

Social Contract for Ghana's Political and Economic Transformation

Article II (2)

Education

*The **Citizens' Convention for Ghana's Political and Economic Transformation** took place in Accra on June 18-19, 2024, drawing 510 participants representing numerous stakeholder groups from civil society, government and business. Building on 18 months of research and nationwide engagements, participants agreed on specific goals and targets for the seven key issue areas underpinning the Compact and **Citizens' Declaration for a Social Contract with the Government of Ghana**, which the convention adopted by acclamation. The issue areas are: gender equality, youth employment and skills, vision and planning, fiscal responsibility, private sector development, climate change, and health.*

Background

Ghana has a youthful population, with 56 percent of the total under 25 years old, according to the 2021 census. However, the youth unemployment rate of 19.7 percent is significantly higher than the national average of 13.4 percent. Addressing this challenge requires more and smarter investment in building human capital to unlock the full potential of the youth to boost national socio-economic development. This article focuses on pre-tertiary education issues relevant to the attainment of the Ghana Compact's objectives.

Despite the implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy since 1995, basic education faces significant challenges. Learning outcomes are alarming, with only about half of Primary 4 pupils assessed in 2021 meeting the minimum competency benchmarks for literacy and numeracy. The Ghana School Feeding Programme (SFP), designed to improve school enrollment and retention while reducing hunger, suffers from political interference and delayed contractor payments. The allocated cost per plate – raised by the 2024 Budget from GHS1.20 to GHS1.50 – remains insufficient and tends to compromise meal quality amid increased enrollment and economic strain.

Much of the increased enrollment is due to the introduction in 2017 of the Free Senior High School (SHS) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program. However, rapid implementation without adequate preparation resulted in overcrowded schools, increased student-teacher ratios, heavy pressure on facilities and neglect of the needs of vulnerable and underserved groups. The sustainability of funding these programs through Ghana's natural resource revenues has also been questioned.

Despite its great potential for job creation, TVET remains underfunded and widely unappreciated. Public perception of TVET is poor, and critical inputs are omitted from the costing framework, leading to an unfavorable learning environment, especially for deprived students. Only the Jachie Skills Training Center for the Disabled caters exclusively to physically challenged students, despite a directive for all training

institutions to be disability-friendly. The education system in general struggles with inclusivity, particularly for children with disabilities who often remain "invisible" in education data. Gender disparities persist, along with significant geographical disparities in educational resources and outcomes, with rural and underserved regions facing shortages in teachers, learning materials, and infrastructure.

There are nationwide shortages of physical and digital infrastructure. Many schools lack computers and only 50 percent of secondary schools and 25 percent of TVET schools have access to the internet. Evidently, the National Youth Policy objective of state-of-the-art ICT centers in all schools remains unmet.

To compound the situation, the proportion of trained teachers is still inadequate and training programs are both congested and lacking focus on basic skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy. The disconnect between teacher training content and school curricula exacerbates the issues.

Actions and targets for Ghana's education system

1. Enhancing implementation of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE)

Issue: Notable disparities in enrolment levels and quality of education according to income quintile and geographical location

- **Action:** Increase investment in the School Feeding Programme (SFP) as a component of boosting enrollment, ensuring timely disbursement of funds and community involvement.
- **Target:** By 2025, the cost per plate for pupils should be a minimum of GHS2.00 (adjusted annually against inflation), and at least 80 percent of supplier contracts should be awarded to local community suppliers.

2. Inadequate school infrastructure

Issue: Shortage of decent classrooms and buildings hampers improved learning outcomes

- **Action:** Invest in school infrastructure to improve pupil-teacher ratios and increase the provision of learning materials, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
- **Target:** By 2050, the teacher-student ratio should not exceed 1:45 in all basic schools.

3. Rethinking the Free Senior High School and TVET policy

Issue: Current methods of financing free SHS include oil revenue, raising sustainability questions

- **Action 1:** Review the financing model, potentially including means-testing to ensure that only those in need actually benefit from free education.
- **Target:** By 2030, establish a sustainable financing model for Free SHS and TVET.
- **Action 2:** Decentralize the Free SHS program by building more community senior secondary schools and TVET institutions and expanding remote learning approaches.
- **Target:** By 2050, each community should have access to a well-resourced community secondary school within a 10 km radius.

4. Bolstering TVET

Issue: Maximizing the potential impact of TVET for job creation and workforce upskilling

- **Action 1:** Develop a holistic financing structure for TVET under the Free SHS program, covering all necessary input costs including protective gear and insurance.
- **Target:** Double the budgetary allocation for TVET by 2030.
- **Action 2:** Change public perception of TVET through campaigns showcasing job opportunities and economic benefits.
- **Target:** By 2035, double the total enrollment in TVET schools.

5. Strengthening teacher training

Issue: Modernize teacher training to remain relevant in the emerging education landscape

- **Action 1:** Update teacher training curricula to focus on skills such as critical thinking and problem solving to ensure alignment with new school curricula and evolving labor market.
- **Target:** By 20XX, establish a teacher training curriculum involving structured and extensive private sector participation.
- **Action 2:** Equip teachers with digital education skills to enhance their teaching capabilities.
- **Target:** By 20XX, mainstream digital approaches to teaching and learning in all schools.

6. Promoting gender inclusiveness and equity

Issue: National and local disparities in access to gender-friendly school environments

- **Action 1:** Provide a friendly environment with career guidance and counseling in schools, particularly where gender disparities are significant.
- **Target:** By 20XX, integrate and mainstream structured career guidance in all schools.
- **Action 2:** Reduce gender bias in STEM by incentivizing girls' participation through scholarships.
- **Target:** By 2050, achieve gender parity in the enrollment of girls in STEM courses.

7. Promoting inclusiveness and equity for people with disabilities

Issue: Nationwide shortage of facilities for children with physical and learning disabilities

- **Action:** Ensure access to adapted learning environments for children with physical and learning disabilities.
- **Target:** By 2050, all districts should have at least one well-equipped and resourced Special School and all school infrastructure should be adequately adapted for children with disabilities.