



Finn Church Aid



FINN CHURCH AID'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO FINLAND'S AFRICA STRATEGY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Focus on education as the key to unlock the potential of Africa's youth	3
Create opportunities for decent jobs for youth, link learning to earning	4
Invest in young people's capacities to prevent conflict and build peace	5
Leave no one behind: prioritise the most fragile states	6
Promote safe migration and tackle root causes of displacement	7
COVID-19 and Finland's Africa Strategy	8

Africa is a continent of youth. They form the continent's future and affect the entire world.

While national populations in other parts of the world are aging, most African countries have majority youth populations. Currently, 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25. These young women and men bring great potential for the African future. By 2050, there will be 2 billion Africans, and one third of the world's youth will be in sub-Saharan Africa.

Finland can achieve its goal of having impact beyond its size if its Africa strategy manages to harness the continent's youth dividend for positive change and development. Some of the most pressing needs in African countries coincide with areas where Finland stands out as a global leader, such as quality education, linking learning to earning, sustainable livelihoods and promoting peace, security, gender equality and good governance.

Africa is one of the world's fastest growing markets, and political ties of African countries, security issues and the effects of global phenomena, like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, have an increasing influence on the entire world. A mutually beneficial partnership is an opportunity for both Africa and Finland.



FOCUS ON EDUCATION AS THE KEY TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF AFRICA'S YOUTH

Even with a substantial increase in the number of children and youth with access to basic education in Africa, a large number remains out of school. The number is even increasing in conflict-affected countries, particularly among refugees. There are vast differences with access to school between genders as well as other vulnerable groups, like children and youth with disabilities.

The quality of education is another challenge. Many children and youth do not even acquire basic skills, like literacy and numeracy. Teachers are often absent or lack in education themselves.

Low enrolment in secondary and tertiary education as well as high dropout rates also require action. Only one in 25 African youth is expected to enter a graduate and postgraduate institution. In addition, technical, vocational and informal education sectors are severely underdeveloped.

Disruptions in the learning path and a lack of basic skills undermine the chances of completing basic education and acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for employment. The situation is likely to get worse with the rising demand for education from a growing school-age population.

The African Union has recognised the urgent need for improvements within education and aligning it with labour market demands. The mismatch of skills particularly amongst youth employees is evident. Career guidance and counselling services are scarce or non-existing. The youth must be prepared for the jobs of the future, for example digital services – not the jobs of the past.

Finland's educational competence and education system are widely acknowledged internationally. African countries are

keen to learn what Finland has done to achieve quality learning for all. This is the area where Finland has most to offer, and therefore Finland should further invest in addressing the learning crisis and existing gender gaps in its African partnerships.

FINLAND SHOULD:

...**devote** at least €100 million annually from the development cooperation budget to education, especially in countries affected by conflicts and disasters.

...**participate** in international education forums and advocate for increased attention and resources to the quality of education.

...**provide** strategic leadership in addressing the learning crisis in the EU and the UN.

...**address** the need for skilled youth through a Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) ecosystem of teacher training, career guidance and counselling, private sector engagement, internships, and accreditation of learning.

...**support** the creation, development and use of digital learning environments in general and within TVET in particular

...**support** EU education accreditation standards in an African context where it is not possible to have local degrees.

...**support** systematic cooperation between Finnish education actors and provide long-term seed funding for new ideas and products.

...**conceptualize** and package its educational know-how export and create an action plan on how to effectively market it.

...**establish** an expert capacity deployment facility in education for selected UN agencies.

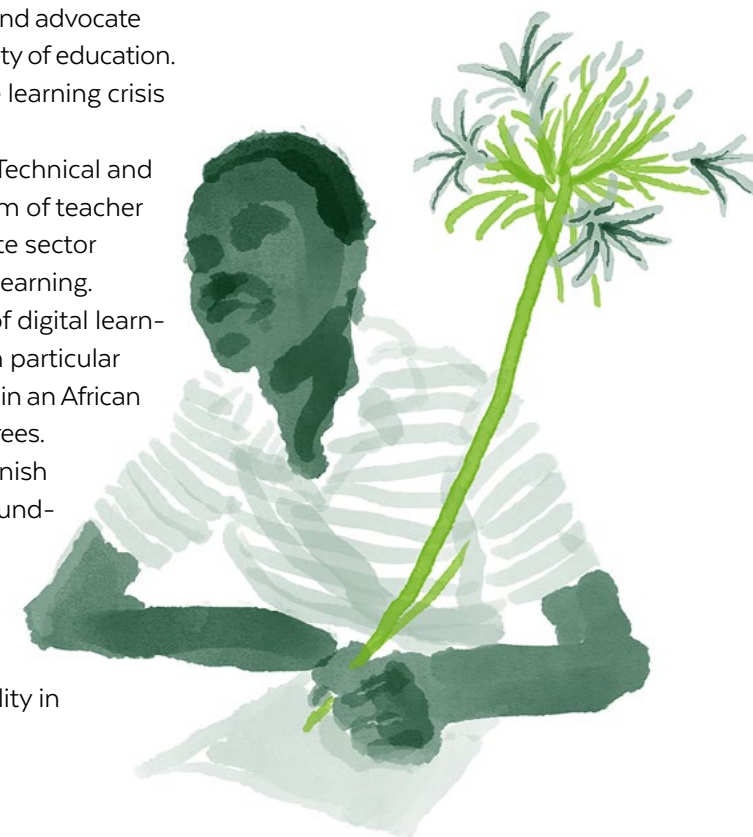
In Sub-Saharan Africa:

... more than 20% of children aged 6–11,

... more than 30% of youth between 12–14 and

... almost 60% of youth between 15 and 17 are out of school.

... girls are more likely to be out of school than boys.



CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECENT JOBS FOR YOUTH, LINK LEARNING TO EARNING

The future of Africa's youth depends on sustainable livelihoods. The challenge is formidable.

Every year in Ethiopia alone, two million people enter the job market, but there are no jobs – not to mention decent jobs. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's) provide up to 70% of new jobs in for instance OECD countries, but in Africa the SME sector is missing in many places due to a lack of financing and skilled workforce.

The enterprises also need to operate in an environment where the rule of law is compromised and regulatory frameworks are weak or absent. Most African countries are missing pathways from quality education to sustainable livelihoods, thus adversely affecting the likelihood that the countries can achieve the SDG's.

This presents a clear partnership opportunity for Finland and African countries, with Finland also benefiting from investments in a flourishing SME sector.

FINLAND SHOULD:

...**strengthen** investments in the private sector and SME's in particular. Sustainability, environmental concerns and human rights need to cut across Finland's approach.

...**prioritise** the creation of decent jobs for youth in cooperation with African partners, such as the African Development Bank.

...**support** the linking of learning to earning by, for instance, connecting Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) with the private sector and job market needs.

...**promote** gender equality in sustainable livelihood cooperation with African partners.

...**create** a platform for Finnish actors working in Africa to ease collaboration, and remove and identify barriers for cooperation, such as those that affect funding.



INVEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAPACITIES TO PREVENT CONFLICT AND BUILD PEACE

When talking about youth in Africa it is important to recognise that we are talking about millions of young women and men with distinct experiences, needs, aspirations and capacities.

Despite the heterogeneity of this broad group, the prominent narrative of young people often brings up a set of problems that needs to be solved rather than the positive role and potential of youth.

Practitioners and policymakers must go beyond narrow understandings that focus on risk scenarios when addressing job security or the geographical flows of refugees, migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

They also need to consider the attributes and capabilities that young women and men already possess as active citizens; eager to participate in society but frustrated at being excluded from decisions that affect their lives. Concentrated efforts to support good and inclusive governance and influence in decision-making are crucial in preventing conflicts and strengthening peace.

Protracted conflicts present the greatest barrier to development and the respect for human rights. Political and communal violence and instability have resulted in the displacement of millions of people, such as in East Africa, where almost every country in the sub-region is affected.

Youth of faith are in a position to speak in a narrative that can connect with other peers as well as leading and promoting inter-religious and cultural dialogue. In collaboration with traditional and religious leaders, they offer pathways to challenge restrictive social and gender norms.

Finland and Finnish actors have an important and recognised role in mediation and peacebuilding, and Finland has positioned itself as a global champion of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

FINLAND SHOULD:

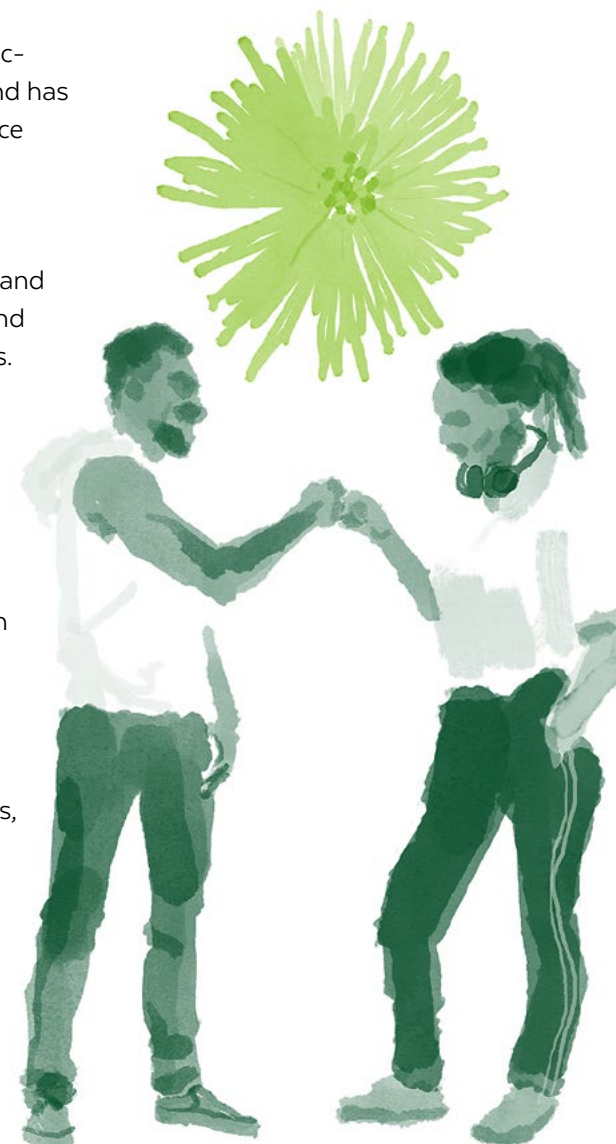
...**support** the meaningful inclusion of youth, women and religious and traditional leaders in decision-making and peacebuilding at the local, national and regional levels.

...**support** the African Union's 2063 agenda, which recognises the powerful role of African youth as drivers of change.

...**continue** investing in good, inclusive governance through promoting transparent and accountable institutions, and improved duty-bearer capacity.

...**increase** political efforts to reverse the phenomenon known as 'the shrinking space of civil society' that erodes civic space in Africa. While recognising the youth's abilities to challenge this, Finland also needs to address the youth's protection concerns.

...**ensure** that grassroots-level organisations, initiatives, and movements have access to funding. Youth-led organisations often face a challenge in meeting the rigorous requirements for funding proposals and therefore lack flexible and multiyear funding.



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: PRIORITISE THE MOST FRAGILE STATES

The statistics on fragility are staggering. By 2030, 80% of extreme poverty will be in fragile states. Out of the 58 fragile states classified by the OECD, 35 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Those populations' median age is 20, compared with 33 in the rest of the world, meaning that having a special focus on youth is a necessity when supporting fragile states. In surveys, youth list education, employment opportunities and peace as the most significant areas defining their future.

Attracting sufficient development funding, including financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), constitutes the biggest challenge for Africa's fragile states. Securing private financing for development in fragile states is particularly difficult. Only 6% of the private finances mobilised by Official Development Assistance (ODA) interventions go to the least developed countries. Without additional efforts, these fragile states will not meet the SDG's, and their populations will remain behind the trajectory of other developing countries.

While there will not be an easy fix, the Africa strategy is an opportunity to give strategic guidance to all actors involved in the implementation of the national strategy.

FINLAND SHOULD:

...**prioritize** fragile states over middle-income countries in its development cooperation with African countries.

...**provide** strategic leadership for the EU to become a global leader in addressing state fragility in Africa.

...**enable** vibrant civil societies in fragile states

...**explicitly** seek solutions to state fragility that address the African youth's potential and needs by forging partnerships with private sector actors.

...**further** promote and develop a triple nexus approach in fragile states.



PROMOTE SAFE MIGRATION AND TACKLE ROOT CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT

Migration is widespread across Africa. Most migrants and refugees that leave abroad enter neighbouring African countries.

In 2018, the number of refugees, returnees, IDPs and asylum seekers in Africa reached 26,4 million. The figure has risen largely because of ongoing crises in Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, DRC and Burundi. Uganda hosts the continent's biggest number of refugees. Forced displacement is mostly driven by factors such as climate change, competition over natural resources that results in food insecurity, natural disasters, armed conflict, human trafficking, forced recruitment and sexual and gender-based violence.

International migration is often driven by a search for education or economic opportunities, such as employment, trade and investments. One-third of Africa's youth aged 15-35 is unemployed.

Every fourth migrant in Africa is a child. Forced displacement can hinder education, demanding systems to accommodate those who move and those left behind.

The challenge for the next decades is to create enough education and employment opportunities for the coming generations.

FINLAND SHOULD:

...**promote legal**, safe and well-managed migration within and from Africa.

...**tackle** root causes of forced displacement, such as poverty, conflict and discrimination. That includes strengthening livelihood and education opportunities, and stabilising societies.

...**advocate** globally for return possibilities, sustainable integration and reintegration in Africa .

...**utilise** the African diasporas' know-how better and invest in building mutually benefiting relationships between local populations and diasporas.

MIGRANTS FROM, TO, WITHIN AFRICA:	42 million (year 2019)
REFUGEES IN AFRICA:	6.3 million
IDPs IN AFRICA:	17.7 million



COVID-19 AND FINLAND'S AFRICA STRATEGY

The COVID-19 pandemic will have dramatic consequences on African societies, particularly fragile states, as well as African partnerships with state- and non-state actors in 2020 and beyond.

COVID-19 shows that there is a need for more and better coordination between countries; that global and national challenges go together and that the solutions call for solidarity and deeper partnerships – not isolation and inward focus. Global solidarity is not only a moral imperative; it is in every-one's interests.

It will be crucial to support African countries' capacities to respond to pandemics, such as COVID-19, through a robust health-sector engagement. At the same time, Finland needs to maintain a focus on its long-term commitments to African sustainable development.

As a result of unprecedented school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has never been a greater need to ensure every child and youth can continue to access education and learning. Education is a lifesaving and protective measure during times of crisis.

Lessons from previous Ebola responses show that long school closures lead to dropouts of children and youth who never return, increased teenage pregnancy and other protection issues, and cause enormous strain on government systems when the crisis is over.

Due to the consequences of COVID-19 to economies, decent jobs in Africa will be more important than ever. Similarly, to the rest of the world, Africa's entrepreneurs and SME's are going to need additional support to, firstly, preserve

existing jobs and livelihoods, and secondly, to provide for new employment opportunities. Finland should consider early measures, including emergency cash injections, to address urgent economic aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Existing instruments and Finnish humanitarian and development actors should be prioritized in the COVID-19 related response. In addition to the health sector, the response should focus on retention of decent jobs, saving livelihoods and education.

FINLAND SHOULD

...**roll out** additional official development aid as part of their COVID-19 response.

...**not let** the additional burden of COVID-19 draw attention away from other needs in fragile states and maintain funding.

...**ensure** adequate and harmonised humanitarian and development financing of education during the current pandemic, and in the longer-term, finance the recovery phase and achievement of SDG4.

...**allocate** COVID-19 specific funding for retaining decent jobs in Africa, especially the SME's. Finnfund, FCA Investments and other actors working with development policy investments should be involved in considering actions similar to those applied to support the private sector in Finland and elsewhere.





Finn Church Aid (FCA) is the largest Finnish organisation in international aid. FCA operates in 13 countries across four continents, and has over 70 years of experience.

FCA specialises in supporting local communities in three priority areas:

Right to Quality Education, **Right to Livelihood**, and **Right to Peace**.

Read about our strategy:

Finn Church Aid's Global Strategy in English (pdf, 24 pages, 7.2 Mb)

Finn Church Aid

P.O. Box 210 (Eteläranta 8)

FI-00131 Helsinki, Finland

finnchurchaid.fi