

SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee

Statement

For a Sustainable Future, Invest in Education



International Education Day 2020

We stand at the cusp of a new decade. Our resolution must be to make it the decade for education – one in which governments will invest in fulfilling the human right to education as the most viable path for building a more equitable, peaceful and sustainable future.

It is in this spirit that the first International Education Day of the decade reaffirms the **fundamentally transformative role** of education for people, planet, prosperity and peace.

In light of the complex and interdependent challenges that we face today, the extent to which nations invest in quality education from **early childhood to higher education and lifelong learning** opportunities will largely determine their future resilience, stability and prosperity.

We can never sufficiently repeat that education transforms lives, giving people the power to take their future in hand, to make informed choices for themselves, their families and their communities.

We have compelling evidence demonstrating the impact of education on every aspect of development: on slashing poverty; dramatically reducing infant and maternal mortality; keeping girls from marrying too young and advancing gender equality. Every additional year of education translates into higher income and matching opportunities to secure decent jobs.

As we enter the **last decade of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, it is simply not possible to navigate the rapid winds powering the 21st century – be it climate change, technological disruption or accelerated globalization – without vastly expanding educational opportunities.

Today education is in crisis. Because it is leaving hundreds of millions behind, especially in situations of conflict and protracted crisis; because it is not doing enough to tackle inequalities, including gender; because in too many instances schooling does not equate with actual learning.

Education today has to be rethought to carry **lasting value for individuals and societies**, to be forward-looking and a bulwark against contemporary intolerance and violence that is fueling divides, amplified by social media. Schools, universities and learning institutions should be places for nurturing democratic values, respect and solidarity, and empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to shape and steer the future.

So what's the way forward?

First, we need political recognition and will at the highest level of education as a priority for society, innovation and sustainable growth. Education is not a cost – it is an investment in people, planet, prosperity and peace.

Yet the systemic underfunding of education is stalling progress towards the 2030 Agenda as a whole – especially in Africa that accounts for two-thirds of the USD 39 billion financing gap.

Against this backdrop, we collectively call on governments to meet the agreed **financing benchmarks** by allocating at least 4 to 6% of GDP and 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education. In addition, international aid to education has to increase in volume and predictability and target those countries with the greatest needs, including those hosting large numbers of school-age refugees.

Second, we must **act on the inequalities** that are undermining education's mission and invest in what creates inclusion and gender equality. This runs from ensuring equitable access to education by investing more in those furthest behind, in new pedagogical models, redesigned curricula, and better training and support to teachers to enable flexible learning pathways throughout life.

Third, **accountability**: education is a human right and a public good. Everyone has a role in defending it but governments hold the primary responsibility for ensuring this right through equitable and effective financing of public education with a commitment to leave no one behind.

We also need to show what's working and why, including through better data, particularly to understand who is not included, collaboration across sectors and the sharing of journeys to success.

Finally, **societal engagement** to put teaching and learning at the center of public policy, from employment to health to social well-being and innovation, and generate political will.

Today we are positioning education as **humanity's greatest renewable resource** – one that must be protected and nurtured to open minds, promote shared values, foster a culture of peace and invent our common future on the basis of human rights, dignity and respect for diversity.

We call for a political and societal compact for education to reverse the bleak projections on Sustainable Development Goal 4 and set a new course for education, especially for those left behind.

On this International Day, as representatives of the global education community, we call upon leaders to raise the stakes around education and have the ambition to foster societies in which learning is valued as a right and as our greatest asset for building a better world.

The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee is the global multi-stakeholder consultation and coordination mechanism for education in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Its primary objective is to harmonize and strengthen support to countries and their partners for the realization of the global education goal and targets. The Steering Committee is composed of members representing a majority from countries, the World Education Forum 2015 convening agencies (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, ILO, the World Bank), the Global Partnership for Education, the OECD, regional organizations, teacher organizations, civil society networks, the private sector, foundations and youth organizations.

SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee Secretariat
UNESCO
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris France



education2030@unesco.org



www.SDG4education2030.org



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