

Schools for Africa: UNICEF's Education Initiative

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Most of us are used to going to school 5 days a week, 6-7 hours a day, along with any extracurricular activities, but that is not the standard around the world. Schools vary in length daily and annually, and usually it is just the preference of people living there, but certain countries don't have a choice. Underdeveloped countries, specifically in Africa struggle to make school a large focus in communities. This is because of many factors such as lack of resources and not publicizing the importance and availability. Currently over 38 million children in Africa don't have the chance to access education. Even a few years in school can completely change the course of a life, and the future of many people yet to come.

One example of a struggling country is Madagascar, off the coast of Africa. It struggles with many things, not just education, but UNICEF has focused on helping kids in that area get the education they deserve. On the island, UNICEF says, "The school attendance rate is extremely low, and teachers are insufficiently trained to deliver quality teaching to the children – a staggering two-thirds of teachers lack formal education for this job." (UNICEF, 3). To help the change, UNICEF founded their "Schools for Africa" initiative in 2004. With the help of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Hamburg Society, they have been able to raise over USD 300 million for 27 countries, and have opened up education to over 30 million girls and boys!

Another part of their initiative is spreading the word of things that are happening. Through partnerships with schools in Croatia, students are learning about the hardships of other countries, and it has led to over HRK 6 million for African countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia and Burkina.

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International (DKG) is another organization that partnered with UNICEF for this project. They specifically focus on quality education as an international women's organization. While UNICEF focused on this initiative as a whole, in all of Africa, DKG focused on the most extreme cases. These include children in very rural areas, experiencing poverty, and especially girls. This is very important because, while Africa struggles in general with education, girls and women struggle anyway with their rights and what is considered "their place" in society. With this sector of the initiative, many more kids' lives have been changed for the better, and reached many more countries.

The Schools for Africa campaign ended in 2022, but that doesn't mean that UNICEF's work in Africa has ended. They are focusing on building off of their success "by focusing on

creating systemic, sustainable change in the education pathway from early learning to primary to secondary education, and focusing on vulnerable groups of children to ensure no child is left behind.” (DKG, 6). All the support and future campaigns can lead to a new and better world for generations to come, helping the world together.

References:

“The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International.” *UNICEF USA*, www.unicefusa.org/about-unicef-usa/partnerships/humanitarian-organizations/delta-kappa-gamma-society-international. Accessed 3 Feb. 2024.

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