

Education for the future

ESSA's impact in the first five years
and our ambitions for 2021–2026





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Letter from Lucy Heady

ESSA CEO

I am proud to share the ESSA 5th Birthday Report, giving an overview of our achievements from inception five years ago and sharing our vision for the next five years.

Since the beginning, ESSA has always taken a step-by-step approach. As a start-up in 2016, our strategy was to establish ESSA as a charity, build a board and team, secure funding from influential partners, and deliver our model as quickly as possible. Our initial focus was on improving post-secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa by working on three big challenges:

The visibility of African research on education, the faculty crisis, and the impact of university and college scholarships for young people. This was made possible by the early and flexible support of Robert Bosch Stiftung. An investment of one million Euros from the Foundation enabled us to make a meaningful contribution to improving education in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2019, we entered a new phase. Catalysed by the support of Dubai Cares and private donors we were able to grow the team and form new partnerships in order to create further impact. This investment enabled us to expand into tertiary education, and start work on two additional challenges:

- Unlocking women leaders in education
- Young people's transition from college or university into work.

Now in 2021, we operate a cost-effective approach with a 15-member distributed team based in Ghana, Kenya, Germany



and the U.K. Working along side this passionate and committed team every day is the real privilege of this job. Since start-up, 33 students from across sub-Saharan Africa have taken part in our paid internship programme.

It is therefore with a great foundation that we can look forward with excitement towards ESSA's five upcoming years. This ambitious strategy set out in this report is designed to support an evidence-led transformation of post-secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa. A transformation that has only become more urgent in the wake of the global

Our goal is to reach over

1.4M

students

pandemic, equipping young people with the skills for work is critical to a strong recovery.

Our goal is to reach over 1.4 million students in 500 universities and colleges in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. To support them to achieve their ambitions and create more opportunity for the millions that will follow. We will do this by working across the student journey: from accessing education through to transition into employment. ESSA works at the systems level and a strong knowledge ecosystem is critical to any sustainable, systemic change. Therefore we remain committed to building the visibility of African education researchers and increasing access to evidence and data.

We have learned over the past year how much unexpected events can affect even the best-laid plans. While we cannot see what is coming in the future we know we must remain nimble and responsive to the changing needs of our partners. Our guide in this, as ever, is our commitment to our values. We are evidence-driven, solutions-focused, always learning and



strengthening trust in our operations.

A special thank you to our investors and partners. Your trust, collaboration, and shared vision to transform education for young people in sub-Saharan Africa is reflected in our successes.

I would like to thank our board of trustees and our team who are from Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Togo, the UK and Germany.

I very much hope you enjoy reading about our journey so far and are as excited as I am by where we plan to go next.

Lucy Heady

Chief Executive Officer

Education Sub Saharan Africa



impacting more than

500

universities and colleges

Letter from Lisa Tichagwa

INTERN

We are living in extraordinary times and as the pandemic has changed major parts of our lives. This generation of young people are sometimes labelled as not having the leadership skills to be at the centre of decision-making.

However, recent times have proven we can do anything. I am so proud of the hard work of young people in Africa in responding to pandemic and other huge challenges we are facing like unemployment. From becoming creative entrepreneurs in Ghana to working as frontline workers fighting the pandemic in Zimbabwe, we have been resilient. This can also be attributed to the education, trainings, mentorship and opportunities provided by institutions and individuals to build our leadership skills. One of such organizations is Education Sub Saharan Africa and I have had the opportunity to intern with them.

I got to know about ESSA in May of 2017 when my university notified students of a summer internship opportunity working on a research project for ESSA. My application was successful, and I began my two-month internship in July as part of the team that mapped university scholarship programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. This led to later creating a website where students can find the right scholarships for them called the African [Scholarships Hub](#). I enjoyed working on the project as I found out about different scholarship programmes available for African students to pursue higher education. While I was in Zimbabwe, I only knew of a handful of these programmes, and I realized that many students may miss out on opportunities simply because they do not know that these programmes

exist. As an August Wilhelm von Hofmann scholarship recipient, I know the importance scholarships in helping more young people access universities and colleges.

My internship led on to working as a research and programmes intern for ESSA since October 2017. Since then, I have had insight into the challenges facing higher education in sub-Saharan Africa such as quality, accessibility, inclusiveness and equality, as well as the numerous efforts by various parties to solve these issues.

As ESSA celebrates its 5th anniversary this year, I reflect on my contributions as a young person in this organization and



(Image Copyright – Jacobs university)

how we can all support a charity that works with and for young people. The end goal is to ensure that young people in sub-Saharan Africa have opportunities and resources to help achieve our ambitions.

Lisa Tichagwa
Intern

Education Sub Saharan Africa



My internship led on to working as a research and programmes intern for ESSA



Who We are

A young Black man with a friendly smile is the central focus of the image. He is wearing a long-sleeved button-down shirt with a bold, vertical pattern of brown, yellow, and white stripes. He is standing on a balcony with a dark metal railing. The background shows a white building facade and a clear blue sky. The overall mood is positive and professional.

OUR VISION

High-quality education in Sub-Saharan Africa enables young people to achieve their ambitions and strengthens society

OUR MISSION

Our mission starts with universities and colleges, using data and evidence to drive a dramatic improvement in education for young people

WHERE WE WORK

Our work has relevance across the continent, but we are a small organisation and recognise that there is no “one size fits all” approach to development. ESSA therefore takes a country-specific fit-for-purpose emphasis to our work.



We have staff in **Ghana** and **Kenya**. We work at the regional level, focusing on the East African Community through our partnership with the Inter-University Council of East Africa. Many of our programmes are relevant to all 46 sub-Saharan African countries and so we work with partners and networks across the region.



Our goal is to have operations in **Ghana, Kenya, Uganda** and **Zambia** by the end of our 5-year strategy.

Our work is relevant across all

46

countries in sub-Saharan Africa

Our strategy

from evidence to real change for young people

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM AFRICA'S FUTURE

- Quality education and jobs for the world's largest youth population could lift millions from poverty and strengthen societies globally. But without these opportunities, the world faces the risk of migration and unrest.
- Colleges, universities, and vocational courses build young people's skills for work and skills to be active citizens in their communities.
- These institutions are the training ground for professionals, including teachers, education staff, and vital health workers.
- Colleges and universities are hubs for knowledge, driving evidence and solutions for transforming society.

FILLING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

Yet, there are big gaps in data and evidence about the relevance of university and college for work.

For example, we do not know the most cost-effective ways to support more young people to attend university or college, or where young people go after they leave education.

This leads to low, badly targeted investment.



By 2030, we expect

40M



more young people complete secondary school¹

Access must increase

Below

10%



of young people enter universities and colleges giving global average of 40%. Cost of education being one of the main barriers.³

Quality of education must improve

50%



With more students per professor compared to global average, course quality and relevance is greatly affected. Curricula and teaching methodologies are out of date.

Work skills and opportunities needed

1/3⁵



1 out of 3 young people are unemployed including graduates who are experiencing a skills mismatch.⁶

Under-represented groups must benefit

Women and other under-represented groups have less leadership opportunities in education and work.

24%



of university and college faculty and just 2.5% of vice chancellors in sub-Saharan Africa are women. Women make up 43% of those who receive tertiary education but hold 28% of formal sector jobs.⁷

5: DFID, 2018 (cross-sector African business leader survey)
6: McKinsey Global Institute, 2019

BUILDING AN EVIDENCE ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATION

We support university and college leaders, employers, policymakers, and young people to turn evidence into practical solutions and maximise resources. Our goal is to increase access to university or college; improve the quality of education; and enable young people to transition into work.

This will support more than 1.4 million current students at over 500 universities and colleges in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia to achieve their ambitions, and create more opportunity for the millions that will follow.

OUR APPROACH:



Identify the biggest issues in tertiary education



Build influential partnerships with organizations in Africa and beyond



Understand what data and evidence is needed for change



Turn data and evidence into practical solutions



Harness the power of Africa's universities, colleges, and businesses to advocate solutions at scale



Improve education and increase work for young people in Sub-Saharan Africa

IMPACT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIETIES THROUGH OUR WORK AND BEYOND

Through our work, we create impact in the lives of young people and the society at large.



Turn the evidence into practical solutions for use in education policy and delivery

- We present high-quality evidence in user-friendly formats: Digital products, tools and research publications.

Identify the biggest issues in tertiary education

We focus on quality, access, relevance (transition to work) and knowledge ecosystem for education.



Build influential evidence alliance to understand and create evidence for change

- We strengthen trust and increase learning by building an evidence alliance for education
- We co-create policy-relevant evidence.

Motivate the use of evidence informed solutions in decision making

- We build networks and create conversations to improve the use of evidence.



The contribution ESSA makes is shown in red. No one organisation can solve these major systemic challenges. ESSA's contribution is all aimed at boosting and joining up the work of others.

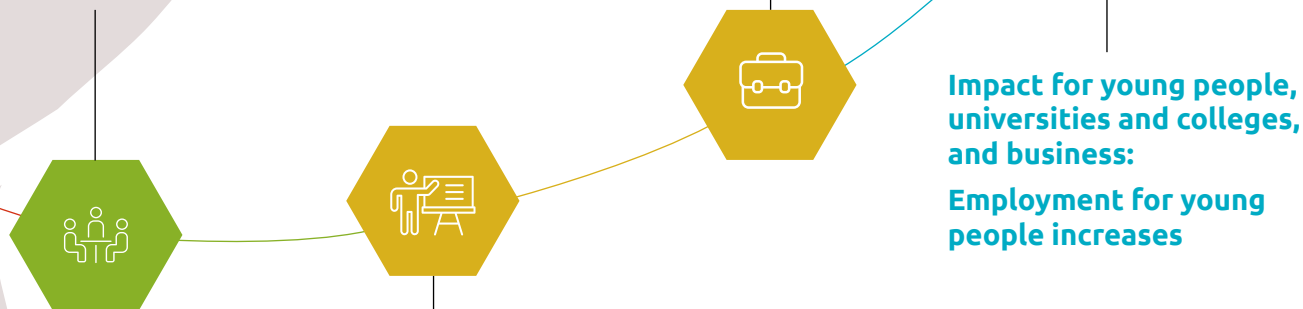


Uptake of solutions in education policy and practice

- Educators, decision-makers, young people and investors are increasingly using evidence to drive their decisions, helped by local researchers and civil society.

Youth transition smoothly to decent & productive employment

- Young people have market-relevant skills for productive and decent jobs.
- Businesses have the skills they need to grow.
- It takes less time for young people to find jobs after university or college.



Impact for young people, universities and colleges, and business:
Employment for young people increases

Functioning education system for everyone

- Universities and colleges expand **access** and **quality** to meet the needs of young people, and employers.
- Universities and colleges deliver market relevant skills to enable students to **transition to work**.





Our values

Our values guide
everything that
we do

WE ARE:

Evidence-driven

Solutions-focused

**Strengthening
trust**

Always learning



EVIDENCE-DRIVEN

- We are driven by data and evidence to find what works best, building an evidence alliance for education in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Through gathering insights from those we work with – from students to university leaders, employers and policy makers – we have something new to say and get the right results.



SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED

- We are accountable to young people and educators in sub-Saharan Africa.
- We prioritise inclusion and see strength in working across different cultures.

ESSA



STRENGTHENING TRUST

- We seek the highest impact for young people and educators in sub-Saharan Africa with the cost-effective funds we invest.
- We measure our results and use our resources efficiently, earning credibility with our partners and investors.



ALWAYS LEARNING

- We listen and learn from people's first-hand experiences about education and work across sub-Saharan Africa.
- We bring fresh perspectives by joining-up those who share our passion to learn, through our practical step by step approach.

Our 5 year journey

2016



- ESSA was inspired by the impact of systemic challenges on the ground that our founder Patrick Dunne saw through his work with Warwick in Africa
- Patrick Dunne and Chris Foy appointed first trustees
- Start-up investment from the Robert Bosch Foundation
- Olaf Hahn appointed Director
- Uta-Micaela Dürig CEO of Robert Bosch Stiftung becomes a trustee

2017



- Joel Kibazo joins the ESSA Board of Trustees
- Established partnerships with the African Association of Universities (AAU), Ghana's National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) and Mastercard Foundation to conduct pioneering analysis of demographics of faculty in Ghana
- Established Partnership with the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge

2018



- Mmasekgoa Masire Mwamba joins the ESSA Board of Trustees
- Partnership with The Schaufler Foundation to develop the African Scholarships Hub and map over 30,000 scholarships from nearly 300 providers
- Piloted the '[demographics of faculty](#)' study to provide fresh insights on the scale of the faculty crisis in Ghana in partnership with AAU, NCTE and PRB, supported by the Mastercard Foundation.
- Launched the first free [African Education Research Database](#) in partnership with the REAL Centre and with the support of the Jacobs Foundation, with over 2,500 research papers by African scholars

2019



- Dubai Cares partnership and investment to transform education in sub-Saharan Africa
- Joachim Rogall joins ESSA Board of Trustees, Uta Micaela During and Mmasekgoa Masire Mwamba become first ESSA Patrons
- Created a [framework for scholarship programmes](#), endorsed by UNESCO, to ensure they have impact for young people and society

2020



- Lucy Heady appointed as ESSA CEO
- HE Dr Tariq Al Gurg appointed as ESSA Patron
- Dolika Banda, Nancy Matimu and Kendi Ntwiga-Nderitu appointed ESSA Trustees
- ESSA's work on scholarships is published the [Global Education Monitoring Report](#)
- Launched [Edujobs Africa](#), the first African Academic Jobs board with over 400 jobs in partnership with AAU and the Warwick Employment Group
- Published an [evidence synthesis](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on universities and colleges, drawing out lessons for policy-makers, vice-chancellors, faculty and students
- Launched the [African Scholarships Hub](#)

2021



- [Research to understand the student journey in sub-Saharan Africa](#) with Quilt.AI and IPSOS
- Scaling up our work on the faculty crisis to East Africa in partnership with the Inter-University Council of East Africa, AAU and PRB
- Worked with UNHCR to map education opportunities for refugees in 21 countries in West and Central Africa
- Launched our strategy for the next 5 years

Learning In crisis

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

HOW WE RESPONDED AS A TEAM

Back in March 2020 when the global pandemic hit, the ESSA team were already working remotely. We adapted quickly, putting in place measures that ensured the safety of our employees and stakeholders. This enabled us to maintain our support to those at the forefront of education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Adapting did not come without challenges. Most notably the strain placed on many of our partners and the tertiary education sector in sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite these challenges, our partners and those we work with – including students, educators and policy leaders – came together to protect education as a fundamental right for all during this crisis.

HOW THE EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONDED: LEARNING IN CRISIS REPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged universities and colleges in sub-Saharan Africa in many new and unexpected ways. It is becoming increasingly clear that COVID-19 will be a fixture in our lives for some time to come.

Our learning in crisis report addressed some of these challenges and learnings from the pandemic response for the tertiary education sector.



“

Students are being left behind with e-learning. For example the Ministry of Education have put resources on their website, on the radio, and on television, but many students don't have electricity or can't afford data. Teachers and students with internet access also need training to use these e-learning platforms

FIONAH UMULISA

former ESSA intern and Africa Leadership University graduate, Rwanda





We identified top lessons for college and university students, faculty, and Vice Chancellors in sub-Saharan Africa.



STUDENTS



FACULTY



**VICE
CHANCELLORS**

By promoting the report on our social media platforms, we gained over 9,000 views. Through sharing the report directly with our partners and their member organizations, we reached over 5,000 education stakeholders.

The results of our report aim to improve higher education policymakers' and researchers understanding of the current challenges. Most importantly, it will serve as an important tool for possible recovery strategies for students, vice chancellors and faculty members during and after the pandemic.

9,000

views of our report on
social media

Disseminated to

5,000

education
stakeholders

Our work

from evidence to action

1 ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE

Scholarships Impact

With the support of our partners and funders, we give more youths the possibility to attend college and university through scholarships.



IDENTIFY ISSUE:

Young people are concerned about the high cost of education ([Quilt.AI 2021](#)). As demand for education surges in the world's youngest continent, there is limited evidence to know whether scholarships are supporting young people to join the workforce and little tracking of the return on investment of funding.



BUILD AN EVIDENCE BASED ALLIANCE:

Bringing together students, universities, and influential scholarship funders and providers who agree on core challenges to achieving impact for young people.



UNDERSTAND:

Pioneering analysis into over 400 top scholarship programmes for students in sub-Saharan Africa. Uncovered low return on \$750 million annual investment, limited access for disadvantaged students, high drop-out rates, limited support for students to find jobs, lack of tracking about impact of scholarships on society.



SOLUTION:

Analysis featured in UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitoring ([GEM](#)) report. Using this knowledge, we created the '[African Scholarships Hub](#)' to help young people find scholarships more easily online.

“

The in-depth analysis of scholarship opportunities for sub-Saharan African students, contributed by ESSA to our Report, filled a void in research that needed to be filled. Charged with a mandate to monitor the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 4, but with no systematic data on the number of scholarships mentioned in Target 4.b, this analysis was a critical piece for us. It successfully reinforced the message that scholarships must prioritize an inclusive focus if they are to be equitable.

Global Education Monitoring Report
UNESCO

Pioneered analysis
into over
400
top scholarship
programmes



SOLUTION AT SCALE:

We created publicly available [KPI framework](#) for social inclusion within scholarship programming, providing guidance to providers and funders. Expanding digital hub to thousands of scholarships. Partnership established with UNHCR to map pathways into education for refugees in West and Central Africa.



CASE STUDY

Fulfilling my dreams through a scholarship

Rita Asantewaa Opoku is a student on a scholarship at the University of Professional Studies (UPS) in Ghana, where she is studying for a bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

Before I began studying at the University of Professional Studies (UPS), I received a scholarship from a business called Newmont Ghana. These scholarships are typically given to farm owners in the New Abirem community, as the organisation's way of supporting farm owners since the organisation uses part of the land for their operations. My grandma owns a farm, so my siblings have this scholarship and most of my relatives have the same scholarship.

Scholarships make education easier for young people especially the less privileged ones. In UPS, you must come to school for a semester, pay school fees which are more than GHC4000 (£492) and pay hostel fees, all while your parents have other kids to take care of. Scholarships reduce the pressure on parents and make learning easier for young people.

Personally, I am happy I have this scholarship because it has helped me a lot as I know I can do a lot of things. This scholarship will help me reach a higher level in my education if I study hard and meet the scholarship's requirements to do well.

One of the biggest issues with young people is unemployment after graduation. As a scholarship recipient, it makes it easier to find work with the organisation who sponsored your education after graduation. With the scholarship, you get to meet a lot of people and when you do well, they will employ you in their business. I have a

cousin who had this same Newmont scholarship, and she is currently working with them. I think if I do well and meet the requirements for a particular job, it's highly possible I can easily get employment after graduating.

If I did not make the required grades needed, I may not have gotten this scholarship so it's important for young people to make it a point to excel in their exams.

Having used the African Scholarship Hub created by ESSA, I realised it's easy to use and young people in Africa can utilise this platform to apply for scholarships.

I would like to further my education so I will be applying for a scholarship to Canada for my Master's Degree through the Hub.

What's life for me after graduation? I'm a business student so I wouldn't focus my dreams on just one thing. I want to do a lot of things. I want to be an entrepreneur. I want to invest money in a lot of things. This is becoming a reality through the scholarship, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds for me.





ESSA's study found that Ghana needs five times more faculty to meet growing numbers of students. The results were timely and revealing. It made those of us in academia and policy making rethink the approach to solving the faculty deficit challenge. The local/ national capacity for producing doctoral graduates in universities in Ghana is inadequate. The practices and competencies of focus for faculty also need to be enhanced to include teaching and learning skills, research skills, grant management skills and other soft skills, which are not currently part of the requirement for becoming an academic in Ghana.

Taking part in ESSA's workshop on the faculty crisis revealed to me in a most practical way, the skills and competences that effective academics should possess and the opportunities to develop more faculty with global perspectives in an international academic environment. Thanks to ESSA for that revealing initiative. I hope to see the impact of the study and workshop positively affecting faculty development in Ghana.



Prof. Goski Alabi

Co-founder of Laweh University College in Accra, Ghana,
and participant in our Demographics of Faculty study

2 QUALITY OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE EDUCATION

The Faculty Crisis

Africa is facing a shortage of academic teaching and research staff. At the same time, more young people are enrolling in higher education across the region. COVID-19 is making delivering quality education even more difficult. To address this, we are connecting evidence on delivering quality education with university and college leaders, and policymakers.



IDENTIFY ISSUE:

Critical shortage of academic teaching and research staff.



BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASED ALLIANCE:

Created a consortium – made up of the Association of African Universities (AAU), Education Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA), and the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) – in partnership with the Ghana National Council of Tertiary Education (NCTE), commissioned a study called the [‘Demographics of Faculty’](#) to understand the quantity and quality of faculty members and policy environment of universities in Ghana.



There is the need to reduce the gap that exists between the student-teacher ratio. We need more faculty staff and academics to ensure that the teaching is effective and the learning processes are efficient within the university communities.

It is important for teaching and students, it is important for research, it is also important for community service because if there is a deficit, usually African researchers come out with poor teaching strategies, poor research outputs, and they may have limited time for community services because they are overly burdened.



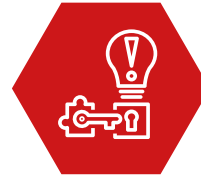
Fred Awaah

Lecturer at the University of Professional Studies, Accra, Ghana



UNDERSTAND:

The study revealed that Ghana is facing a critical shortage of academic teaching staff. To achieve the desired student-teacher ratios, public universities in Ghana are required to hire an additional 3,410 faculty, 71% would need to be women. Gender inequality persists among faculty within disciplines and academic ranks. In the 2016/2017 academic year, only 10 out of 120 faculty with the rank of professor at public universities were women. In 2019 we led research on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education in sub-Saharan Africa.



SOLUTION:

- Now this analysis will feed into updating the GTEC university and polytechnic policy norms and creating digital tools to improve data collection and faculty planning across Ghana.
- Launched first academic African Jobs Board '[Edujobs](#)' to help faculty and education job seekers find jobs and employers in the education sector find talent, in partnership with University of Warwick and the Association of African Universities.



SOLUTION AT SCALE:

Continue to work with partners, and the Inter-University Council of East Africa, expanding work to 6 countries in East Africa. Establishing a methodology for developing an online planning tool that can be replicated and used to improve faculty planning and decision-making in other African countries.



At some point, society, family, circles pull you down and you don't know how to get up. Where I think ESSA can come in is to really integrate leadership as part of education.

ALMAZ NEGASH

Founder of the African Diaspora Network



Women Leading

Women must have more leadership opportunities and roles to improve society for us all. Whilst this is not unique to education, academia can set the bar. We have an opportunity to unlock the potential of female leadership.

Universities and colleges are places where women can gain leadership skills and roles:

- Female role models in universities and colleges can inspire new generations of young people to be leaders.
- Mentoring and networks within universities and colleges and beyond can unlock the power of female leadership.
- Scholarships can develop students and educators into leaders.

This counteracts unconscious gender biases: transforming society so that it works better for everyone.



IDENTIFY ISSUE:

Underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within universities and colleges (and beyond). Only 8% of professors at public universities in Ghana are women ([ESSA DAF study](#)). Across sub-Saharan Africa just 2.5% of vice-chancellors are women. More evidence is needed on the role of universities and colleges in equipping women for accessing leadership opportunities and positions in sub-Saharan Africa.



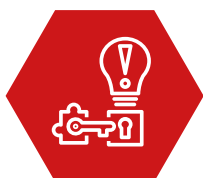
BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASED ALLIANCE:

Bringing together universities, colleges, employers, and leadership organisations. Promoting [female education leaders' stories](#).



UNDERSTAND:

Analyzing female leadership policies and practices within universities and colleges. Led a survey and interviews to discover the barriers female students, faculty and graduates in sub-Saharan Africa face accessing leadership skills and roles.



SOLUTION:

We published the results of our research on women in leadership titled "The State of Women Leading Report".



SOLUTION AT SCALE:

We are contentiously scoping policy solutions and striving towards enhanced leadership programmes.

CASE STUDY

What does it take to have a career trajectory marked by a number of firsts? First female University Chancellor in Zambia, Ruth Mubanga, shares her leadership journey.

From the first female biology lecturer to the first female chancellor and many more firsts in between! how does it feel to be a pacesetter in the education sector?

Honestly, it has been a challenging yet exciting experience. As the first female science lecturer at the Nkrumah College, there was no one to look up to. I was the pioneer so both students and teachers looked up to me as a role model.

Speaking from experience on your road to leadership, do you think there are specific skills needed to be a leader?

It is important to have the ability to influence people and communicate effectively, as miscommunication creates lots of problems. When I became the director at the Ministry of Education, I had to coordinate the teacher education sector and lead national projects. During these moments, it was important for people to recognize me as someone who can lead.

What do you think are some barriers women in Zambia face in the quest for leadership positions?

One major challenge I would say affects women is confidence. I have had opportunities during my time

at the Ministry of Education where I recommended positions to some women, but they felt they were incapable so turned them down.

Another challenge is the fact that Zambian women are the main support system in their families so taking a leadership role isn't their priority. They would choose family or a less demanding role over a challenging leadership position or pursuing their education.

What would be a good influencing strategy to ensure more female representation in universities?

I think regulators for universities and colleges should publish records of women enrolments in universities and women in leadership roles in education. When they keep publishing these statistics annually, we can have a sense of the issues on the ground and how to solve them. That's the starting point because if we have fewer women pursuing higher education, there would be fewer women in leadership.



“

As a principal, there was a lot of resistance from people who did not think I could deliver in my position or was qualified enough. For me that meant working extra hard to show people I have the qualities and capacities to deliver in my position.



“

Confidence is one of the biggest obstacles which we need to address so women can confidently feel and say they can lead.

“

There should be specific leadership development programmes aimed at building the leadership capacities of women.



3 TRANSITION TO WORK

Universities increasing work skills for young people

We are striving to match employers with universities and colleges to enable them to adopt an evidence based approach aimed at helping youths transition into jobs.



IDENTIFY ISSUE:

In Ghana, it takes more than ten years for most graduates to secure decent jobs after leaving school. (ISSER of the University of Ghana, 2017). In Uganda 79.5% of employed young people are undereducated for the job they are doing (ILO SWTS, 2014). There is a mismatch between what students are learning in university and the skills employers need. This is underpinned by a lack of data and evidence about what students do once they leave university or college.



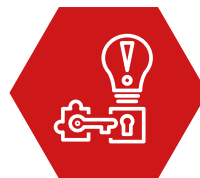
BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASED ALLIANCE:

Joining up employers, universities and colleges across region. Established a partnership with The Education Collaborative at Ashesi University in Ghana. Engaging employers with universities and colleges e.g The University of Cape Coast, Ghana (UCC).



UNDERSTAND:

Identified the barriers for increasing employability and closing the skills gap for young people between university and college and employment. Created [mini-report](#) on how universities in Africa can build job skills for young people.



SOLUTION:

Using evidence to develop a framework for effective career services in universities and colleges and tracking young people's employment.



SOLUTION AT SCALE:

Testing the framework co-creating activities to share learning with other universities and colleges.

In Uganda

79.5%

of employed young people are undereducated for the job they are doing

Universities and employers must work together to promote youth employment in Africa

The Director of The Education Collaborative, Rose Dodd shares critical challenges and solutions to youth unemployment issues in Africa.



Unemployment in Africa has been on the rise, as Africa's youth population keeps increasing against the number of available employment opportunities after graduating from university or higher education.

One barrier preventing young people from gaining employment after graduation in sub-Saharan Africa is the disconnect between their skillset and what is required by the job market. While, many young people do not know how to find jobs, they also do not know how to be successful once they gain employment, the fact remains that, there are not enough jobs. While there are fewer jobs, graduate numbers keep increasing annually.

The United Nations has estimated that by 2050, [Africa's population may reach 2.5 billion](#), with [more than 50% being less than 25 years old](#). With the rise in the number of youth, there will inevitably be an increase in the demand for jobs. Developing systems for training graduates is one way of addressing the challenge of unemployment.

"We must adopt a systems approach to prepare young people for employment by improving career preparation and guidance services in universities. Once we identify what is relevant and timeless both in hard skills and in other competencies like adaptability, learning, flexibility, and intuition, it helps to train young people with the best skills for employment," shared Rose Dodd, Director of the Education Collaborative.

"This is why our collaboration with the Education sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA) is important as we will give higher education institutions in Africa a place to start, in determining what is important when it comes to career and employability services and how to measure it, in connection with employers. African universities and employers need to continuously work together to train students in building relevant job skills for employment, right from the university," Dodd added.

On the need to prepare career-ready graduates for the highly competitive global job market, Dodd mentioned, that there is the need to start preparing young people for careers and not just jobs. "Many people graduate and just want to find jobs without thinking about the long term; there has to be a shift in this kind of thinking. The end goal should be growing a career by succeeding in any role, the end goal is not finding a job," shared Dodd.

The future of work for young people in Africa requires a bar for good service. Employers or even graduates can really differentiate themselves by learning what it means to run a proper service company in the service industry. That is what will set people apart in careers; that ability to differentiate and position the service to be consistent in quality over several years.

Deeper engagements and collaborations among key stakeholders in African higher-ed is needed to gain the much-needed change that is required to address Africa's unemployment challenges. According to Dodd, "There is no starting or ending point for universities and employers. We should start together, go through the cycle together, and end together with each graduate who enters the world of work. That's how we should be working together. We haven't been doing that as efficiently as we should, and now is as good a time as ever to begin working on it."

4

KNOWLEDGE ECOSYSTEM

We contribute to a sustainable knowledge ecosystem for education by raising the profile of African education researchers and increasing access to relevant data.

**IDENTIFY ISSUE:**

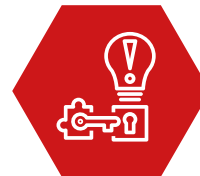
There is a wealth of research on education by researchers in sub-Saharan Africa. But this research is often not sufficiently used nationally, regionally or globally to solve challenges in education.

**BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASED ALLIANCE:**

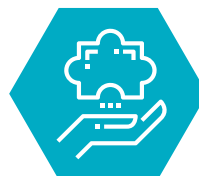
We partnered with African researchers and the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the University of Cambridge.

**UNDERSTAND:**

Together we created the first free online database of education research by scholars in Africa, with over 3500 papers in English, French and Portuguese. African [Education Research Database\(AERD\)](#)

**SOLUTION:**

Gaps in research and the need for a research community were identified. Curating research from AERD, promoting improved education, including a report on access to [TVET](#) for people with disability.

**SOLUTION AT SCALE:**

Supporting a network of researchers to inspire policy change in tertiary education in the region. Curating research from this database to promote better education policies, making it more accessible to policy and decision-makers for tertiary education in Africa. The database highlights [gaps in education research](#). This is particularly crucial for under-researched areas identified in the database (such as education in conflict and TVET).

“

Often the claim is that education is under-researched in Africa and there is not enough information available. While this is not completely untrue, the reality is that there is a lot of research and information out there that only needs to be unearthed and made visible.

MAUD SEGHERS

Senior Education Advisor at VVOB

CASE STUDY

We must promote African research on education

Samuel Asare is a Research Manager at ESSA who manages our African Education Research Database (AERD).

It is hard to find African research on education and even harder for African researchers to get their work published and to achieve influence. I realized this during my postgraduate education at the University of Otago in New Zealand. It became difficult to find research papers about the topic I was researching in Ghana, as a result I ended up using publications about other countries and contexts.

Solving education challenges in Africa requires the use of evidence that has been generated within the continent. That is why a platform of academic research within Africa is important as it serves many purposes. Primarily, it is essential for academics who need to use up-to-date evidence and knowledge in their work.

Students can also use a database of education research in their learning. When we created the African Research Education Database with the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge, the goal was to raise the visibility and use of African research and expertise. More importantly, to identify African experts who are conducting research in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, we have over 3,500 high quality publications by scholars in Africa in the database. We have proven that there is good quality research coming from Africa.

However, what remains a challenge is access to funding for African researchers to conduct research. We had a workshop for African researchers in Ethiopia and

one of the key issues they spoke about was that they don't have access to funding. If we want to generate evidence through research, then we should invest in research. Research is expensive; travelling to rural areas to interview and to survey people is expensive, so funding is key.

As researchers, we need to collaborate more with our fellow African researchers to promote our work. We have the expertise. It is not always the case that huge sums of money are required to conduct research. All research can have an impact.



All research can have an impact.

SAMUEL ASARE

Research Manager at ESSA

Unlocking Education Data

We are mapping available data sets across education covering early childhood education, primary and secondary and into tertiary. We have started to build a community of practice to increase the access and use of this data.



IDENTIFY ISSUE:

Data about post-secondary education is hard to find and use. It is difficult for decision-makers – from governments to university leaders, and researchers – to access and find the data they need to improve education delivery and policy.



BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASED ALLIANCE:

We are working in partnership with Zizi Afrique and the EdTech Hub to create a community of researchers and organisations who gather education data. This community will map existing education data and find out where there are gaps, and influence those who own data to share it widely.



UNDERSTAND:

The data community has begun mapping available education data in Kenya. We are bringing in evidence from our African Education Research database and connecting with African scholars across the continent who need data for their work.

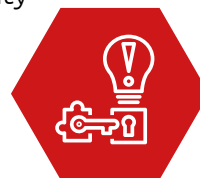
Listening to students

Applying to colleges and for jobs is a daunting process for students. From gathering information to navigating long forms - students seek close guidance and support. The internet has opened up a world of possibilities and support for students, especially those looking to go abroad for university, college, or work.

As of 2017, there are 9 million post-secondary students in sub-Saharan Africa. As educational attainment grows, so too will the qualified numbers of young people in Africa seeking a university or college education abroad and at home.

We worked with [Quilt.AI](#) to understand students' journeys online in Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and Uganda. We wanted to answer the following questions - what are the enablers and barriers to post-secondary education, scholarships, and job applications? What are students saying about these areas?

Up to 300,000 unique searches by students on social media were analysed across the four countries. We also looked at 2,000 social media posts from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to understand how students are getting information about universities and jobs and what conversations they are having.



SOLUTION:

Replicate data mapping in Ghana and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Develop online and offline tools for the community of practice to share data and learn from each other.

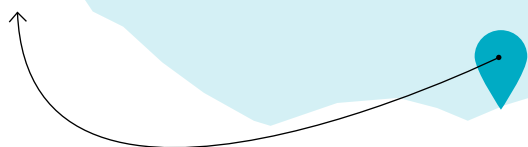


SOLUTION AT SCALE:

Holding a series of workshops with researchers and policy makers to find out what data they need and why.

Insights from listening to students across our focus countries:

COUNTRY INSIGHTS	GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL: APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	SKILLS GAINED WHILE AT UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	GRADUATE FROM UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE: JOB TRANSITION
GHANA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on empowering girls / removing gender disparity. • Affordability of school fees is a common problem faced by students pursuing university or college across the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have a positive outlook for future job prospects when in school. • Students gain experience and skills through internships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media has become the new “official” job hunting site. • Students no longer hopeful after facing the harsh reality of finding jobs after graduation. • Graduates and employers are utilising social media platforms to such for jobs of identify suitable candidates respectively.



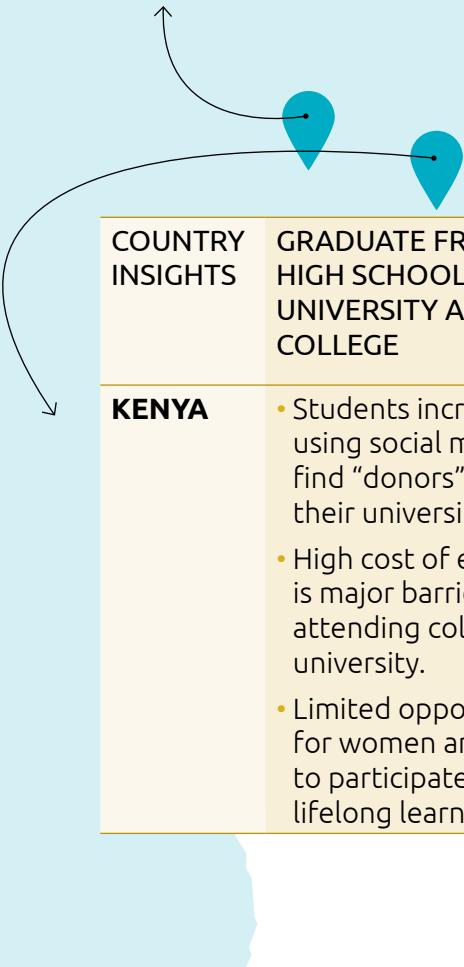
COUNTRY INSIGHTS	GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL: APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	SKILLS GAINED WHILE AT UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	GRADUATE FROM UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE: JOB TRANSITION
ZAMBIA	Compared to other countries, Zambia has significantly less students worrying about not being able to get into a university.	Compared to other countries, Zambia has more resources catered to students' job skills - ample resources and job opportunities locally.	Many job opportunities available, many of which are “informal” offers by individual entrepreneurs or businesses.



The pandemic has affected students' lives, from attending college to finding jobs in struggling economies. As they navigate future uncertainties, organizations, like ESSA, play a critical role in helping them navigate opportunities. The internet is a powerful

platform to reach students as they use it to find information and resources. Using digital insights and marketing tools can amplify organisations' messages and reach more students.

COUNTRY INSIGHTS	GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL: APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	SKILLS GAINED WHILE AT UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	GRADUATE FROM UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE: JOB TRANSITION
UGANDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite local demands, there are more overseas scholarships than local ones being offered. • High cost of education locally. • Limited local scholarships for students. 	Students are "unskilled" and not up to standard, lacking important job skills.	Students losing faith in the government to provide jobs, giving up the idea of searching for jobs after graduation.



COUNTRY INSIGHTS	GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL: UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	SKILLS GAINED WHILE AT UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE	GRADUATE FROM UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE: JOB TRANSITION
KENYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students increasingly using social media to find "donors" to fund their universities. • High cost of education is major barrier to attending college and university. • Limited opportunities for women and girls to participate in lifelong learning. 	Students prepared to enter the workforce through acquiring job skills.	Students frustrated due to difficulties in finding jobs and direct their discontent towards the government.

Transformational Impact through partnerships

Partnerships have always been essential to ESSA's success. We seek to work with partners across the African continent on all our projects. Our small team magnifies impact through those we work with. ESSA is one part of the ecosystem of individuals and institutions seeking to transform tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa and our greatest successes have come from brokering partnerships within this ecosystem to deliver change.

“

The seed-funding provided by us is offering high return on investment. I am excited to see ESSA growing further, and to produce high impact for Tertiary Education in sub-Saharan Africa.

JOACHIM ROGALL

President and CEO, Robert Bosch Stiftung, ESSA Trustee

How we do it:



- Identifying organisations with the right expertise in Africa and beyond.



- Bringing new ideas and using our experience of delivering practical and relevant research, to bring these organisations together to form networks and communities.



- Working with these networks and communities to understand what data and evidence is needed for change, and to build robust and credible knowledge.



- Working together to use knowledge to create practical solutions. Building influence within specific communities.



- Achieving a mandate to drive change at scale from memberships or electorates. Networks and communities implement solutions at scale.



- Developing an evidence alliance for education that delivers impact for young people in sub-Saharan Africa.

“

We believe this partnership will help connect millions of students and graduates to employment opportunities and will be central to developing successful and sustainable economies and societies

HE DR TARIQ AL GURG

Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Cares



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITES AFRICAINES
اتحاد الجامعات الأفريقية



Spotlight on: Association of African Universities & Warwick Employment Agency

The Association of African Universities (AAU) is a longstanding leader in African tertiary education. Its mission is to enhance the quality and relevance of university and college education in Africa and strengthen its contribution to Africa's development.

Warwick Employment Group (WEG) provides worldwide employment opportunities for students, institutions and their staff, to maximise their potential in the workplace. The organisation is developed through a quality, ethical, community approach, mirroring the aspirations of our university partners, to fulfill a recruitment need for the higher education sector.

In partnership with the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the

Warwick Employment Group (WEG); part of the University of Warwick, we launched Edujobs Africa, the first academic jobs board for the continent. Edujobs Africa is an online website, hosting job vacancies in tertiary education in Africa; this includes academic and staff roles at universities, colleges, and other education organisations. The site will support universities, colleges and governments in the region to retain academic talent, promote mobility between educational institutions and help job seekers in Africa to find new opportunities in education.

Edujobs Africa offers the opportunity for universities, colleges, and other education institutions to promote their work and vacancies to a broad audience.



OUR Goal for 2026

University and college leaders, employers, policymakers and young people are using evidence together to:

- Increase access to universities and colleges, through impactful scholarships and loans.
- Develop business models that make sure universities and colleges have enough faculty to develop young people's skills for work.
- Match graduate's skills and ambitions with work opportunities.
- Ensure women, refugees, young people with disabilities, and others who are underrepresented, play a leading role in universities and colleges.

This will support more than 1.4 million current students at over 500 universities and colleges in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia to achieve their ambitions, and create more opportunity for the millions that will follow.

This will assist more than

1.4M
current students

In over

500

universities and colleges in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia

We are making this happen by building an alliance for evidence-based education in sub-Saharan Africa:

- Starting work on an ambitious five-year strategy designed to support a data and evidence-led transformation of tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Collaborating with partners and funders to maximise the impact of their strategies and investments into education.
- Delivering on impact by moving from interesting and provocative analysis to real change for the sector.
- Building our role as a thought leader.
- Catalysing new, intelligent investment into tertiary education.
- Increasing our country presence by setting up a legal entity in Ghana.
- Strengthening staff expertise and leadership.





How we aim to reach this goal through our focus areas:

Access to university and college education

 **Impact of scholarships, in the next year:**

- Research conducted to understand the growing need for student finance, the funding and different models available, their cost-effectiveness, and impact. Evidence is provided to decision-makers.
- Expand mapping to TVET opportunities and other forms of student finance, including grants and loans, in our focus countries.
- Engage with corporate sponsors of scholarships.
- Understand the barriers to access to education for refugees through our work with UNHCR, and women through our Women Leading work, and the role that student finance can play in improving their access to education.

 **In the next 5 years, by 2026:**

- A core group of scholarship funders and providers have signed up to common KPIs to drive improved return on investment and impact for young people.
- Our African Scholarships Hub is reaching students across sub-Saharan Africa, including those from under-represented groups, and helping them find the right scholarships for them.
- There is a community of interest for student finance that shares good practice and data on results, and advocates for further investment.
- Providers of student finance design their programmes to be inclusive of women, refugees and other under-represented groups.
- Young people in our focus countries have the data and evidence to seek the financial aid that is right for them.
- Policy-makers in our focus countries have the data and evidence to design and implement effective financial packages.
- Investors have the data and evidence to invest in approaches that achieve the most impact, particularly for the young people in our focus countries.



Quality of university and college education



The faculty crisis, in the next year:

- Our analysis of the faculty crisis in East Africa is underway, incorporating the impact of COVID-19.
- There is a deeper understanding of the impact of the faculty crisis on quality university and college education in our focus countries.
- Current solutions to the faculty crisis in our focus countries and the evidence for their impact are well understood.
- Policy-makers and leaders of universities and colleges in Ghana have the tools to quantify the scale of the faculty crisis they are facing.
- Edujobs Africa, a pan-African jobs board, is successfully improving the speed and quality of faculty recruitment.



In the next 5 years, by 2026:

- New models for universities and colleges are mapped with a focus on 1) models targeted explicitly at employment and 2) models with a large component of online learning.
- Analysis of the faculty crisis is expanded to cover TVET institutions.
- Assessment of the faculty crisis becomes standard across SSA.
- Data on the faculty crisis are readily available.
- Policy-makers in our focus countries have effective strategies in place to address the faculty crisis.
- The potential for new models of tertiary education to deliver quality at scale are well understood.
- The faculty crisis and potential solutions are well understood across Ghana, East Africa and other regions.



Women leading, in the next year:

- There is uptake of our Women Leading report findings by organisations in our network.
- There is a coalition for action to overcome the barriers female leaders face within universities and colleges.
- Establish and mobilise strong partnerships in one (or more) focus countries to deliver impact.



In the next 5 years, by 2026:

- The effectiveness of scholarships, mentorship, network, training and policies to increase female leadership is understood in our four focus countries.
- New models for increasing female leadership skills and positions universities and colleges are mapped in our focus countries.
- Policy makers, employers and educators are making use of data to determine what measures must be taken, what targets must be put in place, and what policies are needed to improve the numbers of women in leadership positions.
- There are specific leadership development programmes and policies aimed at building the leadership capacities of women.



Transition to work



Increasing work skills, in the next year:

- In Ghana there is a deeper understanding of the barriers for employers engaging with universities and colleges.
- Evidence for what is effective within universities and colleges for improving transition to employment in our focus countries is mapped and translated into guidance (including internships, apprenticeships and alumni networks).
- The characteristics of effective careers development systems and measurement frameworks are well understood.
- Barriers and solutions for women and other under-represented groups transitioning into employment and leadership positions are well understood.



In the next 5 years, by 2026:

- Universities, colleges and employers are effectively collaborating to improve employment prospects in our focus countries.
- Tracking of students into work is widespread in our focus countries and data is openly available.
- Universities, colleges and employers in our focus countries are implementing 'best practices' for supporting women and other under-represented groups and tracking their success.
- Young people and their parents in our focus countries can use data (e.g. on employment after graduation) to make choices about what they study.

Knowledge eco-system



African-led research and unlocking data, in the next year:

- We continue to support researchers in Africa to be better networked, access more contracts for their work, and influence local policy.
- We are hosting a virtual conference in 2021 in collaboration with the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge, to bring together researchers from across Africa to discuss challenges they face related to research funding and opportunities.
- Data and evidence on education in sub-Saharan Africa is more easily available for research and analysis and there is greater awareness of what exists, particularly policy-makers in our focus countries.



In the next 5 years, by 2026:

- African researchers influence local policy in our focus countries.
- Policy-makers and educators have access to relevant data on university and college education and the transition to employment for young people in our focus countries.
- An overview of available data and evidence allows for smart investment in data collection and evaluation in our focus countries.
- Relevant data and evidence are easy to find and are translated into practical guidance for educators, policy-makers and students in our focus countries.
- The local ecosystem of data-collectors, academics, consultants and civil society has the access to the right data, evidence and skills to influence key decision-makers in our focus countries.

Supporting our WORK

To achieve our vision by 2026, we will need to raise \$1million in unrestricted and strategic funds annually. If the opportunity arises to raise more, we can significantly scale up our impact and achieve even more for young people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Funders and philanthropists:

We see funders and philanthropists as partners who share our vision. We look forward to partnering with you to transform outcomes for young people.

University and College Leaders:

Do you want to take an evidence-based approach to increasing your impact? Do you have lessons to share from pioneering a new idea? We would be delighted to partner with you to help you in your journey.

Businesses and employers:

Do you want to engage with universities and colleges to increase your talent pipeline and contribute to building the skills of tomorrow's workforce? Partner with us to create a system that delivers for you.

Champions of tertiary education:

We cannot achieve our strategic goals without you. We are keen to form new partnerships and collaborations to drive forward impact across our focus areas.

Researchers:

For researchers looking to increase the impact of what you do, partner with ESSA to raise the profile and influence of your work to make a difference to tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Donation:

We raise funds for educational projects to increase impact in sub-Saharan Africa. You can support us by visiting our Just Giving page to donate: <https://www.justgiving.com/e-s-s-a>

To get **involved** with us, please get in touch via email: info@essa-africa.org.



Thank you to OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Our work would not be possible without the support of our funders and implementing partners. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to investing in education in Africa.

Funding partners:

- Dubai Cares
- Jacobs foundation
- Mastercard Foundation
- Private Individual Donors
- Robert Bosch Stiftung
- Schaufler Foundation
- The Ang-Scholz Family
- UNHCR


Implementing partners:

- African Leadership University (ALU)
- Ashesi University
- Association of African Universities (AAU)
- Atelier de Recherche sur l'Education au Burkina Faso (AREB)
- Decent Jobs for Youth
- EdTech Hub
- Government of Ghana
- Inter-University Council of East Africa
- Jacobs University
- Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC)
- Population Reference Bureau (PRB)
- RUFORUM
- University of Cambridge REAL centre
- UNESCO
- Warwick Employment group
- Zizi Afrique Foundation



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