



"THE GLOBAL YOUTH COMPACT TO BUILD BACK BETTER POST-COVID-19"

THEME:

"Building Back Better in a connected World, Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Critical Role of Young People and Global Solidarity."





9TH AFRICA STUDENTS AND YOUTH SUMMIT

"THE GLOBAL YOUTH COMPACT TO BUILD BACK BETTER POST-COVID-19" 3 DECEMBER 2020

We, students and youth leaders, meeting at the 9th Africa Students and Youth Summit on 2nd and 3rd December 2020, reaffirm our commitment to the world's direction to Build Back Better and to the cause of making our voices heard, and to taking the necessary steps to ensure that, post-COVID-19, we truly rebuild a world of equity and justice for **ALL**.

PREAMBLE

- This compact is inspired by the great work youth and student activists have done to support initiatives that are committed to averting the ravaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This compact is a key outcome of the 9th Africa Students and Youth Summit deliberations;
- This compact also draws inspiration from very key documents that have been launched or shared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the "Fair Share for Children Report" launched by the 100 Million Campaign and its partners, the outcome documents from the AASU situation room meetings and webinars, and the UNESCO Guidelines on Education in Emergencies (COVID-19);
- 3. We are truly indebted to the many youths and student leaders who have, at the risk of their own lives and safety, volunteered in several capacities to alleviate the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable communities, as well as UNESCO, the 100 Million Campaign, the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Global Students Forum (GSF), and the Laureates and Leaders for Children, and in particular, Kailash Satyarthi (Nobel Peace Laureate);
- 4. This Global Youth Compact presents a non-legally binding collaborative process that tries to solidify the efforts of youth and student leaders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This compact also places a demand on the world's youth and student leaders to engage their local and national decision-makers and encourage them to act in a concerted manner that will yield the results needed to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver justice for all.

OUR COMMON UNDERSTANDING

We believe that a post-COVID-19 era, if not planned for properly, could be more devastating than the pandemic itself, undoing all the gains we have made in the past and risking the loss of an entire generation. The global COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that none of us is safe until we all are; therefore, to truly Build Back Better post-COVID-19, the needs of the world's most marginalised and deprived groups must not be left out.





This compact sets out our thoughts as youths, students, and leaders of our representative organisations about how a post-COVID era could look if we are all united in action to create a fairer, more equal future. We know that for the world to truly witness a come-back from the catastrophic effects of such a crisis, we would need to work together in solidarity and partnership to achieve the targets that we are setting for ourselves.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Our collective responsibility is hinged on the assumption that no country has been spared from the impact of COVID-19. However, despite facing a common enemy like never before, the world has not responded in unity. The Coronavirus pandemic, like so many of the greatest challenges facing our generation, cannot be solved without joining hands beyond borders, continents, and ages.

Recognising the above reality, we commit to:

- working closely with partners to develop swift and timely responses to the humanitarian crisis imposed by the pandemic.
- contributing to decision-making and system-building geared towards peaceful, prosperous and progressive societies.
- empowering young people to actively take up leadership roles in government and civil society.
- creating a coalition of State and Non-State actors to advance the cause of students and the youth.
- developing resilient strategies for vulnerable groups, especially in low-income countries.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Our duty of ensuring that we Build Back Better rests on our abilities to work together towards shared goals, as outlined in this Compact. Our ability to work together in trust, determination, respect for each other, and solidarity will determine whether we can attain the objectives outlined in this Global Youth Compact. We have come together through shared values and mutually beneficial cooperation to support each other and work together towards a better world for **ALL**.

This compact is hinged on the principles of:

- 1. Respect for human rights
- 2. Gender-responsiveness
- 3. Holistic engagement
- 4. Sustainable development
- 5. Youth-leadership
- 6. Fairness and equality
- 7. Solidarity





OUR CONCERNS AND PRIORITY AREAS

We identify as pressing and urgent, the following areas and request support from governments and action from students and youth: 1. Justice for Children and Girls; 2. Education Post COVID-19; 3. Future of Work and Entrepreneurship; 4. Global Leadership; 5. Global Solidarity; and 6. Finding our Voices: Young people at the forefront of Building Back Better.

1 JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND GIRLS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the economies of countries. In response, the world's wealthiest governments have pledged over \$5 trillion - an unprecedented commitment - to 'stimulate the global economy', yet the vast majority of these funds have remained in richer countries and corporations. Unfortunately, we have not witnessed such urgent and bold commitments to bring an end to some, if not most, of the world's pertinent issues relating to the challenges that children and women have endured in the past years.

Through the 100 Million Campaign's 1 in 5 Campaign (Justice for Every Child), students and young leaders have been standing together to demand a fair share of COVID-19 funding for every child. Every child deserves to be Free, Safe and Educated, regardless of their societal status.

Fair Share for Every Child

Pre-COVID-19, the world's poorest and most excluded communities were already struggling to survive, and for many families living in extreme poverty or overcrowded conditions, properly protecting themselves from contracting the virus has been impossible- not because they do not want to but because they do not have the means to do so. Loss of income due to pandemic restrictions, such as lockdowns, has also gravely worsened the situation, with some families hit by food and nutrition insecurity. Moreover, as the majority of schools closed across the world, vulnerable children without access to digital learning have been denied their right to education, and in many cases, their only regular meal through school feeding programs. With hunger, child labour, child marriage, and teen pregnancy rates rising, even as schools begin to reopen, estimates suggest that tens of millions of children may never return to the classroom.

Despite all the issues aforementioned, very little has been done to protect the lives of children and present them with an opportunity for a better future. Just about 0.13% of the global response funds pledged by the world's richest countries have been allocated to the protection of the poorest children and their families. Before the pandemic, 1 in 5 children was living on \$2 or less a day. The pandemic is expected to worsen the plight of these children, and if deliberate actions are not taken now, we stand to lose an entire generation.





Building Back Equal for Girls

Before the pandemic, an alarming number of girls were forced into early marriage while genderbased violence grew. However, at the same time, the widening gender gap in education was beginning to decline, and the world was beginning to take more seriously, the discussions and actions around, ensuring gender equality and parity in all sectors. However, with the increased cases of violence, discrimination, and abuse against women and girls which we have seen during the pandemic, we are likely to lose many of the gains we have made in the past.

As a matter of urgency, there should be a roadmap by State institutions, civil society groups, and youth/student-led organizations to address the issues concerning the rights, education, and freedom of women and girls. If we are to truly Build Back Better post-COVID-19, the systematic and rampant inequality faced by almost half the world cannot be left unresolved.

Action Points on Justice for Children and Girls:

We are asking world leaders and decision-makers to:

- Present a vivid plan that mandates the necessary policies and laws that protect the rights of the most vulnerable children, especially in ensuring their education.
- Deliver a Fair Share for Children by working together to commit to allocating 20% of the initial 'global economic stimulus package' (\$5 trillion) to the 20% of children living on \$2 or less a day (\$1 trillion).
- Provide a meaningful opportunity for young people to be engaged on all matters concerning girls and children.
- Address the urgent needs of ensuring girls' education by prioritizing their access.
- Strengthen State institutions to ensure the delivery of justice for all.

We are asking student and youth leaders to:

- Join the global call through the 1 in 5 Campaign to demand a Fair Share for Every Child.
- Demand equal participation in the decision-making concerning the rights and freedoms of girls and children.
- Be advocates and leaders of change concerning the status of women and children in their communities, country, or region.

2

EDUCATION POST COVID-19

Globally, education has faced its biggest crisis, with the education of over 1 billion students disrupted. The ability for educational systems or institutions to resume and deliver an equal, quality, and accessible education requires the active involvement of diverse stakeholders.

Even before the pandemic, we witnessed gross inequalities and discrimination that existed as barriers in achieving universal access to quality education. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to widen this gap. Education, as we know it, will never be the same because of this pandemic.





The pandemic has taught us that we cannot always rely on the traditional modes of teaching and learning especially in times of emergencies.

Domestic Financing for Education

The 2015 Incheon Declaration proposes that, with an emphasis on basic education, national governments should devote 4 to 6 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and/or at least 15 to 20 per cent of their overall public spending to education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has to a large extent had an impact on the budgets of every country, even for the richest countries. Consequently, the ability of governments, especially low-income countries, to domestically generate funds to support education may be depleted further due to huge commitments to re-stabilizing their economies. Hence, it has become necessary for the richest countries and development partners to make a resolve to support lower-income countries.

However, it is noteworthy that already, through the Global Education Coalition (launched by UNESCO) and Save Our Future, work is already being done to protect the education of millions of students globally.

Online Modes of Pedagogy Vis-A-Vis In-Person Teaching and Learning

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, most academic institutions employed the traditional modes of face-to-face teaching and learning. Now, COVID-19 restrictions have influenced the approaches to pedagogy across the world, and educators are compelled to adopt digital approaches to teaching and learning.

The pandemic has presented a strong case to adopt the online modes of learning. In some countries, there may already be existing infrastructure and resources that facilitate online learning. In other countries, while the infrastructure to facilitate online learning may exist, access to such enabling technologies may be very limited. The online modes of learning, though helpful, have disadvantaged children or students from poorer communities, as they do not have the enabling technologies to join their peers.

Perhaps, educational institutions and stakeholders should adopt/adapt hybrid systems of learning balancing online learning and onsite learning – in order to be more responsive to the needs of increasingly diverse student populations.

Students and Academic Mobility

Migration of people has been fundamental to human development since the dawn of time. In an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of this movement and the inter-cultural understanding it brings has been a key part of progressive globalization. As such, over 1 million students travel yearly from their home country to study in others due to diverse reasons, and this mobility of students is an essential aspect of our educational systems globally.





Our ability to sustain and put the right mechanisms in place that support this process is very key to ensure that academic institutions; still learn from one another, promote the equitable distribution of quality academics, and commit to not truncate the education of students who are on the move.

With the inception of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (GCRHEQ), student unions around the world have been working together to gather thoughts on what the impact of the GCRHEQ will be in diverse sectors. Regional student unions are also coming together to build a coalition of students to ask governments to ratify this convention through the **"Student-led Global Ratification Campaign."**

Action Points on Education Post COVID-19:

We are asking governments to:

- Increase their domestic budget allocation to education and for richer countries to sustain, or increase, their Overseas Development Aid to low-income countries for education.
- Outline clear and precise strategies to tackle the anticipated disruptions to education.
- Prioritize domestic means of financing education, such as closing taxation loopholes to increase available capital or redirecting existing resources to replenish the education budget.
- Indulge educational institutions to adopt quality assurance mechanisms for Online Learning.
- Encourage education stakeholders to take action that ends the digital divide in relation to online learning, including ensuring access to enabling technologies where they are currently missing.
- Consider student organizations as key partners in Building Back plans.

We are asking student and youth leaders to:

• Engage their constituents to find out their challenges and how these can be incorporated into national and regional plans for education reconfiguration.

3

FUTURE OF WORK AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated strongly that the future of work is digital. It has indeed indicated that every employee or employer, as well as State institutions, has to reimagine approaches to resolving employment-related issues. The future of work will not be the same as we know it, especially with the revelations of COVID-19, both in terms of restrictions and possibilities. Young people who will live the future of work need to be given the right resources and skills to survive in this new future of work.





Changing Nature of Work

The current pandemic has propelled the world to adapt to new strategies like working remotely. Now more than ever, young people need to be knowledgeable technologically to work efficiently in a post COVID era. There is a great concern for young people in low-income countries that are struggling for necessities in this new online world, such as reliable internet data, equipment and training. How can young people compete professionally and fairly if the training grounds are so unevenly equipped? There is a need for governments to implement policies that facilitate investments in technology that ensures universal access.

Equal Access to Capital

In our quest to Building Back Better, equal access to capital to all forms of enterprises, especially that of women, should be a key concern. The disturbing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth-led businesses and enterprises has rendered many abled young people jobless. If this condition is sustained, it would pose a great danger to societies. Concrete steps to creating and granting equal access to funds to support enterprises of young people are therefore imperative.

Action Points on Future of Work and Entrepreneurship:

We are asking governments to:

- Make credit facilities available and accessible to young men and women.
- Reduce the digital divide by increasing young people's access to digital tools, as well as the internet.
- Establish entrepreneurship hubs and promote capacity development programmes.
- Remove all legal, political, and cultural impediments towards leadership, especially as regards young women.
- Actively involve young people in crucial decision-making at national and local levels.

We are asking students and youth leaders to:

- Promote the development of educational and capacity development programmes that integrate computer literacy and digitization into entrepreneurship.
- Engage in consultations to find sustainable digital solutions to the survival of businesses.
- Take initiatives in leadership and volunteerism.
- Demand accountability and transparency in governance concerning the employability of young people and women.
- Challenge unprogressive laws and social norms that inhibit the free and successful development of young people.

4

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

In every instance, especially in times of crisis, leadership, especially from Heads of States, is needed to prevent or mitigate the worst consequences. The global nature of the COVID-19 crisis made it inappropriate and ineffective for countries to independently address challenges.





The vast interconnectedness of the world means that countries are exposed to one another in a truly profound way. While it is important to note that some governments did act swiftly to protect their own citizens, the pandemic has exposed the chasm of true global leadership, especially in the lack of collaborative action taken to support poorer countries who may need more assistance to survive in building back.

Heads of States

COVID-19 has reminded us all of the criticality of governments protecting **ALL** their citizens, irrespective of status, wealth, creed, gender, religion, etc. In times of crisis such as this, we remain inspired by Madiba's philosophy that a "nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but it's lowest ones".

The young people of the world have called on their governments and Heads of States to act in a manner that will hold the gains in education, human rights, protection of children, gender equality, and equal access to economic resources, especially amidst the pandemic. Unfortunately, some world leaders have failed to respond appropriately to these demands; for example, in some countries where young people have stood up to demand their rights, they have been either brutalised or unlawfully imprisoned at the hands of the State. This reinforces the need for Heads of States to commit to ensuring the wellbeing of citizens at all times, especially in times of crisis.

Multilateralism and the World's Poorest Countries

The regions with the world's poorest countries are also home to the largest and fastest rising youth population. It has therefore been alarming to watch how several decision-making fora with significant global influence, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the G7 and G20, have virtually no governmental representation from such countries.

2020 marked the United Nations' 75th Anniversary. This supposed celebration of multilateralism and global unity was hardly impactful, as it failed to make a firm universal commitment to work together to protect those hardest hit by COVID-19 - the first truly global crisis since its inception.

However, as strong believers in internationalism and multilateralism in all its forms, we are committed as young people to continue to work in genuine partnership and solidarity with our peers across the world, especially the most vulnerable, and pushing our elected representatives to step up and do the same.

Action Points on Global Leadership:

We are asking governments to:

- Commit to further deepening multilateral relations towards a common interest.
- Reconsider approaches to international treaties or agreements on common problems like climate change, human rights, terrorism.
- Work closely with international organizations to deliver on mandates.





- Make good on their respective commitments to various international organizations.
- Concretize efforts towards protecting women, children, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities.

We are asking youth and student leaders to:

- Collaborate with State and Non-State actors to ensure a concerted effort in building back equal.
- Deepen advocacy to support marginalized groups.
- Demand accountability and action on common causes like Climate Change, Child Labour, Violence Against Women, etc.
- Pressure respective governments to fully commit to internationalism and multilateralism.
- Advocate for the practical involvement of the youth in the international governance system.

5

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

In a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to stand together to demand equal and fair treatment is invaluable. Global, regional, and national student unions have come together to demand a fair share for children, call on governments to respect and protect human rights, and ensure equal distribution of COVID-19 response support for all, especially for the most marginalised groups.

We have indeed come to understand the power of our collective voices. When we come together to fight for a common cause, we are almost unstoppable. We have come to also understand that being able to stand together in times like this helps us to further appreciate the enormity of the pervasive social problems that confront us collectively.

The Global Student Forum (GSF)

The Global Student Forum is a voluntary consortium that comprises regional federations, including the All-Africa Students Union (AASU), Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA), European Students Union (ESU), Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), and Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE), which together cover 143 student unions in 95 countries, as well as national unions, organisations, and movements from countries including Chile, Bangladesh, Burundi, Chad, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

The purpose of the Global Student Forum is to coordinate people and ideas to animate the struggles that students are fighting around the world. It is anchored on the grassroots, working democratically and horizontally to address our local challenges and build a shared vision. The GSF is an essential structure that operates below the radar to support activists building on the ground, facilitating transregional exchanges that inspire and strengthen them.





Whilst enabling the development of a genuinely autonomous student-led agenda, the express intention is not to compete with other structures for political voice but to strengthen the activism and structures that already exist and have legitimacy.

The forum is a platform for student movements to work together on issues of common concern. The GSF amplifies the struggles of student movements around the world, whether against the rising cost of education or violence in our institutions and draws attention to student movements where they face political repression, discrimination, and police brutality.

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GSF has been monitoring the impact on education systems and the lives of students. GSF is still in an embryonic form, but this crisis has pushed the members to discuss how to articulate cooperation while working on setting up the forum's permanent structures. Due to the crisis, schools and universities around the world have been closed and many students are unable to access learning resources, are struggling with unemployment, or have been made homeless. The GSF, through its regional representatives, has been supporting students: Connecting them to information and resources about their studies, mobility, accommodation, employment, and welfare. The GSF is using its extensive networks to communicate reliable, up-to-date information about staying safe to communities on the ground. The GSF is lobbying institutions and governments to make reasonable adjustments to protect the rights of the marginalised and ensure inequities are not deepened as a result of the crisis.

Grassroots Mobilisation

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, young people and students have engaged in so many initiatives geared towards reaching the most vulnerable communities. Without the efforts of student unions and youth groups, so many marginalised children and families would have been left out of the COVID-19 support initiatives, and their specific needs and vulnerabilities remaining hidden and unaddressed. Student unions and youth were able to reach out to the unreached with PPE and have also assisted the aged to get access to their basic needs during lockdown periods.

As youth and student organizations, our power truly lies in our combined ability to both mobilize at the grass-roots level and come together in our large numbers to issue common demands. Especially amidst the pandemic, when many activities and basic services shifted online, leaving poor or rural communities without access to such technologies, mobilizing at the grassroots levels has proven significantly impactful in supporting the rights, safety and dignity of all citizens.

Action Points on Global Solidarity:

We are asking governments to:

• Actively recognize, champion and support the efforts of students and young people to collectively organize internationally and engage our representative organisations such as the Global Student Forum.





• Commit to formally listening to and learning from students and young people who have been mobilizing at the grassroots level, prior to and throughout the pandemic, to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable citizens are heard.

We as students and youth leaders to commit to ensuring that:

- Student and youth organizations are willing and able to collaborate globally and act on issues both at the global and local levels.
- Student and youth groups collaborate more effectively across borders in times of crises.
- Young people become more aware of their rights and the need to assert the same.
- Student and youth groups lend their voices to campaigns by peers wherever in the world.
- Students are democratically represented at the national, regional, and global levels.
- We join hands to address the issues that concern any student or young person in any part of the world.

6

FINDING OUR VOICES: YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE FOREFRONT OF BUILDING BACK BETTER

The challenges and ravages caused by the novel COVID-19 require that young people around the globe take an important role in the Building Back Better agenda. Although the world continues to suffer the herculean effects of the pandemic, young people stand to be the most disadvantaged in the medium and long term.

Despite people aged 30 years or younger comprising almost half the world's population, we remain significantly politically unrepresented; the majority of our demography is below the legal voting age, and just 2% of Parliamentarians in the world are under 30. This leaves our voices unheard and experiences sidelined in critical decision-making spaces whose outcomes have a direct and significant impact on our lives. If we are to truly build back better, this gap must be acknowledged and rectified. For example, with the global economy contracted, coupled with severe losses of income and opportunities, the future of young people will be significantly harder if they are left behind in the resuscitation of the global economy. Therefore, we must be consulted on how to prevent or mitigate this impact.

Action Points on Finding Our Voices: Young People at the Forefront of Building Back Better

We are asking governments to:

- Formally consult with and place value on the input of students, young people and their elected representative unions on their COVID-19 response planning.
- Create space for the meaningful participation of young people in high-level policy discussions.
- Actively collect and disaggregate data by age and gender to ensure the realities of young people and women are correctly understood and evidenced.





We are asking student and youth leaders to:

- Form and actively support youth coalitions to contest for political power.
- Mobilize and support campaigns at the grassroots to reorient communities towards contemporary progressive values.
- Actively engage in high-level policy discussions to highlight workable measures to empower the most vulnerable population (women and youth).
- Leverage collective action for the youth and women empowerment. This can be done through the establishment of community groups.

CONCLUSION

- This compact represents our voices as youth and students across the world, and demonstrates our relentless pursuit to make the world a better place post-COVID-19, without losing the gains we have consolidated in the past;
- The young people of the world, amidst the COVID-19, have proven themselves as strong leaders in diverse circumstances, and that, even in the face of COVID-19 pandemic, they are willing and able to hold world leaders accountable and take the needed actions to Build Back Better;
- We are of the firm understanding that we can only see this through to the end if we constantly engage each other through dialogues, conversations, and fora to address what matters to us most.

IMPLEMENTATION

- 1. We need our collective efforts at the global, international, national, and local levels for the successful implementation of this compact;
- 2. As youth and student leaders, we commit to execute the priority areas and goals indicated in this compact in tandem with our collective goal to ensure that we Build Back Better and equal;
- 3. Within our own countries and at regional and global levels, we will adopt this Compact, taking account of the various realities, capacities, and levels of growth, and respecting individual policies and priorities. We reaffirm our commitments to the respect of human rights and equal treatment of all persons, regardless of their societal status;
- 4. We will implement this compact through continual consultations with all of our colleagues and partners across the globe in the spirit of solidarity. We will build on our existing relationships, networks, and friendships to build a broader coalition to demand our collective concerns. Through global student and youth networks, we will work in a concerted manner;
- 5. We will work together in the pursuance of global and continental goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.





REVIEW

- 1. This compact will be reviewed twice before the next Africa Students and Youth Summit while considering the contextual complexities and peculiarities of the countries we represent.
- 2. The first review will be conducted six months after the promulgation of this compact.
- 3. The review of this compact will be done by a selected committee of youth and student leaders who represent the five regions of the world.
- 4. The reviews will be focused on five key areas relevance, contextual analysis, representation of the most marginalized groups, responses to our demands and the lessons learnt from actions being taken to achieve the objects outlined in this compact.
- 5. The reviews will be submitted to the LOC of the 9th Africa Students and Youth Summit to be incorporated and disseminated to other partners.

Connect with us

- 6 @AASU1972
- AASU_1972
- AASU_1972



www.aasuonline.org

