

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council 4th Cycle – 44th Session

Right to Education
Country Review: The Republic of Cape Verde

Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK

April 2023

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Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit NGO that investigates and reports human rights violations in education worldwide while advocating for and supporting human rights-focused educational development. By submitting this report, Broken Chalk aims to contribute to the 44th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Cape Verde with a focus on the education sector, encouraging the country to continue its improvement efforts and providing further insight into how to overcome current challenges and deficiencies regarding human rights in education.
2. On the third UPR Cycle, Cape Verde received 18 recommendations from 17 reviewing countries. Those included multiple encouragements to ratify the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, the recommendation to education to former detainees or inmates, to extend free education to secondary school levels, to ensure access to education and improve (adult) literacy rates in rural areas (especially for women), to reduce gender inequality in education, and to continue enhancing and resourcing the Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021 to provide quality education for all and securing education access to vulnerable collectives.ⁱ
3. Regarding Human Development, the 2019 Cape Verde's Index is 0.665, above the average for countries in the medium human development group and above the Sub-Saharan Africa average.ⁱⁱ However, regarding ensuring the right to education, against an income-adjusted benchmark, Cape Verde scored 82%, with sub-scores indicating significantly lower performance in secondary education provision than in primary education provision, all of which suggests that there still is much room for improvement.ⁱⁱⁱ The Covid-19 pandemic, climate change shocks and the Russo-Ukrainian war effects on the global economy have exacerbated the reported preexisting inequalities by increasing poverty and unemployment in the country.^{iv} Moreover, Cape Verde is considered a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), which faces specific challenges due to its remoteness, small size and susceptibility to climate and economic shocks.^v

ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN CAPE VERDE

IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATION

4. Most improvements in education throughout the last years have been made thanks to the 2017-2021 Strategic Education Plan, aiming at accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goal 4 of Quality Education and focused on the following pillars: universal access to pre-primary education for all children aged 4 to 5 years, including those with

- special needs; better articulation of pre-primary education with primary education so that all students receive two years of pre-primary education; equal access to universal, free education up to Grade 8 through the implementation of social action plans for schools, particularly for priority groups and special education for all.^{vi}
5. Cape Verde has continued to ensure and improve access to primary and secondary education, the **schooling rate scored 92.4% in 2021**, and the **literacy rate reached 88.5% in 2019**, with most over 15 years old knowing how to read and write.^{vii} Government expenditure on education shifted from **23.3% of the total budget in 2020 to 24.09% in 2021**.^{viii} Regarding infrastructure, **97.6% of elementary and secondary schools in Cape Verde have access to water, and 89% are connected to the public electricity grid**. The 2017-2021 Strategic Education Plan allowed for the implementation of education enhancement programs such as Education of Excellence, to which some 93.2 million US\$ were allocated in 2020, and 6.4 million US\$ were allocated to scholarships.^{ix}
 6. The Covid-19 pandemic caused much struggle in the tourism-centred economy of Cape Verde. However, the country was timely and effective in managing the crisis and vaccinating most of the population.^x In the area of education, it also acted effectively. In 2020, Cape Verde received a grant of 750.000\$ from the GPE (Global Partnership in Education), which substantially contributed to teacher training in distance teaching, provision of learning material and TV access to remote areas, and sufficient sanitary facilities.^{xi} After the closure of schools, the Ministry of Education implemented the “Learning and Studying at Home” program, which enhanced lesson delivery **through radio, television and the use of tablets** because 30% to 40% of the families did not have access to 3D technology. The program also allowed for the **extension of the digital television coverage area and improved signal quality**.^{xii} Despite all of this, it should be noted that there is **no evidence of comprehensive strategies to adapt to the post-Covid19 context**.
 7. Of Particular relevance is the recent **ratification of the Convention Against Discrimination in Education by Cape Verde on the 5th of October 2022**, which entered into force on the 5th of January 2023. Although its practical application is yet to be seen, this action has fully implemented several recommendations made in the previous UPR session.^{xiii}

INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION ACCESS

8. A challenge remains regarding the **hidden costs of education**. Although Primary Education and Secondary Education (up to 8th grade) are free and mandatory^{xiv}, a range of extra costs, including transportation, meals, or particular school material, is significant **for low-income families**. This represents an inequality in access to quality

education for low-income families.^{xv}

9. Higher Secondary Education and Higher Education (university) **remain subject to fees** (although authorities have stated the intention to make education free from 9th to 12th grade^{xvi}), allowing for inequality based on the economic level of each family. This also intersects with the disparity between families living in rural areas and families living in urban spaces^{xvii}, where the former have less access due to general lower economic capacity and lack of technology and internet connectivity due to its high cost (especially relevant during Covid-19)^{xviii}.
10. Regarding **Higher Education**, although significant efforts have been made to supply it widely, it must be noted that the schooling rate for the 2019-2020 period is **23.5%**, 37 points lower than that of secondary school, indicating an obstacle in its access.^{xix} One of the difficulties in this area is the geographical setting of Cape Verde; being an archipelago, the mission of providing accessible higher education to all areas is profoundly complex and has not been achieved. There are **only Higher Education institutions in the islands of Santiago and São Vicente**.^{xx} This, together with the fact that Higher Education is not accessible, generates a little incentive for students who live in remote areas and possess a low economic level to enter Higher Education.^{xxi}
11. There is also **inequality around language**. While for most of the Cabo Verdean population, the first language is Cabo Verdean Language (CVL), Portuguese is still the only official and schooling language. This continues to produce evident inequalities for students with limited exposure to Portuguese, namely those who live in rural areas and remote locations, usually from low-income families. Such students will have a learning disadvantage and increased difficulty when learning. This inequality also represents a disconnection between the formal education systems and society; policies to fill this gap will inevitably contribute to identity-building and social cohesion. Although some Bilingual education programs have been reportedly launched, implementing such initiatives needs to be revised and more robust and needs political and economic backup.^{xxii}
12. Despite the political will expressed in the Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021 to improve access and quality of education to **disabled students** (17,5% of the population have at least one handicap^{xxiii}) and increase staff capacitation aided by UNICEF^{xxiv}, it has been reported that **practical implementation of inclusive strategies for such students has been deficient**. Many disabled people do not attend education and do not receive the necessary benefits to do so. The infrastructures and educational technologies have not adapted to them for the most part.^{xxv}

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN EDUCATION

13. Concerning gender parity, good results have been achieved in preschool and primary education: the parity index scored 0.98 and 0.93, respectively, showing a slightly higher male representation. However, the challenge remains in secondary and higher education levels where the female model is significant and increasingly more elevated. **The parity index scores 1.2 for secondary education and 1.5 for higher education.** Incentives to attract males in those sectors are necessary to ensure equality.^{xxvi}
14. Despite the significantly higher female presence in secondary and higher education, the **literacy rate for men is currently almost 10% higher than women's**, which displays an access inequality for women too.^{xxvii}
15. Despite significant improvement through the introduction of a gender module in the secondary education curriculum, the curricula reportedly still contain **discriminatory stereotypes towards women, which is also reflected in the fact that women are poorly represented in the fields of study typically dominated by men**, such as in the technological area.^{xxviii}
16. While gender matters are beginning to be present in the curricula, **education on sexuality is deficient.** It has been acknowledged as necessary for the development and safety of students by the government, and a Sexual Guidance in Schools guide has been developed with the aid of UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), but due to limited political will and the sensitivity of the topic, very few students have benefited from such education. A comprehensive module on sex education is yet to be implemented effectively.^{xxix}
17. It should be noted that the figure regarding minorities based on sexual orientation or gender identification in Cape Verde could not be found. Similarly, no mechanisms to protect such minorities or education could be found. Despite being a potentially sensitive topic that is now invisible to the sector, advances in this area could be positive to ensure that all students are free and enjoy an equal treatment by peers and staff.

DEFICIENCIES IN EDUCATION

18. Higher Education in Cape Verde is a relatively new sector that emerged in the last 20 years. Considering that it is still in its infancy, as well as its notably tricky geographical setting, the industry lacks quality: although the newly formed Higher Education Regulatory Agency (Agência Reguladora do Ensino Superior – ARES) is beginning to conduct evaluations and checks to improve performance^{xxx}, the sector still **needs to build a comprehensive system of teaching quality evaluation, mechanisms to better**

align tertiary education content to the national goals and needs, and ensure access to educational material and technologies, as well as connectivity.^{xxxix}

19. Although around 76% of children currently have access to preschool education, there are regional differences with areas that display even lower percentages. Early Childhood Education and Preschoolers are formally one of the foci of the 2017-2021 Education Strategic Plan, but it has yet to be largely neglected. There still needs to be adequate legal **mechanisms to ensure universal preschool mandatory and free access**, the preschool **budget is around 0.3%** of the state budget, and there is a lack of professional qualifications for preschool teachers (**only 30% have the necessary staff**).^{xxxix} Moreover, **technological access and tools have needed to be included** in preschools, together with a **lack of teacher training in ICT**.^{xxxix}
20. One of the most significant problems in Cape Verde's education sector is the quality of education, reflected in **low-performance rates in primary school**. In mathematics, only 2.85% of children could deal with the main areas of study successfully. In the area of language, 6 out of every ten children demonstrated great difficulty or inability to interpret the basic rules of functioning of speech. Furthermore, Cape Verde still **does not have a comprehensive national system to measure learning outcomes** at any level of education.^{xxxix}
21. Regarding technological access, it should be noted that although most schools are connected to the public electricity grid and that the 2017-2021 Strategic Education Plan has allowed for the incorporation of more technological tools and a more robust curriculum on ICT skills, **only the 17% of schools have internet access**^{xxxix} This is even though Cabo Verde has one of the highest rates of internet access in Africa. The **cost of the internet is the problem, as it is among the world's highest; it is still too high for many to obtain, especially** for those with lower income, generating a situation of inequality as well.^{xxxix}

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

22. Considering all the observations above and given the third UPR cycle recommendations on the right to education, Broken Chalk wants to suggest the following suggestions to Cape Verde:
23. To reduce the hidden costs of education by providing free access to transportation, material, and nutritional services with particular attention to low-income families and students who live in remote rural areas, which might increase the economic cost of education.

24. By the government's stated intentions to continue to extend free, accessible, and mandatory education to the preschool years and higher education, with particular attention to low-income families.
25. Regarding higher education, generate incentive campaigns to increase the schooling rate, particularly for males, and expand the presence of higher education institutions to all territories or better-ensuring access to universities from remote places.
26. To implement comprehensive national programs to overcome the inequality around language. Cabo Verdean Language should be significantly more present in all stages of education; particular attention should be paid to students with lower exposure to Portuguese to ensure they do not fall behind, and bilingual education initiatives should be enhanced through multidisciplinary teams that include local community members that understand the specific language needs of the area.
27. To make education infrastructure, curricula, and staff more sensitive and adaptable to disabled or special needs students. Proper access to buildings, inclusive educational material and a comprehensive disability-oriented training module for all educators should be provided to ensure the access and equality of such students.
28. To continue to ensure girls' and women's access to education at all levels to achieve greater equality in literacy rates, to continue to work towards eliminating gender stereotypes and to incentivise the presence of women in male-dominated study fields.
29. To implement a comprehensive educational program in secondary school regarding sexuality to guarantee students' safety and health and eliminate diversity-damaging stereotypes based on sexual orientation.
30. To implement a comprehensive national system of evaluation and assessment of teaching quality to ensure an adequate provision of content at all educational stages and to identify deficiencies in teaching quality, particularly in the area of language and mathematics in primary school. Proper evaluation and analysis of student performance could overcome ineffective modes of teaching that result in low performance, allow for educational innovation, and better align curricula to the needs and goals of Cape Verde's society, better preparing students to face the labour market.
31. To continue ensuring that all teachers are qualified to provide adequate education to their assigned level. This should be mainly applied to the preschool levels, where most teachers need the proper qualification, which could hinder the development of students.

32. To guarantee greater access to technological tools for educational purposes both for schools and families, as well as facilitating internet access. This seems especially important considering the introduction of technologies in the global labour market, and it is also essential to provide flexible and adaptable modes of education.
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References are submitted with different document



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