

Africa A+ Schools (A+) and the United Nations



Africa A+ Schools (A+) is a registered non-profit organization (NPO Registration No. 220-868) working in the field of early childhood education since 2014. **A+** focusses on community upliftment through promotion of quality education in the preschool and foundation phases (ages 1-9 years).

A+ has reflected on how its work aligns with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as defined by the United Nations (UN). The SDGs are intended to guide the development of nations in such a way as to benefit all peoples, economies and the planetary environment.

The conclusion we have reached is that the work of **A+** does indeed align well with the SDGs. We believe that **A+** helps to drive the SDGs in the South African communities where it works. **A+** is certainly not in conflict with any of the 17 SDGs, but the alignment is naturally stronger and more direct with some SDGs than with others. Below we highlight the goals to which we believe **A+** makes a substantive contribution.

Poverty (SDG 1) is a phenomenon that is exacerbated by low levels of education. South Africa faces serious challenges in the quality of education offered to its children. By working to upgrade the standards of pedagogy in early-education classrooms, **A+** creates a sound educational foundation for higher grades to build on, thereby broadening opportunities for young people and their gainful employment, to escape the grip of poverty.



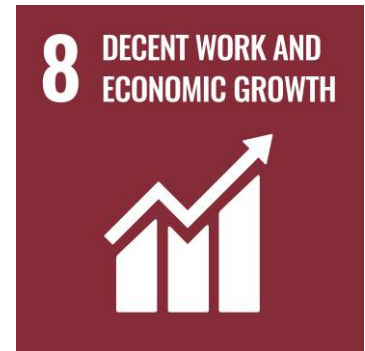
Quality Education (SDG 4) is exactly what **A+** promotes. We do this by training teachers, principals, parents and Community Facilitators in pedagogical techniques of play-based teaching and learning, especially by using all of the **arts** to achieve joyful and creative learning.



Gender Equality (SDG 5), although not a specific target of **A+**, is indirectly addressed by the fact that the great majority of trainees in **A+** programmes are **women**. By strengthening the skills of teachers, principals and parents, it is largely women who are being up-skilled and empowered. This is positive for poor communities in which women generally do not enjoy equal status with men.



Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) is relevant to preschool education because this is one of the few sectors in which women from underprivileged communities can achieve professional status. **A+** specifically targets preschools because their teachers are frequently under-qualified and inexperienced. Through **A+** training, these teachers not only become more skilled and effective, but also improve their career prospects and potential to sustain income.



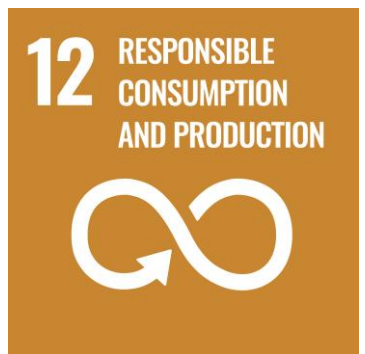
Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9) may seem very remote from early childhood education. However, the **A+** approach to pedagogy strongly emphasizes creativity, problem solving and critical thinking. These learned attributes are all key to entrepreneurship which, in turn, is key to innovation and the development of industry. **A+** operates from a conviction (supported by research) that the acquisition of these key skills begins at an early age.



Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10) is highly relevant in South Africa which has extreme levels of social and economic inequality. As explained under SDG 8 (above), **A+** training enhances the professionalism and efficacy of its trainees, regardless of socioeconomic status, thereby helping to shrink the gap between more and less privileged communities and their respective levels of education.



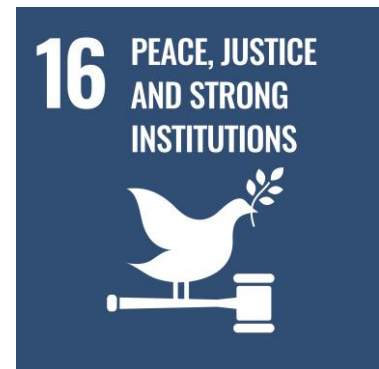
Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) finds expression in the **A+** emphasis on the use of cast-off, natural and recyclable materials as educational resources. In other words, **A+** makes extensive use of no-cost, readily available materials in its teaching and learning activities. In this way, an awareness of the value and potential of such materials is promoted and the need for new, expensive and wasteful resources is reduced.



A+ frequently draws themes from nature in its creative, arts-based teaching and learning activities, thereby promoting an awareness of nature, flora and fauna. This naturally leads teachers and children to greater appreciation of, and desire to preserve, our natural heritage (SDGs 14 & 15).



A+ has a conviction that schools are among the most important **institutions** in society. We work to strengthen schools by adopting a “whole-school” approach to training. This means that all members of staff are included in workshops and stakeholder meetings to foster inclusivity and the development of an institutional culture of quality education. Functional schools can undoubtedly contribute to **peace and justice** in communities.



A+ regularly partners with other organizations in its community projects. By entering into **partnerships**, a wider range of services can be offered to schools. For example, while **A+** focusses on teacher training, partner organizations can assist schools with feeding schemes, infrastructural development and administrative protocols. Such combinations of expertise and resources make significant upgrades of schools possible.



Taking all of the above into account, we believe that **Africa A+ Schools** can proudly claim to be making a contribution to South Africa’s achievement of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. It is our intention to continue to deliver on these worthy objectives up to 2030, and beyond.

Acknowledgement: **Africa A+ Schools** acknowledges the United Nations as the source of the icons and SDGs used in this document.

Disclaimer: The use of the SDGs and their icons in this document does not imply endorsement by the United Nations of **Africa A+ Schools**, its products or services, or of its planned activities.

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