FOUNDATIONS AND SDG4: AN INITIAL REPORT
September 2018

The objective of this report is to show the important role of foundations in promoting SDG4, particularly in relation to the coordination role of the SDG 2030-Education Steering Committee (SC) hosted by UNESCO. Foundations, among other international development actors, have the potential to provide additional educational opportunities in the developing world. To date, this support has not been harnessed sufficiently in our global pursuit of a quality education for all.

This report summarizes the findings from a survey conducted by EAA on 27 foundations (48 % response rate), expert meetings, and a desk study. It emphasizes the unique role of foundations in advocating the importance of education. Foundations’ methods of implementing activities and/or providing financial assistance contribute significantly to the SDG4 goals. Nevertheless, there is a room for improvement through an effective and open dialogue with all stakeholders for greater contributions by foundations to the SDG 2030 goals. A list of the foundations is attached at the end of this document (Annex 1).

Contributions from foundations
This section of the report summarizes the areas where foundations are already contributing to promoting and enabling the achievement of SDG4.

- Many foundations advocate and prioritize education and the SDG4 outcomes;
- Foundations allocate significant resources specifically for this goal;
- While governments are responsible to provide and facilitate access to quality education and ensure that the adequate system of financing of education is in place, studies show that education was the second largest sector supported by foundations during 2013-2015, with 2.1 billion provided by more than 100 foundations\(^1\). Foundations’ contributions vary, depending on the size of the foundation and the degree of support to the education activities/themes;
- Research and data analysis show that foundations contribute to achieving the SDG4 for two important reasons: they offer financing as well as innovative and complementary approaches to development\(^2\);
- Foundations invest not only financially but in other ways, too. They often explore options, take risks, embrace practical solutions, and support innovation in financing, policy and programming;
- These are areas that traditional donors and development stakeholders may be unwilling to undertake\(^3\).

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\(^2\) Grady, UNDP, 2014. Erik Lundsgaarde, Evelyn Funk, Anja Kopyra, Jennifer Richter & Hannah Steinfeldt, Private Foundations and Development-Cooperation-Insights from Tanzania (studies: German Development Institute (DIE))
\(^3\) Nashua Watson, 2012. (Source: the Bellagio initiative)
- Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia are areas of significant regional focus for foundations’ investment and development;
- Regional foundations play a role in consolidating information about available foundation efforts and achievements, collect data, and identify gaps and what could be done to close gaps;
- Many foundations are moving from single/sector development outcomes/impact projects to multi-sectoral approaches. Many activities are closely aligned with the other SDGs and targets.

Opportunities
The nature of foundations, their flexibility in funding and programming, and their relatively low engagement in global education movements to date all offer opportunities on which the SDG4 SC can capitalize in support of Member States

- Foundations are mentioned in national and international policy documents on development cooperation as part of an emerging group of actors in international development⁴;
- Foundations are increasingly keen to align their involvement and results with national development priorities and policy plans at the country level. Foundations often work in partnership and in coordination with national governments and other in-country development partners and seek cooperation from both the public and private sectors;
- Foundations are interested in working with governments, particularly in relation to building capacity and finding solutions to strengthen the system⁵. Some cases show that they are increasingly coordinating efforts engaging with national governments as their development partners rather than merely donors;
- With their partners beyond government, foundations share common development outcomes and enlarged opportunities for actions in support of sustainability;
- Foundations can assert political influence at the country level and are keen to support governments to leverage their resources in support of national development plans;
- Foundations can also be effective at mobilizing media attention to education and other development issues;
- Foundations engage in diverse educational issues, and support a wide variety of advocacy campaigns, programs and projects. However, providing education services and improving education quality remains key to their support;
- Regional and national foundations expressed their willingness and commitment to work in communities unreached by development assistance;
- Foundations work across sub sectors. For example, some surveys found that early childhood and primary education are the most significant areas of focus and investment. Secondary and vocational education are also major foci of many foundations. Technology was at the bottom of the survey’s respondents list.

⁵ GPE - Private Foundations Engagement Strategy 2018-2020
Challenges:
The opportunities for capitalizing on what foundations have to offer in education abound, but improved action is not without its challenges. Major challenges are summarized here.

- While many foundations support education in developing countries these activities often lack coordination;
- Related to the point above, the work of some foundations may not have a strong strategic connection to larger global education policy agendas;
- Duplication of effort is identified by some studies;
- There is growing concern in the international development sector including foundations that aid money is increasingly going to middle income countries rather than to those most in need.

Several of these challenges provide information on how the SC can take advantage of its unique role to make better use of the advantages that foundations offer.

Recommendations:
A number of recommendations emerged as a result of the EAA review of the work and potential of foundations in relation to SDG 4. To facilitate improved coordination of foundations’ work in support of Member States the recommendations are divided into those that relate to SC actions and those that relate to the actions of foundations.

SC potential actions:
- Improve the means of communication between government and foundations and other stockholders to improve SDG4;
- With thoughtful and sustained policy engagement, working with partners, foundations can become more effective and influential for education improvement;
- Foundations and governments should collaborate around SDGs to reduce duplication, create synergies, and leverage resources among partners;
- Network approaches in and between countries could improve lessons learned and implementation, while decreasing duplication of effort.

Foundations potential actions:
- Avoid duplication so as is not replicate government mandated work. The government has the power to scale innovative and successful solutions via policies and programs;*
- Dissemination of information via connecting a network of foundations with other international actors within the sector in order to bridge the information gap between ministries and civil Society;
- Foundations should engage in a stronger campaign style approach that demonstrates and leverages foundation’s existing involvement;
- Promote multi-sectoral partnerships to tackle multi-dimensional development challenges. Multi-tiered and multi-sectoral partnership can galvanize support and scale.

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*EAA Foundations Survey August 2018
## Annex

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