**Call for Input: Addressing the vulnerabilities of children to sale and sexual exploitation in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals**

**Introduction**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s holistic and dynamic human rights-based approach to development, advocates monitoring state parties’ implementation of international human rights norms.  In that regard, “*school to prison pipelines*” perpetuate racist White supremacist disproportionate intergenerational marginalization and exclusion of Afrikan (Black) youth from the right to education. For example, although the USA has ratified the ICERD 1965,

“Over the last three decades, research has shown that  even when controlling for income level Black students were four times more likely to be suspended than their white peers during the 2017-18 academic year (...) Black students are also more likely to attend schools with law enforcement and significant security measures on campus, and were twice as likely to be referred or arrested than their white peers in 2018-19 (...) the school-to-prison pipeline such disproportionality begets—has been attributed to biases, implicit or otherwise, that school officials may carry into the schoolhouse” (State of California 2021, p.215- 216).

The Americas are not alone in identifying “school to prison pipelines” as evidence of White supremacist Afriphobia. In the UK, between 2008 and 2018 “the percentage of incarcerated White children fell from 74% to 55%, whereas the rates of incarcerated children from a Afrikan background increased over the same period, from 15% to 25%. AfriKan children accounted for a quarter of incarcerated youth in 2018, and “an ever-ready cohort to transition to the adult estate when they become 21 years of age.” Afrikans disproportionately represent 10% of people in detention whilst accounting for only 3% of the population of England and Wales (Byrne et al, 2020, pp.64-65). It is therefore imperative to advocate redress and repair in and of educational systems to “leave no one behind”, employing the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) with particular focus on SDGs.

**School to prison pipelines of the Global North**

“*School-to-prison pipelines* (are) attributed to biases, implicit or otherwise, that school officials may carry into the schoolhouse” (2021, p.215-216). Biases illustrate CRT’s central tenet of *race and racism* by upholding White supremacist curriculum and pedagogy, as well as recruitment and selection policies in educational institutions. In that regard, it is necessary to articulate the historical context in which race as a social construct was derived. Notably, racial hierarchies were used to justify and legitimize the enslavement of Africans in European colonies from the sixteenth century onwards and formed the basis of capitalism. These White supremacist scientific and later sociological ideologies argued that Africans were physically, mentally, and morally inferior to other ethnicities, an argument used as the ideological and legal basis for capitalistic overexploitation of enslaved Africans.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development illustrates a holistic human rights-based approach to development, and therefore a normative framework within which exacerbated threats to the sale and sexual exploitation of Afrikan minors can be linked to breaches of economic, social, and cultural rights. In that regard, the *critique of liberalism* is another central tenet of CRT, which advocates imperative emancipatory praxis to dismantle oppressive, unequitable White supremacist neoliberal intersections of race and property.  These intersections include educational policies derived from the “economic pull” of neo-colonial hegemony and imperialist capitalism, rather than Afrikan stories and narratives of intergenerational systemic racism and efforts, to eliminate *school to prison pipelines*.

Socio-economically disadvantaged Afrikan communities generally result from intergenerational systemic racism and White supremacist colonial hegemony. **“**Economic empowerment of the (African) diaspora is consistently low, and our communities consistently have a beat that is not in sync with our White peers” (Byrne, et al, 2020, p.93). *School to prison pipelines* are fuelled by colour-blind educational policies, which fail to acknowledge Afrikan youth’s cultural diversityand experiences**.** In 2021 an African NGO reported **“**LGBTQI youth are at greater risk of being homeless, dropping out of school, and experience depression as a result of the covid-19 pandemic." The broader impact of socioeconomic disparities such as poor housing, health, and unemployment must be considered in critically evaluating exclusion and marginalisation of African minors from the right to education, in breach of SDG 4. Furthermore, as a result of the covid-19 pandemic school-aged children and youth have suffered significant [learning loss](https://www.propublica.org/article/held-back-inside-a-lost-school-year) from a lack of [equitable access to resources](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf) (Gray & Ray, 2021).

**Other vulnerabilities faced by minors in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals**

UNICEF identified three main potential secondary impacts (resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic) on children and their caregivers in terms of child protection: neglect and lack of parental care; mental health and psychosocial distress; and increased [exposure to violence](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/exposure-to-violence), including sexual violence, physical and emotional abuse. In the Global South, Afrikan minors aged 17 and under are further vulnerable to breaches of SDG Targets, as their poverty rates has risen between 10% to 20%.  Notably, “SDG Target 8.7 provides to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”. However, the pandemic has disproportionately fuelled increased incidences of Afrikan child labour. “Hundreds of millions of children in poorer countries lack computers or the internet and have no schooling at all (…) ten-year-olds are now mining sand in East Africa while children with the same age in West Africa are chopping weeds on cocoa plantations in West Africa,” (Ngamije, 2021). These are breaches of SDG Target 16.2 which “provides to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”.  Unfortunately, the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia which commenced in 2022 has further exacerbated the likelihood of global economic downturn and recession, which will adversely impact Afrikan communities including youth globally.

**Good Practice in Institutional Settings**

Good practice is exemplified where educational curricula and policies are inclusive of our cultural heritage; e,g, France’s Loi Taubira acknowledges the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans as a breach of universal human rights. Narratives on the unrepresentativeness of educational curricula are also warranted by Art, 106 of the DDPA 2001 which

“Emphasizes that remembering the crimes or wrongs of the past,(…) unequivocally condemning its racist tragedies and telling the truth about history are essential elements for international reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity” (WCAR, 2001).

Education of African youth through secure digital spaces adequately protected from sexual predators and other criminal elements remains imperative. Multi-level multistakeholder actors must reduce the digital divide within and between countries globally, to “leave no one behind”, in accordance with the SDGs. Failure to do so would be perilous for the future of Afrikan youth.

**Sources**

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