



## BHARAT AFRICA: BILATERAL RELATION ENGAGEMENT IN HEALTH, TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

India and Africa indeed share a significant strategic position, serving as vital links between the East and West. This geographical advantage has positioned both regions as key players in the global supply chain and has led to increased cooperation in various fields, particularly in pursuing sustainable development goals such as promoting good health, quality education, and technological advancement. This partnership not only strengthens ties between the two regions but also enhances their collective impact on global issues. By leveraging their respective strengths and resources, India and Africa are fostering innovation and addressing challenges that affect their populations and beyond. As emerging economies, both India and Africa recognize the importance of investing in sectors that improve the well-being and prosperity of their citizens. By working together, they can achieve greater efficiencies and accelerate progress towards common objectives, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and sustainable world. The growing engagement between India and Africa reflects a broader trend of South-South cooperation, where countries in the global South collaborate to address shared challenges and pursue mutual development goals. This collaborative approach underscores the importance of solidarity and partnership in addressing complex global issues and fostering inclusive growth and development.

*Key words: India Africa relations, health, education and technology, historical relations and recent developments.*

### INTRODUCTION

The historical relationship between India and Africa is one of the oldest and encompasses various spheres from social to political, and financial to cultural. Evidence of historical relations between India and Africa can be traced back to accounts in the Vedas, Bhagwat Geeta, and the Greek text "The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea," written in 60 AD. The foundation of India-Africa relations is built upon collective opposition to colonialism and racial discrimination, as well as a zeal for a new international economic order marked by inclusivity, sustainability, and democratic principles.

Moreover, among all eminent personalities, Gandhi and Mandela stand the tallest as they share similar ideologies, providing a solid foundation for India-Africa relations. Nehru also followed a similar course and declared that "though separated by the Indian Ocean from us, Africa is in a sense our next-door neighbor," and "in historical perspective, Indian interest is likely to be bound up more and more with the growth of Africa" (Biswas, 1992). Nehru always gave special attention to India-Africa relations, regarding the African liberation struggle as part of Afro-Asian resurgence, and offered support to the African masses struggling against colonial discrimination and apartheid.

In addition, Nehru highlighted South-South cooperation by unraveling the policy of non-alignment, which he considered both a policy principle and a collective movement, forming the basic



structure of India's foreign policy. Alongside figures like China's Zhou Enlai, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana's Nkrumah, Indonesia's Sukarno, and Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, Nehru played a prominent part in organizing the inaugural Asian-African Conference in April 1955. This historic event convened representatives from 29 African and Asian nations in the city of Bandung, Indonesia, leading to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The India and Africa share a common colonial past, albeit with differing circumstances. Compared to other regions in Asia, Africa endured more extensive colonization territorially and for longer duration. Similar to other nations, Africa also underwent struggles for independence, facing them with courage. However, one of the major challenges encountered was the disruption of their cultures and the rapid spread of Christianity. Consequently, African education became more closely tied to European languages compared to other regions. India, too, faced the influence of Westernization and the erosion of cultural values, but it managed to preserve its roots firmly due to its rich ancient heritage, which served as a foundation to weather the Western storm. Indian culture acted as a barrier against the spread of Christianization as well.

In many aspects of education, linguistics, and religion, Africa was leading the race with a demonstration of a rapid pace. Westernization. However, it's ironic that despite Africa's swift embrace of Western cultural influences, it lagged in economic westernization. Economic development often accompanies Westernization, but Africa's progress was hindered by a lack of integration between indigenous cultures and Western civilization, as argued by Ali M. Muzari in his paper titled "Africa and Asia in the Post-colonial Experience: Political Allies or Economic Rivals?". This contrasted with other nations that achieved development by blending their traditions with Western influences. In India, there was a significant debate on this matter. Gandhi argued that excessive westernization and industrialization would turn Indians into mechanical robots, while Rabindranath Tagore advocated for a synthesis of the best aspects of both cultures for progressive development.

Africa has not passively accepted the process of Westernization; instead, it has preserved its identity through its multilingual society, art, literature, and performance of traditional customs. Music and dance have been significant tools for expressing themselves and voicing their grievances. A notable figure in this regard is the South African singer Miriam Makeba, who used her songs to protest against the apartheid system'. The government eventually banned her music as it became very influential. Many uprisings in Africa have been symbolized by songs, such as the "Soweto Uprising," which was epitomized by the song "Soweto Blues".

The interconnection between India and Africa also extends to the cultural identities they share. This cultural exchange was significantly influenced by the substantial migration of plantation workers during colonial times. According to a British online Archives Article titled "From the Archives "The Indian Diaspora in British Colonial Africa," between 1829 and 1924, a total of 769,427 Indians migrated



to Mauritius, South Africa, Seychelles, and East Africa'. Just as India has been celebrated as a major hub of diversity, Africa too has made concerted efforts to preserve its unique diversity.

### ***Health***

According to the UN, 46 million people in the African Continent experienced hunger in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is the highest share of any continent in the world. On the other hand, according to the World Food Program, one-fourth of the world's undernourished people live in India, making it home to a quarter of all undernourished people worldwide. This makes the country a key focus for tackling hunger on a global scale. Both India and Africa share a common history and are grappling with similar issues such as health problems stemming from food insecurity, climate change, and poverty.

The India and Africa have been making concerted and constant efforts to address these challenges through various initiatives and policies. India has implemented several social welfare programs targeting marginalized communities in an attempt to make the country self-reliant in many aspects. According to a report by Niti Ayog, there was an astonishing achievement as 135 million individuals managed to escape multidimensional poverty between 2016 and 2021. This positive development is reflected in a significant reduction of 9.89 percentage points in the proportion of multi-dimensionality poor individuals, decreasing from 24.85 percent in 2015-16 to 14.96 percent in 2019-21'. While India has been comparatively successful in maintaining its development trajectory, Africa's trajectory remains derailed due to historical discrimination as well as multiple post-colonial issues such as civil wars, military coups, rigged elections, and unequal exchange of globalization. Africa faced a further serious blow with the opening of the disease Pandora's box, leading to the continent remaining a hotspot of origin for lethal diseases like HIV and Ebola.

However, the India-Africa relations in the health domain date back to colonial times when Indian doctors were sent for special healthcare missions to the east coast of Africa, particularly Kenya. This effort reached new heights after colonialism as the Indian government extended credit to Africa's health sector as well as the Information Communication Technology sector.

A major test for the India-Africa relationship came in 2001 when South Africa was accused of sourcing cheap forms of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. During this critical juncture, India stood tall behind Africa by volunteering to sell Cipla-manufactured drugs for less than one dollar a day in Africa'. The India and Africa have joined forces in various aspects of the healthcare sector, including the establishment of the India-Africa Health Sciences Collaborative Platform (IAHSP). This platform, housed within the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), provides a structured framework for collaborative endeavors in biomedical research, drug development, and capacity building. It underscores the dedication to tackling shared health issues through innovative and enduring solutions.



The collaboration between India and African countries has been strengthened with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the African Union (AU). The two organizations are working together to conduct common research, find sustainable solutions in the health domain, and provide training to doctors and health practitioners’.

During the third India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in 2015, attended by 41 heads of state and government as well as officials from 54 African countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a significant increase in financial assistance. India pledged to provide concessional credit worth \$10 billion over the next five years and increased grant assistance totaling \$600 million. This included the establishment of a \$100 million India-Africa Development Fund and a \$10 million India-Africa Health Fund. The proposal for this funding, which aims to enhance the health and capabilities of African populations, was conceptualized as the 'Madiba-Mahatma Initiative,' honoring the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela’.

In 2016, PM Modi visited Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa with the aim to enhance the export of medicines and create pharmaceutical plants. During the Covid-19 pandemic, India played a key role through vaccine diplomacy and provided enabled faster inoculation in Africa’. The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed that India supplied made-in-India Covid Vaccines to 42 African countries. According to a Times of India report, India exported approximately 1.6 crore doses of Covid – Vaccine to its immediate neighbors, comprising Africa and South America.

### ***Energy Technology***

Energy has always played a critical role in diplomacy and conflicts, with events like the Iraq War, Gulf War, and more recently, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, significantly impacting dynamics of global supply chain. These conflicts directly or indirectly affect the energy economies of countries, including India. India, energy demand is primarily driven by coal and oil, shaping the country's economy and policies, particularly India's relationship with Africa. According to the OEC, India imports 8.68% of its oil from Nigeria and 1.43% from Egypt. In return, India exports total of \$38.8Mcrude oil, with South Africa being a major destination’. Collaboration between India and African nations in the energy sector is evident through various initiatives, such as oil ventures in Nigeria by India's ONGC Videsh Limited and Mittal Energy, and the doubling of oil imports from Nigeria by Indian Oil Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum. Nigeria alone accounts for 12% of India's oil imports from Africa, while the remaining 3% comes from Angola, Algeria, Egypt, and Equatorial Guinea collectively. Indian state-run companies have invested approximately \$8 billion in African oil ventures.

### ***Renewable Energy***

India's significant contribution to renewable energy is exemplified by the International Solar Alliance (ISA), with 33 African countries among its members. India's interest in partnering with African



nations stems from their equatorial geographic location, presenting ample solar energy potential. In 2020, India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) secured a Project Management Consultancy Contract to develop a 500 MW solar park in Mali and Togo, marking India's initial steps in bolstering Africa's solar infrastructure. NTPC is exploring similar opportunities in other ISA member nations across Africa, recognizing the critical need for intervention given the low electricity access in Sub-Saharan Africa and limited generation capacity. Leveraging the ISA, India aims to optimize Africa's solar resources, solidifying its position in the renewable energy sector'.

The cooperation on energy sector between Africa and India has been discussed on the various Forum and visits by Indian Prime minister and officials as India is looking for new strategic partner in this sector. This will take the south south cooperation to another height and will make the region energy efficient.

### ***Digital Revolution***

In the era of globalization, both India and Africa face challenges related to the digital divide, illiteracy, and infrastructure. According to IMF, internet usage remains relatively low, with only 28% of Africans, and according to ITU's World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database, 43% of Indians accessing the internet'. Countries like Morocco, Seychelles, Egypt, Kenya, and Tanzania have relatively better internet penetration, while others like Nigeria, South Africa, Mali, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, and Chad lag'.

Amidst the crisis India has made significant strides in digital empowerment through initiatives like Smart Cities, UPI, Aadhar, and Co-Win, bolstered by policies like Digital India. Prime Minister Modi's vision of a \$5 trillion economy and schemes like "Viksit Bharat @2047" and "Self-reliant India" further propel the digital revolution. India's success serves as a model for the Global South, with Africa emulating initiatives like the Ghana card inspired by India's Aadhar card. India is actively contributing to Africa's digital revolution by establishing the Ghana India-Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technology and committing \$2 million to African digital financial inclusion, reflecting its commitment to South-South cooperation'. Indian government is also under conversations for expansion of UPI service in countries like Mozambique, Kenya and Namibia'.

### ***Space Exploration Technology***

India's recent achievements in space exploration, such as the successful launch of Chandrayaan 3 and becoming the first country to land on the south pole of the moon, have positioned it as a leader in the Global South. Collaboration between Indian and South African scientists in developing the world's largest telescope holds promise for space exploration endeavors. At the 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the establishment of a BRICS Space Exploration Consortium, underscoring India's commitment to space exploration and collaboration with African nations.





## Education

*“Education is the most powerful Weapon which can use to change the World.”*

-Nelson Mandela

The above lines of Nelson Mandela hold immense relevance for post-colonial societies like India and Africa as both the nations are blessed with demographic dividend but suffering from limited resources. Innovation in the field of education can act as fuel to transform these nations into the exclusive hub of developed economy. Thus, both nations are engaging on multiple levels in the domain of education to unlock its unrealized human capital.

Indo Africa educational ties dates back to Nehrus time when he expressed his grave concern about education in Africa and said “the whole purpose of our scholarships to African students to come to India must take some positive measures to meet the situation” Nehrus effort has materialized during the third India Africa forum Submit (IAFS-3) also India pledged 50000 scholarships for African students to pursue their studies in India’.

India Launched technical and economic cooperation (ITEC) in 1964 to impart world class technical education to African Youth. ITEC is not a rigid curriculum rather customized with changing dynamics of world demand. In response to the evolving global landscape, the ITEC program and its delivery methods have adapted. For instance, India introduced the prototype e-ITEC course for African countries in 2019. The e-ITEC program saw a surge in popularity during the COVID-induced lockdown and continues to maintain its high level of appeal. Over time, the ITEC program has introduced various innovative studies covering topics such as big data analytics, urban infrastructure management, WTO-related subjects, and solar technology’.

Presently, approximately 98 Indian institutions offer training courses encompassing areas like agriculture, food and fertilizers, engineering and technology, as well as environment and climate change. Alongside civilian training initiatives, ITEC oversees defense training programs, study tours, disaster relief aid, the dispatch of Indian experts abroad, and project-based collaboration. Africa stands out as a significant recipient of the program, with nearly half of the ITEC slots designated for countries in the region’.

APJ Abdul Kalam during his inaugural speech in 2004 in Johannesburg requested African Union Member to connect to Indian Institution through optical Fiber networks and due to these efforts the Pan African E network (PANEP) project was formally launched in 2009 to develop tele- medicine and tele education throughout the continent. Later on during pandemic in 2019 it was transformed to e-vidya Bharti and E-AArogya Bharti’ which function under the aegis of IGNOU benefiting the African population at most.



India and Africa also have partnership in teachers training program for the holistic and inclusive education for children's of both the country. In the student exchange program India rank among top 5 destinations for African Student for higher education'. In 2018, the Ministry of Human Resource and Development in India introduced the 'Study in India' campaign aimed at enticing students from neighboring and African nations. Under this initiative, international students have access to a selection of 1,500 courses spanning undergraduate, graduate, and Ph.D. levels, offered by both public and private institutions across India. Additionally, deserving students may qualify for fee waivers of up to 100 percent'.

The most recent development in the Indo Africa education relationship manifested itself with the setup of The National Forensic Sciences (NFSU) in Jinja (Uganda) and Indian Institute Technology Madras campus in Zanzibar in Tanzania which is an ambitious initiative by NEP 2020. Such developments are taking the India Africa educational ties to the new zenith.

Another important dimension between India Africa ties is Capacity Building. In the past two decades over 37000 African Government civil servant has received training in India in various educational and training institution'. India has also setup 10 CEIT (center for excellence in IT) which have together trained over 57000 it graduates and post graduates.

India's Higher Education Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for the year 2020-21 showcases promising trends, indicating significant strides in the education sector. The data, sourced from reputable sources such as the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) and the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), underscores the nation's commitment to fostering inclusive and accessible education for all.

With a GER of 27.3%, India demonstrates a noteworthy level of enrollment among eligible students within the specified age group. Notably, both boys and girls exhibit commendable participation rates, with girls slightly outpacing boys with a GER of 27.9% compared to 26.7% for boys. This parity in enrollment reflects the country's efforts in promoting gender equality and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities.

Furthermore, the total GER of 27.3% signifies a considerable proportion of the population engaging in higher education pursuits. This indicates a growing recognition among Indian youth of the importance of higher education in personal and professional development. (See fig 1 p.15)

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) data for the academic year 2021-22, sourced from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) and the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21, showcases India's commendable performance in education across various levels without delving into specific issue. As per the data at Elementary School Level, the GER for girls and boys at the elementary school level stands at 100.1% and 99.3% respectively, with a total GER of



100.1%. These figures indicate that, on average, more than 100% of eligible children are enrolled in elementary schools, showcasing India's commitment to universal primary education.

According to data at the secondary school level, both girls and boys demonstrate high levels of enrollment, with GERs of 79.4% and 79.7% respectively. The total GER for secondary education is 79.6%. This signifies a significant proportion of students transitioning from primary to secondary education, highlighting the accessibility and inclusivity of India's educational system.

In addition, the GER for senior secondary school education continues to be robust, with girls and boys displaying enrollment rates of 58.2% and 57% respectively, resulting in a total GER of 57.6%. These figures indicate that a substantial portion of students are pursuing education beyond the secondary level, laying a strong foundation for higher education and skill development.

Hence, the consistency in GERs across different education levels reflects India's efforts to provide continuous and progressive educational opportunities for its youth. The incremental decline in GERs from elementary to senior secondary levels is a natural progression, yet the figures remain impressive, indicating widespread access to education across the board. (See Fig 2, p.16).

Moreover, the data provided by the United Nations regarding Africa's progress towards achieving universal primary education from 2010 to 2015 reflects significant efforts and progress in the region's educational development. Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education 79.5% , this figure indicates that nearly 80% of children of primary school age are enrolled in school. Achieving a high net enrolment ratio demonstrates Africa's commitment to increasing access to primary education, a fundamental aspect of achieving universal primary education.

The proportion of Pupils Starting Grade 1 Who Reach the Last Grade of Primary (56%): While this proportion is lower compared to the net enrolment ratio, it signifies efforts to improve educational retention rates. It suggests that more than half of the students who start primary school progress through all grades and complete their primary education, albeit with room for improvement.

Literacy Rate of 15-24 Years Old, Women, and Men (78.4%): The literacy rate among 15-24 years old, both women and men, stands at 78.4%. This indicates significant progress in providing basic literacy skills to the youth population, which is crucial for their personal development and economic empowerment. Overall, the data reflects Africa's concerted efforts towards achieving universal primary education during the specified period. Despite facing various challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, socio-economic disparities, and limited resources, African countries have made considerable strides in expanding access to education, improving retention rates, and enhancing literacy skills among youth. (See Fig 3 P.16)

India, having already achieved universal primary education and recognizing the importance of education as a catalyst for development, is committed to supporting Africa in its efforts to attain similar goals. Through various initiatives and partnerships, India extends its resources, expertise, and support to





African countries to enhance educational outcomes and mitigate the challenges they face. India's assistance to Africa in achieving universal education goals in the form of Capacity Building, Scholarship Exchange, Educational Aid, and Technology Advancement in Africa. By collaborating with African governments, international organizations, and development partners, India contributes to collective efforts aimed at addressing the educational crisis in Africa. Through these collaborative endeavors, India reaffirms its commitment to advancing education as a fundamental human right and a key driver of socio-economic development and empowerment, not only in Africa but across the globe.

## **CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS IN THE INDIAN –AFRICAN RELATIONSHIP**

India's relationship with Africa faces a significant challenge due to China's growing influence on the continent. In recent years, the partnership between Africa and China has gained immense importance, especially in the context of global politics and international relations. With Africa's population of 1.34 billion and China's 1.39 billion, their collaboration holds substantial global significance. To fully comprehend the involvement of external powers in Africa, such as India, it is essential to consider China's increasing presence'.

Historically, during the Cold War and in the years following, China, India, and Africa were united as part of the "global South." They worked together in international groups like the G77 to address developmental issues in relation to wealthier nations. However, in the 21st century, the nature of China and India's engagement with Africa has become more competitive. China has established a significant presence in Africa, particularly in the economic domain. Meanwhile, India, although not explicitly framing its engagement as competitive, highlights that its relationship with Africa is driven by different motivations, methods, and outcomes'.

According to George Yu, in 1968, remarked that understanding China's involvement in Africa is challenging due to its significant but complex and varied role across the continent. In the last two decades, China's growing footprint in Africa has prompted traditional global powers, such as the European Union, the United States, and Japan, to reassess their strategies. Additionally, China's involvement has inspired other emerging powers, including India, to enhance their efforts to collaborate with Africa'.

The term "Chinafrica" has emerged to describe the study of political, economic, and social interactions between China and Africa. However, these relationships also reflect broader trends in global dynamics beyond just the two regions.

In addition, there are several challenges and opportunities that India and Africa need to consider to further strengthen their relationship and explore new areas of cooperation through South-South Cooperation. These challenges mostly revolve around trade, investment, and economic collaboration:

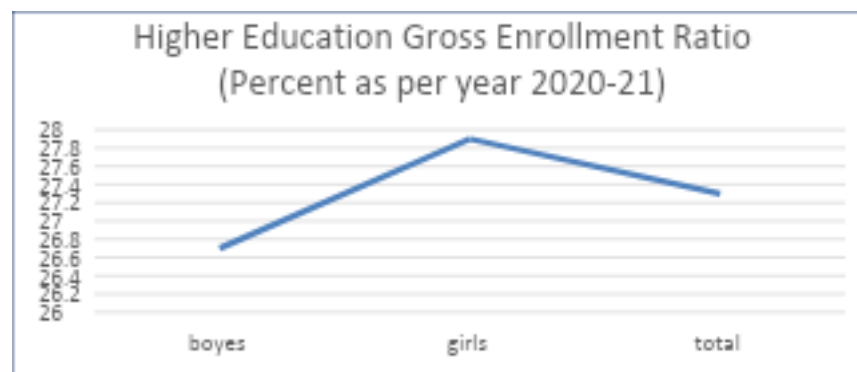
- **Access to Finance:** One of the key difficulties for businesses in both India and Africa is the lack of access to finance. Small and medium enterprises in particular struggle to secure funding, which hinders their ability to expand into each other's markets.
- **Limited Market Access:** Businesses in both regions face restricted access to each other's markets, preventing them from fully benefiting from the potential opportunities that exist.
- **Shortage of Skilled Workers:** Both India and Africa face a shortage of skilled labor, making it difficult for businesses to maximize the available opportunities in their respective markets.
- **Cultural Differences:** Differences in cultural practices can create challenges for businesses trying to establish strong partnerships between the two regions. These differences can complicate communication and business operations.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between India and Africa is characterized by vibrancy and mutualism, rooted in their shared struggles and visions. Both political entities are actively engaging in South-South cooperation, striving to usher in a new era marked by transparency and democratization.

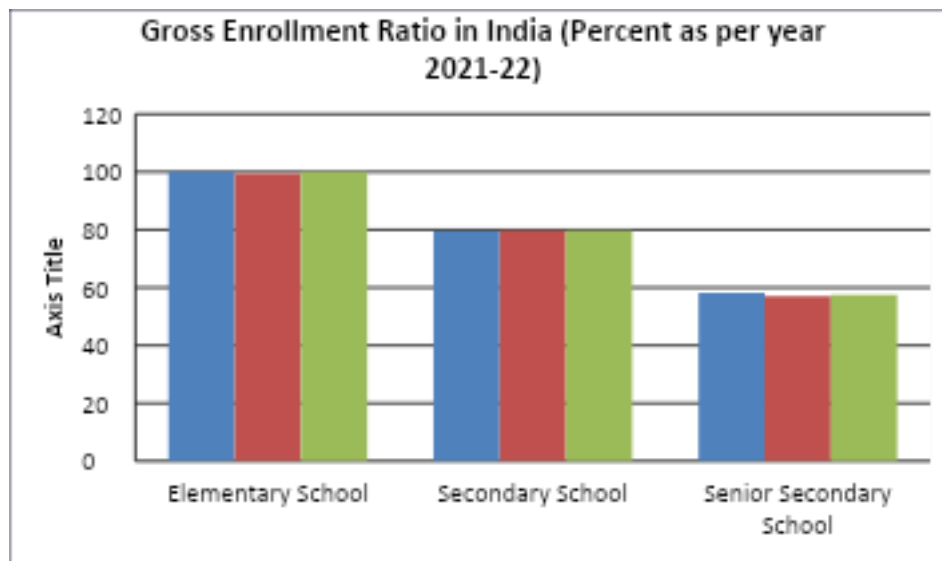
The year 2023 stood out as a significant milestone in India-Africa relations, as India astutely utilized its G20 presidency to secure permanent membership in the African Union. This move brought the African continent into the mainstream, bolstering their diplomatic and bargaining power on the international stage. The expanding dimensions of the India-Africa relationship are contributing to the prosperity of the global South. Together, they are endeavoring to forge a new era of health, technology, and education development, towards a safer and more sustainable world.

Figure 1



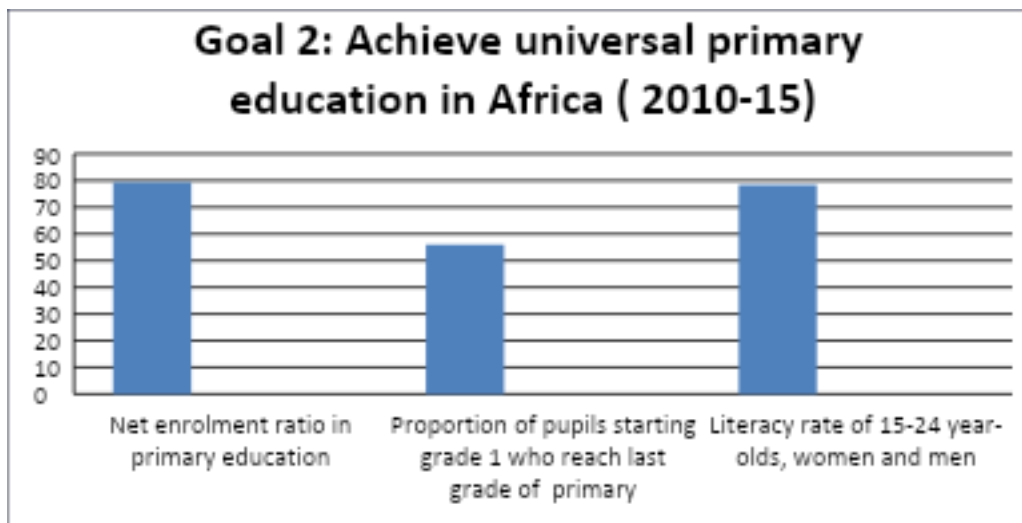
Source: Higher education, Unified District Information System for education (UDISE)+ (2021-22), Department of School education and literacy and all India Survey on Higher Education) (AISHE) 2020-21.

Figure 2



Source: Higher education, Unified District Information System for education (UDISE)+ (2021-22), Department of School education and literacy and all India Survey on Higher Education) (AISHE) 2020-21 African Development Bank.

Figure 3



Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange, United Nations of Economic Commission for Africa, <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/net-enrolment-ratio-in-primary-education>.



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