

**Forum:** Education Committee

**Agenda:** On measures to tackle the issue of high-quality teacher shortages in East Africa

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## Introduction

The issue of high-quality teacher shortages in East Africa presents a critical challenge to achieving equitable and accessible education. Over the past few decades, East Africa has been experiencing a rapidly growing population and an increasing demand for education. Population growth poses a significant challenge to the fragile education system in these countries that lack sufficient funding and support from the government and the private sectors. At the very core of the numerous causes that led to the struggling circumstances of these East African countries is the shortage of high-quality teachers, which are essential to establishing a robust and inclusive education system. According to the United Nations, sub-Saharan Africa, which encompasses East African countries, is projected to need to recruit around 15 million new teachers by 2030.

Education plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth, social development, and individual empowerment. The importance of education is also emphasized heavily by the United Nations, as manifested in seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that embody the concerted vision of the UN and the Member States towards a more prosperous and inclusive future. However, the lack of high-quality teachers severely hampers these objectives, leading to poor learning outcomes in these underdeveloped regions, higher dropout rates, and perpetuation of the cycles of poverty.

In particular, Rural and remote communities are disproportionately affected, where teacher shortages are most pronounced. Many schools are operating with severe teacher shortages or relying on underqualified personnel to fill the gaps. These challenges seem to aggravate educational inequalities and leave millions of children in East Africa at risk of missing out on the benefits of quality learning opportunities, leaving profound implications on their future careers and the economic, social, and technological advancements in their nations.

The shortage is driven by a combination of factors, including insufficient training programs, low teacher salaries, poor working conditions, rural isolation, etc. Additionally, the allure of better-paying jobs outside of education is often exacerbated by widespread poverty in East Africa, leading to many qualified individuals pursuing alternative career paths. Furthermore, systemic challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and political instability in these regions exacerbate the issue. Kenya, as an East African nation, exemplifies the scope of the issue, with a critical shortage of 50,000 teachers in its public secondary education sector.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4—ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all—underscores our committee’s commitment to promoting quality education inclusively worldwide. Given that the lack of quality teachers massively undermines our progress toward achieving the SDG, tackling root causes and addressing the issue as a whole has been more important than ever. This objective requires urgent attention and a comprehensive approach; by investing in sustainable and viable solutions, governments and stakeholders can help bridge the education gap and empower future generations.

## **Key Terms**

**High-quality teachers** – teachers equipped with the necessary academic qualifications, adequate professional training, and pedagogical skills to effectively deliver quality education and promote positive learning outcomes for students.

**Teacher shortages** – A situation where the number of available qualified teachers is insufficient to meet the demand by filling the gap in teaching positions. The demand encompasses key aspects such as quantity, qualifications, and geographic distribution.

**Rural and underserved communities** – Areas with limited access to educational resources, infrastructure, and qualified teachers, often experience higher rates of poverty.

**Education resources** – The essential teaching, learning, and research resources or materials used to support education and development. Examples of such include textbooks, course materials, assessment tools, etc.

**Educational equity and quality** – The principle of ensuring all students—regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances—have equal opportunities to access high-quality education that meets their needs and supports their development.

**Brain drain** – the loss of human capital, in this context, highly skilled professionals, such as qualified teachers, migrate from their home country to another country in search of better opportunities. This often exacerbates teacher shortages in the home country as human capital in education experiences decline.

**Attrition** – the gradual reduction of a workforce and the loss of members of a particular group usually as a result of resignation, retirement, termination, or death.

**Teacher-pupil ratio** – a measure of the number of teachers assigned to each teacher in an educational institution. The ratio can be calculated by dividing the total number of students by the total number of teachers. It serves as a key indicator of quality education as lower ratio signifies better opportunities for individualized attention to each student.

**Teaching incentives** – Policies, programs, or other kinds of benefits designed to motivate and encourage educators to improve their performance or attract and retain teachers, especially in underserved areas.

This can be achieved through means such as but not limited to financial benefits, housing, career development, and so on.

**Arid and semi-arid lands** – also known as the ASALs, are geographical regions characterized by extremely low rainfall, often with high temperatures and limited vegetation. These regions are usually marginalized communities where educational resources are scarce with poor infrastructure, limited social services, and so on.

## General Overview

The shortage of high-quality teacher in East Africa is a multifaceted, complex issues deeply rooted in systemic and primary challenges in the region. The East Africa region—which includes Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda—has been confronting demographic shifts and underfunded education systems. Specifically, the demographic trend in these countries can be seen as holding high potential for economic growth as these countries are often characterized by high birth rates that result in a rapidly growing population of young people. Nonetheless, the expanding young cohort in these countries is placing immense pressure on the vulnerable education systems to deliver and promote access to quality education for all children.

### Major causes for high-quality teacher shortages in East-Africa

#### *Insufficient teacher training programs*

Insufficient teacher training programs are a major cause of teacher shortages in East Africa. Due to the inadequate capacity of teacher training institutions to prepare adequate numbers of qualified teachers, a foundation for a robust education system cannot be laid successfully. Limited infrastructure, outdated curricula, and inadequate funding all led to insufficiency in producing enough graduates to meet the rapidly growing demand for educators. Furthermore, besides the insufficiency in the number of teacher training programs and available places, those that exist are often of poor quality and fail to produce qualified teachers. Ultimately, most teachers in the region receive limited support to develop their professional competencies once in service, leading to the perpetuation of high-quality teacher shortages in East Africa.

#### *Low salaries and poor working conditions*

Teacher is often viewed as an unattractive career choice due to low pay and challenging working environment. This issue is particularly prominent in East Africa where funding, infrastructure, and resources are very limited. In countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, for example, teachers frequently report delays in salary payments, lack of housing, and inadequate

educational resources. The root cause of such is the unstable economies that these African nations suffer, aggravated by external factors such as but not limited to conflicts and droughts.

Furthermore, working conditions play a crucial role in teacher shortages, with teachers' tendency to leave the profession when conditions deteriorate. First, insufficient teaching supplies and student textbooks, inadequate equipment, and lack of curriculum reform have been found to be correlated with teacher leaving their jobs. High teacher workloads also contribute to the issue; teachers find their work stressful and view their occupational status as declining. Due to fatigue and the feeling of being incompetent with the immense workload, many teachers decide to drop out, which leads to a further decline in the number of available teachers in the region.

Social instability is another prominent part of the poor working conditions. Specifically, teachers leave positions when their own and students' physical safety and integrity is at risk. Attacks as a result of terrorism and tribal clashes in conflict areas are prevalent, accompanied by victimization and harassment against teachers. Nonetheless, teachers are facing poor social support with a lack of respect in society. This all undermined the attractiveness of the profession to potential candidates and retention among existing teachers.

Overall, the poor working conditions deter potential candidates from entering the profession and lead to higher attrition rates among existing teachers.

### *Migration and brain drain*

Many highly skilled teachers often leave rural areas or their home countries and migrate to other more developed countries in search of better opportunities. This is related to other existing factors such as low salary and poor working conditions as they are also referred as push factors that encourage brain drain. A survey reveals that teachers' salaries are generally below the poverty line or cost of living, and some teachers in Tanzania even discourage their own children from choosing teacher as their future career. In turn, skilled teachers leave the home country and seek better-paying jobs abroad, and usually their destinations are more developed than underserved areas where infrastructure, resources, and working conditions are outperformed.

Kenya and Ethiopia, for example, have seen a steady outflow of teachers to the Middle East and Europe, where salaries and working conditions are considerably more attractive. Additionally, urbanization within East African nations also exacerbate teacher shortages particularly in rural and underserved areas. This can be seen from the fact that skilled professionals, including high-quality teachers, gradually move to cities and urban areas, creating a stark disparity in teacher distribution.

### **Major countries involved**

## *Kenya*

Kenya, an East African country with a coastline on the Indian Ocean, has taken steps to address teacher shortages mainly through the Teacher Service Commission (TSC)—an independent commission that oversees teacher recruitment, deployment, and training. It manages the human resources in the country's education sector and it has implemented various initiatives to tackle the issue. A prominent strategy involves deploying teachers in rural and underserved areas by offering financial incentives and hardship allowances. However, challenges still persist, particularly when the incentives become insufficient and hardly compelling to teachers in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) and regions with harsh living conditions, lack of infrastructure, and insecurity.

In addition, Kenya has embraced digital learning initiatives like the Digital Literacy Program (DLP) to enhance the distribution and accessibility of educational resources. The approach aims to leverage modern technology to build a stronger education system due to the convenience and efficiency of digital platforms. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the program is hampered by the insufficient training of teachers in the use of digital tools.

## *Ethiopia*

The rapidly growing population and systemic constraints pose significant challenges for Ethiopia's education sector. The Ethiopian government has primarily addressed teacher recruitment and training through its General Education Quality Improvement Project (GEQIP), a quota-based teacher deployment system that aims to ensure fair allocation of qualified teachers in underserved areas. This approach seeks to promote educational equity, especially in rural regions where the demand for qualified teachers is extremely high. However, retention remains an issue as poor working conditions, delayed payments, and inadequate resources disincentivize teachers from staying and driving them to seek opportunities elsewhere. Teacher training and infrastructure projects such as the establishment of regional training centers are largely funded by Ethiopia's partnerships with international organizations including UNESCO and the World Bank.

## *Rwanda*

Rwanda demonstrates great proactiveness when it comes to address teacher shortages through policies and international collaboration. The government has improved teacher salaries and offered housing subsidies, which significantly boosted retention rates especially in underserved areas. Teacher training programs in Rwanda are further facilitated by its collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and UNICEF. These programs underscore modern teaching methods, subject mastery, and the use of technology in classrooms.

For example, the project “Supporting Teacher Achievement in Rwandan Schools”, abbreviated STARS, led by Georgetown University in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Rwanda and Innovation for Poverty Action, strives to raise teachers’ motivation and effort and enhance student outcomes. This project is to be scaled in public primary schools with pay-for-performance contracts to reach its aim. Rwanda’s proactive policies and compressive approach have made it a model for other East African nations striving to combat teacher shortages.

### *South Sudan*

The world’s youngest nation, South Sudan faces immense challenges in its education system due to ongoing conflict, displacement, and poor infrastructure. Teacher shortages are particularly significant in rural and conflict-affected areas, where schools are even non-operational. To address such severity, the government has been collaborating with international parties such as UNICEF and Save the Children. Their efforts include mobile education units and community-based teacher training programs that seek to reach displaced individuals. Nevertheless, South Sudan still struggles with fragile education system and series of challenges such as low retention rates and poor quality education delivered.

### *Somalia*

Somalia has experienced decades of turmoil where every aspects have been greatly affected by its continuous political and social unrest. Teacher shortages are acute, with many schools relying on volunteer teachers who lack formal qualifications. Somalia’s education system is heavily dependent on interventions by international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Initiatives include training programs for unqualified teachers, funding for school construction, and capacity-building projects to strengthen education governance.

## **Major parties involved**

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

UNESCO plays a critical role in addressing teacher shortages globally, with a focus on vulnerable regions like East Africa. UNESCO partners with governments of affected nations to enhance teacher training programs and initiatives, while advocating for more proactive policies to be implemented in underserved areas. Teacher Task Force (TTF), a UNESCO-led coalition created in 2008, serves as a unique partnership that advocates for teachers and the teaching profession; it revolves around the idea of raising awareness and expanding knowledge in order to support countries towards achieving quality education for all.

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

As an organization targeting aid for children worldwide, UNICEF has been striving to ensure equal access to quality education for children, particularly in East African nations. UNICEF conducts a multitude of programs that include workshops and professional development for teachers. In conflict-affected areas like Somalia, UNICEF provides training for unqualified volunteer teachers and establishes community-based training programs. Teacher For All serves as an excellent example of UNICEF's commitment to addressing teacher allocation challenges across sub-Saharan Africa. Recognizing the uneven distribution of teachers exacerbates issues caused by severe teacher shortages, the project leverages multiple data sources and mixed methods to formulate effective strategies for teacher allocation, ensuring no child is deprived of quality education.

### *African Development Bank (AfDB)*

The AfDB is a multilateral development financial institution that funds projects aimed at improving education infrastructure and teaching training across Africa. Regarding education infrastructure, AfDB has invested in the construction of teacher colleges, classrooms, and housing for teachers in underserved areas. Furthermore, investments centered on technology have helped schools and educators implement digital tools and e-learning platforms to enhance teaching training and student learning outcomes.

## **Timeline of Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1963-1975	East African nations, including Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, achieved independence from colonialism that ruled over centuries. The countries had also prioritized building national education systems but teacher shortages became prevalent due to limited resources and reliance on foreign educators and institutions.
1980s	Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) initiated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank relieved pressure on government's spending education.

2003

Kenya introduced Free Primary Education (FPE), which boosted enrollment to 84%, leading to an additional 1.3 million students enrolled within a year. This approach created a demand for over 60,000 teachers, manifesting teacher shortages in Kenya as an East African country.

2005

UNESCO established Teacher Task Force (TTF), a unique partnership that advocates for teachers and the teaching profession. The organization tackles teacher shortages in East Africa by raising awareness, expanding knowledge, and improving teacher policies.

2012

Teacher Incentive Framework is launched by Uganda to address rural teacher shortages by providing financial and non-financial incentives. It includes housing allowances equivalent to 20% of teacher salaries in rural areas, leading to a 15% increase in teacher retention rates in 2 years. This approach highlighted the importance of tackling teacher shortages in underserved areas where resources are limited and conditions are harsh.

2015

By this time, East Africa faced an average pupil-to-teacher ratio of 1:49 in primary schools, far exceeding world's average of 1:40. In countries like Kenya and Uganda, the ratios reach up to 1:70, presenting immense challenges for teacher shortages in East African countries. The United Nations introduced the Sustainable Develop Goals (SDGs), with SDG 4 "quality education" reaffirming the need for inclusive and quality education. Teacher shortages became a global concern under this global framework.

2017

Rwanda propelled a Teacher Development and Management Policy, focusing on professional development and training and improved working conditions to retain teachers.

2020

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems globally and exacerbated teacher shortages, particularly in East Africa that faced worsened economic strain and health concerns. The pandemic highlighted the need for technology integration in building robust education systems.



2021

UNESCO and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) commit to supporting countries, including East African nations, to build robust education systems by unlocking \$500 million to mitigate disruptions caused by the global pandemic. Specifically, the funds will support teacher training initiatives such as digital education and remote learning that help teachers adapt to post-pandemic teaching environments. On the other hand, it aims to train over 100,000 teachers with a focus on teacher retention in rural areas. The funds will sustain learning for up to 355 million children in 67 eligible countries.

2023

Kenya, with World Bank support, announced a digital training initiative that encompasses agenda include training over 5000 teachers annually and reducing the national pupil-teacher ratio from 1:56 to 1:40 by 2027.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has been actively involved in addressing the issue of high-quality teacher shortages in East Africa. Through its various specialized agencies, the UN has been initiating programs and seeking collaboration with Member States to improve access to quality education, teacher training deficiencies, and teacher retention, particularly in underserved areas. For the past few decades, the UN implemented numerous projects in East Africa and supported policies that seek to tackle teacher shortages.

- UNESCO's Education 2030 Agenda is a critical part of the global effort to achieve SDG 4 "inclusive and quality education for all." Teacher shortages are prioritized since high-quality teachers are considered crucial to achieving universal education, which is explicitly addressed in SDG 4.
- Teacher Task Force (TTF) represents a global initiative to address teacher shortages. In sub-Saharan Africa, TTF works to mobilize resources, advocate for pro-teacher policymaking, and support national governments in achieving effective teacher recruitment and retention. In countries like Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, UNESCO's TTF has been instrumental in formulating strategies to reduce teacher shortages and promote quality education, especially in rural regions.
- UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 - Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) includes 17 SDGs aimed at ending poverty and ensuring prosperity for all. SDG 4 focuses on education, which directly addresses teacher shortages and the need for robust education systems. Target 4.c, specifically, focuses on increasing the supply of qualified teachers, through ways like teacher training programs

supported by international cooperation, in developing countries. The target thereby emphasizes the teacher gap in places like East Africa where demand exceeds supply.

- UN Resolution A/RES/69/313 - Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015) was adopted by the UN in July 2015. It particularly discusses the financing of the SDGs and provides financial commitments to facilitate SDG 4, which includes ensuring quality education for all. The key areas of funding include teacher training, educational infrastructure, and resources for improving teacher quality in regions with acute shortages. The adoption also means that governments and international organizations are to allocate financial resources toward improving education systems.

## Possible Solutions

The issue of high-quality teacher shortages in East Africa requires a holistic approach that focuses on tackling regional systemic challenges hampering enhancements in the education sector. Due to inherent difficulties in East Africa, such as weak infrastructure, poor social service, and a struggling economy, international cooperation has become highly critical in addressing such an issue. The approach should involve numerous parties, including the government, the UN, the private sector, and the international community.

### *Strengthening teacher training programs*

East African nations need to establish more teacher-training institutions to expand the pool of qualified teachers. This is particularly important in rural areas where teacher shortages are the most acute due to the large rural population in these developing countries. The outdated teacher training curricula also must be upgraded by incorporating modern pedagogical techniques and culturally appropriate techniques to achieve quality education. Technology can assist in building effective programs by integrating digital tools and e-learning platforms to overcome physical and geographical challenges. Also, digital resources can support ongoing professional development for teachers, thereby enabling the consistency and long-term effectiveness of teacher training initiatives in East Africa.

### *Incentivizing teacher retention and welfare*

Raising teacher salaries is one of the most popular strategies to ease teacher shortages. By offering financial incentives like higher salaries, housing allowances, and other forms of subsidies, governments may attract more people to enter the profession and retain existing teachers. This strategy is particularly effective in rural areas where teacher attrition is prevalent. Furthermore, investing in improving school infrastructure and providing adequate educational resources are crucial to good working conditions for teachers. Along with career development

initiatives such as opportunities for promotions, leadership roles, and further education scholarships, this strategy can cultivate job satisfaction, hence addressing acute teacher shortages in East Africa.

### *Encouraging partnerships and funding*

Seeking cooperation among the international community can introduce technical assistance and financial aid from parties like the UN, MEDCs, and other organizations. Many existing projects involved collaborative efforts because East African nations are often unable to handle such issue. The cooperation can center on securing funding for training, infrastructure, and teacher welfare and sharing best practices and resources. Additionally, public-private partnerships will be crucial as private companies can contribute to programs and initiatives through investments and financial aid. This can be done through the emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Overall, international cooperation is a promising strategy that can mitigate brain drain and support initiatives to ease teacher shortages in East Africa.

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