

**Submission to the
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Council
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Country Review: South Africa
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by Ivan Evstatiev**

Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and focused on raising awareness and minimizing human rights violations in the educational field.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquility in the society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarization; and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work together with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and to take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.

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0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit organization with one main goal - To protect human rights in the world of education. The organization started with a website and articles and currently it is working on multiple projects, each aiming to fight human rights violations in the educational sphere. As the UPR is related to human rights violations, inequalities, human trafficking, and other violations, Broken Chalk prepares this article for the fourth cycle and the specific country - South Africa.
2. During the last cycle, the delegation put forward 243 recommendations, South Africa supported 187 of them, and the rest they noted.¹ Section B31 is the one that stands out as it is related to “Equality & non-discrimination” and South Africa supported all of the recommendations given. Some of them are related to the protection of different minorities. Support and education on the LGBTQ communities and attempts on reducing discrimination in the country. The recommendations given in 2017 will help Broken Chalk evaluate the performance of the specific country. This report will give an update on the previous issues related to education, plus recommendations on how to deal with new ones.

1. Discrimination in Education

3. In 2019, South Africa launch a National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. Even though the country started such a plan, the discrimination and abuse for non-nationals continues to this day. According to the World Bank Gini Index, South Africa is the country with the highest wealth inequality, which is also seen in schools.² Children in the top 200 schools score higher in math than children in the other 6,600 schools in the country. Theoretically, every child should be guaranteed quality education, but the statistics show otherwise.³ Out of the top 200 schools, 185 are former white-only schools, and all of them keep having significant fees in order to keep lower-class families away from their schools. Even though the ratio of boys to girls in schools is almost equal, with 89.7% enrolment for boys and 90.9% for girls, the dropout rates are not as equal. Boys are more likely to dropout from school for numerous reasons.⁴ There are several factors that might influence this rate, such as boys being physically abused by bigger students causing lesser attachments to school. Other common factors are joining a gang, being part of a single-parent household, or repeating classes. As males are determined to be the physically stronger gender, most of them are needed to provide for their family and this stops them from being interested in their educational path.
4. Amnesty International states that the educational system is a mirror for what the economic status and inequality represent. 20% of schools are broadly functional, the rest

dysfunctional. Because of this, the average South African child is determined not by their ability or the result of hard work and determination, but instead by the colour of their skin, the province of their birth, and the wealth of their parents. It is a cycle that leaves almost no kid with the chance to succeed in life if his background does not support him.⁵

5. Another major issue related to the educational inequalities is underage mothers. The Gauteng Department of Health show that more than 23,000 girls aged under 18 gave birth between April 2020 and March 2021 which respectively stops them from pursuing their educational path. The cycle of underage motherhood is almost predictable as these girls either enter a forced marriage and/or live in poverty and dependence on public assistance. This also is a result of a lack of sex education, which is very essential in order to educate young girls regarding sexual health and pregnancy.⁶

II. Covid-19 worsening educational sphere

6. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the whole world. Unfortunately, some countries were able to adapt, quickly and more appropriately than other countries. Upwards of 750,000 have dropped out of school, which is 520,000 more than the expected rates in the country.⁷ South Africa's Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, confirms that more than 300,000 have dropped out for a 6 months period. Different factors related to Covid-19 affected this rate. The first measure taken by the government is what many countries did: rotational education. A reduced number of learners go to school for one week, then the rest who stayed at home can go to school the week after. The procedure is reasonable, but a lot of students either lost motivation or did not have the opportunity to participate in online classes. Another factor to be considered is that Covid-19 left more than 3 million adults jobless, which in many of the cases means that they cannot support the needs of their children related to school.⁸ A large number of households are unable to afford to pay for an internet connection or computer, so their children cannot attend online classes. In response to the shocking results, the Minister launched a project called the "Zero Dropout campaign" with the goal to reduce the dropout rates by 2030.⁹
7. According to new research by UNICEF, learners are behind their schedule with between 75% to a full year of where they should be with their education. Rotational attendance, school closures, and days off, have resulted in learners losing 54% of their learning time.¹⁰ The problem is from both sides, as not only kids face difficulties, but teachers as well. Teachers' well-being should be a top priority as South Africa is not able to afford to lose more of its children's time. The National Income Dynamics Study Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (Nids-Cram) has gathered data on poverty and hunger in the South African household for the period May 2020-March 2021.¹¹ Results showed that 14% of all

children in South Africa aged between 0-17 have experienced hunger at least once a week. There are approximately 20 million children between the age of 0-17, so that means that around 2.8 million children were hungry at least once a week. The survey showed that 1% or 28.000 were hungry every day. As The National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) shows, still 10.1 million learners go to school walking, with as the numbers show, some of them are walking hungry. Poverty is a serious factor in preventing children to go to school or even having the will.

III. Drinking water & sanitation major issues in classroom

8. In 2013, the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshegka, accepted a law which obliges every school in the country to have at the very least: water, electricity, internet, safe classrooms of up to 40 students, security, and the appropriate facilities to study and practice different sports. A 2019 report from The National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) shows that across South Africa, 3,710 schools only have unlawful pit toilets on the premises, while 6,089 have a combination of undemolished pit toilets and other sanitation infrastructure on the school property.¹² Such toilets are, unhygienic, and viruses such as Covid-19, cholera, and typhoid could be spread around them, but most shockingly there are reports of learners' deaths in such toilets. Clean toilets and water are a prerequisite for young learners to be at least a bit more willing to go to school.
9. Lack of access to water and sanitation is a matter of life and death. In Africa, more than 315,000 children die from diarrhoeal diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. The UN is aiming to create a world with sustainable water and sanitation in the whole world until 2030.¹³

IV. HIV and AIDS among youngsters

10. South Africa is the country with the highest rates of HIV in the world, with more than 7,5 million South Africans living with the disease. In 2018, 69,000 women became HIV-positive, and 10–19-year-old women numbered 33,000 in the same year.¹⁴ The study is showing that a high number of the young females who get sick is because they are having relationships with older man who are disease vectors also referred to in the study as "sugar daddies". Furthermore, HIV and AIDS an estimated 260,000 children were living with HIV. More than 1.2 million children between the age of (0-17) have been orphaned by HIV or AIDS. This makes them financially unstable, vulnerable to aggression and usually, they become sexually active earlier than other children. All of these factors are endangering the educational process and potential graduation for youngsters, and this is

not only education but also health-related matters. According to research on the effects that HIV and AIDS have on children and schools. HIV-infected children are more likely to miss school days more often, to be in a grade that is not the appropriate one for their age, and the dropout rate for kids from these groups is also higher.

11. South Africa started the 90-90-90 goal meaning (90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained treatment, and 90% of all people receiving treatment will have viral load suppression), however, the country is not there yet. The country is showing significant progress, but the problem is still there, and Broken Chalk would note that one of the most important actions that South Africa can take is to educate its citizens on the matters related to HIV and AIDS.¹⁵

V. Human trafficking in South Africa

12. Human trafficking in South Africa occurs as practice of forced labor and sexual exploitation. The yearly report from the U.S. government comments on the relevant topic per country.¹⁶ During the newest period The Directorate of Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI, or Hawks) collaborated closely with the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), together they worked on 31 new cases of trafficking. This is an increase from the 24 cases from the previous period. The government prosecuted these 31 new cases for an unknown number of traffic victims. Of 31 cases, 7 were sentenced to jail, as 2 of the cases were sent for life imprisonment, and the other 5 received between 22-25 years of prison. The report also states that there are numerous cases of police forces convicted in human trafficking from previous periods, which is shocking. Unfortunately, NGO's and researchers' alarms for neglected cases of human trafficking are low, particularly among the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), the Department of Social Development (DSD), SAPS, and the DPCI. There are serious allegations of hundreds of police officers being bribed and allowing traffickers to pass by the borders.¹⁷ South African trafficking rings exploit girls as young as 10 years old in sex trafficking. Girls in forced marriage are vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor by their husbands. Traffickers force foreign and South African LGBTQI+ persons to engage in commercial sex acts.
13. Protection has decreased by the government during the final period as fewer victims were tried to be identified. It is also important to mention the fact that the government removed the individual occupying the position of chair of NICTIP, which directed all governmental trafficking efforts and the framework, and did not communicate the change to stakeholders. The position is not filled yet, which is not benefitting the process of improving the "trafficking problem". These abuses impact the mental health of victims which prevents them from ever starting up or continuing their educational path.

University research shows that child victims of such crime, often suffer from developmental delays, language, and cognitive difficulties, the deficit in verbal and memory skills, poorer academic performances, and grade retention.¹⁸

VI. Recommendations & conclusions

- 14.** Broken Chalk admires the efforts and results that the country is achieving, in the field of education. There are noticeable improvements in the sphere of education with numerous achievements to be considered such as giving access to more children to go to school, building new toilets for children, and informing them more about diseases.
- 15.** However, as the report states, there are several issues that should be tackled urgently, and even though the country has a big budget specifically related to education, we would recommend continuing in investment towards education. Upon the previous recommendations and the new observations, Broken Chalk would recommend:
- 16.** To work towards minimalizing poverty and increasing the minimum wage per day. The social difference holds back kids from pursuing their educational goals
- 17.** To supply more learners with reliable internet and/or tablets from which they can follow classes. This will prevent a major part of them from missing classes and potentially dropping out
- 18.** To train teachers to become better professionals, so they can teach students more effectively. Stimulate teachers to self-develop as well.
- 19.** To educate both boys and girls on safe sex and using protection. This could reduce child pregnancy, dropout rates, disease expansion and more.
- 20.** To build schools that are safe for the children.
- 21.** To have water that is drinkable, and to install toilets in every school in order to prevent the spread of disease and ultimately death.
- 22.** Penalize the authorities' accepting bribes related to human traffic. Investigate more proactively and fight this as kids are being ruined.
- 23.** To remember its commitments and obligations under international law to meet the demands, attention, support, and needs necessary for students with disabilities to have equal access to quality education.
- 24.** To invest the education money equally and responsibly. Take accountability for the money spent and demonstrate results.
- 25.** These recommendations are with the specific goal to improve the educational sphere in South Africa and to maintain and improve the rights of its citizens. The recommendations are in the capabilities of the authorities responsible to emerge with a plan for the pre and post-pandemic issues. Achieving the recommendations from the previous UPR cycle as well as the ones that would be newly recommended should be a priority for South Africa as well as their internal projects for handling issues. We from Broken Chalk see a lot of potential in the country and that the field of education could be one of their fastest-growing sectors with the needed attention and investment.

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**BROKEN
CHALK**

Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR

Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31685639758 | info@brokenchalk.org | www.brokenchalk.org

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