

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT BOTSWANA

Digital learning and transformation

Transforming Education is essential more especially after the negative impact of COVID 19. The constraints brought by the emergence of COVID 19 in delivering education challenged Governments to become innovative and review some policies to ensure increased access to quality education and training across of levels of education. In recognising the need for continuity of education following disruptions as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, Botswana is taking a giant step in rolling out functional high-speed internet connectivity to all institutions of learning, providing individual computer devices for learners and teachers (including specialist devices for the hearing and visually impaired learners), and capacity building for teachers and educators. We underscore the importance of integrating ICT in teaching and learning as articulated through the Education & Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP), which among others, considered greater access, utilization and integration of ICT as a means to improve teaching and learning and as a tool to improve education management with the overall goal to improve learning outcomes. We therefore, commit to achieve full digitalisation by 2024 in realisation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4).

Inclusive, equitable and healthy schools.

The effects of school violence have an emotional and physical impact on learners and teachers with the potential to curtail teaching and learning resulting in some learners leaving school. These present conditions inimical in the achievement of the SDG4. We acknowledge that students experiencing or observing violence in and around schools and other institutions of learning face significant challenges impacting their learning experience and outcomes. As such, we commit to strengthening prevention and response to all forms of violence at the school level, online, and in emergency settings by scaling up evidence-based prevention approaches such as emotional learning, gender transformative and trauma-informed approaches in curricula and teachers' training as accelerators to violence prevention, learning and lifelong physical and mental health amongst others. We also commit to strengthening child-friendly teaching and learning environments and robust referral systems to effectively, ethically, and timely respond to violence. Psychosocial support and mental well-being of learners has become a critical element in improving the performance of teachers and learners. We commit to provide access to blended counselling services for all in an effort to enhance psychosocial support for impactful learning.

Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development

The importance of the provision of early childhood care and development cannot be underestimated as it provides a critical role in the foundational basis for learning. In order to move in tandem with the EFA goal of provision of education for all, Botswana commits to provision of a two-year compulsory Pre-Primary education for all learners.

Currently in Botswana 43% of children of 4-5 years are enrolled in the free reception class programme (RCP) in public primary schools. We are working with UNICEF to look at possible PPP models to increase access to pre-primary education. Furthermore, Botswana commits to the introduction of the Language Policy to enhance early learning.

Raising the ambition of national education targets and benchmarks

We recognise the need to accredit institutions, programmes and license teachers and lecturers to uphold the highest levels of professionalism and education standards. The Government of Botswana commits to training and upgrading of skills and qualifications of all teachers and professionals to support effective teaching and learning. We further commit to building capacity of teachers to improve on teacher innovation and use of technology. Transformation of education, can be realised if teachers and lecturers are professionalised, trained, motivated and supported as they deliver teaching and learning. We commit to strengthen the available incentives through in-service training and continued teacher professional development.

We acknowledge that education is a dynamic process which develops over the years. Therefore, in order to align to the aspirations of a Knowledge Based Economy and encompass opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Botswana has committed and is reviewing the curriculum to meet the demands of the local and global market, address contemporary issues and promote acquisition of life skills.

At the core of education transformation is inclusion of learners of different backgrounds, which includes among others the marginalised, orphans and vulnerable learners, learners in remote area communities, the girl child, and learners with special educational needs, to foster social justice. We affirm our commitment to ensure gender equality and equitable access to learning. Furthermore, Botswana is a declarant of EFA therefore, we affirm our commitment to providing twelve (12) year uninterrupted basic education to promote higher completion and transition rates across all levels. Currently junior secondary to senior secondary transition rate stands at 58.9% and we plan to increase access to tertiary education through the development of education pathways including a vocational education.

Ensuring strengthened and more sustainable public financing of education

Recognising the importance of ensuring that every child is funded to access quality education, we vow to invest in education and skills development for all learners from early childhood through to tertiary. We recognise the urgency of increasing investments in education. The global benchmark of 20% of domestic budget allocated to education remains central in country-level dialogue and advocacy. Therefore Botswana commits to continued prioritizing, protecting and increasing domestic

finance for education through the provision of the largest share of the national budget to the education sector towards the achievement of the SGD4.

We acknowledge that the success of any Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative in promoting affordable quality education and better access on a sustainable basis depends largely on the mutual trust of the partners, state institutions and schools. Botswana commits to PPP through the triple helix model as a measure towards providing affordable quality education to the less privileged and more marginalised sections of the society to deliver on the national education targets and benchmarks. Botswana affirms its commitment to raise more revenues to increase education budgets.

We acknowledge the need to engage in strategic dialogue and support strong communication between Finance and Education ministries. As such, we commit to improved accountability for spending and demonstrating convincing results as a key step towards stronger dialogue between ministries of education and finance. Botswana considers political will as a significant factor that translates commitment into budget action.

We express our sincere appreciation to the United Nations for effective guidance and excellent arrangements for the UN Transforming Education Summit and look forward to the next Summit.