

RUHUSIWA

GirlsAllowed

**PRIORITISING GIRLS
EDUCATION**

**WHY STUDENTS SHOULD
ENGAGE WITH ICTS**

**RESCUING SCHOOL GIRL
DROPOUTS**

**EDUCATION WITHOUT
GENDER INEQUALITY**

**SUICIDE AMONGST YOUTH
AND CHILDREN**

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EDUCATION WITHOUT GENDER INEQUALITY



Student learn using multi-media, Zambia
Photo: Gareth Bentley / IICD

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear readers

Greetings! And welcome to yet another exciting edition of your favourite magazine. On behalf of The Usawa Institute family and RUHUSIWA magazine, I would like to thank you for the love and support you showed on our inaugural edition.

In this edition, we give you a deeper insight into digitalization and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education for girls and women in our continent. ICTs can be simply defined as any technology that has to do with information and communication, this refers to the use of gadgets like mobile phones, computers, and cameras to pass information and communicate. The world we live in is a result of constant change. What might be there one day is might not be there tomorrow, look at what happened with Covid19!

The changes that we have all born witnessed represent a significant period in our lives. When the world went on lockdown, due to the pandemic people working from home, and students learned from home online- FOR ME that was an eye opener on how much ICTs are important in education!

The use of ICTs is so widespread, policies, rules, regulations and traditions are being transitioned and shaped to adopt and accommodate ICTs in the workplace, families societies and communities-the education sector should not be left out, it has been proven that the use of ICT in the classroom increases the motivation of the students, promotes interactivity, increases communication between students and their teachers.

There are some parents who still are not allowing their daughters to own mobile phones, computers or other communication methods because they believe these gadgets promote cultural indecency. I mean really parents!? Yes, we still have partners who do not allow their spouses access to mobile phones, computers, and cameras because culture says so. Yes, we still have communities and schools that are still lagging behind in terms of ICTs in education because they cannot afford them.

Dear authorities and policymakers, please prioritize and foster ICTs in public education. Dear parents, for the sake of better education, let that daughter have access to a mobile phone, a computer or any other communication methods. Dear partner, please understand that giving women and girls access to the internet and skills to use ICTs gives them an opportunity to start new businesses, and access education as well as health and financial services.

ICTs in education are very important and they are a key aspect that shouldn't be ignored. Once again, thank you for being a part of our journey. I hope this edition will give you a better perspective on what ICTs are, and how important they are in the education system.

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Zambia Urged To Prioritise ICT's In Education

By Luyando Haamwala
Photo: GPE Flickr

Zambian students without access to ICT equipment and resources faced a nightmare when their school life got replaced with home shortly after the Covid 19 crippled the world.

Due to the Covid19 pandemic that hit the African continent and the world at large, Tech adoption in the classroom increased in the past three years across the continent, just as it is done overseas, Interactive whiteboards, tablets, and laptops have all but replaced the chalkboards, textbooks, and clunky desktop computers of the traditional classroom, and today's teachers

and students have access to hundreds of thousands of apps, videos, and online courses designed to enhance the learning experience

In the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, the education system in most developing African countries was among the most threatened, as schools were required to shut down for months with teachers and learners having reduced contact hours especially in rural areas.

For students in Zambia, the Covid19 era gave most of them a nightmare of their lifetime. With the classroom being replaced by their homes and the chalk board being replaced by mobile phones and computers

It was the hardest time for most parents and students as they could not afford this kind of education.

The story was however different for private and international schools who have invested heavily in the Information and communications technology ICTs and were able to effectively implement online and distance education for their pupils with lesser challenges.

According to parents across the nation of Zambia, the Covid 19 crisis should be an eye opener for policymakers and authorities to start developing methods and models that can help the less privileged students access the essentials of ICTs. This situation with no doubt then begs the answer to the question on the importance of ICTs and digitalisation in education.

According to a 31 year old mother of two, (GRACE SINYANGWE) from Lusaka's Kabwata Township, the effects of the covid-19 pandemic in the education sector were visible in most homes, as parents would speak the same language as challenges experienced were similar.

"Progress was seen in children from private schools and this should have also been seen for children in public facilities"
Mr Victor Muyumba

Ms. SINYANGWE, a mother of two, says her sons who were in public schools began to lose interest in school activities such as home studying, which she said would worry her.

'The lack of ICT equipment and close interaction with teachers made the situation worse for children.'

Another 28-year-old Mother to a child living with special needs IDAH PHIRI, of Lilayi Residential Area, narrated that the burden of raising a special child doubled, as having her child in school greatly helps in behavioural and developmental growth which she cannot manage alone.

Ms PHIRI said the development of her 6-year-old son living with autism slowed down as the lack of teacher-pupil conduct was reduced. "I believe if my son continued with learning even through ICTs innovation his development and interaction with others would have increased.

The story in rural areas is however different as schools record a large number of school dropouts, teen pregnancies and early marriages due to the lack of continued learning through the closure of schools. This was mostly attributed to the lack of electricity, computers and lack of internet connection. National Union for Private and Public Educators NUPPEZ one of the teacher unions in Zambia says it is important for the education sector to be digitised as the world is developing at a fast pace and as such the country needs to be at par with other developed countries. NUPPEZ President Victor Muyumba said in an interview that with the advent of covid, learning must not only be believed to be physical contact between teachers and learners as this will increase children lagging behind, especially in public schools was observed.

Mr. Muyumba added that it is the lack of ICTs in education that saw children in public schools returning to where they had ended in the last term of school while those in private learning facilities were ahead and had covered most of the topics in their school calendar.

Mr. Muyumba emphasized the need for the government to invest in ICT's and digitization of the education sector. He said not only should concentration be placed on equipment but also it must be constituting credible cadres of ICT teachers in the country.

He added that ICT gadgets must also be made cheaper for all parents and guardians to afford. From the above, it is evident that ICTs in education play a very important role that can't be ignored in the changing world.

Ms PHIRI said the development of her 6-year-old son living with autism slowed down as teacher-pupil contact was reduced.



STATE OF EDUCATION

GHANA

3.99 % of
GDP is spent
Education

Education
is free until
secondary

393 000
Teachers

265 000
children
were out of
school

SOUTH AFRICA

26.8 million
Aged 0 - 24yrs

24 894
Public
Schools

444 8577
Teachers

843 000
children
were out of
school

10 Reasons Why Students Should Engage With ICT's

By Loyce Jamo
Photo World Bank Flickr

Being in the teaching Industry for quite some time now, allow me to confirm that ICTs have not just made my job as a teacher easier but it has played a much bigger role in the development of my students. Yes, it can be argued that ICTs have created a not-so-safe space for students, especially girls and women but taking from my experience as a teacher and a mother.

Allow me to say this- 'Because educational technology pervades all aspects of modern society, schools have a duty of care to ensure that pupils understand issues such as keeping safe online, protecting their identity, recognising good and misleading information sources on the internet, the effects of educational technology on communications and the economy, to name but a few issues. Technology in schools is very important for human development and students need to be part of the world.

Here are some reasons why students should engage with ICT.

1. Technology in the classroom gives an opportunity to students to learn more, and to be creative they don't need to wait for the teacher they can research on their own. The teacher is the facilitator.
2. Technology in the classroom improves access to information helping students to have timely information, you can be updated with the latest happenings and debates in real-time.
3. ICTs help to prepare students for the future through research, the use of phones or tablets can facilitate communication with the world creating opportunities and visibility through interaction with other people.
4. ICT in the classroom can facilitate the teaching and learning process by allowing the use of various dynamic forms of learning and investigation.
5. ICT in classroom can help the student to be more responsible, practical and dynamic.
6. ICT places all learners on an equal footing. Given the right hardware, software and curriculum activities, even severely physically disadvantaged pupils can achieve the same degree of success as anyone else.
7. ICT has been shown to have benefits in terms of motivating pupils. That comes about partly through factors like being able to produce nice-looking work with no teacher's red marks all over it, and partly because the computer is seen as being impartial and non-judgemental in its feedback to the pupil.

8. ICT enables pupils to gather data that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible to obtain. For example, data from inaccessible places (eg outer space), inaccessible times (eg overnight), from both overseas and nationally on demand (without having to physically go anywhere) or data at very precise time intervals.

9. ICT enables pupils to experiment with changing aspects of a model, which may be difficult or even impossible for them to do otherwise. For example, pupils of Business Studies and Economics can see what might happen to the economy if interest rates were raised or lowered.

10. ICT enables pupils to draft or redraft their work until they are satisfied with it.

“Early child digital literacy will empower young future innovators with digital skills. And this will allow them to contribute to their communities and global tech advancements”

Agang Ditlhogo





Only 37 %

of Women in Sub Saharan Africa
have access to mobile internet. Which
means the rest do not have access to



Health and Wellness Information



Financial Services – Mobile Money, banking,
remittances, loans, insurance, pay bills



Education and Skills Learning



Ability to run an enterprise, business or
find employment



Digital Solutions that improve quality of life



Ability to tell their stories



Source: GMSA 2021 Report



Every Learner Matters

By Suraiya Essof

Photo : GPE Flickr

The classroom was quieter than a regular classroom, but everything else was the same with children happily making their kites, teachers demonstrating how to make them and I, amazed at all that I was witnessing, watching how a special needs classroom is run. I am not sure what I had expected to see at the first Kites for Peace workshop at a special school.

Perhaps that the children may be more attention needy? I could not have been more mistaken. All that the hearing-impaired children at Chirodzo Primary School in Mbare (Harare, Zimbabwe) needed was a teacher who could 'crutch' their impediment with skill and some understanding. They are just like their non-disabled peers after all, but with a special educational need, they are in a regular classroom, and they are accompanied by a regular teacher but one with a "special" skill!

I reflected on what my social activist colleague and fellow educator, Samantha Sibanda said "We further disable children when we don't give them what they need to remove the barriers that they encounter daily in the classroom and so they fail to thrive".

Samantha is a Human Rights Advocate and the director of Signs of Hope Trust. What she meant by this is that these children simply need the appropriate tools and teachers who are skilled in communicating with them. In this particular classroom at Chirodzo, the extra skill that these great teachers have is simple – sign language!

This straightforward solution is an example of why we need educational legislation and policies that include and accommodate children with special educational needs. This is a starting point.

The correct training of special needs educators e.g., in sign language, braille, etc. is one simple solution. Internet access and connectivity is another, Covid lockdowns proved that virtual classrooms could effectively reflect real classrooms, and while this may have been resisted and since discarded in the mainstream, it has been a welcomed development in the disabled community because of ease of accessibility for those with physical disabilities, and the digital tools and "crutches" that simplify learning for those with hearing and physical impairments, as well as those with psychosocial impairments.

Disabilities and needs are not homogenous! We cannot bundle them into one when seeking solutions - mental and physical disabilities, girls and young women issues, high risk teens, low income community needs must be separated. Furthermore, individual disabilities must be separated for example, physical disability doesn't affect intellectual capability. This point needs to be acknowledged and harnessed when searching for solutions to address inclusivity in our schools.

In Zimbabwe, best practices include community information centres set up by government and resource centres in schools, as in Chirodzo, where the community can access digital and non digital tools (e.g. braille machines), as well as skilled and specialised educators.

The country also has a number of Special needs institutions but, while these address many needs of the disabled community, they are not always ideal because they don't promote integration in wider community settings. Students become isolated, segregation occurs and misconceptions and biases abound.

Integration into regular classes is a double edged sword - While students with conditions such as albinism may easily be integrated into regular classrooms, this is not the case for some - particularly deaf and blind students.

Trust Mutekwa, aka Ticha Muzavazi, special educator at St Giles Rehabilitation Centre, and advocate for Inclusive Education, points out that performance in class or general functionality of children with disability backgrounds is largely dependent on addressing or meeting particular needs as determined by their nature. He highlights that, for learners with particular impairments and special needs to be meaningfully integrated into regular classes, there is need to have skilled teachers working with them.

Otherwise the learners may be more disempowered if they have special tools like braille machines in the regular schools,

without special assistance from skilled teachers. Integration, however, is necessary to craft conditions for coexistence with the wider community, and to teach children the norms and etiquette for community socialisation. Non-disabled children also need to be educated on the correct etiquette in their interactions with those with disabilities. Schools should nurture community inclusivity as this promotes the correct attitudes that are necessary for cooperation and unity.

Even if we were to create special schools for those with disabilities according to their needs, resources will likely always be the limiting factor as they are not easily availed.

A well equipped and well trained support system within the school is a middle ground, fulfilling the need for integration, empowering students with the relevant aids and fostering appropriate cultures and positive attitudes. These resource centres would have relevant learning for different ages and education levels, bearing in mind that many disabled children have gaps in learning due to inaccessibility of schools and long absences due to Rehabilitation.

The revolution in creating inclusive education systems starts and ends with the correct attitudes by:

- ensuring that schools are accessible to all sectors of society
- lobbying and advocating for learners with disabilities
- raising awareness of challenges, and educating on how solutions can be reached without discrimination, so that we as a society are not further contributors of disabilities

- Providing the necessary tools to minimise the negative effects of the disability
- Encouraging a change of mindset to beat stigmatisation
- Including people with disabilities in building and planning their own solutions
- Promoting universal design in all areas, particularly accessible infrastructure such as - ramps, accessible toilets, braille etc. so that they may be usable by many diverse community sectors.
- Lobbying for Tax rebates to make technology and tools available to low - income families
- being aware of and open to the use of relevant low-cost/free technology such as Open source software- e.g. screen readers, smartphone accessibility features, and tools for computer-assisted communication. eg <https://grid.asterics.eu>
- Creating apps and encouraging local solutions for marginalised communities.
- Allowing all stakeholders to give input in proposing politicians - teachers, disability specialists: speech therapists, Ministry of Education Secretariat, Ministry of Health, policymakers, school administrators, SDCs in charge of renovations and so on.

My trip to Chirodzo and subsequent experiences with special needs students and educators have opened my eyes to one thing:

“Disability” results from how the impairment interacts with the environment. And so, if we can create a welcoming and inclusive environment, where students feel less burdened by their challenges, we can uncover the wealth of talent, brilliance and artistry that they possess and build an industrious and peaceful future for us all!



JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PER KM²

Distance covered before finding a Junior secondary School



Source: Federal Ministry of Education



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Rescuing School Girl Dropouts: Lesotho

By Sebongile Kolobe
Photo: World Bank Flickr

The government of Lesotho in collaboration with the United Nation Agencies (UNESCO, UNAID, UNICEF and UNFPA) recently launched 'Lesotho Education plus Initiative 2021-2025' in to respond to nearly 50 000 thousand adolescent girls' at risk of secondary school dropping out of school due unwanted pregnancies, early child marriage, dysfunctional families, fees and reduce the risk of HIV infections by 50%.

The 'Lesotho Education Plus Initiative' spearheads the accomplishment of gender equality in sub-Saharan Africa with secondary education as the tactical access point. The in and out of school initiative is said to play a key role in reducing HIV Stigma and discrimination.

Even though the exact statistics of Girls Drop due to early and unintended pregnancies and teenage pregnancies between 2020 and 2022 in Lesotho are unknown at this stage, The State of the World Population 2022 indicate the 1 in 3 women in Lesotho start childbearing in adolescence and nearly half of adolescent mothers are children.

Lesotho commits to accelerate action and investment more to empower adolescents girls and young women and it also joins other sister countries by being the eleventh country to join the Education Plus Initiative. The Education in and out of school is said to play a vital role in reducing HIV transmission and HIV- related stigma and discrimination.

In 2019 alone, Lesotho experienced 16 217 of drops out within primary and secondary schools with Secondary girls drop- out for the year 2019 amount to 3 792 country wide while boys stands at 3 509 which amounts to 7 301 school dropouts in general. On the other hand a huge difference is within the primary education where 3 343 girls dropped out due Girl Child marriage, early an intended pregnancies while boys 5573 boys who are head boys

Gladys (Not her Real name) in Mohale's Hoek's remote area Mpharane dropped out of school at the age of 16 to give birth to her first child due early and unintended pregnancy. This year she turns 20, and she is expecting her fourth child, she never considered the use of contraceptives because her husband and the in-laws are against the idea.

However, despite being a mother of four, Gladys still wishes to go back to school and at least complete her high school. She said the Lesotho Education Plus Initiative could be the angel of hope she has been hoping for in the past years, since she can not afford to pay for her own school fees and take care of her children at the same time.

"Even though I am about to have my fourth child, I still wish I could finish school. However, what will happen to my children. My grandmother is old and right after the birth of this one; I must hustle to find work to provide for. Otherwise we shall go to bed hungry", Gladys sighed.

Gladys dropped school at grade 8 and she viewed the initiative as a scapegoat for many girls especially the ones living in the rural areas where many challenges pertaining a girl child are mostly seen. She said many girls at her village dropped out of school to get married and are now young adults.

Data captured between 2019 & 2021 through medical records from the first quarter of The State of the World Population 2022 further indicate that girls between the ages of 10-14 have increased abortion admission of 35.7%, girls between 15-19 years are 8.1% and girls between 20-24 is 10.06%.

The report continued to reveal that Mohale's Hoek recorded the highest number of abortions resulting from early child marriage by 85% followed by Maseru District at 51% and Berea districts at 50%. The District Health Manager said the district recorded 149 cases of abortions in Mohale's Hoek between 2020 and 2022.

Regional Director UNAID, Ann Shongwe said this is retention for Girls to give them an opportunity to finish school without any hindrance. She said Africa need the input girls and young women as investing in girls' education transforms communities, countries and the entire world. She narrated that Girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy, productive lives. They earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families.

"When we start talking about Initiatives like this, it is because of the numbers of girls that contract HIV when out of school. The numbers are very scare and we think: what can we do differently", Ann Shongwe said.

She continued to congratulate the government of Lesotho to the fight against HIV/AIDS since 2004. She highlighted that Lesotho became the first to launch "Know your Status Campaign and since 1994-2021- New Infections have declined by 79% and AIDS deaths by 76%.

"a huge difference is within the primary education where 3 343 girls dropped out due Girl Child marriage, early an unintended pregnancies while boys 5 573 boys became head boys"

Upon the recent launch of the Lesotho Education plus initiative, speakers indicated that the initiative entirely centered on the empowerment of girl child but the absence of parenting continuously forced students to drop out and force them to look for jobs as means of living. They revealed that Covid 19 exposed many children to difficult situations that mandated them to never consider school as a considerable means to better life.

The founder of Impact School Maseru Lesotho, 'Mamonaheng Koenane viewed the innovative as a master plan to even introduce girls to ISTEM as The African Union (AU) through the decision on the Science Technology and Innovation (STI) captured in the Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA), encourages members to spend at least 1% on research and development to enhance STEM innovations.

Additionally, the AU has also developed the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16 - 25), FAWE/AUCIEFFA commissioned Gender Equality Strategy for CESA 16-25 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2014 - 2024),

all of which underpin science, technology and innovation as multi-function tools and enablers for achieving continental development goals. "The More girls have the opportunity to study, unlike before this is the more chance they get exposed to STEM subjects and we need that. We cannot afford to only see a boy child in those areas while we need girls, I like this move by the government, and she said smiling"

The Minister of Education and Training in Lesotho Honorable 'Mamookho Phiri said the initiative realises every girl's rights to health and education.

Therefore, Lesotho will ensure sustainability of this Initiative through a number of Interventions such as fast-tracking Retention Policy under the support of UNESCO, the fast-tracking of Valid Validated Learners Pregnancies Management Policy with support from UNFPA to be approved by Parliament soon enough.

"The sustainability of this programme depends on the above policies to ensure that girls and young women have access to sexual reproductive education. We have implemented life skills based sexual reproduction in schools," she said.

Evidence confirms that girls—and their communities and countries—reap multiple social and economic benefits from their completion of secondary school: reduced vulnerability to acquiring HIV and to becoming child brides and teenage mothers, while increasing their prospects for securing jobs and higher incomes as adult women, among others.

The initiative is a rights-based, gender-responsive action agenda to ensure adolescent girls and young women have equal opportunities to access quality secondary education, alongside key education and health services and supports for their economic autonomy and empowerment. It will foster an enabling environment for adolescent girls and young women to enjoy safe and fruitful learning experiences, and to thrive while paving their way to vibrant futures. The rewards will also reach far into the longer-term, with inter-generational effects: Empowered girls are the empowered women of the future.

A gender activist Zwelithini Matsoso said if carried out properly; the Initiative has the capacity to turn gender equality into a reality.

LENTSOE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2022



MALEBANA DIANA POKA
MENTEE- LESOTHO



TASHINGA CHIWOMBA
MENTEE- ZIMBABWE



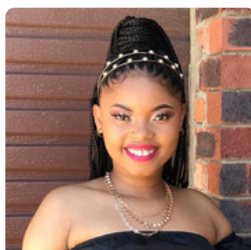
LINTLE FOSA
MENTEE- LESOTHO



MOSA MAOENG
MENTEE- LESOTHO



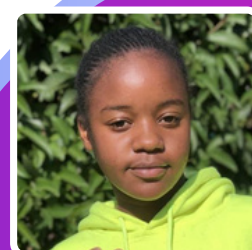
CHARLOTTE K. CHIGWEDERE
MENTEE- ZIMBABWE



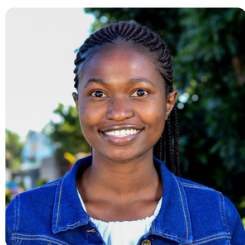
LINEO RAMOTABOKA
MENTEE- LESOTHO



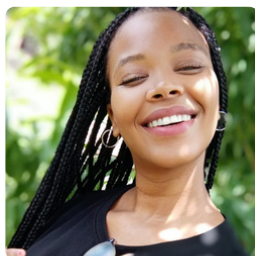
SHARON CHIWA
MENTEE- ZIMBAWE



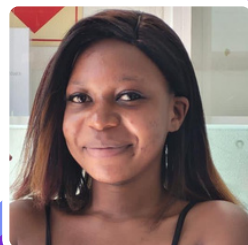
CHELSEA CHAPWNYA
MENTEE- ZIMBAWE



TANIA CHIPO
MENTEE- ZIMBABWE



SYLVIA MAKATLA
MENTEE- LESOTHO



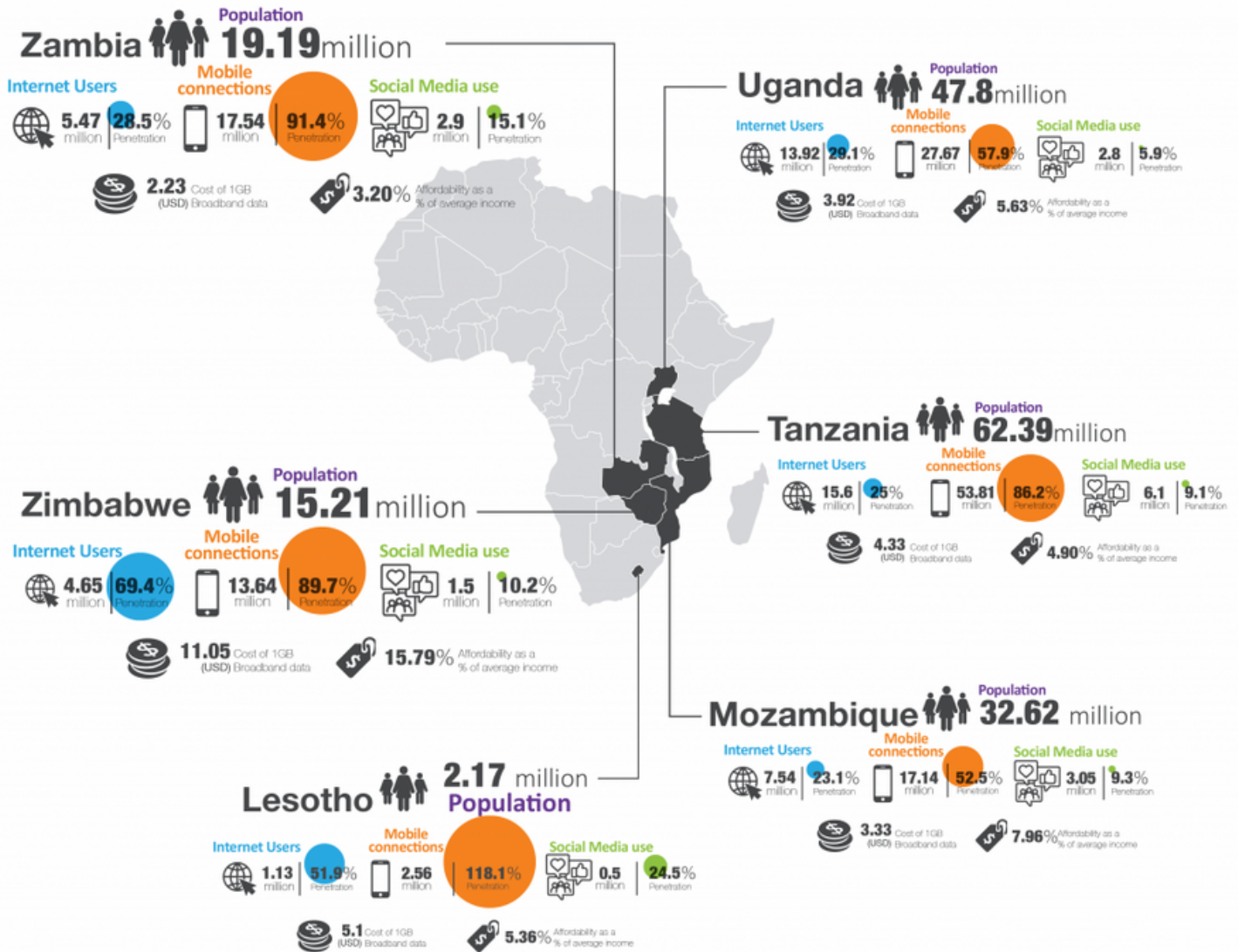
SAMANTHA MUSVABURI
MENTEE- ZIMBABWE



LINTLE MAKUTOANE
MENTEE- LESOTHO

LMP is a program that teaches young women and girls to use digital communication skills to be able to tell their stories and highlight and speak out about the systematic issues around young women and girls in Africa . The LMP shapes young women and girls who are advocates, journalist and activists understand their rights, leadership and with technical training ion using digital media to tell stories and speak around issues that concerns girl child education. This program will be training 12 Lesotho and Zimbabwean with the industry-needed skills, best practises and mentorship for them to collaborate and use their voices (lentsoe) for the girls child.





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"In 2020, mobile technologies and services generated more than \$130 billion of economic value added (8% of GDP) in Sub-Saharan Africa. This will reach \$155 billion by 2025, as countries increasingly benefit from the improvements in productivity and efficiency brought about by the increased take-up of mobile services"

source: gsma.com

Prioritise quality and inclusive education in Africa

By Jane Gogodo-Shambare

***"Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of education exclusion, with more than 20% of children under-11 not attending school".
UNESCO***

Aristotle avowed: the worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal. These words are the philosopher's warning that while inequality is bad for society, the attempts to cover up and ignore inequalities within society is even worse. UNESCO found that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of education exclusion, with more than 20% of children under-11 not attending school. For far too long, society has been ignoring the inequalities in our schooling system and pretending that all schools are equal and that all students are being treated fairly and equally in these schools.

The global community, through the enactment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), appears to have heeded Aristotle's warning. For instance, SDG 4 aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This goal ensures that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030. It is safe to say that significant progress has been made since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to SDGs. But it would appear that some of these gains might have been lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the context of education, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities. Learners from affluent schools simply switched to online learning on their smartphones, iPads, and laptops. The same, however, could not be said of rural and township schools. Learners from these upper-top schools were excluded from schooling. But, as a nation, did we acknowledge this inequality? No. Instead we equalised the inequality. By calling for a blanket ruling on remote learning or online learning, society ignored that poor learners neither have iPads nor Wi-Fi at home. So how were they expected to learn? In this sense, COVID-19 exacerbated education inequalities in developing countries. In the spirit of inclusion and facilitating equal opportunity,

SDG 10.2 and SDG 10.3 seek to reduce inequalities. In addition, SDG 9 promotes innovation and infrastructure, which might have the antidote needed to bridge the education inequalities.

ICTs and Digitalisation are important to education. The pandemic forced alternative ways for communicating, learning, and teaching need to be utilised. Hence, the importance of the internet. For rural and township learners, this is where the plot thickens. Already, many of the marginalised schools lack the basic infrastructure such as electricity, buildings, and running water. Without the required infrastructure it becomes difficult to have innovations such as the internet. Having internet services and devices such as tablets and computers ushers in the needed transformation in education for learners in marginalised communities. This is where SDG 9 becomes useful.

There are two case studies in South Africa and Kenya where local governments are partnering with private players and schools to provide free Wi-Fi. In South Africa, the City of Tshwane in partnership with Ulwembu Business Services are providing free wifi called Tshi-Wifi service to seven regions for schools, clinics, informal settlements, libraries, and educational institutions. In Nyandarua county, Kenya, the government is providing also free public wifi.

Ensuring that learning initiatives engender transformation, quality and inclusive education is imperative. ICTs and digitalisation remain important for sustainable quality education initiatives. They will always support an uninterrupted learning experience.

Prioritising remote learning offers a pattern of consistency. It also has the potential to curb interruptions that result from crises such as natural disasters and conflict. The power of remote learning has been observed in the current war between Ukraine and Russia. Many Ukraine children have managed to continue learning with minimal interruptions on online platforms.

Educational rights of children must be observed in order for Africa and the rest of the world to meet the goals for sustainable development on the 2030 Agenda. Maintaining and supporting children's education guarantees human capital for sustainable development. To achieve this SDG 17 calls for partnerships for the goals and must be embraced in solving the education crises for those marginalised.

The following recommendations are put forward

- Collaboration between governments and telecommunication's companies to ensure coverage reaches the most remote rural areas, this could help rural and township communities to develop more remote learning programmes and ensure inclusive learning.
- Government intervention to encourage mobile service providers to offer subsidised or zero-rated data for learning and education.
- The private sector should join the campaign to help digitalise education. Donate devices such as tablets, computers, and cell phones. Computer training skills are also a vital part of digitalisation that can be provided through initiatives by Tech companies from the private sector.



Suicide Amongst Youth And Children

By Kelly Muzariri -Tavaziva

Photo: Meena Ishag - Flickr

Suicide may seem a far-fetched thought to many but to some it is the only option possible when life takes a different turn. Ironically the thoughts can occur more often than one may realise. These thoughts can emerge from persistent feelings of complete hopelessness, thinking it were better to end it all or perceiving that it is the only resort when one finds their life taking on a sudden unexpected turn.

As we dig deeper into this, one can begin to wonder how is it that a person who seemed to have it all together in life such as being surrounded by family, access to a good education with a community of friends then suddenly their narrative changes to hear that they are no more because they took their life.

This scenario is not far-fetched but rather portrays a real-life story captured in the main news headlines reported from Harare, Zimbabwe. It was on this day I had tuned in to the broadcasting station and what gripped my attention immediately was the tabloid written "11-year-old schoolgirl takes her life." listened in closely, intently and cringed to see the family was shattered, the father could hardly spare a

few minutes to speak as he wept in pain he could only briefly speak out of dismay as he mentioned in the past few days when she came from school, she showed changes in her mood and was very withdrawn, was she abused?

The speculation was not clear, on the day the incident occurred she had just returned from school, when the mother asked her to go and tidy her room, we did not hear again from her.

As they went into the room only find her hanging and already gone. Unfortunately, in this case as is common at times others are left with a lot of questions unanswered to conclude the story. Working in the mental health fraternity for youth mental health interventions, the incident had just occurred at a period where a local university was asking for support on campus due to the increasing rate of suicide at the university. The reality of suicide hit us, in essence

knowing that it has gripped society at the core and the education fraternity has been no exception. Learning communities can identify with the unprecedented rise in the African context to date. World Suicide Prevention Day has been marked yearly on the 10th of September; the commemorations aim at bringing awareness



to the reality of lives being lost through self-harm. The conversations about post suicide incidents have unfortunately been aired through great difficulties in these learning communities.

This brings to surface the grave reality that children and youth are faced with having to mentally process the meaning altogether. Aiding to awareness, suicide is known as taking one's life due to varying contributors such as difficulties in keeping up with life and stress that is often caused by depression, feeling as if life has no meaning or purpose.

Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and was the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds globally in 2019 (WHO ref). Given such statistics there is an opportunity to normalise equipping the young generation on basic skills to give support in the form of mental health first aid approach towards seeing signs of suicidal tendencies amongst other peers.

What are some of the signs of suicidal ideations?

- Social isolation, withdrawal from loved ones.
- Talking about taking one's own life.

- Acting as if saying goodbye to people.
- Suddenly engaging in risky behaviours are amongst some of the varied signs

Ways to offer support.

- Being observant to notice the above and any other such like symptoms pointing towards suicidal ideations.
- Engage in conversation intentionally asking Are you ok?
- Actively listening with the intention to affirm that you are there for them and to probe further on ways to offer support to the individual
- If discussion is presenting to be at the advanced level, seek to a trusted other professional for further support.
- Checking up on them, asking how are you doing?

There is hope in learning communities through opportunities to offer reassurance as support strategies this can be in simple forms of engaging in conversations by asking Are you ok? Being a listening ear and reaching out for help in safe spaces when feeling overwhelmed.



Education Digitalisation: The Future of Learning

By Takudzwa Nduku

Photo 1: GPE Flickr, Photo 2 World Bank

#DidYouKnow in a world where digitalisation impacts change in the modern global community? It has been recorded that in 2021 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 45 percent fewer women and girls have been documented to have access to ICTs, including female students in learning institutions, as recorded by sagfoundation.com. Though the world continues to evolve daily, with each country leaving their digital mark and footprint, Africa still lags behind in terms of incorporating ICTs into learning and work institutions.

This was heavily seen with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, which paved the way for the increased use of digital learning and ICT resources in schools. But how many African students, particularly female students, can say they have proper access to ICT tools to learn online?

The use of electronic devices and the internet in schools still remains a big obstacle to ensuring online learning for African students, as some parts of the continent still struggle to finance basic student necessities.

It is, however, important to note that, according to the United Nations (UN), in 2018, Africa's primary school enrollment rate was above 80 percent on average, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recording more children going to school than ever.

Creating a huge crisis with some African countries, such as Zimbabwe, experiencing teacher shortages due to low manpower and wage strikes in the wake of the current economic situation, Africa has still yet to equip itself against natural disasters and educational disruptions. Furthermore, there is a great need for ICTs in the education sector, in both rural and urban schools, to help curb situations such as teacher strikes, natural disasters, and pandemics. Students, both in the rural and urban areas, will have a chance to keep up in school whilst experiencing disasters.

Though one might argue that the use of ICTs in schools could be expensive for an ordinary or poor learning institution, there is a need for African governments and the private sector to



invest more in the education of African school children while ensuring increased budgets for the country's education.

While this learning disparity affects both genders in schools, more girls still remain behind boys at lower and upper secondary levels, particularly in STEM education, though the World Economic Forum has recorded a reduction in the past decades, which still remains a relatively low percentage in some regions where child and early marriages are still rampant.

This all stems from the different ways these two genders are brought up. Whereas boys are taught the importance of school and education, girls are groomed from an early age to understand the importance of being the perfect bride.

Hence, when some of these girls end up getting pregnant, they are entirely shunned from accessing learning tools.

Therefore, the introduction of ICTs in schools will not only help close the learning gap created by natural disasters, pandemics, and teacher strikes. The digitalisation of education will also assist in closing the disparity between girls and boys in schools while helping educate those girls that end up pregnant or married from a young age. By teaching and including our African girls, particularly the rural girl child, to make use of online learning tools and ICT in schools.

We are not only investing in their future by ensuring they keep up with their urban counterparts, but we are also helping them keep up with their education when they end up in undesirable situations such as child pregnancies and early marriages.

Education Without Gender Inequality

By Mitchell Matika

Photo: GPE Flickr



Africa has been billed as a continent of opportunities. Yet it remains a continent where the drivers of its economic, social and cultural growth remain unsung.

Some of our social identities, like race, ethnicity, gender and others, are acquired either at birth or can be adjusted or developed during our lifetime. Society moulds us to fit into this big puzzle and in this puzzle, some pieces end up growing bigger over time, squeezing the other pieces into formation. The bigger pieces would form the oppressor group while the other small pieces would be the oppressed group. The joining of pieces represents the privilege and easily acquired resources the oppressor group has.

In terms of gender, "men are more likely than women to control conversations and be allowed to get away with it and to have their contributions taken seriously." African society is built upon the ideals of patriarchy, where men always have the last say and women should bow their heads and take it.

Dating back 200 years ago, women were only viewed as tools of war, baby-making machines, and household help. Our own identities are not solely based on what we choose to call ourselves at the end of the day.

Rather, they are based on what was put together ears before we were born and how we happen to fit into them.

However, over time, we have shown vast improvement because we currently have women governors and leaders like Minister Martha Karua and the late political, and environmental activist Wangari Maathai. Educating the girl child is educating a generation, yes that baby machine socially assigned role to women has a greater impact when educated.

Worldwide according to United nations stats 129 million girls are out of school, that's about 64 million generations, that will continue normalising risks such as child marriages, gender inequality, child mortality, poverty, and maternal mortality. All these are global problems being faced by snatching the right to education away from the girl child.

Gender-equitable education systems empower girls and boys and promote the development of life skills – like self-management, communication, negotiation and critical thinking – that young people need to succeed.

They close skills gaps that perpetuate pay gaps and build prosperity for entire countries. Educating girls is the number one way to fight climate change, reduce poverty, and create a fair and sustainable world and the planet at large.



RUHUSIWA

Ruhusiwa #GirlsAllowed is published by The Usawa Institute a non-profit organisation dedicated to fostering equality through education, research and advocacy, we are fully committed to the girl child and her access to education across the continent of Africa.

For more information contact us at info@theusawainstitute.org

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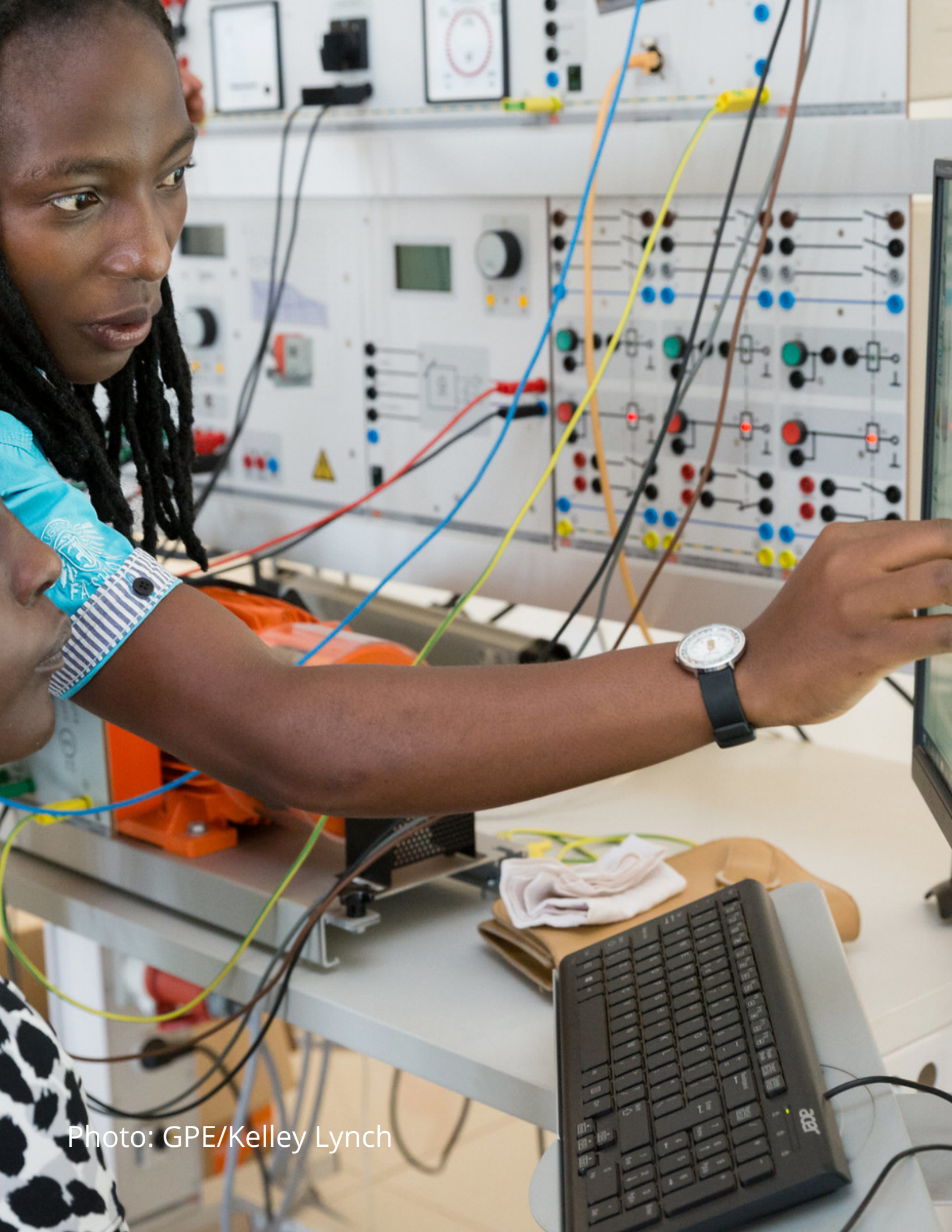


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