youth.

The youth deem the following skills and attributes as most valuable for the futures they want- technical skills, soft skills (communication, social-emotional skills), broader knowledge, academic knowledge, person's character, and religion. Within responses on the kinds of technical skills the students want to learn, the range of skills varied, including fashion, finance, accounting, "practical knowledge," medicine, teaching, ICT, languages, carpentry, and agriculture/farming.

To be able to continue their education, the youth identified needed support areas that include finances (including more availability of student scholarships, loans and business loans for youth); social-emotional support, teachers, capital resources related to their interest areas in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (especially pertaining to training programs, devices and machines according to trade), and additional education especially for those out-of-school and those at risk of dropping out. From the perspective of the teachers, they believed that the main reason students are absent from school are due to financial reasons (inability to pay school fees), or transportation related issues. They believed that school fees and finances are by far the greatest factor in making schooling difficult for youth.

On the supply side, while most students who are currently enrolled in school said they can reach the school¹ in less than or around one hour, there are students who have dropped out due to distance to school. Teachers reported that safety may be an issue for students traveling long distances to schools, especially for girls. Some teachers noted that girls have to walk home earlier than boys so that they can arrive home safely. This in turn means that in such cases, girls are less able to participate in after-school activities that may enrich their education.

On the relevance of the curriculum more than half of the educators interviewed agreed that the educational program their students receive is adequately preparing them to acquire skills necessary for the current job market and personal lives. Still, many educators felt that the programs were only partially preparing students for the skills they will need in the job market. Some educators believed that extracurricular activities or other channels were filling gaps in educational programs. Most educators agree that the curriculum they are using is both relevant and can be applied practically to lives of their learners. Some teachers gave examples of how specific aspects of the curriculum they are teaching in the classroom can be applied in the lives of their students. The integration of international curriculums was another theme that appeared throughout some of the educators' responses. One educator felt that the adoption of a curriculum not designed in-country, which is not unique to the students' country context, is actually confusing and may not prove as relevant in the lives of students. The educator cited an example of using East African (Uganda and Kenya) curriculum as well as the local South Sudan

¹ Type of schooling included secondary schools, TVET programs, second-chance programs, primary schools as well as koranic schools

curriculum. While some examples were not relevant to issues in South Sudan, other lessons on citizenship was cross-cutting and relevant because it dealt with instilling a sense of patriotism in the students. Another educator pointed out the positive aspects of the British curriculum which they use that they feel benefits their students. The teachers are eager to integrate technology into classrooms to connect to the globalized world. However, they noted that more resources are needed to reach the full potential of using technology within classrooms. A trend was noted during analysis that those youth who had more specific understanding of what education they needed to achieve their aspirations tended to be more critical of the gaps in their curriculum.

2. Introduction / overview

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 30% of youth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are illiterate (UIS, 2015), and the World Bank reports that most out-of-school youth in the region drop out before secondary education (World Bank, 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest participation in secondary education. Nearly half of its population under 25 years of age. Only half of the population are enrolled in lower secondary education and the proportion drops to one third of the population at the upper secondary level, which is half of the world average. There are about 89 million out-of-school/NEET adolescents between ages 12 and 24 and an estimated 40 million more youth are projected to drop out in the next decade (Inoue et al., 2015).

Given the potential for youth to lead and shape the world, current educational patterns compel a better understanding of youth characteristics and of the gap that often exists between youth realities and aspirations, and the nature of educational provision.

The study '**Relevance of post-basic education to the changing realities of youth in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the perspectives of young people**' therefore aims to assess the relevance of educational provision for youth (15-24 years of age) in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in pursuit of the Education 2030 agenda, which calls for building education and learning systems that promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by means of society-wide participation and through all channels - formal, non-formal and informal settings.

The results aim to contribute to more responsive policies on the issue of youth disengagement from education and the ensuing consequences in skills shortages, low employment prospects, and general well-being. Hence, data collection focused on the subjective dimension of youth demand for learning opportunities and supply of such opportunities. The scope of the study guided and directed the questions asked to youth and educators.

The report is divided into the broad context and key issues of the region. Then it delves into the research and methods of how data collection was conducted. The research findings are divided into themes that emerged from the focus group discussions and interviews with youth as well as interviews with the educators. The main themes are categorized into: the profile of youth and youth's aspirations and demands on learning and skills; the supply of learning opportunities; and the barriers youth face in attaining training or education that act as causes of non-take up of formal and non-formal education and training opportunities. Based on these themes that emerged, the report outlines some recommendations and considerations for policy and steps forward on youth's educational and technical training.

3. Context and key issues

The mantra of education policy which penetrated through the Faure report (1972), Delors report (1996) and eventually towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2015 focused on a ‘learning society’ with opportunities of ‘lifelong education’ for all individuals. However, global contexts since then have changed bringing in new levels of uncertainty, challenges and opportunities.² With the Sustainable Development Goals, the focus is on equitable life long learning for all. Thus the educational needs of the NEET or youth in school become relevant to understand.

The 2018 World Bank Development Report identifies three dimensions what is called a ‘learning crises’: 1) learning outcomes are poor, 2) schools are failing learners and 3) systems are failing schools. Learning in its true essence, whether derived from formal curricula, employers’ assessments or general knowledge, is not occurring and is subsequently amplifying inequalities, especially for the disadvantaged youth. The most recent data available for Southern and East Africa, from year 2007, indicate that less than 50% of sixth grade students were able to comprehend simple words.³ In 2014, less than 45% of sixth grade students from West and Central Africa made the mark of “sufficient” competency level for reading or mathematics.⁴ With regard to the second dimension of schools failing learners, schools struggle to meet learners’ needs when they are lacking one or more of the four key inputs for learning: prepared learners, effective teaching, learning- focused inputs and skilled management and governance.

Students are unprepared due to multiple deprivations ranging from chronic malnutrition, which impairs brain development, lack of nurturing behavior from caregivers etc. This leads to lasting negative impact for the youth in terms of their cognitive ability. Thirty percent of children under 5 in developing countries are physically stunted, meaning they have low height for their age, typically due to chronic malnutrition.⁵ Moreover, teachers are not prepared enough to teach the learning generation. They often either lack skills or motivation to perform. In 14 sub-Saharan countries, the average grade 6 teacher performs no better on reading tests than the highest-performing students from that same grade.⁶ The last dimension to the learning crisis of systems failing schools emphasizes the lack of learning metrics and instruments to assess learning.

UNICEF classifies barriers to education for out-of-school youth from both the supply-side and demand-side. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, girls face disadvantages from both supply and demand sides. From the supply side, girls too often face the risk of violence in school or on the way to school. Schools often lack hygienic toilet facilities, making it difficult for girls to attend school during their menstrual period. Under-provision of educational facilities and lack of teachers also contribute to educational gaps. On the demand side, socio-cultural gender norms

² Power, C. N. 1997. Learning: a means or an end? A look at the Delors Report and its implications for educational renewal. *Prospects*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, p.118

³ Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) results for grade 6 students in 15 countries in 2007 (Hungu et al. 2010).

⁴ Programme d’Analyse des Systemes educatifs de la Confemen (PASEC) results for grade 6 students in 10 francophone countries in 2014 (PASEC 2015).

⁵ Black et al.(2017). Stunting is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a height-for-age z-score of less than two standard deviations below the median of a healthy reference population.

⁶ UIS (2006).

prevent girls from enrolling or remaining in education, such as labor expectations in the home, early marriage and pregnancy (UNICEF/UIS, 2014a). Child labor practices also hinder the ability of both boys and girls from continuing their education, with one example being the prevalence of illegal gold mining in Ghana, where young boys are encouraged to dropout early to work in the mines (HRW, 2015)⁷. In addition to gender discrimination, lack of accommodation of a disability, language challenges, displacement and conflict also constitute barriers to accessing education. For example, in East and Southern Africa, children with disabilities are over-represented among out-of-school children (UNICEF, 2014a).

In West and Central Africa (UNICEF 2014b), parents in most countries cite economic hardship as a main cause of non-attendance. Data also shows that gender and poverty impact the risk for out-of-school status in West Africa; UNICEF (2014b) estimates that, '[a] girl from a poor household, living in a rural area, (bottom three income quintiles) is twice as likely to be excluded from the education system than a boy from a rich, urban household (top two income quintiles).' UNESCO (2014b) also estimates that in West Africa, the majority of out-of-school children never attended school as opposed to dropping out. In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, almost half of children will never attend school.

Learning needs vary across diverse communities and therefore effective learning must reflect cultures, norms and aspirations of the communities. The definition of quality of life in terms of education then changes. Re-visioning and empowering of education is essential to foster diversity such that it "builds the human resources we need to be productive, to continue to learn, to solve problems, to be creative, and to live together and with nature in peace and harmony. When nations ensure that such an education is accessible to all throughout their lives, a quiet revolution is set in motion: education becomes the engine of sustainable development and the key to a better world."⁸

The paradox of economic globalization and technology is such that they have reduced global poverty, yet patterns of unemployment, economic disparities and vulnerable employment persist especially for the youth, emphasizing the greater need for inclusive educational systems for the disadvantaged. Although countries worldwide are experiencing strong economic growth rates, employment opportunities are not expanding; sub-Saharan Africa remains subject to declining job quality and working condition. People in vulnerable employment account for almost half of total employment and a proportion lack access to social security and secure incomes.⁹

Recent data from the World Bank from some African countries shows a range of experiences in terms of youth employment. Cabo Verde, which has the highest female GER of the region also has highest youth female unemployment at 26%. Male youth in Cabo Verde, on the other hand, experience 14% unemployment, similar to Nigeria at 14%. Senegal also has high disparities between male and female youth unemployment: 19% of female youth are unemployed as compared to 9% of males.

⁷ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ghana0515_forinsertltr2_0.pdf

⁸ Power, C. 2015. *The Power of Education: Education for All, Development, Globalisation and UNESCO*. London, Springer.

⁹ International Labour Office. 2014. *Global Employment Trends 2014*. Geneva, International Labour Office

Filmer and Fox (2015) also argue that because most Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs require a completed primary and some secondary education, many youth in sub-Saharan Africa cannot enroll in TVET programs. For example, in Senegal in the mid-2000s, 10,000 youth were enrolled in formal TVET programs whereas 440,000 were taking part in traditional apprenticeships in the motor repair business (Walter, 2011 in UNESCO, 2012). Rates for Ghana are even higher, with some estimates showing that 80% to 90% of all skills training comes from informal apprenticeships (UNESCO, 2012). While informal and traditional apprenticeship systems have substantial value, UNESCO (2012) highlights their highly gendered and class-based nature and calls for the creation of policies and programs to diversify different trades.

There are emerging cultural innovations and creativity from and among the youth who wish to apply them to meet their aspirations. There are more than one billion people in the world aged 15 to 24, and this group is widely considered to be the most active, informed and connected segment of the population.¹⁰ In sub-Saharan Africa, mobile cellular subscriptions are at 74% and in the case of Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Nigeria, the figures are at 139%, 120%, 99% and 82% respectively (World Bank, 2016). This generation, having grown up in an environment of awareness and mass information, calls for educational opportunities that are customized and based on diverse knowledge systems.¹¹ Education policy making is becoming more complex and needs sophisticated understanding given the rising disillusion amongst the youth relating to upward mobility through education. Youth of the current generation are beginning to question their ‘return on investment’ from traditional educational programs.¹²

In light of this rapidly changing reality, we need to rethink the normative principles that guide educational governance: in the context of education as a public good and especially in its applicability to post basic education and training.

4. Research methodology and limitations

This is a qualitative methods study which includes case studies based on interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The study targets youth (15-24 years of age) in selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The study includes three UNESCO defined regions in East and West Africa covered by UNESCO offices in Abuja, Dakar and Nairobi. The study collected field-based data from Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria in the Abuja region; Mali and Senegal in the Dakar region; and from Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda in the Nairobi region.

4.1. Selection and sample

The target groups were selected based on feasibility of reaching the target groups while ensuring a wide range of groups to be inclusive and representative in the approach. Geographical

¹⁰ Youth-support’ by Chernor Bah, Chair, Youth Advocacy Group for Global Education First Initiative (GEFI); Panel discussions: ‘Enabling conditions for the delivery of quality global citizenship education: Where are we? Where do we want to go?’ Global Citizenship Education: Enabling Conditions & Perspectives, 16 May 2014, UNESCO, Paris.

¹¹ www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/ChernorBah_16May2014.pdf [Accessed February 2015]. 45 UNESCO. 2009. UNESCO World Report Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue. Paris, UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001852/185202e.pdf> [Accessed February 2015]

¹² Facer, K. 2011. Learning Futures: Education, Technology and Social Challenges. New York, Routledge

remoteness, urban/rural and gender characteristics were considered as well, and an effort was made to include youth with disabilities wherever possible, though no youth participants ended up self-identifying as having any disabilities. The group included at least one of the following characteristics: adolescent youth attending secondary schooling, after school programs, non-formal programs, youth in integrated non-formal schools, out of school youth, youth involved in second chance/bridge course programs, youth enrolled or who have participated in vocational or technical training programs and/or other such programs, as well as working youth. Another group included teachers and/or trainers from programs serving youth learners, which included formal secondary schools, vocational training centers, colleges, and/or non-formal programs to understand their perspectives on the interests and challenges of adolescents, the support they receive from government institutions and/or other donors, and identify the gaps in what their programs and facilities are able to offer. On average, four FGDs, two youth interviews and one educator interview were held for each country with minor variations. There were a total number of 380 FGD participants, 19 youth and 10 educators interviewed. Some of the youth interviewees may have participated in the FGD. The sample is outlined below:

		Data		
Regions	Countries	Number of FGD [^]	Number of Interviewss with youth	Number of Interviews with educators
*West Africa	Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal	18	10	5
*East Africa	Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda	20	9	5

[^]Each FGD included between 8-12 individuals,

4.2. Instruments and data collection procedure

The type of data collection tools used were Focus Group Discussions, and interviews (see Annex for data collection tools). The main data collection techniques involved group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews, and open-ended discussions. The objective of the case study was designed to understand local perspectives on educational attainment, benefits, challenges and prospects. Typical of a case study, multiple data sets were used and themes were analyzed and triangulated using all the data sources. The protocol was followed to approach the respondents for their time for the data collection, which is important for acquiring permission to collect any data. The interviews were conducted by Millennium Promise staff or enumerators who are native to the specific countries and are fluent in the local languages.

All qualitative data were back translated to English for data transcription. QSR NVIVO 11 software was used to analyze the qualitative data. The data was analyzed to get an empirical understanding of each of the components (perceptions of various stakeholders, supply and demand factors to non-formal and formal education, new approaches to skill development and other dimensions). An emergent design of conducting qualitative analysis was used for data

analysis, wherein, themes are not pre-set, rather, the themes emerge from the data that is gathered. Data analysis focused on highlighting emerging common themes in the main domain areas (perceptions, supply and demand side factors to non-formal and formal education, new approaches to skill development and other dimensions) of the study.

4.3. Limitations

Although same research protocols and training materials were used in preparation for data collection, given the scope of the study spanning multiple countries with various enumerators and transcribers involved, there were varying degrees in the data quality, in terms of length of discussions, probing of questions, thoroughness of data transcription and participant tracking records on which quantitative trends were drawn. There were also multiple languages utilized so nuances may not have all been captured from the translation to transcription process. Given the complex nature of the data collection process, the research needed to be completed and the report written in much shorter time than what had been planned for the report. Limited sample size causes a generalizability issue. However the the focus of this report is not not generalize the themes to all of sub-Saharan Africa. It is meant to understand the educational issues that come up as a result of the FGD. The report will help to highlight the voices of the youth. A lot of the data is given in verbatim form which presents their perspectives and future aspirations.

5. Research findings

5.1. Profile of youth

The scope of the discussions outlined to engage youth comprise of youth participating in formal schools, non-formal schools including religious schools, governmental and nongovernmental schools, vocational / technical programs, second-chance / bridge programs, as well as out-of-school youth. The demographics covered are from both urban and rural areas, across 11 countries. While the locale and situation of youth vary among the respondent groups, the youth shared similar perspectives and the following sections highlight the dominant themes that have emerged in the discussions. The characteristics of the sample are given in the Table below.

Table: Sample Characteristics

Categories	Percentages
Average Age of the sample	
Percentage of Females	
Percentage of employed	
Percentage in-school	
Percentage of rural residents	

5.1.1. Youth Life Prospects and Dreams

Aspiring to a life of service

Much could be deciphered from responses to one’s aspirations in life dreams and goals. The questions posed to the youth on their life prospects were answered with a strong sense of service for others both in the jobs and professions preferred, but also in the broader life goals. When youth were asked about their goals and aspirations, professions were often given as responses with most of them being professions in service or serving others: Doctor/medical profession,

teacher, nurse and engineer were the most frequently stated responses. The word cloud below depicts the responses on the professions, with the sizes of the words correlating to the frequency of responses; the largest letters illustrate highest frequency.



Word frequency on professions



Word frequency on life goals and dreams

In describing their aspirations, the rationale for wanting a certain profession was prevalently linked to helping others. In the responses to life aspirations that did not state a type of profession, the most frequently mentioned words illustrated the desire to help family, community, their respective countries, and groups of populations. The commonly stated life dreams included fighting poverty, social impact work, setting up businesses or organizations to support the poor/orphans, and bettering their families’ lives as well as their own. Learning a skill, completing studies, or securing a job were mostly mentioned as a means to an end, of improving and supporting the family/children, self, village and their respective countries.

There were varying degrees of specificity in the steps to be taken to achieving their dreams. Some students identified process in detail, such as wanting to get training in preparation for a better job. “After this scholastic calendar, I would like to pursue Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to acquire skills that will help get a better job after school.” (South Sudan urban formal school youth) Some others had a clear sense of the kind of life they want to live, however without a specified plan. “[My dream is] to finish school - to be disciplined - to have a job - to help the poor - to reward parents.” Youth also sought to fill the gaps in shortage of various industries, such as wanting to become teachers or doctors where there were not many in their villages. One youth explained, “I want to teach [in my community] in technical skills since there are always inadequate number of teachers”.

5.1.2. Desired trajectory for youth

Academic skills

For many youth, achieving their dreams meant completing their studies to be able to get to their desired goals; therefore, statements in continuing education or studies, going to university, completing studies, passing exams were frequently embedded into the description of aspirations and frequently mentioned. However, unfortunately for many youth, continuing their education

was not a guaranteed path. Some of the major reasons for these barriers are outlined in the following sections of the report. Sometimes, being able to finish the desired course of study was a dream and goal on its own, and one student shared that they were “praying to continue with [my] studies” (Nigeria FGD). The desire to continue education was commonly found among all groups of youth, whether they were currently in formal school, non-formal school, second chance/bridge programs, vocational programs or out of school. The most common response to what youth would want to do when they left their current education program was continuing their studies. The desire to continue education stemmed primarily from the recognition that their desired professions and jobs could be achieved with certain higher degrees. In few cases, youth shared that they were simultaneously looking for a job to be able to finance their continued studies. One youth from South Sudan wanted to engage in farming and community volunteer work to earn money and reputation before joining university. Another student planned to attend university at a later stage, but first wanted to develop a more technical skill through computer courses.

Seven youth among the FGDs specifically sought technical skills. The skills ranged from broad “vocational training”, religious practice, volunteer work while taking computer courses, internship with Department of Finance and Administration, to more specific plans of receiving professional training abroad in order to be able to work for a big telecommunication company.

Finding a job

The second most prevalent response in regards to the next steps referred to looking for a job. Unlike the responses given to pursuing of academics as the next step, the response for finding a job was more prevalent for youth in vocational programs, second chance programs and out-of-school youth, although there were few responses from youth in formal school as well on employment. There were mixed responses between those who gave generic responses of simply finding a job and employment versus those who knew what kinds of work they wanted to do. Some of these jobs specifically referred to included setting up businesses or workshops, joining a cooperative, doing electrical work, welding, farming, fashion/tailoring, television entertainment network (urban youth from formal school) or becoming a religious leader.

As a next step, three youth specifically mentioned the desire to volunteer for community, supporting other children and volunteer for environmental work. Only one youth who is currently out of school specifically mentioned getting married as the next step among the FGDs. Two youth currently attending formal school in an urban area specifically mentioned they were not sure what they would do after they complete their studies.

5.1.3. Role models strongly influence youth aspirations

In discussing youth’s aspirations, it is clear the influence role models have on shaping the life goals and professional outlook. In most cases, **role models** had direct correlation to youth’s aspirations in terms of the types of professions as well as the character and qualities youth aspired to, revealing how important and crucial environment and surroundings are in formulating personal dreams, goals and choice of profession.

More importantly, role models were important in aspiring to the quality and characteristics of a person they wanted to become. Aligned to the types of professions the youth hoped to have in

really show that different perspective which inspires you to think better in every way.” (Ethiopia urban formal school)

“Electrical instructor at the school. He is disciplined, teaches well and practices what he teaches by opening a cyber café in the community. He is an entrepreneur. Has a different lifestyle from the rest through his hard work.” (Kenya TVET afterschool program)

Gender: women empowered

In some cases, the gender factor played a special role in inspiring younger women:

“She was a true inspiration for people who wanted to go into architecture. For starters, she’s a woman that chose architecture which is not usually a field known for women in Ethiopia. The things she did were exceptional and notable.” (Ethiopia urban formal school)

“I choose to become a medical doctor because it impresses me if I see female doctors” (Nigeria TVET afterschool)

Youth role model based on success:

“She is a fashion designer and at the same time a singer and she established so many businesses so I want to be like her.” (Kenya afterschool TVET program)

“I want to be an architect in construction, I experienced this experience when they were constructing under [...] construction company. He [...] could get a lot of money in less than an hour; so he could advise me in advance to go to a technical skills. (Uganda rural vocational program)

“Steve Jobs. I admire his commitment and engagement in his work; also his visions. He wanted to create a better world and wanted to be more perfectionist.” (Urban Ethiopia out-of-school youth interview)

“[My role model] is the first vice president of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan before South Sudan attain its independence. He is good leader, he speaks very well.” (South Sudan youth interview)

“I have a role model. The person has established a lot of businesses and managing them by himself. So I want to be like him.” (Ghana youth interview)

“Thiago Sylva the Brazilian footballer is my idol because he helped his team qualify for the coming World Cup.” (Senegal secondary school)

Youth role model based on intelligence:

“My English teacher inspired by the way he teaches English. He is very intelligent and smart. He liked to crack jokes with students always. He is friendly” (South Sudan rural out-of-school youth)

“I just want become a medical doctor like one lady. Because she is a knowledgeable persons and works very well.” (Nigeria rural formal school)

“French teacher [...], because of his knowledge and know-how.” (Guinea youth interview)

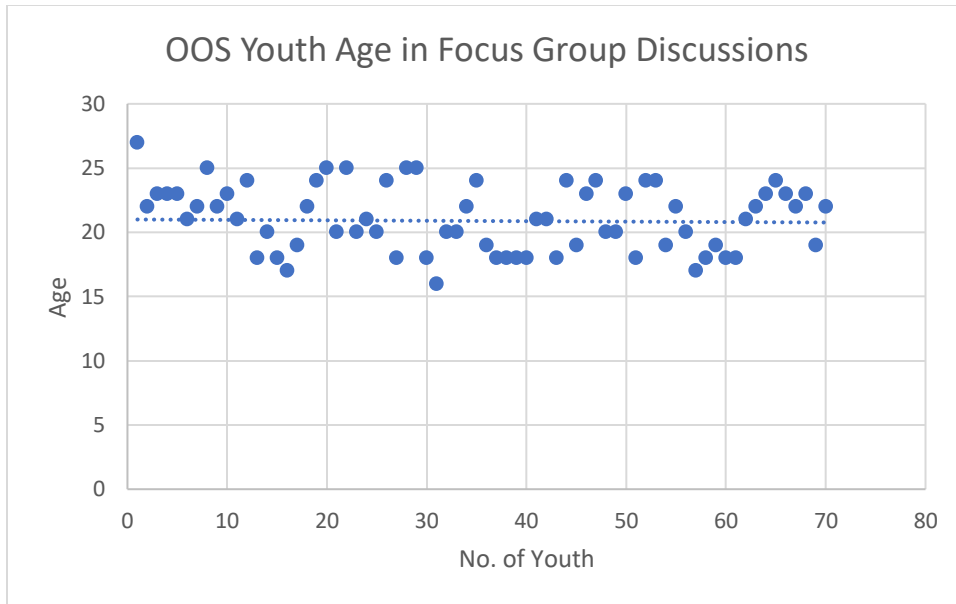
One youth in Mali’s rural secondary school shared a role model from the community, a peer: “I want to become like Mother Djénèba, a young girl from our community who works well at school.”

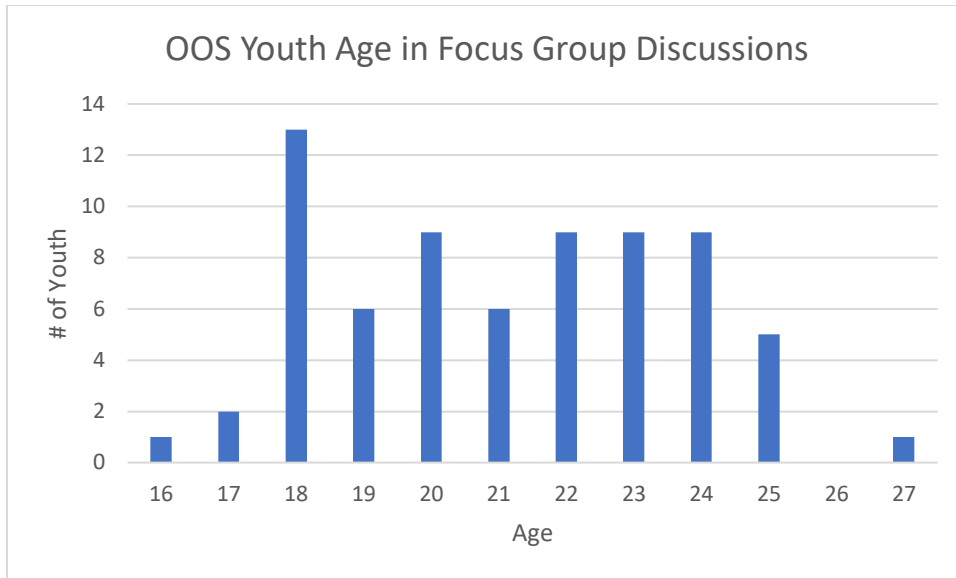
Youth who did not have role models aspired to become the first person to be an example for other younger youth in the community. “I don’t have any role model around but I would like to be the first person to join the military so that I can be emulated by the younger ones in my community.” (Nigeria formal rural school)

In some cases, the youth were already serving as role models for others in the community. One student from Uganda in a vocational program in a rural area shared, “For me, most of my friends who are in the village always ask me how life is when at school and when I share with them they admire to be like me.”

5.1.4. *Out-of-School Youth*

Of the 380 youth in 38 FGDs held across 11 countries, there were 71 youth in the data available, who were participants under the group category of being out of school. The average age of the out of school youth was 21.





Note: Average age: 21

The case study guidelines encouraged an even mix of both genders in each group during data collection and among the out of school youth, 30 were male and 40 were female, and 1 unknown. Although they participated in the discussions under the category of being out-of-school youth, as defined by not being a part of formal schooling, 19 youth said they currently attend some type of an educational program, with all 19 youth being from Nigeria. The remaining 52 youths were not attending any educational opportunities. When asked if they planned to continue their education in the next year, 30 responded that they plan to attend, which indicated even some youth currently not in an educational program also plan to attend in the next year.

Forty (40) youths do not plan to continue education. While only few of these specific respondents explained the reasons they will not continue education, 10 respondents of 13, both female and male, gave financial problems and poverty as the reasons for not furthering their education. Two female respondents said marriage will be the main factor in discontinuing school and one female respondent stated her poor academic performance as the reason. Only 20 of the youth were currently working, with a range of description given on their work from learning trade/trading, teaching, transport, shop keeping, farming, tailoring, construction to computer work. Most youths, 51, responded that they are not currently working. There were no self-reported disability or health issues reported that hinder daily activities.

Most youth who reported they will not be continuing education in the upcoming year have dropped out mostly involuntarily due to factors beyond their control. Most of the students who reported that they will not be continuing education next year attributed this to school fees and personal financial issues. Many students who reported that they will in fact be continuing their education in the upcoming year reported receiving a scholarship or sponsorship for school fees. Often students who reported that they would not be continuing education in the upcoming year also mentioned that they intend to continue with their education if given the resources and opportunity. As a response to a question asking if students will continue education next year, one student reported, “no, I want to work for some time and save money before I will continue my education.”

Beyond financial reasons, some students reported other barriers to receiving a quality education, which have led them to seek out alternative, less traditional channels of education or vocational schools. “I found it easier to continue my education online; not to go to the normal kind of schools because when you see education in the 21st century it's much easier to learn it through the internet rather than going to classes,” reported one youth.

Youth discussed what could be done to improve the situation of students who drop out or youth who are out of school. Answers varied from financial inclusion- an increase in scholarship money or decreased school fees- to establishing more vocational training or apprenticeship opportunities. One student suspected that increasing self-learning educational opportunities via the use of technology, versus solely relying on teachers, would encourage youth to stay in school and feel more connected to the curriculum.

Most youth who are not currently enrolled in an educational program are currently working in a range of sectors from part-time teaching, construction, retail, and some have even started their own entrepreneurial ventures. There was almost an equal divide between out of school youth who are working part time only 8-20 hours per week and those who are working 40+ hours per week.

5.2. Youth’s perspective and demands for knowledge and skills for Education 2030

In order to understand youth’s demands for and expectations from education and training, questions were asked on what they deem the most valuable knowledge and skills for the future they desired. The questions posed were meant to also grasp youth’s perspectives on what they understood to be their most desired skill that has the potential of shaping their future. In conjunction with this question, questions were also asked on what the most valuable thing is youth learned so far through their learning opportunities. The below table summarizes the findings, in order of frequency on the perceptions on valuable knowledge.

5.2.1. Valuable knowledge as identified by youth:

Most valued knowledge and skills needed for future that youth desire	Most valuable thing learned so far through learning opportunities
Technical Soft skills & Character Academic Broad knowledge Communication Religious Flexibility in training Education	Technical skill / practice Soft skills & character Real world understanding Self-worth and confidence Self-reliance Communication Academic Talent related skill

The responses were diverse on both questions. Responses to most valuable knowledge and skills for the desired future included technical skills, soft skills and character (social, interpersonal, decision-making, conflict resolution, respect, leadership), broader knowledge (life skills, health, hygiene), academic knowledge and religious knowledge. Responses to most valuable thing learned so far through learning opportunities, ranged from technical skills, to soft skills and character, to real world understanding (environment, disease and health, gender relations, children's rights), self-worth (belief in self, confidence, self-reliance, self-awareness), communication and academics (languages, reading, math, research). A smaller number of youth shared that their most important lessons came from their family and outside of the classrooms, such as lessons in life that money isn't everything, self-reliance, having proper social skills and being "the best self." One student listed talent as the most valuable thing learned so far, but didn't elaborate on the characteristic of the talent.

With both questions on valuable skills learned so far and desired, **technical skills and soft skills** were the most frequently mentioned. In other words, past learning and future learning needs stated were similar, which may be reflective of youth's awareness of the skills needed to achieve their aspirations and employment of choice in the future, as well as the importance of less tangible skills that youth recognize to be also important related to the broader non-monetary and non-employment related values imparted by education; such as character, communication and being a helpful and contributing member to community and society, which they also expressed in their aspirations. Technical skills desired referenced **fashion, finance, entrepreneurship, marketing, accounting, medicine, engineering, architecture, mechanics, teaching, ICT, computer coding and programming, construction, carpentry and agriculture/farming**. Technical skills acquired so far included computer, sewing and agriculture. Not surprisingly, these skills referenced back to the types of professions/aspirations the youth have for their future when they responded to about their life goals and dreams. Next to technical skills, various types of skills were mentioned in what could be categorized as "soft skills." Youth discussed skills such as time management, leadership, listening, interpersonal and critical thinking, as well as skills that can be described more as qualities or character of a person, such as patience, manners, courage, respect, confidence, diligence and discipline. One youth mentioned the importance of flexibility, not in and of themselves, rather, in the educational training provided. Given that there are contextual challenges that youth will not be able to change easily, a training on identifying their valuable traits to make the most of the circumstances should be included as an educational opportunity.

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

5.2.2. Support needed as identified by youth

Youth reported substantial gains from their learning experiences. But they also felt that they needed to develop their skills further. However, they reported significant gaps in the support available to them to do this. Youth responses on types of support desired touched upon the need for financial support, social-emotional support, teachers, capital resource (especially pertaining to training programs, devices and machines according to trade) and additional education opportunities especially for those out-of-school and those at risk of dropping out.

A majority of responses referred to need for financial support, with additional explanation sometimes linked to school fees, materials and supplies and being able to secure admission to schools for continuing education. Some youth identified the wish for the source of the support as families and/or the government, either to pay the fees, provide scholarships, or subsidizing/providing student loans. One student linked the issue of the types of skills taught in the current system, which result in youth being continually dependent solely on existing government or institutions. A government loan that supports youth entrepreneurship was desired, with one youth explaining, “Another challenge is the government, simply, since the beginning we are prepared and trained to be employed by the government and other institutions but we need skills for self-employment and not be dependent. The government should help youth to get soft loans for starting their business and for their sustainability.”

The responses identifying financial support as a major need came from students from both urban and rural formal schools, TVET programs, second chance programs and out-of-school youth. Specifically when the groups of out-of-school youth were asked if there is anything that would encourage them to return to some form of education/training, some factors identified were: sufficient number of teachers, learning materials, support from family, friends and relatives as well as being able to see those around them attending school and provision of a training program/workshops.

Other material support is also needed as identified by youth. Many mentioned vocational centers and facilities, laboratories, equipment, dormitories (to solve transportation problems), libraries, improvement of existing schools, learning materials, seeds for afforestation and farming and kit for construction work. One student in a rural second chance program shared that there are no schools in the community. Apart from educational sphere, a few students from the out-of-school group discussed that they have begun their own businesses and need some capital to boost their businesses.

More training opportunities were also identified both by youth in and out of schools. Vocational training schools as well as learning programs/projects in-school and workshops were mentioned. One out of school youth in an urban setting in South Sudan mentioned their desire to attend training but that “the problem is that the government is not prioritizing education or other vocational schools/trainings.”

In terms of teaching force, there were **teachers needed** in various subject areas suggesting teacher shortage. Students also mentioned a shortage of qualified teachers. Further, few students,

both in and out of school, wanted to have mentorship, advice and motivational support (from parents and teachers), as well as guidance in career trajectory.

5.3. Policies and programmes to meet the learners' demands

5.3.1. Learning opportunities supply

The youth were asked to comment on the availability of learning opportunities that helped to prepare or improve for their future and any previous participation in them. Most youth in FGDs shared that they participated in a learning opportunity, with formal schooling within their communities making up a big portion of the responses. Vocational training programs were present in various locales within community levels as well, ranging from fashion design/sewing centers, formal schools (primary, secondary, sometimes tertiary), mechanical/carpentry/welding workshops, hairdressing salon, community centers (sometimes poorly equipped) and medersa (non-formal religious school). There were few youths who shared they did not have exposure to such programs and did not have access to programs in their communities. The respondents who did not have access or did not participate in other opportunities were from rural areas, either rural formal schools, out-of-school youth in rural areas, or youth in second chance programs in a rural area.

Youth shared that they have had exposure to a range of technical, social, academic and life skills as well as service/volunteer opportunities through those learning opportunities. Youth in formal schools referred to clubs or extracurricular activities such as Model UN, book clubs, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math¹³ (STEM) clubs, Red Cross program and short workshops on life skills or finance and banking. Extracurricular activities were mentioned from both urban and rural schools, though more frequently referenced in urban areas. For youth in TVET or second chance programs, they described the trades they were currently learning, such as sewing, hairdressing and electrical work. Some of the learning opportunities identified are being held at community centers, vocational training centers, churches, public and private schools and shops where the trade takes place (workshops, garage, salons). Some students, such as students in Nigeria and Tanzania identified being beneficiaries of scholarship programs which enabled access to their learning opportunities at formal schools. In the case of Ethiopia, there were specific government programs the youth shared to address the needs for second chance programs. One student in an urban TVET program with aspect of second chance described, "From my past experiences, especially at sub-cities or kebeles (administrative city units in Ethiopia), they provided us with as many opportunities as they could. The quality is of course poor, but, they did everything they could, and placed us in programs. I personally worked in carpentry, through opportunities given to us by the government."

Many of the programs offered, however, did not seem to be held consistently and regularly. There are some competitions, seasonal workshops and programs, but many of the shared learning opportunities were temporal in nature. One student shared about ICT competitions, "Once a year, we have some ICT competitions but even those aren't enough. They only take place once a year. But once those competitions are done, nobody looks twice at the students or provides them with other opportunities." (Ethiopia urban formal preparatory school)

¹³ www.ed.gov/stem

5.3.2. Youth perceptions on curriculum alignment and technical trainings

A significant portion of FGD participant youth shared that they partook in learning opportunities and substantial positive responses arose in discussing the valuable lessons youth have learned thus far in their learning, as well as the impact those lessons have had in their lives. However, there were mixed responses in the alignment of curriculum in preparation for future as well as the relevance and applicability of learning to day-to-day life. While most youth responded that they found the learning opportunities so far to have either prepared them for their future goals or helped in day-to-day life, many of these positive answers were simple affirmative “yes” answers and those who answered affirmatively with more details and explanation were almost all youth who are in vocational training programs. On the other hand, there were many other youths who shared views on the other end of the spectrum that were more in-depth and revealing in some of the shortcomings of their learning opportunities, their relevance and applicability to their lives.

In cases where youth responded positively to the alignment of learning to future goals and relevance to daily lives, the benefits cited were wide in range, from the relevance of most basic education (literacy and numeracy) to technical skills. The youth utilized literacy and numeracy skills in their day-to-day lives to help their family members- mothers and siblings- in reading, doing calculations and helping with homework. Most respondents who had positive feedback on the learning experiences were from non-formal schools. Youth attending second chance, TVET, or non-formal programs were acquiring skills or apprenticeships in areas of their choice and preparing for their future through hairdressing, fashion design, tailoring/sewing, or shop-keeping. A handful of responses were on applying academics and school teachings to real life, such as science knowledge to farming, soft skills such as time management, and one youth shared they hope their basic education will help to secure a job. One second chance TVET program participant in an urban area shared, “I'm working and training in a field I'm extremely passionate about. I have always wanted to do hair. Of course I want to return to school as well, it would make me happy. Maybe I could do both one day. Spend half my time doing my hair salon, and the other half with school. I would be very happy. That's something I want.” (Ethiopia)

On the other hand, there were youth who found their past or current learning opportunities to fall short of what is needed and desirable. Their dissatisfaction arose from finding the learning content to be: theory-based knowledge rather than practical skills; religious education that does not help in the job market; low quality of education along with shortage of job opportunities; misaligned exam content and exam-oriented system; and lack of curriculum integration (needing to choose one track). An added frustration on the part of youth was an overall sense of needing to choose a profession not aligned to their passion due to the job availability and societal pressure based on prestige in the type of profession. Most of the responses came from selected few countries, Ethiopia, Uganda and Mali; however, from the depths and insights youth shared in the discussions as a whole, it is possible that certain groups of youth were more open to being frank and being critical of their education systems, rather than that these issues were only specific to those certain countries. The youth’s voices on the issues within the education system and their learning opportunities were thoughtful and candid with very specific issues outlined.

These issues raised on the shortcomings of learning opportunities are critical and hold important implications for the improvements needed in education interventions as well as education systems. Even when there are learning opportunities available on the supply end to students from

formal, non-formal, or technical programs, there are foundational issues that need improving, such as content of what is taught, how the contents are taught to be relevant to the youth, as well as systemic issues of examination and course trajectory that encourage and support youth to excel in their studies and professions of choice, and to think creatively across traditionally defined subject area silos. There are more complex factors, such as perceptions and bias on professions and job market supply, that devalue the desire and future goals and dreams of youth.

5.3.3. Educators' Perceptions of the Quality of Education and Curriculum Students Receive

More than half of the educators interviewed agreed that the educational program their students receive is adequately preparing them to acquire skills necessary for the current job market and personal lives. More than half also believed that the curriculum their education system is using is both relevant and can be applied practically to the lives of their students. Some teachers gave examples of how specific aspects of the curriculum they are teaching in the classroom can be applied in the lives of their students. One example is how a technical skill like embroidery and the use of sewing sheets, which is taught in one school, is now being applied by women at home as they sells sheets to earn money. One teacher summed up that, "the students are already practicing in the community and earning a few coins. The skills offered target the job market, and through their own passion, they practice in the community and come to perfect the skills at the institution." (Educator, Kenya)

The integration of international curriculums was another theme that appeared throughout some of the educators' interviews. One educator felt that the adoption of an international curriculum, which is a mixed and generalized East African curriculum, is not unique to the students' specific country context and is therefore actually confusing and may not prove as relevant in the lives of students.

"South Sudan is yet to roll out a national curriculum that is distinct and unique to its context. At the moment, the curriculum I used for teaching in class is a mixed of East Africa (Uganda and Kenya) as well as aspects of teaching from Sudan. As a result, it is somehow confusing and may as well proved not relevant in the long run given the context of the country with the ever evolving situations It's difficult to share at the moment. For social science classes, most of the examples are not related to issues to do with South Sudan. However, the incorporation of "citizenship" sessions in the teaching is relevant because it's instilling a sense of patriotism in the students. The relevance of the materials are minimal. As I have expressed earlier, they are not contextual to a greater extent to the South Sudan situation." (Educator, South Sudan)

Another educator, who teaches from the British curriculum, highlighted the positive aspects of using that curriculum, which they feel brings a lot of benefits to their students. Particularly the educator highlighted the curriculum's relevance to universities and felt that the use of the British curriculum would enhance students' opportunities of getting accepted to different universities.

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

Although just over fifty percent of educators felt confident that the curriculum was relevant and that the education their students were receiving is preparing them for the job market, many educators still felt that the educational programs were only partially preparing students for the skills they will need in the job market. Educators thought students were being trained adequately only in certain skills, that may or may not be applicable to students' lives, due to insufficient funding or irrelevance in the curriculum. Several teachers thought that some of the material

students are learning through formal education does not include knowledge that would be applicable to students' lives. Some educators believed that extracurricular activities or other channels of learning are filling in some of the gaps in formal education.

5.3.4. Education and the Role of Technology

Teachers were asked about the role of technology in their own educational opportunities, and most agreed that technology has added value to their education. Educators also discussed the benefits that technology has provided them in their career. Thematic responses involved advantages of connecting to the globalized world, simplifying research methods, and accessing international information through the use of technology. "Technology has helped a lot these days. It has made the world a global village. If you want any information you can go to the internet to do your research. Yes. As I said earlier, you can go the internet to get any information that you need from there so it has made learning easy through research." (Educator, Ghana).

Another recurring theme throughout the interview responses included the disadvantages of lacking resources and funding necessary to sufficiently maximize the potential use of technology. Other educators agreed that the presence of technology was useful, but felt it was not being utilized to its full potential in an educational setting. Some teachers also reported that technology is not integrated into their educational system at all, despite the potential benefits. "Technology has not been integrated in any of our education system. None of us can understand or even begin to comprehend the kind of benefit it brings when integrated in the education system." (Educator, South Sudan)

5.4. Youth perceptions on barriers to pursuing education and training

To understand youth's perceptions on the barriers to pursuing their education and training, the foundational question posed was if youth thought they would be able to reach and complete the educational level they desire. The FGD responses were divided almost evenly to those who believe they would be able to versus those who believe they would not be able to. Majority of were a simple "yes" or "no" without qualifying descriptions, but of the students who believed they would be able to finish, their confidence in the support of those who help them with educational support were the primary reasons. When asked why they thought it would be possible to continue education, responses primarily pointed to the role of their family members in supporting the youth financially, materially, but also due to their encouragement.

When youth were asked who in their lives are most supportive of their education, the responses were heavily focused on their families, as illustrated by the word cloud below, with the largest words indicating those most frequently mentioned:



When asked how the identified people in their lives were most supportive, many students referenced financial support, in terms of school fees/tuition and provision of basic needs and materials. However, there were also frequent mentions of how their network of family, peers and educators also helped them in significant ways through encouragement, mentorship and advice.

One student described the positive influence of friends by saying “Encouragements from friends have helped me in making decision to return to school. I highly motivated to return to school by seeing that my friends who I started school with before I stopped have gone far in their studies.” Another student shared that their support came from

the school dean who provided much guidance: “It’s not that my family isn’t supportive but he better understands what I want to do and what I have to do to get there. He realizes my potential and he pushes me further to do better. He has access to my grades so he also tells me what I should do. I always go to him for advice if I have a new idea. And he’s always made me think about it from different perspectives.” From these discussions, it is also clear that siblings, and most often older siblings, take on the responsibilities similar to that of the parents in providing for the families. One youth in particular shared that he stopped his schooling as an oldest child of the household: “I do not [know] anybody that started school from my family and dropped out. I am the only one, I dropped out because I am the eldest son of our parents I had shoulder a lot of responsibilities in the household.” (Nigeria out-of-school youth in rural area). Another explained “My sister never went to school. She was the oldest and had to stay home and help her mother with the house activities (cooking-caring for younger sisters and brothers).” (Senegal rural area)

While family, friends and individual networks provide meaningful support, there are many more challenges that act as barriers to education and training opportunities. There were myriad reasons identified for those who did not think they would be able to continue their education, as well as youth who are currently out of school. Financial burdens and related decisions to take on work or labor to meet financial needs, teaching force issues, underperformance in academics, family issues or family loss, early marriages and pregnancies, inconvenient distance to schools and conflict were identified as primary reasons for the non-take up of formal and non-formal education.

5.4.1. Educators on student attendance and barriers

Teachers commented on the current situation of student attendance in their classes and barriers that hinder student attendance and overall motivation. Commonly reported factors that hinder student motivation, in order of prevalence, include economic hardships and persisting poverty, traditional and cultural attitudes towards education, female menstruation, unreliable

transportation, personal health, household hardships, or lack of general motivation resulting from insufficient resources or inadequate teachers.

Many of the factors teachers suspected impacted student motivation aligned with educational barriers that students reported. The number one barrier adversely affecting learning and accessibility of acquiring skills that students reported was financial constraints. In urban areas, one student reported that high cost of living weighed against the cost of education was a barrier. Several students discussed the lacking of means to afford the required school fees. A few students also highlighted lacking resources and school infrastructure as factors hurting student motivation and learning.

5.4.2. Financial burden

Conversations with youth both in and out of school reveal the harsh reality and prevalence of the poverty-stricken state of many regions, communities and families of all 11 countries.

Across multiple countries, there were school costs required, which were identified as burdens on the youth and their families. This was found to be the case in Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. School fees and finances are by far the greatest factor in making schooling difficult for youth.

Youth faced difficulties related to finances in various ways. Some stopped schooling to take care of family which is the opportunity costs of attending school. Some others are in situations of needing to discontinue school because school fees have not been covered. Below cases illustrate those experiences:

“I tried to participate in an opportunity in a different program, not here.. and, I wanted them to help me with school... I stopped in the 10th grade. I had to also take care of my family. But everywhere I went looking for an opportunity, they asked for money. And because I am unable to pay any money, I missed the opportunity. And these are the kinds of things I've tried.” (Urban Ethiopia TVET second chance program)

“When it’s coming to examination time and we haven’t finished school fees, the school chases you for fees and find that you are not able to find the money... When we are chased away, it makes us lose hope of even coming back to school; thinking that the rest have gone ahead.” (Rural Uganda Vocational program)

“If I could start from where I stopped school, if everything was covered for me.. all of the things that I needed, I would be happy. I stopped because, once I finished 10th grade - we had to pay 6-month advance fees for any preparatory programs. There was also a registration fee of 200ETB¹⁴! I couldn't afford that.” (Ethiopia urban TVET second chance program)

“Yes, the school fees is very expensive. Sometime I have to stay home for time before I will come to school.” (Ghana formal secondary school)

Not only a hindrance to continuing education, but the financial difficulties are also the biggest reasons contributing to dropping out and out-of-school status of youth. According to some youth, the situation is worse in rural areas. One student in an urban formal school shared of cases where youth from rural areas come to urban areas for work and cannot continue education- and these

¹⁴ Equivalent to 7.3 USD on 25 January 2018. 1 USD = 27.36 ETB

cases are complicated with both financial issues as well as family issues. From discussions, other family issues that arose included loss of family members, or discord within the family that contributed to discontinuation of schooling. “From a couple of people that we do charity work for, most of them cannot afford school. Mostly they start working at a young age and it’s a bit abusive for them to do that. People that work as maids in families come from “geter” (countryside); they interrupt their education and just come here and work. They want to [study] but family issues won’t let them.” (Ethiopia urban secondary school)

“I dropped out in the 8th grade because, for starters, I came from the countryside. I came to Addis Ababa when I was 8 or 9 years old. But in the countryside, my family is very poor. They are very poor, they cannot help me. They've never even bought me a pen. So I came to Addis, worked during the days, learning at night, and then I had to stop. It was very hard to work during the day and go to school at night, even if I wanted to learn. I was first in my class until the 7th grade in the countryside, and then I had to stop once I was in Addis.”

The situation is worse for certain countries where external factors, such as conflict, exacerbate the level of poverty. “In South Sudan, particularly in Juba, there are thousands of children across communities who have not gone to school. Again there thousands of children, especially youth who dropped out of school. Lack of school fees, poverty, early pregnancy, forced marriage, insecurity, and long distance. Mostly, they dropped at upper primary school or senior secondary level. However, there are those who dropped out as early as 9-10 years while in primary level.” (South Sudan Focus Group Discussions).

While the causes of non-take up of formal and non-formal education and training opportunities may be complex, the foundational issue that needs to be examined and addressed for its prevalence is the harsh and simple reality of poverty and financial status of youth and families.

5.4.3. Work and chores interfere with learning opportunities

Both youth in and out of school tend to take up work outside of the home and non-academic work. Even for students in school, **outside obligations are prevalent**. There were no clear divisions between students out-of-school versus in-school, that took on additional activities (such as work, employment or household chores). Meaning, students who are in school also took on work not distinctly different from out-of-school youth. The responses were evenly split between those youth who believed their outside tasks interfered with their learning versus those who did not think it interfered.

Those youth who found their outside obligations to interfere with their learning and work commented on the break of concentration when they were called by their family members to do work and also commented on the plain lack of time they can devote to their learning or assignments due to other obligations. In discussing obligations that interfere with their learning, most frequently mentioned tasks were farming, household chores, business/shop/trading, tailoring, cooking, washing, gardening and sewing.

5.4.4. Teaching force issues

One discomfort youth expressed more frequently than expected, was about the teaching force. In the discussion with youth, teaching force issues were frequently raised with the issues ranging from **teacher shortage, teacher absenteeism, ineffective teaching and punishments that discourage students from attending school.**

Many more respondents mentioned teacher absences than those who did not during discussions. The absences ranged from teachers skipping class, to teachers holding multiple jobs that interfere with class time, in which the teacher leaves the classroom for phone calls, or incomplete classes with very short lessons that do not fill the designated class time. Some teachers come to school but do not enter the classroom and send notes from staff room to the students without explanation or teaching. Students reported that these absences led to poor academic performance and exam grades. Two students shared that there is no one to tell these issues to, and that nothing changes. Some absences are resulting from teacher shortages, where the few teachers need to teach many classes, so there are gaps in when the teacher can be present to a class. In one case, there was only one teacher to teach the entire school.

There were other issues related to the methods of teaching and rapport between the teachers and students. In one particular case, a student shared that their friend dropped out of school due to a disagreement with a teacher. On this case, the student further explained, "The [teachers] get upset when we ask them questions. When it's time to take exams, the [students] were kicked out. Teachers are difficult at times like this. They can even get mad and say "why did you look at me?" In some other cases, the teachers are not providing the type of explanation and not utilizing the medium of instruction that students desire. The students used the word "discouraged" in explaining some of the teachers and the learning experience. They found some teachers to be discouraging to those students who are late starters (over-age students) in school, as well as criticizing students for their lack of knowledge. that teachers move too quickly through the curriculum, and those who fall behind cannot catch up. There were unique cases of students not understanding the teachers' dialect used in the classroom. Youth also found some of the teachers' punishments or teaching style to be severe, which discouraged them from being in class. Apart from attitudes, students also noted teachers' competencies. They found that some teachers are not trained in the particular subjects that are meant to be taught, and in addition to issue of teaching quality, there are motivational issues as well. In cases like South Sudan, teachers are the least paid civil servants, which exacerbate the teaching force issue of teachers leaving their teaching profession to find other jobs, such as with other businesses or NGOs.

Educator training

All educators who were interviewed from the different countries, with the exception of Guinea which reported having no past teacher training, felt that their training has adequately prepared them for their roles as educators. Most educators agreed that their training has fully prepared them for their career duties, and some reported that they receive continuous training to maintain and build their skills. Some teachers even reported continued learning and attending refresher teaching courses available in their community.

It is noteworthy that this common response from teachers is divergent from the responses among some of the youth who felt the teachers' competencies were lacking in certain subject areas and in teaching quality.

Teacher Motivation

Teachers reported mixed motivations for becoming a teacher and also varied responses regarding their additional career pursuits, if any, outside of teaching. Most teachers actually reported that they were motivated to become a teacher because of their love for children, sharing knowledge, and desire to help others and make an impact in the lives of their students and their community.

Others reported that teaching had not been their first choice in choosing a career, but that other motivations led them to become an educator. Alternative motivations that led them to their path of becoming an educator were varied. Several teachers reported that their first choice of career, such as becoming a doctor, was too difficult to attain so they switched paths to pursue a career in teaching. Some educators whose first career choice had not initially been teaching, were inspired by a past teacher they had on their own educational journey leading them to pivot career paths.

Few teachers pursued their career path in education as means to financial gain. Some reported they selected their profession in education to earn a living, but very few mentioned monetary gain.

Most of the teachers interviewed reported having additional career interests that they hoped to pursue in the future or that they are already pursuing alongside teaching. The most common educators' additional career pursuit interests included agriculture/farming and ICT.

Most teachers said that they are late or absent to classes at times. Reasons for their absence or tardiness varied from health issues, family commitments, social obligations, poor weather and lack of transportation, and personal emergencies. Lack of teacher motivation was also another recurring factor amongst answers. When asked how teachers' roles could be improved and made more manageable, teachers reported that the government could provide greater incentives for teachers through higher salaries, greater teaching support and learning materials, and improved infrastructure and classroom space.

5.4.5. Gender issues

Both male and female youth face challenges and experience barriers in continuation of education upon getting married and a few focus group participants noted that they did not think there were gendered differences in the continuation of education. However, most responses on the topic of marriage revealed that there are significant additional barriers for girls, with factors such as husband's permission needed to continue education (Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal) and whether the husband also values education. Some of the participant youth are currently out of school due to lack of husband's approval and one shared that her husband would allow her to return to school under the condition that the wife will complete schooling cycle if she returns. In addition to husband's authority on the issue, a husband's ability to cover the costs of education for the wife also plays a factor. Furthermore, the chances of girls returning to school after marriage or childbirth is much lower than that of boys.

Across countries, there was also a sense that there was much more freedom in the decision to get married, as well as when to get married for boys. This was apparent when youth shared not only that boys can get married "whenever they want," but that boys can easily continue pursuing their

education after getting married, which is not the case for girls according to most youth respondents. However, there were variations even within one focus group, based on the village. One participant commented that they know of many girls who dropped out due to marriage, but another participant shared it is common for girls to continue with school after marriage in her village. “I have a sister who continued with school after marriage. So, it depends on the type of husband a girl is married to. Even me, my husband has given me go ahead to go back to school if I wish, which I am presently preparing for.” (Nigeria) Cases of involuntary marriage were also apparent. One female youth believed they can complete their education at the current moment, but there was potential of her education being discontinued due to finance issues combined with the likelihood of getting married, in which she shared, “I may be forced to get married.” Another also cited incidences of forced early marriage in rural Uganda.

Average marrying age differs by gender

Of the 75 focus group responses across youth from 11 countries, the average marrying age in their communities was reported as 18 / 19. However, for girls, the average marrying age was notably younger than boys, at 17 / 18 years of age (per 113 responses), whereas for boys, the average marrying age was reported to be much higher, between 24 and 25 (per 97 responses). There were early marriages where age gaps are significant. One participant shared that some girls marry older men, and “the girls are usually defiled even because they see the girls’ bodies looking grown up.” (Rural Uganda secondary school)

In relation to marriage, there were much more modern views among urban youth (in Ethiopia discussions in particular). Two students noted the principle of “consent” in marriage, supported by the law; they both noted that there are urban and rural differences in the marriage culture. Further, one student shared that the current urban trend is also that people cohabitate without getting married. The difference between urban and rural cultures were especially highlighted in the marriage discussion as follows: “According to Ethiopian law, underage marriages are not allowed. Of course there are still underage girls that are getting married in the countryside, but this is not going to continue for much longer in Addis Ababa. Addis has changed since the past, we are more developed now. Ethiopian law states that any girl under the age of 18 is not allowed to get married. Those that know the law can avoid this. Not to say that everyone is aware of this law, but this is what it is. In the countryside, there are some girls who are already spoken for before they are even born because of an agreement their families have made. This is how some of society thinks. But in Addis Ababa, it is important for both partners to consent and be of age.” (Urban Ethiopia TVET second chance program)

There were also broader perceptions and gender biases youth pointed to. Part of the reason for marriage for women, far from personal choice, also came from the idea that there weren’t useful things being done by women if you are not in school and also not married. One such notion was illustrated in one student who pointed out the difference in perceptions of men and women: “Honestly if you’re a man, I don’t think anyone cares whether you’ve gone to school or graduate or dropout. Nobody expects anything from you. But if you’re a female, you have to sacrifice those things (like getting married later) to finish school. But if you’re not in school as a woman, you’re immediately expected to get married. I mean you’re not doing anything else useful.” (Ethiopia FGD) On the other hand, one student believed that even without acquiring education, women can be productive and happy, contrary to common societal view: “I think that it depends

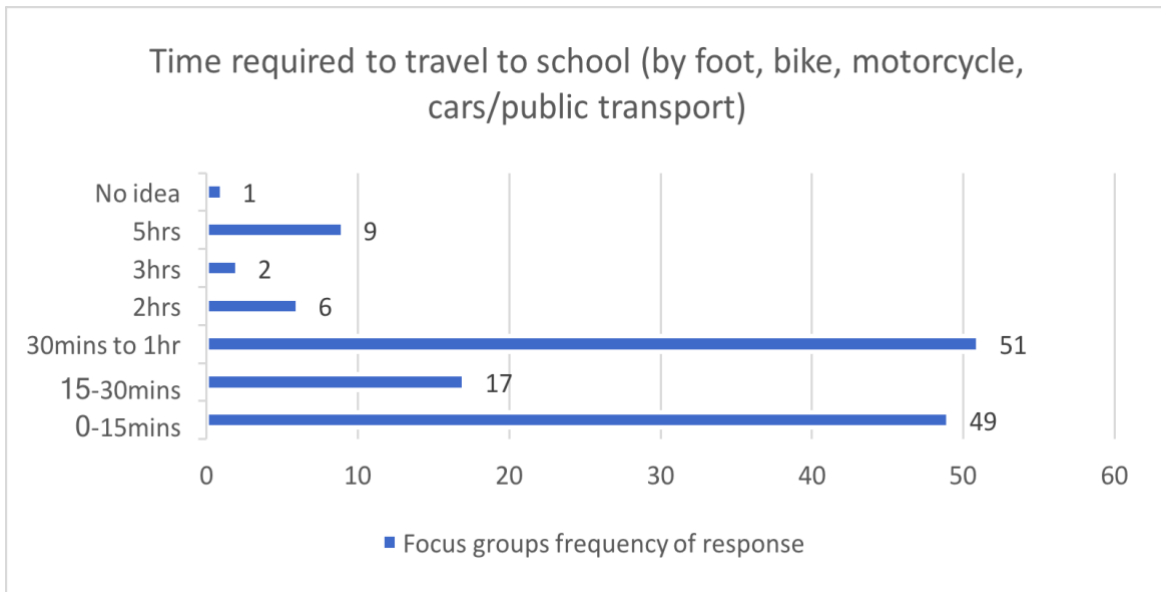
on how society looks at it. I don't believe that academics are the only way to get married or be happy in marriage. Ethiopian women are born with skills like organizing, coordinating, and so on. They can run a lot of things.” (Urban TVET program) However, most youth believed that education did have bearing on the marriage decisions made, either in the timing of when to be married, or to whom to be married.

While women had their own set of perceptions and bias to struggle with, there were also expectations placed on men. “Yes – A girl can get married with or without a job because she will be taken care of by her husband. Men on the other hand have to make sure they have to wait until they are financially stable.” (Senegal FGD) Another youth noted the designated primary role of men, as “most times in our society, the man is expected to be the breadwinner so there’s more pressure on him to be educated and working. Even if women aren’t educated, since her role is (in our culture) mainly in the house – it’s okay.” (Ethiopia urban formal school)

There are also alarming critical gender-based issues such as female genital cutting that is ongoing as identified by some youth. One student saw this hindrance to education, and explained that the government intervention is to “stop those who are performing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practices for girls because it takes time for a girl to heal and she will not be attending classes during this time.” (Tanzania FGD) While this issue is not receiving much international attention in the recent SDG era, incidences of gendered violence continue in some areas, as shared by youth. Gender Based Violence did not emerge as a theme due to reporting biases as girls generally shy away from the topic. However, it is an important theme to consider.

5.4.6. Perceptions on accessibility, infrastructure/facilities and safety of schools

The perceived safety of schools was varied. With schools located far out of town, teachers reported that there is more danger associated with the long commutes of students. Especially in schools that are located far from towns, girls walk home earlier before it gets too late. Most teachers interviewed reported that their education site was easily accessible to the people it is meant to serve. However, long distances might hinder ease of accessibility for students who live far away. The primary modes of transportation to school as reported by youth are by walking, biking, riding motorcycles or cars and public transportation.



For most students, the commute time in any mode of transport takes relatively short time (up to 15 minutes) or between 30 minutes to an hour. However, it is important to note that there are more than 10% of those youth who responded that they travel from 2 to 5 hours. In one of the reported reasons for dropout, few youth have themselves, or know of other youth who dropped out due to distance to schools.

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

Most of the schools have access to water, although the channels through which they receive their water varies from taps, boreholes, streams and roof catchment from the rain. In a few instances, water facilities were an issue impacting student attendance or equitable access.

“Yes it has borehole in the compound but due to over using, the water table is now low. But the borehole has gone a long way to support attendance.” –Educator, South Sudan

“Rely on roof catchment when it rains. In dry spell students fetch water from the stream. They are affected as they lose some time.” –Educator, Kenya

Of all of the educators interviewed, none of them said that there were programs for students of special needs in their community, or at least of which they were of aware.

Similarly, most schools have access to gender separated latrines, but facilities are often not maintained properly or need refurbishing, thus sometimes discouraging the students from using them. Some facilities do not have doors, some are not gender-separated, and uncleanliness needs improving. A few schools were noted not to have clean water or gender-separated latrines.

5.4.7. Impact of conflict on individual youth and trajectory

For youth who are out of school, and from unprecedented external circumstances, such as conflict, there is a tone of uncertainty and disillusionment. Some responses from South Sudan's youth affected by the conflict in their country were as follows:

"My least wish is to be a successful auto mechanic because it was my desire since a child. Unfortunately, I dropped out school due to some difficulties in the family."

"I had good intentions and aspiration while I was a student in Juba Technical School but now I am just doing farming. I guess with farming if given any support I can make huge benefits."

"Ehm, the ongoing conflict displaced us from [our] town and since then not attending school I don't think I have dreams for the future. I am still waiting for some new opportunities."

"We are very disadvantage youth. Conflicts have deprived us of many things which we thought would give us a better life. But we see what is happening in South Sudan. Many youth are unemploy[ed]."

"Not sure about their life goals and dreams."

While most youth engaged in the discussions did not come from conflict areas, the youth from South Sudan shed light on the devastating and tangible consequences of conflict, and point to the need for providing learning opportunities in a targeted manner for the youth in this group.

5.4.8. *Non-voluntary exclusion from educational opportunities*

One clear sense arising from the youth's experiences, especially from youth currently out of school, is that their out-of-school status is non-voluntary in most cases. While some students decide to drop out, or have dropped out due to peer influences, there is a desire to come back to school if at all possible. "My cousin dropped out of school and he regrets it. He was influenced by friends that were not going to school." (Senegal FGD) Further, the discussions highlighted in previous sections on out-of-school youth who were willing to share their own experiences shed light on the details of hindering factors to their educational desires. Some of the reasons for dropping out were linked to academic performance; given the themes that arose regarding far distance to schools, discomfort in the classroom sometimes due to teachers' teaching styles, teacher shortage and teacher absence. These reasons all point to issues in quality of education; which then could lead to poor academic performances. Some poor academic performances resulted from health reasons/sickness and the difficulty in returning to school due to lack of remediation support. "I stopped going to school because I got sick for a little bit of time, and then when I got back I had missed a lot of classes. I couldn't make the grades. I would love to go back to school. To learn...I would be happy if I could go back to school. There's nothing like school." (Ethiopia) This raises once more the need for remediation and extending the availability and supply of second-chance and bridge programs that can allow youth to re-enter the learning opportunities.

5.4.9. *Intention to continue education*

Despite all the challenges and barriers, there is strong sense of desire and intention to continue education on the part of youth. Most youth intend to continue their education, including those out of school, which is expressed as a desired next step in order to fulfill their goals and aspirations. For others, getting a job or getting married is a priority. There is an overall understanding among youth in their perceptions that education and learning opportunities help them to get to where they want to be in terms of jobs and realizing their professional trajectory and aspirations. But some have a better sense for what those are (what is needed for the future), such as acquiring

specific skills, and some youth have access to training opportunities and find professions possible in their locale. While many youth, especially in formal schools, see their academic studies and subjects being applicable and relevant to the real world, there are also strong opinions on where the curriculum falls short of teaching skills (both technical and soft skills) that youth view to be valuable for their future.

6. Discussion and recommendations

This report attempts to answer the questions - what are some of the aspirations of youth and is the education they are receiving enabling them to meet their goals? What are some of the challenges that they are facing in continuing their education? The report is able to show that a youth in Africa has similar aspirations as a youth in any developed nation. They would like to see themselves as doctors, engineers, teachers, and more. However, the ground realities that the African youth face are very different from more developed regions of the world. Financial challenges are defined as the top most hurdle in attending and completing secondary schools and pursuing further learning opportunities. For many youth out of the education and employment network, supporting them with educational and skill enhancing opportunities through TVET programs or alternate education programs should be considered a priority. Many students dropped-out or face the unpredictability of completing secondary schools due to their families' economic hardship. The youth have identified financial support, such as elimination of school fees, provision of scholarships, and student loans, as the biggest support area that would enable them to continue their learning. The Education Commission's report, *The Learning Generation* (Education Commission, 2017), advocates for "progressive universalism" (p. 89) and suggests allocating public funding for the "highest return activities and to those least able to pay for services" (p. 89). The report suggests funding lower levels of education and including the population that is the most marginalized. Achieving free basic and secondary education is not merely desirable, but has become the need of the hour. The report further clarifies that "free" should include all incidental fees as well including textbooks, other learning materials, eyeglasses if necessary for learning etc. More government funding in education will relieve the households from using their funds for basic and secondary education.

There is a need for more countries making secondary education compulsory and free. Rwanda introduced nine-year basic education cycle and the elimination of fees for lower secondary school in 2009, which resulted in an increase in lower secondary student enrollment by 25% within a year (GEM, 2012). Similarly, Kenya abolished fees for secondary school resulting in increased enrollment from 1.2 million in 2007 to 1.4 million in 2008 (UNESCO, 2012). Tanzania joined this group to make secondary education free in 2015 (Right To Education, 2016). and Ghana in 2017 (Human Rights Watch, 2017). While challenges remain in countries which have recently adopted free secondary education, such as ensuring that recruitment of qualified teachers and provision of adequate infrastructure and materials keeps up with increasing enrollment numbers, more countries need to join this group to make secondary education compulsory and free to ensure that youth get an equal opportunity to attend school.

The Education Commission's report notes that in 2030, 62 percent of girls and boys in low-income countries will complete secondary school and 28 percent will achieve learning benchmarks. Therefore the Commission calls for the development of an "Education Giving Pledge," and encouraging high net worth individuals to support education globally. The

financing gap for universal secondary education is roughly \$25 billion (Sachs, 2016). Jeffrey Sachs has called for a Global Fund for Education with the aim of universalizing secondary education and providing quality education in sub-Saharan Africa. Financing education through secondary level will help to ease the economic burden that the families face which are reflected in the voices of the youth in this study.

Amidst the discussion on barriers to learning opportunities arising from practical and tangible factors, such as financial, physical/facility, and pedagogical issues, it is important not to overlook the youth's demand for social, mental and psychological support as well as remediation efforts and programs for youth. Overall, most youth shared that their families, friends and community or educators provide solid and strong support, often playing crucial roles in keeping them in school or helping them return to school, although this sometimes happens at the cost of the eldest siblings giving up their educational opportunities to support the family and other siblings. In the aspirations youth shared about their lives, it was clear the influence their role models have in shaping their professional and life trajectories. Additionally, socio-emotional support was identified as one of the most frequent types of support needed and desired by youth. The impact of thoughtful support and remediation needs to be highlighted in program planning decisions; one student shared the case of a friend who may have returned to school with the proper socio-emotional support, but dropped out because there was lack of trust and care:

I know a guy who dropped out of school in the 9th grade. He dropped out because he did not see the point anymore in learning. I think a lot of people feel that way. This education system is not really relatable; it's not given on an individual basis. They don't give you a reason to learn, you're just told to learn, cram, take a test, if you fail you repeat a grade. Nobody really cares about you. Nobody cares enough to say "let me help you, let me organize a support group, let's study together". It's either you make it on your own, or you don't make it at all. A lot of people kept undermining him (friend), and he couldn't take it after a while. It's because of his psychology – I don't think he dropped out because he didn't have potential. When he was repeatedly told he was dumb by his peers, teachers, and society, he decided there was no point and dropped out. (Ethiopia Urban Formal school)

Aligned to the support for youth, educators, as well as those at household and community levels, also need appropriate awareness, knowledge and training on how youth can be fully supported. Local and national business community needs to be included in the dialogue on skill relevance.

Gender discrimination is a critical factor that increases the probability of girls dropping out of school. Early marriages, authority of husbands on wives' educational decisions, social norms and family responsibilities are among the causes contributing to girls not completing secondary school or hindering their pursuit of further education. The youth responses noted genital mutilation as a practice that still continues in some of the study countries. Rwanda is the only country among all sub-Saharan countries that has been able to improve the gender index, as per The Gender Report (2017) (WEF, 2017). This is mainly due to its highest share of female parliamentarians (61%) in the world. This is backed by its improved scores on health, survival indices and education attainment index. However, overall, sub-Saharan Africa is third from the bottom (just above South Asia and Middle and North Africa) in its distance from gender parity in 2017 (topping the list is Western Europe (p. 18). Globally, sub-Saharan Africa continues to rank last on the Educational Attainment subindex.

The youth expressed their interest in learning technical skills, fashion, finance, accounting, "practical knowledge", medicine, teaching training, ICT, languages, carpentry, agriculture/farming (UNESCO, 2012). A detailed analysis of secondary school curriculum and

syllabi would be needed to map out these skills with the courses taught in secondary schools, and their alignment to economic demands and priority areas at national and subnational levels. Similar analysis for the Technical, Vocational Education and Training programs across countries is needed. There are at present 25% more students enrolled in secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa as compared to 1999. However, the proportion of secondary school population enrolled in TVET population has remained 11% since 1999 (UNESCO, 2012). Many countries have neglected skills development or a technical and vocational education and training strategy, and widespread participation of youth in informal apprenticeship programs continues to go unrecognized (Abudulai, 2017). For instance in Ghana, many youth join as apprentices to specialize in specific skill areas such as glass bead making, tailoring, mechanics, and basket weaving, studying under master craftspeople. Focusing on job related skills through TVET and identifying ways of ensuring that different forms of training are recognized through alignment to credentialing programs will equip a larger youth population to productively join the workforce.

Learning ICT skills was one of the key themes that emerged from the youth voices. ICT can enhance learning for more than 260 million children and youth who are out of school (Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, 2017). The Broadband Commission predicts that the ICT users in Africa will grow by many folds in the next decade. Cheaper Internet cables across the continent will help to reduce the “Digital Divide” in the coming years. While the technology sector is gearing up for greater competition among private firms to provide cheaper and faster Internet services, the youth need to be prepared to make full use of it.

Many youth also join the informal sector. This trend is more common in urban settings. Informal sector workers in seven West African capitals who had completed primary or lower secondary education could earn 20% to 50% more than those without qualification (UNESCO, 2012). Yet even among those youth who manage to complete a secondary education, many still struggle to find work or continue their education. A short study conducted to track a private scholarship fund in Ghana revealed that a vast majority of the secondary school scholarship recipients were found to be without work and un-enrolled in any higher education or TVET program within 6 months-1 year after graduation. Among 70 female youth, 66 of whom had graduated in 2015 and 4 of whom had graduated in 2013, only 4.3% (3) had enrolled in a higher education institution or other education/training program, with, 2 of those enrolled were among the 4 students who had graduated in 2013. The programs of study among the 3 enrolled in higher education included vocational and training (1), nursing college (1) and ICT certificate (1). None were enrolled in 4 year programs. Regarding employment, 11.4% (8) of the recent graduates were employed, and of those employed, half were employed part-time. But many youth are entering the sector without the foundational skills. Youth interested in tailoring, weaving and other skills not taught through a formal TVET program need certification and basic education to avoid being exploited by the employers in the informal sector. With appropriate skill development and certification, they should be entitled to a minimum wage. In many sub-Saharan countries traditional apprenticeships provide the skills needed to make a decent living in the informal sector. The scholarship program has seen many graduates pursue this route after graduating from secondary school. For example, in Rwanda, 100 girls planning to graduate in December 2017 will be entering into informal training for tailoring and weaving from experts in those skill areas since the products they’ll learn to make have high potential for earning a livable income, while pursuing higher education straight out of secondary school remains out of reach. The scholarship

fund has similarly supported recent graduates in Uganda to pursue 2-year teacher training certificates, and has plans to support graduates in Ghana in pursuing profitable vocational skill areas such as bead making. Finding ways to link the TVET centers with apprenticeship models and providing recognized certifications will help to reach out to those marginalized by distance and/or financial barriers. Distance education programs could be another option to ensure that the youth are able to gain skills even if they are out of the formal school network. Further, efforts must be made to raise the status of TVET and other certification courses, since at present, such courses are commonly seen as lower status educational pursuits than university degrees (Abudulai, 2017).

Education Agenda 2030 calls for access, inclusion and equity, gender equality, life-long learning and quality. However, in reality education has been very institution based thus non-inclusive. Education is school based and fewer options are available to make the life-long learning opportunity possible. Outside these formal education institutions, learning is not supported. The youth do not receive the skills they desire to achieve their life goals in secondary schools. Either they do not reach secondary schools or they do not find alternate education useful for skill enhancement. Only a few with decent economic means are able to access TVET programs. Moreover, the TVET track may not always help the youth to achieve what they aspire for. Therefore, in order to achieve the Agenda 2030, the national governments should adapt the agenda based on their local realities to address the demands of the youth. Policies need to match the market needs and help provide an array of skilling avenues for the youth to choose from.

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8. Annexes

TOOLS

Tool 1

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS WITH THE YOUTH

USE ONLY BY THE INTERVIEWER

[Please read the questions starting on the next page aloud to facilitate the Focus Group Discussions. Do not hand out this document to the respondents]

Before asking the questions, please mark below which group you are conducting this focus group with of the following category. Please note that there could be a mix of two or more of the categories below. In this case, please identify ONE category listed below which consist of the MAJORITY of the respondents.

Focus Group Characteristics	Selection
Group of adolescent youth attending formal secondary schooling in an urban area	
Group of adolescent youth attending formal secondary schooling in a rural area	
Group of adolescent attending after school, vocational or technical programs in an urban area	
Group of adolescent attending after school, vocational or technical programs in a rural area	
Group of adolescent attending non-formal programs like Almajiri in Nigeria or Daaras in Senegal, youth in integrated non-formal schools (Tsangaya in Nigeria, Integrated Daaras in Senegal) in an urban area	
Group of adolescent attending non-formal programs like Almajiri in Nigeria or Daaras in Senegal, youth in integrated non-formal schools (Tsangaya in Nigeria, Integrated Daaras in Senegal) in an rural area	

Out of school youth in an urban area	
Out of school youth in a rural area	
Youth involved in second chance/bridge course programs and other such programs in an urban area	
Youth involved in second chance/bridge course programs and other such programs in a rural area	

Information About the FGD	
Date of the discussion	
Location/Address of the discussion	
Please provide the primary language in which the focus group discussion will be conducted	
How many participants are taking part in this focus group? (8-12 participants required)	

Tips for Enumerator: Let the conversation take a natural course, as long as it stays on topic. If you find that as you go through the questions, the topics have already been covered, you may skip questions at your discretion. If you find that the participants are getting into something interesting and you think of additional relevant follow-up questions to ask, please go ahead.

Before beginning, please **READ OUT LOUD** the below statement to the participants:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group discussion. This is an informal conversation meant to help us understand the needs and interests of young people like you with regards to education and skills that you feel would be helpful in achieving your goals. You do not have to list your name if you prefer not to. Nothing that you say will damage your reputation at school, work or in the family/community. This is not an assessment of you or your schooling or work. We are asking some general questions to know more about your educational experience, your skills and your goals. Keep in mind that your participation is voluntary, and if at any point

you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you are free not to respond. Your answers will be analyzed and shared to inform the policymakers and educational practitioners to help them improve the education policies and practices.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE & SKILL PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION 2030

Questions relating to Aspirations

1. What are your life goals and dreams?
2. What would you like to be / have as your profession?
3. Are there any community leaders/role models that inspire you?
 - a. If so who and why?
4. What would you like to do when you leave (or graduate) from your current education program? (ie. University, employment, community/civic involvement, marriage, children, etc.)
5. Do you think it will be possible for you to complete your education and attain the level that you desire?
 - a. *Note to enumerators: If respondents answer noà
 - a. “Why do you think it will not be possible? Are there obstacles you face?”
 - b. Do you foresee any challenges in achieving your education or training for your aspirations?
6. Have you participated in any opportunities/programs to help you prepare or improve for your future (in terms of education, jobs and skills?) What was the opportunity (e.g. include any educational and/or counseling opportunity with community, peer, family, media to get advice/inspiration or ideas on career)?
 - a. How many times were you a part of it? / How long did the opportunity/program last?

Questions on Learning Environment and Demand

7. What learning opportunities are available in your community (i.e. school, community centers, cyber cafes, government programs, sports, tutoring, clubs, workshops, after-school programs, libraries, museums, media etc)?
 - a. Where are they held?
8. Do you think your learning opportunities so far have prepared you for your goals and dreams?
9. Do you think your learning opportunities so far have helped you in your day-to-day life at home and in your community?
10. What do you think are the most valued knowledge and skills you need to have for the future that you want?
11. What support do you want to continue learning to develop your skills?

QUESTIONS ON YOUTH LEARNING EXPERIENCES & BARRIERS

Questions relating to reasons for absence/dropout

12. Do you have a job or business or work outside the home/outside hometown?
 - a. Does your job or business ever interfere with your education? If yes, please explain.

- b. Are your studies helping you in your business, e.g. are you gaining more skills from your studies to continue or improve your business?
- c. Are your studies helping in your daily life?
- 13. Do your household chores/activities ever overlap with your learning time (e.g. school day, training activities, non-formal programs, studying, etc)?
 - a. If yes, what are the household activities that typically keep you from school or other learning opportunities?
 - b. Is your class/program held at a time that is convenient for you to attend? (ie. Doesn't interfere with other responsibilities)
 - c. Are there any other ways that educational opportunities could be better tailored to your availability (i.e. considering cultural norms, family/community/religious responsibilities, etc)?

Questions relating to School/Facility Factors (*skip this section if none of the participants are currently enrolled in any kind of education or training program)

- 14. Is your “education site” easily accessible?
- 15. What means of transport do you use?
- 16. Do you travel to school daily?
 - a. Does anyone board at school?
 - b. How long does it take for you to reach school?
- 17. Do school costs make it difficult for you to attend school?
- 18. Do any of these factors ever deter you from attending school?
- 19. Are there times in which the teacher is not in class?
 - a. If yes, how often is your teacher late/absent in a usual week?
 - b. Does the teacher follow scheduled class times?
- 20. Are there any factors that hinder your motivation for attending class regularly or continuing your education? (if no response, give examples of distance, safety issues, comfort level while in school, housework, traditional values, religion, economic hardships, content/curriculum, teaching style, language/medium of instruction or other school quality related issues etc.)
 - a. Does your education facility have separate latrines for boys and girls? If not, does this ever play as a factor in your attendance?
 - b. Does your education facility have access to clean water? If not, does this ever play as a factor in your attendance?

Questions relating to Support and Barriers

- 21. If not currently enrolled, do you want to pursue any education or training (e.g. formal school, vocational training, etc)?
 - a. Why/Why not?
- 22. If you are currently not in school, is there anything that would encourage you to pursue some form of education or training?
- 23. Who in your life is most supportive of your education?
 - a. In what ways are they supportive?
 - b. In what ways could they be more supportive?
- 24. Do you know of anyone in your community who never enrolled or dropped out for formal studies, but wanted to?
 - a. What is the reason for this? (Consider probing on distance to school, lack of basic services, gender norms, mismatch between family and school values, pregnancy, illness etc.)

- b. If they dropped out, at what point did they drop out?
- 25. At what age do people normally get married in your community/school?
 - a. Is there a difference for boys and girls in the marrying age?
 - b. Do girls/boys continue pursuing learning or training once they are married? Once they have children?
 - c. Do you think level of education has any bearing on when and whom a girl marries? A boy marries?
- 26. What has been the most valuable thing you have learned so far through your learning opportunities?
 - a. How did you learn it?
 - b. How has this lesson impacted your life?

TOOL 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH INDIVIDUAL YOUTH

USE ONLY BY THE INTERVIEWER

[Please read the questions starting on the next page aloud to facilitate the Interviews. Do not hand out this document to the respondents]

Before asking the questions, please mark which type of profile best fits the youth you are interviewing. Please note that there could be a mix of two or more of the categories below. In this case, please identify ONE category listed below which consist of the MAJORITY of the respondent’s work.

Interviewee Characteristics	Selection
Adolescent youth attending formal secondary schooling in an urban area	
Adolescent youth attending formal secondary schooling in a rural area	
Adolescent attending after school, vocational or technical programs in an urban area	
Adolescent attending after school, vocational or technical programs in a rural area	

Adolescent attending non-formal programs like Almajiri in Nigeria or Daaras in Senegal, youth in integrated non-formal schools (Tsangaya in Nigeria, Integrated Daaras in Senegal) in an urban area	
Adolescent attending non-formal programs like Almajiri in Nigeria or Daaras in Senegal, youth in integrated non-formal schools (Tsangaya in Nigeria, Integrated Daaras in Senegal) in an rural area	
Out of school youth in an urban area	
Out of school youth in a rural area	
Youth involved in second chance/bridge course programs and other such programs in an urban area	
Youth involved in second chance/bridge course programs and other such programs in a rural area	

Information about Interview	
Date of the discussion	
Location/Address of the discussion	
Please provide the primary language in which the interview will be conducted	

Tips for Enumerator: Let the conversation take a natural course, as long as it stays on topic. If you find that as you go through the questions, the topics have already been covered, you may skip questions at your discretion. If you find that the participant is getting into something interesting and you think of additional relevant follow-up questions to ask, please go ahead.

Before beginning, please **READ OUT LOUD** the below statement to the participants:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. This is an informal conversation meant to help us understand the needs and interests of young people in your community with regards to education and skills that you feel would be helpful in youth achieving their goals. You do not have to list your name if you prefer not to. Nothing that you say will damage your reputation at school, work or in the community. This is not an assessment of you or your schooling or work. We are asking some general questions to know more about your educational experience, your ideas about educational needs of youth. Keep in mind that your participation is voluntary, and if at any point you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you are free not to respond.

Profile Questions

1. What is your gender? _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. What is the primary language you speak? _____
4. Are you currently attending any educational program? _____
 - a. If yes, what level are you in? _____
 - b. Is it a government or non-governmental school? _____
 - c. What is the primary language of instruction at the facility? _____
5. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed so far? _____

6. Will you be continuing your education in the next year? _____
 - a. If yes, why? _____
 - b. If not, why? _____
7. Are you currently working? If so, what are you doing for work?
 - a. About how many hours per week do spend doing this work?
8. Do you have any disability or permanent health problem that hinders you performing normal daily activities? _____

9. A few questions about your family-
 - a. How big is your family? How many siblings do you have? Do they all live together?

b. What kinds of activities do you do at home to take care of your family? For example, do you help out in the kitchen for cooking, cleaning, getting water etc? What time of day do you do these activities, and how long does it take?

Questions on Learning So Far

10. What are some of your interests or hobbies?

a. Do you think these interests could help you in making a living? How so?

11. What do you think are the most valued knowledge and skills young people need to gain to be prepared for the current job market?

12. What do you think are the most valued knowledge and skills that you want to gain for your future?

13. How do you feel your experiences, through education and otherwise, have prepared you with these skills?

a. If you could go back, would you make any changes to your education or experience to better prepare yourself with these skills? If so, how (e.g. changes to teaching style, curriculum, extra-curricular activities)?

b. What do you think are the barriers to getting these skills?

Questions on Aspirations and Training Needed

14. Do you have a role model? What do you admire about this person?

15. Are there opportunities or resources in your community for young people to learn new skills (e.g. vocational skills like sewing, carpentry, etc, or academic knowledge, etc)? Please describe (What do they teach? Where are they held? What times? Who teaches them? Are teachers paid or volunteer? Who funds the programs? Who participates in these programs?)

16. Is there a cost associated with these learning/training opportunities? If so, how much is it?

17. Is there any kind of further training or support opportunities/resources that you wish were available in your community? Please describe in further detail.

18. Beyond gaining skills for earning income, are there other reasons why education opportunities are important? If so, what are they?

a. What kinds of education or training opportunities are needed to address these reasons?

Questions relating to reasons for absence/dropout

19. Do you know anyone near your age who has dropped out of school? If so, what were the reasons? (If the person being interviewed has him/herself dropped out, ask this as a direct question)

20. Among the young people you know who have dropped out, how are they now supporting themselves financially?

- a. Are any of them attending another type of education that is not formal schooling?
- b. What could be done to help improve the situation for these youth?
- c. If not why? / If so, how?

21. What does a typical day look like for you, including household responsibilities, work, education and training, family, etc?

- a. How would an ideal day look in order for you to pursue your goals?

22. In your education or training so far (if applicable), what has been most helpful for your life? If so how?

- a. How could it have been more relevant?

Questions relating to Support and Barriers

23. If something inappropriate were to happen at your school/training center, do you feel like there is someone you'd feel comfortable reporting it to?

24. Do you feel safe on the way to school?

25. Do you have people in your life who are especially supportive of your educational and/or professional endeavors? Who are these people, and how do they support you?

Tool 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH EDUCATORS

USE ONLY BY THE INTERVIEWER

[Please read the questions starting on the next page aloud to facilitate the Interviews. Do not hand out this document to the respondents]

Before asking the questions, please mark below which type of education program the educator you are interviewing teaches/facilitates. Please note that there could be a mix of two or more of the categories below. In this case, please identify ONE category listed below which consist of the MAJORITY of the respondent’s work.

Type of Educator Position	Selection
Formal secondary school teacher in an urban area	
Formal secondary school teacher in a rural area	
Teacher of after school, vocational or technical programs in an urban area	
Teacher of after school, vocational or technical programs in a rural area	
Teacher of non-formal programs like Almajiri in Nigeria or Daaras in Senegal, or integrated non-formal schools (Tsangaya in Nigeria, Integrated Daaras in Senegal) in an urban area	
Teacher of non-formal programs like Almajiri in Nigeria or Daaras in Senegal, or integrated non-formal schools (Tsangaya in Nigeria, Integrated Daaras in Senegal) in an rural area	
Teacher of second chance/bridge course program or other such programs in an urban area	
Teacher of second chance/bridge course programs or other such programs in a rural area	

Information About the Interview	
Date of the discussion	

Location/Address of the discussion	
Please provide the primary language in which the interview will be conducted	

Tips for Enumerator: Let the conversation take a natural course, as long as it stays on topic. If you find that as you go through the questions, the topics have already been covered, you may skip questions at your discretion. If you find that the participant is getting into something interesting and you think of additional relevant follow-up questions to ask, please go ahead.

Before beginning, please **READ OUT LOUD** the below statement to the participants:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. This is an informal conversation meant to help us understand the needs and interests of young people in your community with regards to education and skills that you feel would be helpful in youth achieving their goals. You do not have to list your name if you prefer not to. Nothing that you say will damage your reputation at school, work or in the community. This is not an assessment of you or your schooling or work. We are asking some general questions to know more about your educational experience, your ideas about educational needs of youth. Keep in mind that your participation is voluntary, and if at any point you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you are free not to respond.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE & SKILL PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION 2030

Profile Questions

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is the primary language you speak?
4. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed so far?
5. What is the subject(s) you teach? Is the same as what you studied?

Questions on Learning So Far

2. What do you think are the most valued knowledge and skills students need to gain to
 - a. be prepared for the current job market?
 - b. be a contributing member of civil society?
 - c. take care of themselves and their families?
3. Do you think the program your students receive is adequately preparing them with these skills?
 - a. If yes, how?
4. Do you think your training so far has adequately prepared you in your role as an educator?
 - a. If not, what additional training do you think would be helpful to you?

5. Do you think there are different needs in skills/knowledge between students who successfully graduate versus students who drop out of school?
 - a. If so, how are they different?
 - b. Are there skills that are equally useful for employment, regardless of education level differences? If yes, what are the skills?
 - c. Are there skills that are equally useful for life in the family and community, regardless of education level differences? If yes, what are the skills?
6. Do you find the curriculum you teach in class to be relevant to the lives of your students?
 - a. Can you share examples of how the material you teach is applicable to students' practical lives?
 - b. If not why? / If so, how?
7. What are some of the methods you use to help your students meet their learning goals?

Questions on Training Needed (*related to above section "Learning so far"-- ask at the discretion of interviewer)

8. Are there opportunities available in the community for students to acquire these valuable skills for employment/entrepreneurship you outlined before? (including after-school programs, non-formal, technical and vocational, etc)
 - a. If so, what are they?
 - b. How accessible are they?
 - c. Who from the community typically participates in these opportunities?
 - d. Are the opportunities affordable for the average household?
 - e. Are there any members/groups who do not participate for specific reason(s)?
 - f. Are these facilities equipped with learning materials? If yes, what are the learning materials available?
9. In your opinion, what would need to be done to support continued learning for youth to develop the skills they want?
 - a. What can different stakeholders do to support youth education and skills? (Private sector/media/parents / community /government / schools / teachers/ friends/religious institutions/self)

QUESTIONS ON YOUTH LEARNING EXPERIENCES & BARRIERS

Questions relating to reasons for absence/dropout

10. Are there incidences of dropout in your school?
 - a. Do you think that drop-out is a serious concern in your community?
11. At what level of education are adolescents most likely to drop out of formal school?
 - a. What are the common reasons?
12. Do you have students who are frequently absent from school?
 - a. If yes, what are the reasons?

Questions relating to School/Facility Factors

13. Do you feel the school/learning center where you work is safe for your students? Why/why not?
 - a. Is it different for boys and girls? If so, how?
14. Is your "education site" easily accessible to the people it is meant to serve?

15. Are there any factors that hinder your motivation for attending class regularly to teach or continuing your own education?
- c. Does your education facility have separate latrines for boys and girls? If not, does this ever play as a factor in students' attendance?
- d. Does your education facility have access to water? If not, does this ever play as a factor in students' attendance?
16. Are there ever times that you are absent or late to your teaching position?
- a. If so, what are the reasons?
- b. Is there anything that could be done to make your teaching role more manageable?
17. Do you think there are any factors that hinder your students' motivation to continue their education? (if no response, give examples of distance, housework, traditional values, religion, economic hardships, etc.)

Questions relating to Aspirations

18. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
19. Do you have other professional goals in addition to your work as a teacher?
- a. If so, are you currently pursuing those goals? How?
20. How do you believe your work as a teacher helps your learners to achieve their goals?

Additional questions on Local Opportunities

21. Are there educational programs in your community that you are aware of that cater to youth with special needs?
22. These days technology has changed the world in many ways, do you think technology has been included/not included in your life in general and in the educational opportunities that you have received so far? If so, how has technology been integrated?
- a. Do you think the inclusion of technology in your educational opportunities has added value to your education? If yes, how?
23. Are there any community centers or places where young people can meet for group activities? E.g. sports grounds, indoor games, etc. etc. If yes, are the activities supervised?

Potential Risks: Youth from 15 to 24 and adult teacher educators interviewed for this study. All youth can read and understand English or French. In addition their parents consent will also be taken. The research team considers this study to involve very minimal risks for participants. The MP researcher will ask for a written permission from all respondents. If at any point in time, they decide not to participate in the research, no more questions will be asked. MP staff will first explain the objectives of the research and provide an overview of the types of questions asked. They will also explain the rights of participant as well as the privacy protection measures that the research team will engage into. After explaining the study objectives to the respondents, only then the research will collect any data. All participants will be asked for their permission before the interview begins. If they do not want to be a part of this study, they can easily opt out with no risk. The research team considers this study to involve very minimal risks for the respondents participating in the focused groups and interviews.