

# THE AFRICA WE WANT:

## Reclaim Public Services



Africa Coalition on Public Services  
Coordinated by



**ISER**

Facilitating Social Justice

INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

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### A People's Manifesto

#### RECOGNISING THAT;

1. In Africa, people struggle to access quality public services and there is chronic underfinancing of public services.
2. Improved public service delivery is crucial for building trust among citizens and fulfilling the social contract between the State and its people.
3. The poly crises: Covid 19 pandemic, Russia/Ukraine war, rising cost of living crisis, and climate change underscore why African governments must pay greater attention to socio-economic rights, particularly strengthen public services delivery in key sectors like healthcare, education, water and social protection etc.
4. Africa's exponentially growing debt burden poses a risk to quality public service delivery by limiting resources available to governments to realize public services like, healthcare, education, water and social protection especially for the vulnerable.
5. Illicit financial flows, corporate tax exemption and the failure to make the wealthy pay their fair share of tax deprive Africa of its resources.
6. Africa is failing to harness its abundant natural resources to finance quality public services.
7. Unregulated private actors are increasingly providing public services, leading to the commercialization and privatization of public services.
8. The African Commission, in its interpretative guidance provided in General Comment 7, reiterates the duty of states to finance and provide public services while also regulating private actors providing social services.
9. Public services are key to ameliorating multiple and intersecting forms of inequality, realizing human rights and creating a fair, just and democratic society.
10. Public services alleviate poverty and vulnerability and contribute to inclusive economic growth.
11. Quality public services enable individuals to live in dignity and achieve better standards of living.
12. Public services are essential for all people, not only poor or vulnerable groups.
13. Women and other vulnerable groups bear a disproportionate burden when public services are inadequate including an increased the burden of unpaid care work.
14. Public services are critical to tackling the ongoing climate and ecological crisis and can build communities resilience to climate change.

## DEMAND:

# QUALITY, EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND GENDER RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES THAT ARE PUBLICLY FUNDED, PUBLICLY DELIVERED, PUBLICLY GOVERNED

1. Governments strengthen public service delivery for all persons regardless of social status; in line with international human rights law. They should be accessible, available, acceptable and of the highest possible quality; non-discriminatory, addressing all prohibited grounds; accountable and participatory.
2. Governments and donors robustly invest in public services which are the first point of call for the poor and most vulnerable.
3. Quality public healthcare and education must be free, at point for end user to ensure provision to everyone regardless of ability to pay.
4. Quality public social services must be delivered by government to ensure equitable access.
5. Governments must remain in stewardship of the provision of quality public services.
6. A well paid and valued workforce is integral to safeguarding public services. States and development partners should invest in public servants and desist austerity measures such as wage and hiring freezes.
7. States must tackle intersectional discriminatory practices that bar people from equitably accessing quality public services.
8. We demand for transparent and accountable public services. States must establish mechanisms to ensure inclusive meaningful participation of the populace in designing and monitoring public social services especially youth, women, persons with disabilities and older persons.
9. Governments invest in digital technologies as a public service and ensure digital Identification Cards (IDs) do not bar access to public services.
10. Protect indigenous seed and control use of genetically modified seeds and use of pesticides.
11. Governments and private actors must provide speedy access to remedy when violations related to public services occur.

## RECLAIM

12. In the provision of public services, all actors involved have a public service obligation, with the primary overarching objective being the public interest. Essential social services like healthcare, education etc. cannot be subjected solely to left to market forces.
13. African states must ensure that even when private actors provide social services, at the minimum, are:
  - a. available to all individuals on an equitable basis and without discrimination;
  - b. accessible, even in times of emergency;
  - c. acceptable to the users;
  - d. of the highest attainable quality;
  - e. effectively regulated;
  - f. and subject to democratic public accountability.
14. States should refrain from commercialising and privatising essential public social services like healthcare, water, electricity and education through Public Private Partnerships or commercial private involvement. Instead, they should devote maximum available resources to ensure quality social public services.
15. Public funds cannot fund for profit entities providing social services.

## FINANCE



16. Funding public services is a state obligation.
17. To sustainably finance public services, African states must:
  - a. Implement fair and progressive taxation, ensuring that the wealthy contribute their fair share of taxes;
  - b. Utilise resource backed financing including harnessing the mineral and oil royalties;
  - c. Harnessing value addition and beneficiation;
  - d. Curb leakages like Illicit Financial Flows, and other forms of corruption and unjustified tax exemptions and tax abuse;
  - e. Demand for and use reparations to fund public services;
  - f. Honor international financing commitments, ensuring that they meet established funding targets such as those outlined in the Abuja declaration for health, as a minimum standard;
  - g. Desist from austerity measures that undermine public services.
18. Rethink the international financial architecture that deprives the Continent of resources needed to finance public services. This includes:
  - a. reform of the global tax rules;
  - b. Sovereign debt cancellation.


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