

**AL-SUMAIT PRIZE**  
FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT



# Al-Sumait White Paper The Key Issues Affecting Education Development In Africa, July 2017

This white paper will examine the complex issues affecting education development in Africa and present the key initiatives that are being implemented to improve access to education for all across the continent.

The development of this white paper is the third in a series produced in conjunction with the Al-Sumait Prize, an annual award by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) for the advancement of economic, social, human resources, and infrastructure development in the African continent.





# Why is Education Development in Africa Still Such a Challenge?

**Africa is a continent that is struggling to develop policy and infrastructure in the face of a booming population.** As stated by the United Nations, Africa is the fastest growing region in the world with half of the world's population projected to be living in Africa by the year 2050. High population growth is especially prevalent in the 48 countries that the United Nations have identified as least developed. Of these 48 countries 27 of these nations are in Africa. With this expanding population the issues of poverty, malnutrition, and access to healthcare and education are the pillars holding the continent back.

As Africa faces challenges relating to a changing climate, food security and an increasing population, education could be the key to unlocking the continent's future. However, the development of and access to quality education in Africa is still a major challenge due to a variety of key factors. The reasons behind the challenge of educating the population are not simple and there is not one reason behind the barriers to education in Africa. However, access to quality education for all boys and girls is still not a reality for many across the continent, in particular in areas such as the Sub-Saharan.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were formed in 2015 to address a range of world issues including education. The aim of the education specific goal is to ensure that by the year 2030 "all boys and girls around the world complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education". Figures by the United Nations show that whilst the rates of enrolment in primary education in developing countries have reached 91 per cent, 57 million children around the world are not attending school. Half of the world's children who have not enrolled to attend school live in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that 50 per cent primary school aged children who are not in school live in areas affected by conflict. Of the 103 million young people who do not possess basic literacy skills such as the ability to read or write, 60 per cent are women. >

**"..half of the world's population (is) projected to be living in Africa by the year 2015... education could be the key to unlocking the continent's future."**



> In light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals the focus of many international aid agencies has moved from focusing on every child accessing basic education to ensuring that every child has access to quality education. The World Bank has stated that the focus needs to shift from making sure every child is in school, to making sure that every child has access to quality education.

It is essential for the future of development and growth of Africa that there is access to quality education for all children. Education is a cornerstone of the ability for countries to further develop and to become global leaders.

## What Are The Key Issues Affecting Education in Africa?

The barriers that are halting the access to education in Africa are complex and multifaceted. All of these issues need to be addressed in order for education on the African continent to improve and be accessible for all. However there are four key issues that have been identified for this white paper as providing significant barriers to education development in Africa. These four key issues of adult literacy, the gender gap, access to education and poverty are not standalone issues and are often intertwined.

### Adult Literacy

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Adult literacy levels are still extremely low across the African continent. According to UNESCO 38 per cent or 153 million adults in Africa are illiterate, with two thirds of those adult women. Around the world 757 million adults and 115 million young people cannot read or write. The rates of adult illiteracy in Sub-Saharan Africa are some of the highest in the world. Africa is the only continent in the world where more than half of parents are not able to assist their children with their homework as they can not read or write. >



## The Gender Gap

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The gap between boys and girls having access to attend quality education is still relatively high in Africa. Across the world UNESCO statistics show that two thirds, or 77 million, of the global illiterate population are women. 29 million of these women live in Sub-Sahara Africa alone. Furthermore, nine million girls between the ages of 6 and 11 will never attend school in Africa. Traditional gender roles are still contributing towards girls and women not accessing education in Africa. Girls who are fortunate enough to access education in Sub-Sahara Africa can expect to only attend school for five years. The new UNESCO eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education shows that 30 per cent of girls of primary school age in Central and Sub-Saharan Africa are not in school. In West Africa early marriage is also a key barrier to girls achieving education.

## Access to Education

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Conflicts and wars are significant barriers to children accessing education across the African continent. The UNHCR reports that globally 21 million people are refugees with only 50 per cent of refugee children enrolled in primary school. Sub-Sahara Africa has the highest rate of education exclusion in the world with one fifth of children under the age of 11 out of school. According to the UNHCR more than 65 million people are uprooted due to wars with more than 21 million becoming refugees. Half of those seeking refuge are children who are missing out on vital education. For girls, their ability to access education can be stopped through a lack of amenities such as toilets being available at schools.

## Poverty

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According to the World Bank 1 in 10 people live on less than \$1.90 per day with half of the worlds poorest people living in Sub-Sahara Arica. UNESCO states that the biggest barrier to a girl in Central and West Africa accessing education is poverty. In Sub-Sahara Africa 43% of school children leave school early. When it comes to the gender gap, poverty has been identified as being the biggest barrier to a girl accessing education. If a girl has not gone to school by the time she turns 10 in the countries of Burkina Faso, Nigeria or Senegal the chances are that she never will. >

**“In Sub-Saharan Africa 43% of school children leave school early. When it comes to the gender gap, poverty has been identified as the biggest barrier to a girl accessing education.”**



## Paths to security success

The barriers that are hindering the advancement of education in Africa are significant. However there is shining light in the form of innovation and advances in technology, policy, and programs that are working to break down these key barriers to education in Africa. For the long term vision of development across the continent education is a cornerstone issue that is being addressed currently through a combination of scientific projects, applied research, and innovative initiatives, which have made a significant and lasting influence in advancing progress to economic and social development in Africa. These initiatives and advancements are helping African nations to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal that “all boys and girls around the world complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education” by the year 2030.

“I think if we can help in whatever way to bring some relief to countries that are under so much stress it is very worth while.”

Dr Kwaku Aning- Al-Sumait Prize Board Member

### Adult Literacy

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Many adults across Africa do not possess basic reading and writing skills due to a number of factors. For women this could be due to being held back from school for early marriage and for both genders due to poverty, conflict or the inability to access education. However global aid agencies such as Oxfam are working to close the gap in West Africa to adults who are illiterate. Adult education classes are giving adults a second chance at learning basic literacy skills that are essential to facing the challenges of daily life and raising children.

“In order to achieve universal education for all in Africa the gender gap needs to be closed. All girls deserve an education just as much as boys.”

Dr. Mustafa Marafi Head of KFAS Prize Office



### The Gender Gap

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According to UNESCO in the last decade advances have been made to close the gender gap when it comes to enrolment levels of boys and girls in school. In Sub-Saharan Africa the level of primary school aged girls enrolling has risen 56 per cent since the 1970s. In comparison to the 27 per cent increase in girls enrolling into school globally this is a significant leap for the region. However, 28 million young girls and adolescents are out of school with many never setting foot inside a classroom.

*“Technological advances and innovation has led to quality education becoming more accessible than ever before. Through the internet, tablets etc. universal education can now be accessed even in classrooms in Sub-Saharan Africa.”*

*Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin Director General at KFAS and Al-Sumait Prize Board Member*

### Access to Education

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Technology is transforming education opportunities for refugee children in Africa through online learning. Now thanks to the Internet and technology such as tablets, schools can access learning materials easily even if resources are scarce. For countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa a surge in school enrolments has led to challenges with an increasing demand for teachers. According to UNESCO in order to meet the education demand, 2.3 million new teaching positions need to be filled in Sub-Saharan Africa alone in order to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of universal primary education for all children.

*“In order for Africa to develop as a continent the role that poverty plays in education needs to be addressed. Only then and with having access to quality education can the continent develop further.”*

*Dr. Mustafa Marafi Head of KFAS Prize Office*



## Poverty

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Poverty is a key barrier to a child accessing education. However, access to quality education is an essential component for the African continent to develop forward. In this way addressing poverty in Africa is addressing education and visa versa. As stated by the World Bank increased education of the population leads to increased sustained economic growth which in turn decreases poverty. With more of the population educated, African nations can increase their economic potential and ensure more and more children go to school.

“Several countries in Africa have made huge strides in reducing childhood deaths from preventable diseases and increasing farmers’ production so that they can feed their families and earn a basic income. For those countries to continually progress the next step is education, so that those healthier, better-fed children can develop the skills they need to participate in the local and global economy, providing a better life for themselves and their families.

*Hassan Al-Damluji Head of Middle East Relations - Gates Foundation*

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## A Prize For Development In Africa

**Today there is a new force in the drive to improve lives in Africa - a powerful initiative conceived by the Amir of the State of Kuwait, H.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.**

Launched in December 2015, **Al-Sumait Prize** is awarded annually to the best international research or development initiative that is deemed to contribute significantly to solve major development challenges facing African nations, in particular the least developing countries in the fields of Food Security, Health and Education.



**“Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, a Kuwaiti physician who devoted his life towards helping the poor in Africa in the fields of health and education.**

The prize has been named after Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, a Kuwaiti physician who devoted his life towards helping the poor in Africa in the field of health and education, the first prize to be awarded will be in the field of Health. Al-Sumait Prize will encompass a sum of one million US dollars, a gold medal, a plaque and a certificate of recognition, to be awarded annually to individuals or institutions who have made significant advancements in addressing major challenges in the selected field for that year.

Al-Sumait Board of Trustees includes of prominent international personalities in the field of development in Africa and world renowned philanthropists. The Board is chaired by H.E. Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait and Chairperson of the Abdulrahman Al-Sumait Prize.

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For more information, please visit [www.alsumaitprize.org](http://www.alsumaitprize.org)

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The Al-Sumait Prize is managed by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS).

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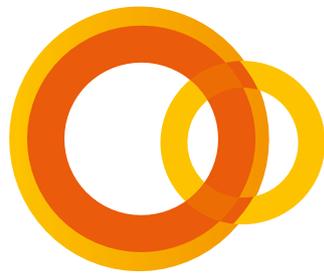
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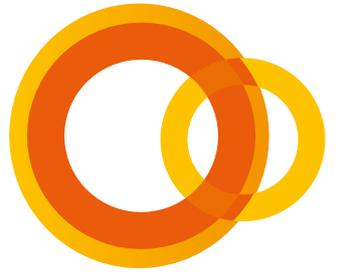
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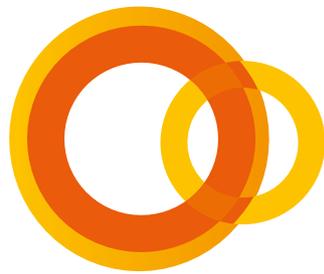
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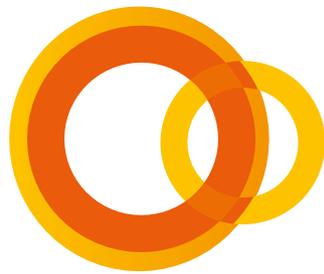
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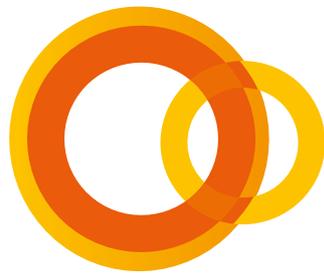
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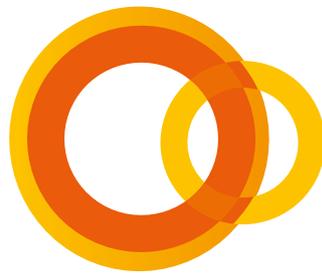
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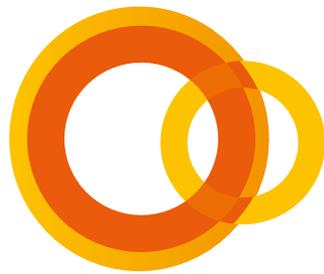
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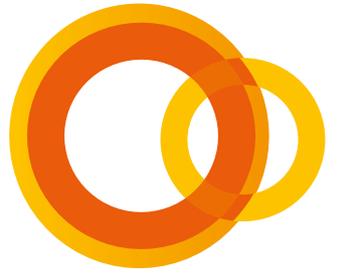
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