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The Intersectionality of Educational Inequalities and Child poverty in Africa: A deconstruction

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## 1. Introduction

The former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere once noted that "Education is not a way to escape poverty - It is a way of fighting it." (UNESCO, 2001). This paper aims to engender a reflective engagement on the relationship between child poverty and educational inequalities in Sub-Saharan Africa, from a human rights and social justice perspective. To achieve this, the study set out to develop an understanding of how child poverty affected educational inequalities and what changes were needed to reduce educational inequalities. The spirit and thrust embodied within the Education for All (EFA) agenda (UNESCO 2001) bear testimony to the critical nature of the education sector in confronting and eradicating poverty, working in collaboration with other social sectors. UNESCO (2001) observes that no country has succeeded if it has not educated its people. The premise of this study was based on the notion that, improved educational investments and attainments at a national level are more likely to lead to poverty reduction and economic growth. The Dakar Framework for Action of 2000, which is linked to Education for All agenda sought to promote integrated sector frameworks, linking these to poverty elimination and development strategies in Africa. It is noted that elevated levels of inequality, especially caused by poverty and lack of opportunity can significantly undermine individuals' educational and occupational choices. It is also important to understand child poverty as separate from adults' poverty. Studying it independently may help establish better understanding and suitable policy solutions for most children.

In a recent study (Tshabangu, 2017), it is noted that over the last 30 years, poverty fell from about 40% to under 20%, while most African countries have barely extricated themselves from the yoke of poverty. Sub-Saharan Africa still records over 40% of people living in abject poverty and most of these are children (World Bank, 2014). It is important to state from the onset that Africa is not a country but a continent and therefore there is some uniqueness of each country, culturally, politically and economically. However, there are certain uncontested commonalities that tie most of Sub-Saharan Africa together, and that is, the higher levels of poverty; the extent of corruption, the higher incidence of disease, poor infrastructure, poor economic growth, fluctuating and unstable democracies prone to conflict and civil war (World Bank 2014; Moyo, 2010, Salih, 2001). While more children are going to school in African countries than in previous years, more than 30 million primary school-age children are not attending school (UNICEF, 2014). In 2002-2003, on average, 40 percent of the children that entered school did not finish their primary education and there has been much improvement (Ndoye, 2008; UNICEF, 2014). There is need to establish deeper understanding on the intersectionality of child poverty and educational inequalities in the lives of children in Africa. It is noted that Africa may not succeed unless children's rights at all levels are observed.

## 2. Background

The legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism have contributed immensely to the shaping of poverty levels in Africa. Colonialism in the 19th century produced capitalist economies modelled after European colonial powers. For Europe, Africa provided a potential market as well as a source of raw materials (Mbah and Igariwey, 2001). Gradually, African societies embraced state capitalism, and later, state socialism, which tended to manifest in excessive greed and corruption among the government elite. At independence, most African countries became socialist states and elected their education systems to model socialist ideologies. The decision to follow socialist ideals was based on the notion that socialist and left-wing ideas opposed colonialism and capitalism. The need for Africa's self-determination was not dissimilar to leftist Enlightenment ideals, which in the 18th century led to the demand for freedom, and later, independence from colonial powers. The socialist revolutionary ideals had therefore galvanised African thinkers and politicians. They perceived European powers as espousing right-wing ideas,

which promoted racism and economic exploitation of their people. Furthermore, socialism seemed closely aligned with African cultural norms of communalism than the individualist capitalism of the West. About Education (2016) further notes that though African socialism was different from European, or Marxist socialism in many respects, it was still essentially about trying to resolve social and economic inequalities by harnessing the means of production through state control. Since the ideology of socialism is explicitly anti-imperialism, for most African countries it seemed there was no other way to go, but socialism. It is noted that state socialism like state capitalism has not served Africa well, particularly due to over-centralisation of state apparatus and lack of democratic spaces; leading to unaccountable governance, corruption, poverty and excessive inequalities.

Economically, it is noted that after political independence, most countries moved from being biggest exporters of agricultural and mineral products to being biggest importers, thereby further weakening their economies (Babu, 1981). Most of these economic failures have caused child poverty and impacted heavily on educational inequalities. Some of the key drivers of inequality are examined closely in the section below.

### **3. Drivers of Inequalities**

It is noted that while globalisation and interconnectedness have brought prosperity in some parts of the world, Africa has not generally benefited from global decisions. These decisions, policies and practices, have tended to be wholly influenced by the rich and powerful countries and their transnational corporations in pursuit of their national interests. Faced with such enormous external economic influences, poor and powerless African governments have been unable to bargain better economic deals for their people. Consequently, globalisation has therefore witnessed, a few getting wealthy while the majority, especially children in Africa, struggle. In the last two decades, other regions of the world such as North Africa and South-East Asia have recorded 81% and 84% reduction in extreme poverty, respectively, while Sub-Saharan Africa only registered 28%, a stark contrast (World Bank, 2014).

Freeman (2010) observed that while financial globalisation can facilitate efficient international allocation of capital and risk-sharing, increased financial flows, particularly foreign direct investment (FDI) have tended to increase income inequality in both advanced and emerging economies. Furthermore, high volumes of trade and financial flows that are driven by technological advances, tend to sideline under resourced or low capital economies such as Africa, thus driving further income inequality.

While changes in information technology have led to improvements in productivity and well-being, this has created a disproportionate rise in the demand for capital, especially for under resourced economies. Low-skilled and unskilled labour has faced elimination through automation, culminating in further inequalities (IMF, 2015). In a globalised environment with flexible labour market institutions, the free flow of labour, and reallocation of resources to more productive regions has tended to disadvantage low capitalised economies such as in Africa, particularly the labour force. While flexible labour markets have largely been lucrative for transnationals, it has often posed challenges for low skilled labour within countries.

#### **3.1 Educational Inequality**

Much of educational inequalities can be attributed to economic disparities and lack of targeted investment. This is often reinforced by unequal distribution of educational resources, low-level funding of schools, lack of qualified teachers especially in socially excluded communities such as rural Africa. Consequently, inequality leads to disparities and poor educational outcomes for the affected populations, further weakening their social mobility. Shrivastava and Shrivastava (2014) observe that while it is difficult to bring about education equality, it is vital to social mobility and it promotes citizenship, identity, equality of opportunity, social inclusion, social cohesion as well as economic growth and employment.

Sub-Saharan Africa's participation levels in education lag behind other regions with 80% at primary, 66% at Lower Secondary and 43% at Upper Secondary. This massive number of dropouts at a secondary level signify children who leave school early to work

and this correlates to ILO (2015)'s higher indices on child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa. Child labour will be discussed later in depth. The 'out of school' rate also records higher numbers of children not attending school. At primary level the worst countries are Liberia 62%, Eritrea 59% Sudan 45%, Djibouti 43%, Equatorial Guinea 42%. At the upper Secondary level, the situation is even worse as some children would have dropped out early for several reasons, chief among them being a lack of funding for education and child welfare. Niger has the highest 'out of school' rate of 89%, Central Africa Republic, 84%, Burkina Faso 77%, Mauritania 73%, and Mozambique 71% (Global Education Monitoring report, 2016a). It is also noted that some of these countries have had prolonged civil conflict in the recent past, which has also damaged infrastructure and weakened efforts on educational equality.

Within the past decade, African governments have shown tremendous commitment in response to the EFA agenda, raising their expenditure on education by 6% annually across sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the resources were used to widen access. It is recorded that significant investments also went towards improving other educational services, with Burundi and Mozambique expenditure levels rising by an average of 12% each year. Out of the 26 countries with available data, only the Central African Republic reduced spending on education (UNESCO, 2011). Besides reducing poverty, education also provides good prospects for earnings and income distribution for those countries that invest more in their education systems. Global Education Monitoring report (2016a), records that the private return per additional year of schooling is 10% for 139 countries and that rates of return are much higher in poorer regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, which have a scarcity of skilled workers. Hernández-Catá, (2016), argues that poverty reduction and raising of standards as part of addressing inequalities is inextricably linked to Sub-Saharan Africa's long-term economic growth performance. Redistribution alone without growing the size of the pie, that is, GDP numbers, will not effectively address educational equalities. That is why the low level of per capita income countries such as Mozambique, still fall short even though their education expenditure levels are rising by an average of 12% each year. It is noted that the income of the poor is more likely to increase, when there is overall economic growth, which is one of the best ways to reduce poverty (Hernández-Catá, 2016).

#### **4. Childhood and Poverty**

##### *4.1 Defining child poverty*

It is often difficult to measure and define child poverty. Child poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and needs to be measured and understood in many ways (UNICEF 2016). UNICEF (2016)'s approaches to child poverty both from a monetary and non-monetary perspective, involve moving many children out of monetary poverty and simultaneously ensuring they are not hungry or malnourished. Poverty primarily refers to general scarcity and a state of material lack. It is important to note that child poverty is not just about lack of money. For children, poverty may include lack of food, clothing, healthcare and shelter. There is also relative poverty to consider and Sabates (2008), defines this as varying from country to country and occurring when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards compared to the rest of their population. In most parts of Africa, especially the rural areas, governments have been slow in providing basic needs, leading to soaring levels of deprivation, compared to the urban areas. This has been due in part to government's lack of political will, lack of resources, tax avoidance, poor policy implementation, corruption and the mass exodus of healthcare and educational professionals to cities or other greener pastures. Child poverty and deprivation, therefore, tends to be experienced differently in urban and rural areas by comparison but is more likely to be severe and widespread in rural areas due to low levels of investment and infrastructure.

##### *4.2 Childhood Experiences of Poverty*

Africa continues to have a disproportionate concentration of poverty among children compared to adults. The World Bank Status of Poverty Report showed that both rural and urban children in Africa were more likely to be poor than adults (World Bank, 2014). Children tend to understand poverty as a deeply physical, emotional and social experience and this experience is felt acutely and minutely from an early age. Since

poverty is multidimensional and not just about lack of money, for most children, poverty is more about the experience than about resources. The World Development Report of 2001 by the World Bank established that poverty has important noneconomic dimensions; and that it is always specific to a location and a social group, and that the awareness of these specifics is essential to the design of policies in different countries, regions and contexts such as rural vs urban or children vs adults (Narayan 2006).

In a previous study on child poverty (Tshabangu, 2017), it is noted that for both adults and children, poverty can be a source of stigma and shame. Some individuals tend to be more affected than others, and people cope in diverse ways. Poverty-related stigma and shame may be particularly difficult for children, who have less life experience and fewer emotional resources to draw upon than adults (Howard and Millard, 1997). Childhood is a tender period where children's sensitivities to the physical, mental, emotional and social are quite strong. Their growth and development often make them more vulnerable when exposed to poverty and degradation. While adults may be resilient putting into use their accumulated experiences, children may be lacking and therefore susceptible to negative long-term impact arising from poverty and social injustice. Coletta et al. (1996) also observed that for younger children, malnutrition at an early age can adversely impair their physical development thus impacting their mental capacities and the ability to learn at school. Half the number of children who die under the age of 5 in Africa is attributed to malnutrition (UNICEF 2015). Such large numbers of children dying at an early age are indicative of their vulnerability, and a demonstration of inequalities and the failure by adults or the state to protect.

## **5. Causes of Child Poverty**

Child poverty is caused by deprivation which is a lack of material conditions and services. There are two signifiers to child poverty and these are discussed below.

### **5.1 Exclusion**

Exclusion occurs due to unjust processes through which children's dignity, voice, and rights are denied (Green, 2006; Rank, Yoon & Herschl, 2003). Evidence suggests that most children in Africa are not accorded their rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified by almost all the countries. As children grow, so does their capacity to make decisions. However, children in most parts of Africa are often seen but not heard and this takes place both in the home and in the classroom (Harber 1995). In some cases, children are just unacknowledged 'invisible hands' that help drive the economy. This means that while some children may provide labour both at home and outside they have no voice in decision-making processes or on issues that directly affect their well-being. One of the reasons why children are often seen but not heard could be due to their poor economic state. Narayan (2006) argues that nobody hears the poor and that it is the rich who are being heard most of the time. Children from rich families are more likely to be heard than poor adults, hence the framing of child poverty and inequalities within a social justice and human rights framework.

The exclusion of children can also be seen within the African paternalistic traditions, and conceptions of childhood. There is a generic notion that children are passive and subordinate, which grows out of 20th century western reconstruction of childhood as a time of dependence and control by adults and this conception also grows out of an understanding of pre-colonial and pre-capitalistic African societies as rigidly hierarchical, unchanging and without tension or conflict particularly between generations (Grier, 2006). Over the years, western conceptions of childhood have become less paternalistic and more liberal, placing more emphasis on the individual and espoused personal autonomy. On the other hand, African conceptions of childhood have largely remained traditionalist and paternalistic, with minuscule practices of liberalism. The traditional paternalistic conception of childhood treats the child as one who could fail, due to incompetence, hence, the traditional Africans emphasis on the rituals of incorporation and socialisation into the clan/ tribe. (Menkiti, 1984). Under such communalism, the community demands that the child forsakes individual good; obeys the 'wisdom' of the elders with minimal or no question, in order to submit to the collective interests (Tyrell and Jurgens 1983). From a human rights' perspective, it is

critical to acknowledge that child poverty and inequalities in education, particularly in Africa are largely due to children's powerlessness and exclusion due to profound paternalistic ideologies both at home and at school (Indabawa, 1997; Ncube, 1998; Harber, 1999).

### *5.2 Vulnerability*

Vulnerability is an inability of society to cope with existing or probable threats to children in their environment (Green, 2006; Rank, Yoon & Herschl, 2003). There are weak social security laws that protect children, as children are often left to the whims of adults who control all resources, sometimes abusively. It is not uncommon in most traditional and paternalistic communities of Africa to deny education to girls; to marry them off at a tender age; failure by the state to protect through social security safety nets or to prosecute abuses on children. In several urban areas, it is also not uncommon to find children begging and sleeping on the streets due to lack or ineffective social security laws that compel the state to protect children. Oftentimes such a sacred task of national significance is relegated to external donor organisations, which raises moral questions on some state governance.

It is therefore noted that household poverty, which impacts on children can occur through personal failings, such as poor individual character traits and habits, which renders a family vulnerable to poverty. Secondly, it may occur through structural failings, such as social and economic policies not working effectively at the state level. Thirdly, it may be due to cultural characteristics, such as maintaining a certain national mindset, which often leads to impoverishing many citizens, mostly children (Green, 2006; Rank, Yoon & Herschl, 2003). Just as Rivera-Batiz (1999) once observed that tens of millions of people in emerging markets have recently fallen back into poverty. Without a democratic voice, they had no control of the risks their governments assumed. Even more outrageous, without transparent political institutions and a free press.

### *5.3 Child poverty in Africa*

Findings on general causes of poverty may give some understanding of how children in Africa often become poor. Poverty may be caused by changing trends in a country's economy, lack of education, feminization aspects of poverty, structural and personal failures, overpopulation, epidemic diseases such as AIDS and malaria, conflict and environmental problems (Lusted, 2010; Harrison, 1993; White & Killick, 2001).

In a previous study (Tshabangu, 2017), it was noted that due to endemic diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Africa, it is not uncommon that many children are robbed of the family breadwinners' quite early in life. Long-term illness has also been known to incapacitate some wage earners leaving children in abject poverty, since most of these workers may not have comprehensive insurance schemes to cover such eventualities. Most countries have high levels of unemployment meaning that parents may be out of work and that there is generally chronic irregularity of work in the employment sector. Traditionally, most African families are large or extended, which may strain the meagre resources available to the household. While the largeness of a family may be an advantage in agrarian and mostly rural Africa, rural-urban migration and urbanisation of life in general renders this notion questionable. Low wages have also been a factor contributing to child poverty and educational inequalities. In some cases, this has driven up child labour and abuse.

In some parts of Africa, access and land ownership has been declining due to rising populations and related environmental issues (Hanmer et al, 1996). In most parts, there continues to be unequal access to land and contestations on land thereby discouraging potential local and external investors who may help drive these economies. It is further noted that in some paternalistic communities, women have no access to land or rights to land ownership since they are statutorily perceived to be minors (Mnisi, 1998; Hanmer et al, 1996). Furthermore, in the urban areas, most women tend to be in the informal sector which often hampers their ability to access credit from financial institutions. Seeing that most women in Africa are often left to fend for their children, particularly in the rural areas, or through death of a spouse, such paternalistic traditions and laws consequently aid the impoverishment of children

## **6. Understanding Child Poverty and Educational Inequalities**

Where poverty indices are much higher, such as in Africa, children tend to bear the brunt of such deprivation with long lasting consequences on their education and social mobility. In countries where there has been poor governance, disasters, war and famine children have been the worst affected by such impoverishing forces, in some cases leading to abusive child labour.

Though this study is not about seeking to establish effective measurements of poverty, the understanding of child poverty may entail measuring it at micro levels, as opposed to macro level or sub-regional levels, or using incomes as a benchmark. As stated earlier, Africa consists of different countries with varying economic capacities and leadership ethos. While for example, the state of children's welfare in South Africa may appear much stronger compared to South Sudan, there are some pockets of abject child poverty in South Africa that might be overlooked if measurements neglected child individuality; the intra-household dynamics and variations between rural districts, towns, cities and regions. Furthermore, child mortality rate for under 5-year-olds and lack of educational opportunities may generally be higher in Niger, at a macro level, compared to Mauritius, but using that statistical fact may only be a masking of realities for some few impoverished children in Mauritius. In some countries, for example, the education per capita grants allocated to schools are the same for every child regardless of their level of need. Such systems of funding allocation need revisiting if they are to effectively address child poverty and inequalities in education (Tshabangu, 2017). At international level, there is also misdirected funding, which does not equitably address needs within SubSaharan African countries. It is noted that the percentage of children completing primary school is a potential measure of country need, yet countries who may not have greater need, continue to get better funding allocations ahead of those in dire need. For example, the average child in Namibia received US\$43 in aid to basic education in 2014 even though the primary completion rate was 85% in 2010 (UNESCO, 2016a). By contrast, Chad, where the primary completion rate was 28% in 2010, received a meagre US\$3 per primary school child in 2014. Liberia and Mauritania, have about 50% of their children completing primary school, but Liberia receives 10 times that of Chad. There is need to address such disparities in funding allocation if countries in need are to address educational inequalities and child poverty. Lustig (2015) also notes that there is a tendency for larger public spending on higher education which tends to benefit the wealthy, while investment in childhood education, which has a strong benefit for disadvantaged children, is neglected (UNESCO, 2015a). Early childhood care and education received only US\$106 million in 2014, from donor funding, less than 3% compared to post-secondary education. (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016).

### ***6.1 Urban-rural dimension***

Children in rural Africa are often exposed to higher levels of deprivation and poverty compared to their urban counterparts (World Bank, 2014). In countries with low rates of urbanisation such as Tanzania and Uganda, the levels of child poverty in rural areas are generally more profound than in countries such as South Africa where most men and women trek to the cities in search of work, leaving children with relatives. Rural-urban migration in search of work has in some cases undermined social cohesion and child safety culminating in poor child welfare.

The increasing numbers of people settling in the cities in most countries have over the years put pressure on urban educational services and employment availability, thereby leading to increased child poverty in the cities (Rebelo, 1999), culminating in street children; child prostitutes; trafficking and child criminality.

## **7. Methodology**

This paper sought to establish better understanding on the intersectionality of child poverty and educational inequalities in Sub-Saharan Africa and how these perpetuate inequalities, especially among children. Based on the examination of key statistical indicators, plausible reflections and understanding was established on the links between child poverty and educational inequalities in Sub-Saharan Africa.



The study used an analytic review of existing survey data and literature on contemporary contexts in Africa, focusing on the interplay between child poverty and education. Several World Bank and United Nations agencies data were used to establish a deeper understanding through thematic discussions on child poverty and educational inequalities, and how these negatively impact childhood development and social mobility. There was also an analytic review of unpublished sources of data and use of observation accounts from Sub-Saharan Africa so as to provide a triangulated approach in the data reviewed. In using World Bank and the United Nations data the study has been able to establish a broader understanding of child poverty and education inequalities in Africa. The sections below seek to further examine in depth some of these findings and challenges.

## **8. Poverty Issues Impacting Educational Inequalities**

### **8.1 *Over reliance on external donor aid***

The western world has continually funded various programmes in different countries, in some cases influencing policies in strategic areas including poverty alleviation. During colonial, rule aid was used as a form of control and influence over colonial empires. The British Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, for example, was a paternalistic tool, used by the coloniser and meant for “peoples not yet able to stand by themselves.” Some have argued that in modern times, authoritarian paternalism is merely denied in name but implemented in practice by western powers (Easterly, 2009). Moyo (2010) has further argued against western aid in Africa citing three main strands that need consideration if Africa is to eradicate poverty. First, it is a complaint about how the West is patronising Africans through aid and secondly, how aid has harmed Africa particularly in view of unfair international trade practices that tend to disadvantage Africa. Thirdly, a political immorality that is contented with over-reliance on external aid, especially on efforts towards poverty eradication. An entrepreneurial alternative is then proposed which is likely to chart a better path for Africa leading to economic independence and poverty reduction. While this may be a plausible alternative in the long term, the contribution of external aid to finance public education and health programmes is still crucial for Africa. Such continued funding may help lower inequalities and raise higher standards of living for the poor in the less developed economies (Castelló-Climent and Doménech, 2008). Efforts on economic independence may still be pursued simultaneously.

It is noted that Sub-Saharan Africa already spends a higher share on education, that is, 18% relative to public budgets compared to other regions. Since aid has stagnated from 50% in 2002 to 28% in 2014, (Global Education Monitoring Report (2016), countries need effective strategies to spur economic growth to maintain higher levels of education expenditure.

### **8.2 *Child labour***

Grier (2006: 8) observes that ‘to be sure, no one familiar with African economies and societies is oblivious to the tremendous amount of labour that children contribute to peasant farming household maintenance, childcare and the informal economy’. Child labour is a long-standing feature spanning the pre-colonial to the postcolonial era (Tyrell and Jurgens, 1983). Traditionally, men would practice polygamy to have more children in the homestead, who in turn provided labour. In contemporary Africa, large households are in most contexts, more likely to be poor than smaller households and therefore a probable cause of higher levels of child poverty. In some instances, large families can be a means of coping with poverty, rather than a cause of it, especially in rural agrarian settings (Hanmer et al, 1996). It is noted that the worst forms of child labour are slavery, debt, bondage, prostitution, pornography, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, use of children in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, and all other work likely to be harmful or hazardous to the health, safety or morals of children under 18 years (Work in Freedom, 2016; ILO, 2016). Compared to other world regions, Africa has the largest number of child labour at around 59 million children aged between of 5 and 17, with some classed as working under hazardous conditions (ILO, 2016). It is recorded that one in 5 children in Africa is employed against their will in stone quarries,

farms, and mines (ILO, 2016). Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest concentrations of child labour (ILO, 2016).

Income inequality and the production of child labour often arises where poor families are faced with tough decisions concerning their children's wellbeing and survival. Parents may make decisions that condone child labour based on house budget constraints or using children as an insurance in an uncertain economic environment. Levison (1991) observed that some parents will send some of their children to work fearing that placing all of them in school may expose the family to economic risks. For families with large land holdings, parents may use the children to work the land rather than invest in children's education (Skoufias, 1995). Despite recorded progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the persistence of child labour has been cited as one area of failure.

### *8.3 Gendered Inequalities*

It was noted in a previous study (Tshabangu, 2017) that the levels of girl-child enrolment in most mainstream sectors of education have reflected rapid improvement in terms of equity and access, since the 1980s. However, this has not translated to the realisation of women senior leaders or politicians who may be more sensitive to child welfare issues. Researched evidence suggests that women tend to prioritise children's welfare compared to men, and therefore more likely to devote resources to child poverty (World Bank, 1998). In some traditionalist communities, girls are more likely to be asked to drop out of school in preference to boys, since boys are perceived to have a greater potential for supporting the family in the long-term, whereas girls are married off to live under their husbands. It is not uncommon in most traditional communities that girls are sometimes married off quite early to raise cash through the bride price and therefore address poverty-related challenges in the home (Narayan and Nyamwaya, 1996).

While we may not simplistically conflate child poverty and that of women, it is noted that there is a strong relationship between women's well-being and child poverty, especially for infants and young dependent children. The advance of women's rights in Africa or lack thereof is closely tied to child poverty and educational inequalities.

### *8.4 Inadequate investments*

In the 1980s several countries under the IMF initiative cut expenditure on basic services, in some cases severely, as a way of achieving macroeconomic stability. Countries such as Zimbabwe witnessed declining spending on education by almost a third in 1992 (Mwanza, 1998). For Sub-Saharan Africa, real government spending on education fell 65 per cent between 1980-7 (Colclough, 1992). It is noted that the neglect of funding in education in the 1980s and part of the 1990s caused irreparable damage to most children's chances in life, especially the poorer children. Children from households where a parent had been retrenched often faced pressure to withdraw from school (World Bank, 1996), thus exacerbating child poverty and educational inequalities. The growth of the informal sector in several countries, which has a higher concentration of women, has been symptomatic of adverse implications for children's welfare.

At the beginning of the 21st century up to 2008 most developing countries including some parts of Africa recorded considerable economic growth, which in turn helped government revenues and boosted investment in educational resources. Based on SACMEQ II learning assessment, there were recorded advances in teaching and learning resulting in improved reading and mathematics achievement (Hungu, 2011). It is noted that increased funding in education helped provide opportunities as well as uplift some of the poorest children from deprivation. However, this was not the experience in other African countries since economic growth was not converted into increased education expenditure. Increased spending on education has often led to improvement in reading and mathematics achievement (Hungu, 2011).

After 2008's global economic recession, there has been declining access to basic services for most children due to budgetary constraints. Increased unemployment, coupled with small manufacturing sectors and the inability to compete with cheap imports, from China, for example, has also compounded problems related to internal economic growth. Stagnant economic growth has, in turn, led to falling incomes and assets leading to further reduced economic activity and by extension, less revenue for the governments.

Donor fatigue has also been notable after the onset of 2008 recessionary pressures (Voice of America, 2013). This has meant higher household costs for many poor families, paying more for their children's education and health, thus leaving many steeped in poverty. Parents are often expected to contribute financially towards the development of schools through payment of various fees and levies. Some of these fees include tuition, examination, caution, watchman, academic, furniture, identity and fee for lunches (Tshabangu, 2010).

There is also an unequal distribution of education resources particularly between rural and urban areas. Differences in school characteristics are a significant source of wealth variation, and gender inequalities in education (Macdonald et al., 2010), coupled with weaker links between education and the surrounding economic, cultural, and social contexts (Ndoye 2008). Oftentimes, Education planning is rarely integrated into the macroeconomic demands and hardly fosters approaches that help develop endogenous potential (Ndoye 2008; Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016a). One of the primary reason for low-level investment in sub-Saharan Africa has been due to negative perceptions of risk particularly on macroeconomic stability; the rule of law, and the ability to enforce contracts. If these perceptions were managed effectively, or evidence, to the contrary, was demonstrated, capital inflows could rise and boost investments (Hernández-Catá, 2016).

### **8.5 Conflict**

Thirty-eight percent of the world's refugees are in Africa due to internal wars, conflict and rampant human rights abuses. There have been numerous wars waged in Africa in the last three decades with devastating short and long-term consequences on human life and infrastructure. It is sadly noted that almost all the African countries with the highest child mortality rates have experienced conflict in recent years. Because of conflict, children have lacked access to education and health care; faced separation from family; lived in child-headed households; been child soldiers and street children; experienced child prostitution, forced marriages and sexual abuse. In the mid-1990s Africa had as many soldiers as teachers (Morgan, 1995), and those numbers have not reduced in some countries. The devastation caused by conflict has often left behind dilapidated public infrastructure such as schools and hospitals which are often vital for child welfare

## **9. Conclusion**

This paper has examined interrelationships between child poverty and educational inequalities noting the debilitating impact these have on children's development and social mobility. Despite improved public expenditure on education, Sub-Saharan African countries need to devise strategies to grow their economies for two reasons; first to increase income per capita, and thus enable greater distribution to address inequalities and secondly, to be self-sustaining in view of stagnating donor funding. As part of growing their economies, countries will need to be effective in revenue collection and harnessing of foreign direct investments (FDIs). Efforts should also be made on encouraging private sector participation in public education and in creating a political and economic climate that is free from conflict, less risky and friendly to both domestic and foreign investors. Foreign donors may need to revisit their funding priorities and models in ways that target countries with excessive inequalities rather than pamper countries with less need. There is also a need to address human rights disparities and exclusion of children from social and economic rights as enshrined in the UNCRC. Such will not only help bridge inequalities but will engender a governance accountability culture at macro levels. Most countries need to address the higher incidents of child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa by investing more in human capital development and strengthening social security safety nets. Without a strategic commitment to addressing the issues raised above, it seems inconceivable that Sub-Saharan Africa will effectively deal with child poverty and educational inequalities bedevilling the region.

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