

**Forum:** Youth Assembly

**Issue:** The question of improving the educational infrastructure in Central Africa

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## Introduction

*“Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children’s rights and never use violence.”*

The above is Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted by the UN in November 1989, and ratified by all UN Member States (excluding the United States of America). The world has realised that education is the backbone of any nation's development and progress, and it is the main tool in opening pathways towards a better quality of life for its citizens. In accordance with the UNCRC, every child holds the basic right of education, however in many nations throughout the Sub-Saharan and Central African regions, these children are unable to access even basic primary schooling.

Education is imperative in aiding these children throughout their life, inculcating core life skills and giving these children the ability to possibly bring their families out of poverty, access a steady source of income and a stable job, and can directly impact the quality of life of one's family, hence taking care of their basic human needs. Despite all this international recognition of a child’s right to education, so many children are being kept away from education across the world, yet Central Africa has consistently ranked as the worst hit due to a wide variety of reasons ranging from political instability, poverty, gender disparity, and lack of resources. As per UNICEF’s official press release, 57 million children are denied basic schooling throughout Central Africa (as of September 2022). Official reports from nations like the Central African Republic (CAR), Burkina Faso, Mali, and others state literacy rates much lower than the world average. Additionally, figures

repeatedly report around 50% of girls and 35% of boys in Central African nations do not complete primary schooling and only around 5% of children aged 7-14 can competently read basic texts.

These disturbing figures showcase the severity of the situation and the dire need for a stable education system in Central and Sub-Saharan Africa. The lack of education in this region directly contributes to illiteracy and poverty and comes with serious implications for the future generations of Africa's would-be leaders. Currently, one of every three adults in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot read, and thus demonstrates their lack of education, leading to most in the region resorting to methods such as crime, welfare dependency, and bribery to support and protect their families.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### **Educational Infrastructure**

Educational infrastructure usually refers to the physical structures and materials required for effective and efficient education, such as school buildings and campuses, technology like computers, tablets, and Wi-Fi, and other miscellaneous resources such as equipment for science experiments and physical education activities. In some cases, educational infrastructure can also mean the curriculum and material taught in class and the knowledge imparted to students in educational institutions such as schools and colleges.

### **Functional Illiteracy**

Functional illiteracy is a more quantitative description of illiteracy and essentially means the lack of literacy in any person excluding them from being a functioning member of modern society and being able to complete tasks such as simple jobs to ensure a livelihood for their families or other daily activities that require a semblance of literacy. General estimates state that upto 35% of adults in Central Africa do not have the ability to read or write and that Sub-Saharan Africa boasts the highest percentage of illiterate youth throughout the world.

## Educational Parity

UNICEF describes educational or education parity as the “equivalent percentages of males and females in an education system” and states that “parity is essential but not sufficient for achieving gender equality”. This basically means that if there is a 1:1 ratio of males to females in education, educational parity has been achieved, and this aids greatly in achieving gender equality however is not the sole factor in determining the gender equality or access to education in a particular nation or region.

## Gender Disparity/Inequality

Gender disparity, more commonly known as gender inequality, refers to when there is a disbalance between the treatment of men as compared to women in general society and the access to goods, services, and other basic necessities (such as education, privacy, jobs, etc.) for each gender. Usually, women are the less-favoured which has led to the recent rise of movements like feminism, #MeToo, and others (and has also been a major factor in past movements such as women’s suffrage).

## Digital Divide

The digital divide is a term commonly associated with the overall gap in accessing technologies and other basic digital resources required for daily tasks, and is a major issue faced throughout Central Africa due to the lack of sufficient resources. Central Africa is currently facing a major digital divide from the rest of the world in that many nations in this region such as the CAR, Mali, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and more do not have sufficient materials such as projectors, computers, and Wi-Fi for teachers and students, inhibiting quality of education and giving these students an unfair disadvantage when it comes to our ever-modernising and digital world.

## Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-governmental organisations are organisations that are not officially affiliated with any government or political entity and are usually non-profit organisations. This means they are usually created to fight for humanitarian causes and do not look for financial rewards for their business, with the majority of NGO workers being unpaid volunteers. Most NGOs currently focus on issues such as lack of education, access to fresh food, drinking water, and sanitation, and other basic human rights such as sustainability or gender inequality.

## **Key Issues**

### **Lack of Access to Education in Conflict Zones**

One of the most pressing issues in Central Africa is the lack of access to education for children living in conflict zones such as war-torn nations. The region is plagued by violence from armed groups and civil wars such as in Somalia, South Sudan, Senegal, CAR, Mozambique, etc. These armed gangs usually target schools and educational infrastructure and this endangers school sites, further leading to parents being unwilling to send their children to school. Countries throughout the region such as Chad and the CAR experience regular attacks on schools from violent gangs and schools are usually caught in the middle of extreme battles between government forces and rebel gangs, forcing students and staff to flee schools and these students usually do not re-enroll in schools, leaving larger gaps in the education system, especially when it comes to children in rural and displaced communities.

Moreover, schools throughout Sub-Saharan Africa often lack basic resources like textbooks, adequate classrooms, and even qualified teachers. Many students have missed their early and primary years of schooling, which majorly contributes towards the low literacy rates and exacerbates long-term socio-economic challenges for these children and their families. While efforts by international organisations and NGOs – such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) – have increased in magnitude and now include initiatives such as providing mobile schools and temporary

learning spaces in areas where students may not be able to access formal education due to a variety of reasons (ranging from financial situation, geographic location, violence in the area, etc.) and have mitigated some of the challenges faced by students such as illiteracy and lack of basic resources, but long-term solutions are imperative for tangible progress.

### **Teacher Shortages and Inadequately Trained Teachers**

Teacher shortages are a major barrier, mitigating quality education being given to children throughout Central Africa. Specifically in Chad and the CAR, student-to-teacher ratios are extremely high, sometimes even exceeding **80:1** in many areas. These shortages are further exacerbated by the fact that these few teachers are usually not even fully trained to provide quality education to students and are unable to effectively educate students, due to lack of resources, extremely high volume of students per class, and of course inadequate training on their part.

Furthermore, the poor working conditions, extremely marginal salaries, and other factors such as ongoing violence in Central and Sub-Saharan Africa (especially in rural/tribal regions) discourages people from choosing education and teaching as their main career path. Even though organisations like the World Bank have launched initiatives such as the World Bank Education Sector Support Project aimed at improving teacher training and recruitment in underprivileged/impoverished regions across the world, this is not a viable long-term solution since significant funding, investments, and international support from governments is required for the project to be viable while also resulting in the expected outcomes.

### **Gender Inequalities and Disparities in Education**

Gender disparities are extremely prevalent throughout Central Africa (especially in nations such as Cameroon, Chad and the CAR) when looking at the education sector. Girls usually face significant barriers when enrolling and staying in school due to traditional and cultural norms in tribal and rural regions which include early/child marriage, and the view of

women as those who stay at home rather than pursue education and jobs. These traditional gender stereotypes are common in Central and Sub-Saharan Africa leading families to prioritise boys' education over girls'. This further perpetuates the poverty and inequality in these regions.

There are multiple efforts by NGOs and charities like Plan International and Save the Children, focusing on eliminating child marriage, providing scholarships to girls in impoverished regions, and improving the existing educational infrastructure in place as well as building on it and expanding it to help cater to children's basic needs. While progress in urban areas has been achieved, due to many factors such as cultural stereotypes, the inconvenience for parents to send children far into urban areas for school every day, and of course the ongoing violence in many nations, rural regions continue to lag behind, further highlighting the requirement for more targeted approaches aimed towards children in rural and tribal areas.

### **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

#### **Central African Governments (Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, etc.)**

Central African governments play a major role in shaping the educational landscape. These countries often face political instability and corruption, lack of funding or resources, and logistical issues in providing access to education and they have taken steps to improving education despite these challenges (such as signing various international agreements on education, such as the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) initiative). However, implementation of these programs and achieving their core goals has been challenging due to weak government control and conflict.

National ministries of education are tasked with developing curricula, training teachers, and maintaining educational infrastructure. For example, the government of Chad has invested in vocational training programs aimed at reducing unemployment. However, with more than 50% of the population living below the poverty line and unable to support

themselves and even access clean drinking water and food, these efforts are limited due to financial constraints of families and governments, the lack of cooperation and coordination between government agencies and ministries, and most importantly, extremely low awareness regarding the need for quality education and its rewards.

### **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**

UNESCO has been a key player in advocating for educational development globally, as well as conducting its own operations to improve educational infrastructure and access to education in Africa. Through its Global Education Monitoring Report and various initiatives like Capacity Development for Education for All (CapEFA), UNESCO aims to strengthen educational capacities and funding of the education sector by governments, as well as monitoring progress of and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4 – Quality Education).

In the CAR, UNESCO has helped by rebuilding schools damaged by violence and wars while also training teachers to provide the best education possible for underprivileged children. By working with governments and local communities, UNESCO promotes inclusive education policies and laws that focus on empowering marginalised populations, such as girls, ethnic minorities, and refugees/displaced persons.

### **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)**

UNICEF has been on the frontlines of improving education in conflict-affected regions of Central Africa. With its overall focus on children's basic rights, UNICEF has launched numerous campaigns to ensure access to quality education for vulnerable children and has spearheaded awareness programs targeted at improving awareness of those in impoverished/underprivileged areas regarding the benefits of education for people and their children/families. Programs like Back to Learning in the CAR target displaced children, providing them with safe learning environments and psychological support due to trauma caused by conflict and violence in their nation and areas.

UNICEF also works with local governments to implement education policies, build schools, and provide learning materials. For example, in Chad, UNICEF helped train teachers and distributed learning kits to nearly 1 million students as part of their efforts to address the educational needs of children affected by the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin.

### **World Bank**

The World Bank has been a major donor for education in Central Africa and throughout the world in other underprivileged regions such as Central America and parts of Asia. Through its International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank finances large-scale educational projects aimed at improving school infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development and also supports external initiatives by other NGOs, organisations, and governments such as the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) provided necessary funding to countries like Chad and the CAR to boost primary education completion and retention of students through primary and secondary school.

One of the key projects funded by the World Bank is the Education Sector Support Project in Cameroon. This project has helped improve access to quality education, focusing on primary and secondary schools in rural areas. The World Bank has also supported the creation of solar-powered classrooms to help in improving environmental awareness and sustainability while also providing a renewable, cheap form of electricity and educational infrastructure that can be used by children in rural areas, improving percentage of rural children having access to quality educational facilities.

### **African Development Bank (AfDB)**

The African Development Bank has invested in education infrastructure projects across the region. AfDB's Human Capital Strategy (HCS) aims to address critical gaps in infrastructure, particularly in rural areas where schools lack basic facilities like toilets, water & food, and electricity. In 2020, AfDB launched the Jobs for Youth in Africa



Initiative, focusing on improving vocational and technical education in order to reduce youth unemployment and imbue youth with critical life skills.

AfDB's involvement in Central Africa also includes its Support for Education Improvement Program, which has helped to build new classrooms and provide educational materials to students in rural and underserved areas. Additionally, the bank emphasises gender equality by funding programs that ensure girls' access to education and gender equality in education.

### **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (such as Save the Children and Plan International)**

NGOs such as Save the Children and Plan International are vital players in improving education in conflict zones. These organisations have run many programs to rebuild schools, train teachers, and provide educational and psychological support to students affected by conflict and trauma. Plan International, for instance, focuses on girls' education, working to eliminate barriers such as child marriage and gender-based violence as well as increasing awareness about the advantages of quality education and debunking cultural stereotypes that prevent girls from accessing education or being given equal opportunities as boys.

Save the Children has been active mostly in the CAR, where conflict has devastated the education system. They have launched mobile schools and other portable/temporary educational institutions in refugee camps, ensuring that displaced children have access to some form of schooling. These NGOs also advocate for children's rights and pressure local governments to invest more in the education sector.

### **International Donor Agencies (USAID, DFID, etc.)**

International donor agencies, including USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and DFID (now the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office -

FCDO), provide substantial financial and technical aid to improve educational infrastructure and quality in Central Africa. USAID's Education Strategy emphasises improving reading skills, particularly in early grades, and has launched initiatives in the past like Room to Learn South Sudan to improve educational access in flashpoint and conflict-affected regions.

DFID, on the other hand, has also funded numerous education projects across Africa, including initiatives focused on girls' education and inclusive education for children with disabilities, empowering women and other demographics that are usually overlooked (such as those with disabilities/special needs, and ethnic minorities). Their Global Partnership for Education funding and other financial aid and affiliation with initiatives for a long time has been essential in addressing the education needs of conflict-affected populations and empowering underprivileged children.

### **Regional Organisations (African Union, Economic Community of Central African States - ECCAS)**

Regional organisations like the African Union (AU) and ECCAS work to harmonise education policies across the region and ensure that education is part of broader development goals. The AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) outlines objectives for increasing access to education and improving the quality of learning environments across the continent.

ECCAS has been involved in creating regional frameworks to address cross-border educational challenges, such as the displacement of children due to conflict. Their efforts also include creating synergies between different countries to share resources and best practices for educational development.

### **Private Sector (Telecommunications, Construction, and Technology Companies)**

The private sector is increasingly becoming a key player in improving educational infrastructure. Companies in telecommunications, construction, and technology sectors have all created countless initiatives and programmes, aiming to ideate and carry out more innovative and targeted solutions to Central Africa's educational challenges. Prominent examples include the telecommunications sector who are aiding in setting up and providing e-learning platforms to educational organisations that can help in a wider reach of education for children who may not be able to attend schools in person due to reasons like distance of school and home, conflict zones, and many others. These e-learning platforms were extremely crucial in crises such as the global COVID-19 pandemic where lockdowns were implemented nation-wide and schools were closed down to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Additionally, construction companies have also been playing their part in the educational sector by building schools and providing educational infrastructure such as quality classrooms and school campuses for students while technology firms are creating solutions by providing affordable means for educational organisations who may not be able to purchase and maintain expensive computers, tables, and other technological gadgets. A main example would be Hewlett-Packard's (HP) initiative to "Educate 100,000 Across Africa in the Next Three Years [since December 2018]". As part of this initiative, HP pledged to empower at least 100,000 children in underprivileged areas throughout the whole of Africa through their HP LIFE (Learning Initiative for Entrepreneurs) program. HP helped by providing technological infrastructure and boosting learning using online softwares and training teachers and students on how to use them. Many other private firms have also committed to similar initiatives and have helped greatly in reducing the digital divide by providing affordable internet access (Wi-Fi routers and other similar systems), cheap and durable laptops, and other general educational softwares that teachers and students can utilise, while also providing training workshops for students and teachers, educating them on how to effectively use these technologies to further their learning.

**Development of Issue/Timeline**

Date	Event	Outcome
18/11/1990	UNESCO launches Education for All (EFA)	UNESCO’s Education for All (EFA) initiative aimed to provide quality primary education for all children by 2015. Central African countries like Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) committed to this goal. While significant progress was made in increasing enrolment rates, the region still faced challenges in infrastructure, teacher training, and access in rural and conflict-affected areas.
2002	World Bank launches Fast Track Initiative (FTI)	The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was created to accelerate progress towards universal primary education. Central African countries received substantial funding for education projects. The initiative helped improve

		<p>access, especially in urban areas, but issues like inadequate school facilities and teacher shortages continued to hinder long-term success in remote regions.</p>
24/05/2006	<p>Central African Republic (CAR) Education Reform Programme</p>	<p>In response to the decline in educational infrastructure due to ongoing conflict, CAR launched an education reform programme aimed at rebuilding schools, training teachers, and revising the national curriculum. Though some schools were rebuilt, the persistent civil war and lack of funding severely limited the programme's reach, leaving many areas without access to quality education.</p>
2010	<p>African Development Bank launches Human Capital Strategy (HCS)</p>	<p>The African Development Bank (AfDB) introduced its Human Capital Strategy (HCS) to enhance educational</p>

		<p>infrastructure and vocational training in Africa, including Central Africa. The initiative aimed to improve access to quality education by focusing on rural areas. While some progress was made in constructing schools, the region's instability limited widespread implementation.</p>
<p>15/07/2014</p>	<p>UNICEF's "Back to Learning" Campaign in CAR</p>	<p>Amidst escalating violence in the Central African Republic, UNICEF launched the Back to Learning campaign to ensure that displaced and vulnerable children continued their education. Temporary learning spaces were set up in refugee camps. This initiative provided educational access to tens of thousands of children, though instability continued to disrupt learning in many regions.</p>

<p>28/09/2015</p>	<p>Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</p>	<p>The UN General Assembly adopted Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), committing to inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030. This renewed global focus helped refocus attention on educational challenges in Central Africa. However, progress has been uneven due to the region's ongoing conflict, economic constraints, and poor infrastructure.</p>
<p>10/12/2017</p>	<p>Launch of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in Chad</p>	<p>Chad joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), receiving international support for its educational reforms. GPE funds were used to rebuild schools, provide teacher training, and improve curriculum development. While enrolment rates increased, many schools, especially in rural areas, still lack basic facilities like water,</p>

		electricity, and trained teachers.
12/07/2021	COVID-19 Pandemic School Closures	The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of schools across Central Africa, further straining the already weak educational infrastructure. Many children, especially in rural areas, lacked access to digital learning platforms or alternative education systems. As a result, learning gaps widened, and many children did not return to school once institutions reopened.
12/07/2021	UNICEF, UNESCO, and World Bank Joint Mission in Central Africa	A joint mission by UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank was launched to assess the impact of COVID-19 on education in Central Africa. The mission recommended urgent investments in digital learning, teacher training, and infrastructure upgrades. Some



		countries received funding for these improvements, but implementation has been slow due to ongoing regional conflicts and logistical challenges.
22/10/2023	African Union’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)	The <b>African Union</b> emphasised the importance of education in its <b>CESA</b> agenda, aiming to increase educational access and infrastructure investment across the continent. Central African countries were encouraged to prioritise education in their national policies. However, due to limited resources and internal conflict, progress in Central Africa has remained slow.

### Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

#### **The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) – 2002**

The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was launched in 2002 and was a sub-project of the Education For All Program, aimed at improving and accelerating the progress of the EFA’s main goals in regions such as Central & Western Africa, Central America, and parts of mainland Asia & Asia-Pacific. It had partnered with organisations such as the World Bank and UNESCO, as well as nations such as the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, EU States, and others to provide aid and funding towards impoverished and underprivileged regions and areas where the FTI was mainly focusing. Most aid was financial but also included technical assistance such as providing resources (like textbooks, stationery, and computers) as well as trained teachers

to low-income nations, especially those like Chad, the CAR, Cameroon, Senegal, and many other Sub-Saharan African nations.

The FTI targeted countries that were lagging behind in achieving universal primary education for all genders and ages, and while the initiative did help in increasing enrolment rates and completion of primary and secondary schooling, there were many issues such as weak governance of the program, dwindling interest from donor nations and organisations due to lack of benefits and rewards for them, and overall lack of long-term stability. Thus, the FTI was absorbed as part of the Global Partnership for Education's operations however there are still many nations that were originally marked as endorsed countries (those in need of aid) who have still not attained key goals and targets set by the EFA and focused on by the FTI, highlighting the immense aid required and need for newer, more sustainable solutions to this issue. While the FTI (as part of the GPE) still does play a major role in funding of education worldwide, the fact that almost 25 years have passed and significant progress has not been reached in every nation showcases the requirement for innovative answers to be thought of.

### **UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) Program – 1990**

UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) program, launched in 1990, was an extremely ambitious global movement hoping to ensure that all children throughout the world, regardless of their cultural, socio-economic, or other backgrounds had access to quality primary education by 2015. Many Central African countries were included in this initiative with its core aims being to reduce illiteracy, improve access to schooling, and bridge the gender gap in education. While a few countries, notably Cameroon, made significant progress in achieving these goals and improving awareness of quality education among their citizens, many other nations (especially rural, tribal, and conflict-affected regions) were left behind, unable to complete these goals to date.

By the 2015 deadline, while a few more countries did take steps towards achieving these goals with the aid of the EFA and FTI, many African nations still faced – and do face – major challenges. School enrollment increased, but issues such as overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, shortages of said teachers, and inadequate infrastructure persisted. UNESCO still continues to support education access and awareness in the region, but the lack of awareness and improvements in terms of quality education still hamper progress in nations like the CAR, Chad, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

### **USAID's Room to Learn Program (South Sudan) – 2013 to 2016**

In 2013, USAID launched the Room to Learn (RtL) program in South Sudan as part of its overall wider efforts to improve education in conflict areas and underprivileged regions across Central Africa. The program was a 3-year agreement between USAID and Winrock International (a non-profit organisation, NPO, working with people and agencies in the US and around the world aiming to “empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources...”). Their main aims, as outlined in Winrock’s official post-initiative final report (published February 2017), included rebuilding schools destroyed and/or damaged by the ongoing civil war after South Sudan’s independence in 2011, providing learning materials such as textbooks and stationery, and also train teachers so that they can offer quality education and support to children in these conflict-affected regions, many of whom were displaced and separated from their families/guardians. The main target audience included impoverished children, children in rural and tribal areas, ethnic minorities, displaced children, and girls.

Despite significant investments throughout the 3-year period until 2016, the civil war in South Sudan created major obstacles for the program and did not result in any significant outcomes. While the program helped increase awareness regarding primary education, due to reasons such as its short timeframe, recurring violence in these areas (making it hard to retain students) and subsequent displacement of families because of the violence, it struggled to maintain consistency. Nevertheless, USAID and Winrock laid the foundation for future efforts in the region and help in outlining the importance of context-specific and targeted approaches, especially in flashpoint regions such as Central and Sub-Saharan Africa, helping future programs learn from past mistakes.

## **Possible Solutions**

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for Education**

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) could be a key driver in improving educational infrastructure in Central Africa. Through PPPs, governments can collaborate with private sector entities such as construction companies, technology firms, and telecommunications

providers to build, maintain, and manage educational infrastructure. For example, private construction companies can build schools in remote areas where government resources may be limited, while tech and telecommunications firms could provide internet access and e-learning platforms for students to use.

PPPs offer several advantages, such as using private sector expertise in management and technology while combining it with government support and thus further reach. In countries like Kenya and Uganda, similar models have been used successfully to expand educational facilities. For Central African countries like Chad, the CAR, and Cameroon, adopting a PPP model could boost the construction of quality educational infrastructure, help provide sustainable maintenance for these buildings, and introduce technological innovations such as solar-powered schools and digital learning platforms to aid in improving sustainability, affordable access to electricity, and ease of learning for students who may not be able to come to school in person.

### **Investment in Teacher Training and Retention Programs**

Teacher shortages are a critical issue in Central Africa, exacerbating the already weak educational infrastructure. Investing in comprehensive teacher training programs is a crucial step toward addressing this problem. Such programs could focus on both pre-service and in-service training, equipping educators with modern teaching techniques, conflict-sensitive pedagogy, and digital literacy skills. Training programs should also include mentoring systems and continuous professional development to improve teaching standards in both urban and rural areas.

Additionally, teacher retention programs should be developed to ensure that qualified teachers stay in the system. This could involve providing competitive salaries, housing incentives, and professional recognition to teachers, particularly those working in remote or conflict-affected regions. Governments can collaborate with international organizations like UNESCO and the World Bank to fund teacher training institutes and support teachers

through e-learning platforms. The ultimate goal is to create a professional, motivated, and well-supported teaching workforce capable of delivering quality education across the region.

### **E-Learning and Digital Classrooms**

Introducing e-learning and digital classrooms is an innovative solution that can help overcome the challenges of the limitations of educational infrastructure, especially in remote rural areas where children may not have access to nearby schools. With the rapid growth of internet and 3G/4G/5G access and mobile technology, online learning platforms can be used to deliver education to students who do not have access to formal classrooms. Governments could partner with private firms in the tech and telecom companies to develop affordable e-learning platforms, such as mobile apps that are accessible even in low-connectivity areas.

Digital classrooms also allow for more interactive and flexible education, aiding students in having access to educational content anytime, anywhere. This could be especially beneficial during school closures caused by conflicts (such as civil wars and other wars going on in the region), health crises (such as the COVID-19 or Ebola pandemics) or any other reason. However, for this to be viable, governments need to invest in digital infrastructure, such as providing internet connectivity in rural areas and equipping schools with computers or tablets, ensuring that the infrastructure to support e-learning is in place. International donors and tech firms could collaborate to fund digital training for teachers and students, ensuring that digital platforms are used for effective delivery of education.

### **Development of Vocational and Technical Education (VET) Programs**

One of the most promising ways to address the gap in educational infrastructure is by developing robust Vocational and Technical Education (VET) programs tailored to the main socio-economic needs and interests of Central Africa and its youth. VET programs would focus on equipping youth with practical skills in fields like construction, agriculture,

technology, and healthcare that they can utilise for their future career paths. These skills would not only prepare students for employment but also help in increasing the number of skilled workers in the local economy. Central African governments could also work with major private firms and the private sector in general to help design curricula that would be extremely useful in increasing job opportunities and career pathways for Africa's future leaders.

In many parts of Central Africa, where formal education is often disrupted due to conflict, VET programs are a great alternative that can be adapted to the specific need of the youth and can also help in ensuring they are offered some form of quality education. By training students in essential job skills and opening paths for entrepreneurship and finding stable jobs, vocational education can greatly contribute in reducing unemployment and poverty in underprivileged and impoverished areas. If these initiatives would be further supported by both governments and international donors like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and African Development Bank (AfDB), this could help in increasing access to quality education, especially in rural areas where traditional education is usually less effective due to its lack of inclusion of core skills used by youth later on in life in their jobs (such as agriculture and healthcare).

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