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## DEBATE ON THE HOW NAMIBIA CAN OFFER LASTING SOLUTIONS TO THE EDUCATION CRISIS AND EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BY NEFF DEPUTY PRESIDENT: KALIMBO IIPUMBU

11/04/2023

Honorable Speaker, distinguished colleagues of the August House.

I rise to make my contribution and to debate and discuss a critical issue that affects the future of our nation - the education crisis in Namibia, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. *worsened*

As we all know, the pandemic has disrupted our lives in unprecedented ways, and education has not been spared. The pandemic has forced schools to close, leaving millions of children without access to quality education. The consequences of this education crisis are severe, as it impacts the socio-economic development of our country.

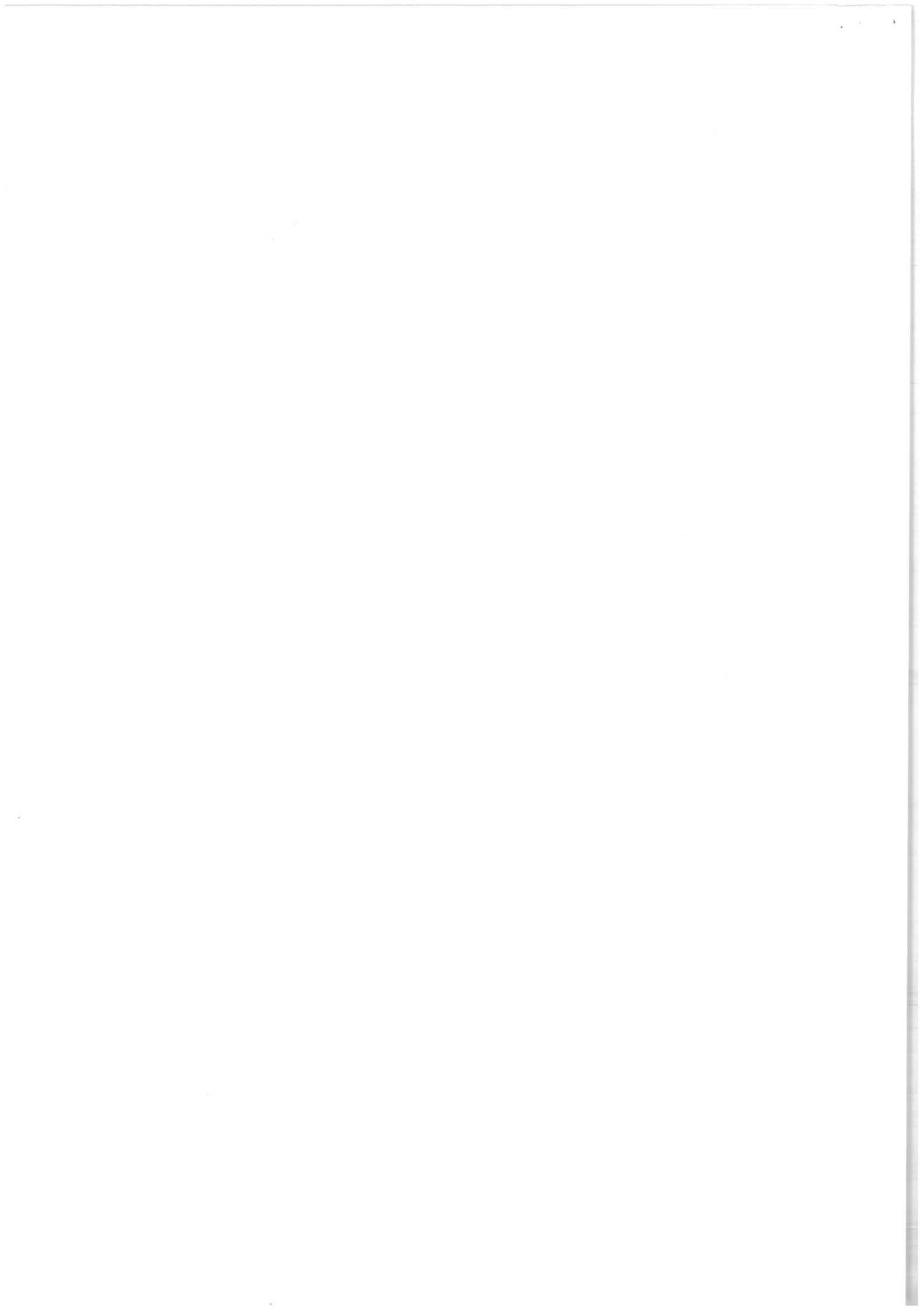
To contain the spread of the virus, many countries closed their schools. This affected over 1.5 billion students worldwide, disrupting their education and forcing them to stay at home.

With schools closed, many students had to resort to online learning. This was challenging, as not all students had access to the internet, computers, or other digital devices required for online learning.

The pandemic highlighted the inequalities that exist within the education system. Students from low-income families, rural areas, and marginalized communities were more likely to lack access to digital devices and internet connectivity, which put them at a disadvantage.

the pandemic also took a toll on the mental health of students and teachers. The stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic, coupled with the isolation caused by social distancing measures, had a negative impact on the mental health and well-being of students and teachers.

The pandemic disrupted the learning process, leading to significant learning loss among students. This will have long-term consequences for their academic and professional futures



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To address this issue, we need to develop lasting solutions that will enable our education system to adapt and thrive in the face of the pandemic.

But we must be clear on the question of free education.

Honorable Members, it has become increasingly clear that there is no such thing as free education in Namibia.

There is only rhetoric that is expressed by the Swapo party in order to give a semblance of progress when there is nothing on the ground that suggests that indeed education is free.

We urge our colleagues to be honest with themselves because parents and teachers cannot be fooled any longer.

Education in Namibia comes at a cost, let us thus talk about how we can meet parents' half-way, effectively, by making solid attainable and well executed promises that give room for what is expected from parents.

We cannot ambush each other and hide behind fingers.

First and foremost, we need to prioritize the safety of our children and teachers. This means ensuring that our schools have adequate facilities, including clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

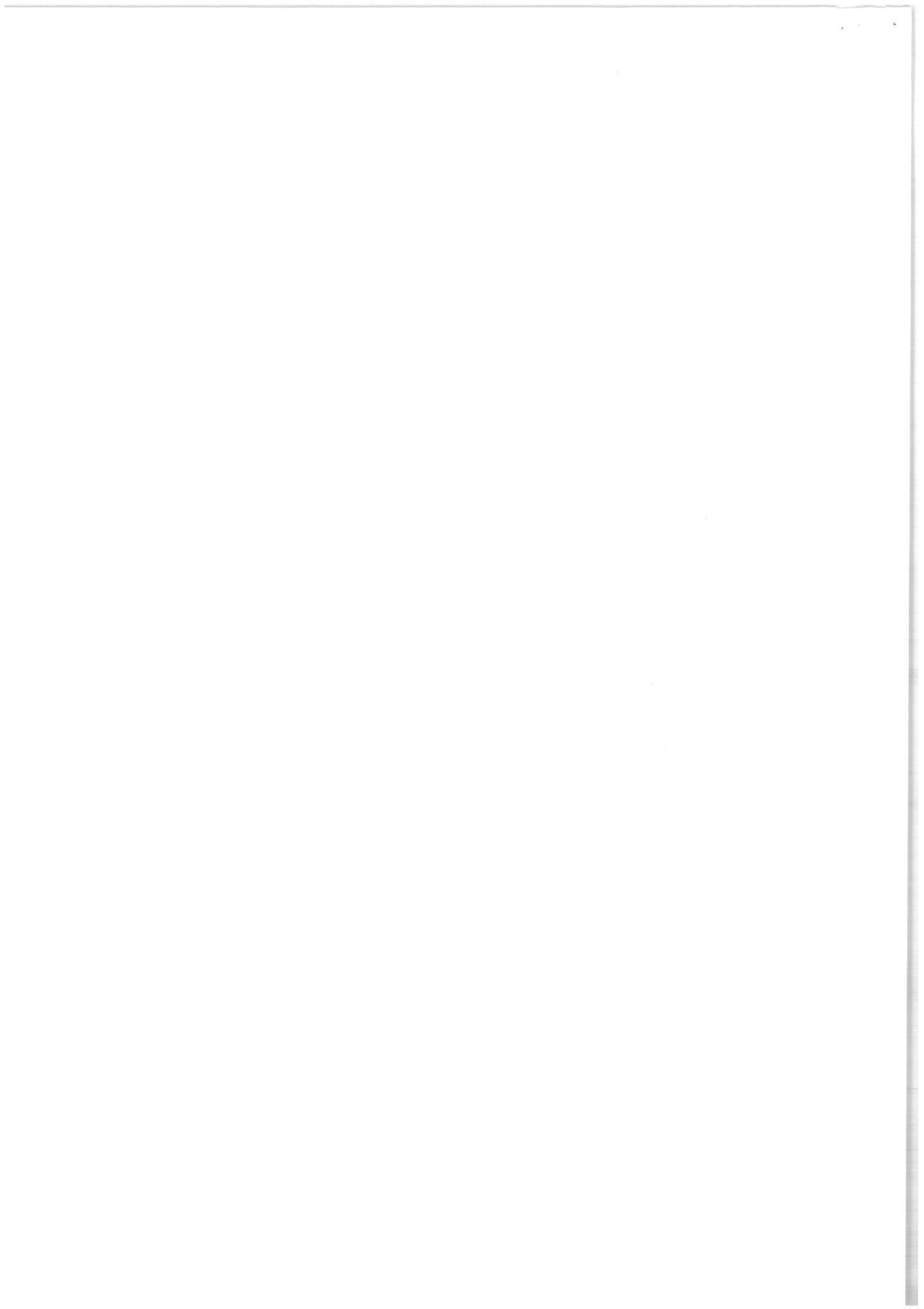
Furthermore, we need to invest in digital infrastructure and online learning resources to ensure that students can continue their education, even if they cannot attend school physically. This investment should be complemented by teacher training programs to enable teachers to deliver quality online education effectively.

We also need to recognize that the pandemic has highlighted the inequalities that exist within our education system.

Many children from disadvantaged communities do not have access to the technology and resources required for online learning, making them more vulnerable to falling behind. To address this, we need to ensure that education is inclusive, and no child is left behind.

Moreover, we must prioritize mental health and well-being, as the pandemic has also taken a toll on the mental health of students and teachers alike. ~~We must~~

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*We must*

invest in counseling and support services to help students and teachers cope with the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic.

Lastly, we need to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, and international partners, to address the education crisis in Namibia. We need to leverage the expertise and resources of these stakeholders to develop and implement sustainable solutions that will help our education system adapt and thrive in the face of the pandemic.

In conclusion, the education crisis in Namibia requires urgent attention, and we must work together to address it.

By prioritizing safety, investing in digital infrastructure, ensuring inclusivity, prioritizing mental health and well-being, and working collaboratively, we can ensure that our education system emerges stronger from this crisis.

Thank you.

