



Contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, are invited to share relevant input and deliberations as to how they address goals and targets from the perspective of “*Ensuring that no one is left behind*”.

Inputs could follow the following template, inspired by the report of the Secretary-General on Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684).

Submissions will be publicly posted online at the United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, at sustainabledevelopment.un.org, as input to the 2016 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Submission Form

The **SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee** supports Member States and partners in achieving SDG4 – Education 2030. To this end, it will, among other activities, provide strategic guidance, review progress drawing on the Global Education Monitoring Report, and make recommendations to the education community on key priorities and catalytic actions to achieve the new agenda; monitor and advocate for adequate financing; and encourage harmonization and coordination of partner activities.

1. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global level:

SDG4 - Education (interlinkage with all other SDGs and in particular targets 1.a, 8.6, 3.7, 5.6, 12.8 and 13.3).

Education is a fundamental human right and an enabling right. To fulfil this right, countries must ensure universal equal access to inclusive and equitable quality education and learning, which should be free and compulsory, leaving no one behind. Education shall aim at the full development of the human personality and promote mutual understanding, tolerance, friendship and peace.

Target 4.1

When the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came to a close in 2015, it was clear that there was tremendous progress toward universal completion of primary education across the globe, but also a trend which slowed when it came to progress among the more disadvantaged. At the same time, it became more clear that access was not sufficient for learning and that an estimated 250 million children were without basic skills whether out of school or even among some who had completed up to four grades of primary education. Thus it is crucial to ensure that education quality, inclusion and equity in and through education represent key elements of the vision for SDG4 and measuring progress to 2030.

Despite much progress, the work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015 was not completed. In 2013, the latest year with data, 59 million children of primary school age, typically between 6 and 11 years of age, were out of school. Estimates by the UNESCO Institute for



Statistics (UIS) show that one out of five out-of-school children have dropped out of school and that two out of five out-of-school children will never set foot in a primary school.

In addition, 65 million adolescents of lower secondary school age, typically between 12 and 15 years of age, were not in school in 2013, for a total of 124 million out-of-school children and adolescents. Many of them live in conflict-afflicted regions and emergency situations. Many are poor and live in rural areas. Many also face discrimination because of ethnic origin, language, gender or disability.

On the background of these numbers, living up to the commitment to ensure the provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, inclusive, equitable primary and secondary education – of which at least nine years are compulsory, leading to relevant outcomes - without discrimination is crucial. The provision of free education includes the removal of cost-related barriers to primary and secondary education.

While the need to close the gap in access to education is recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals, the focus has moved more towards a concept of meaningful access – good quality of education that leads to relevant learning outcomes at all levels of education. To this end, UIS is leading partner efforts to better measure learning outcomes globally.

Target 4.2

Early childhood development, care and education is multidimensional, encompassing several aspects of a child's well-being: physical, social, emotional and mental. In general, development takes place in a series of predictable and common stages: Children become progressively more independent and learn increasingly advanced skills and capacities as they grow older. However, children do develop at different speeds and may reach developmental milestones at different times. What is considered normal child development also varies across cultures and environments, since expectations and parenting strategies may differ not only among countries but also among cultural, ethnic or religious groups within the same country. Despite variations in the pace and rate at which children develop, all children have an inherent right to develop to their fullest potential. The Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly highlights the importance of early child development, stating that a child has a right to develop to "the maximum extent possible" (article 6), and that "States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development" (article 27).

In the majority of countries with available data¹, more than half of children between the ages of 3 and 4 are developmentally on track. In all countries with comparable data, more than 85 per cent of children between the ages of 3 and 4 are considered to be on track in their physical development. With regards to learning and social-emotional development, the proportions of children on track vary widely, but are above 50 per cent in nearly all countries. Children are least likely to be considered developmentally on track in the area of literacy-numeracy across all countries with available data.

Recent research has shown the impact of trauma, such as experienced in situations of conflict, on cognitive development, and the importance of safe and stimulating learning environments.

Investing into quality holistic early childhood development, care and education for all ages is an essential strategy in supporting improved learning and tackling equity – especially for the most marginalized. The provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education is encouraged, to be delivered by well-trained educators. This should be put in place taking into account different national realities, capacities, levels of development, resources and infrastructure. Investments in young children, particularly

¹ Population coverage was insufficient to calculate global and regional estimates at this time due to limitations in data availability.



those from marginalized groups, yield the greatest long-term impact in terms of developmental and educational outcomes. Early childhood care and development also enables early identification of disabilities and children at risk of disability, which allows parents, health care providers and educators to better plan for, develop and implement timely interventions to address the needs of children with disabilities, minimizing developmental delays, improving learning outcomes and inclusion, and preventing marginalization.

There is need for better data to track early childhood development, care and education. UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank are working with partners to enable member states develop and use appropriate metrics.

Targets 4.3 and 4.4

TVET is provided at different levels of education. In 2013, its share of upper secondary education enrolment stood at around 23%. A number of countries have taken steps to expand vocational education to the tertiary education level. All forms of tertiary education have expanded rapidly, with total enrolment rising from 100 million in 2000 to 199 million in 2013. Yet wide disparity in access to tertiary education, in particular at university level, with regard to gender, to social, regional and ethnic background, and to age and disability remain. Disadvantages for females occur particularly in low-income countries, and for males in high-income countries.

Opportunities for access to higher levels of education are often insufficient, particularly in least developed countries, resulting in a knowledge gap with serious consequences for social and economic development. Therefore, it is imperative to reduce barriers to skills development and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), starting from the secondary level, as well as to tertiary education, including university, and to provide lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults. The provision of tertiary education should be made progressively free, in line with existing international agreements. Equitable access to TVET needs to be expanded while quality is ensured. Learning opportunities should be increased and diversified, using a wide range of education and training modalities, so that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, can acquire relevant knowledge, skills and competencies for decent work and life. Beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution, which can be used across a range of occupational fields. Moreover, learners should be provided with opportunities to update their skills continuously through lifelong learning. The provision of flexible learning pathways as well as the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education, is important. The most marginalised children and youth often do not have foundational skills. There is need to develop skills systematically from early childhood. Those who drop out of formal schooling need to be especially targeted and pathways back into formal systems provided.

Target 4.5

A focus on inclusion and equity is a key feature of the Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 4 includes a strong commitment to reducing disparities in Target 4.5, which calls for the elimination of gender disparities and equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, and children in vulnerable situations.

Gender equality remains a concern. At the global level, there is relatively little difference in access to primary education for girls and boys. In 2013, 1 out of 10 girls was out of school, compared to 1 out of 12 boys. Among adolescents of lower secondary school age, the proportion of out-of-school girls and boys was almost equal. However, significant disparities remain in certain regions (see point 2). Moreover, gender parity in education does not automatically lead to gender equality. Hence a shift in focus from gender parity to gender equality is envisaged in the SDG agenda. Children from the poorest household quintile are nearly four times as likely to be out of school as their peers from the richest households. Out-of-school rates are also high in rural areas and among children from households headed by a person with less than a primary education. The Global Education Monitoring Report has estimated further that those from the poorest 20% of households are five times as



likely not to complete primary school as those from the richest 20% of households. Young women from these poorest households are almost six times as likely to be unable to read as those from the richest households.

Capacity-building efforts and investment will be required to guarantee gender mainstreaming across education systems and programmes in their implementation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up.

Target 4.6

Worldwide, in 2013, 757 million adults (aged 15 and over), of whom two-thirds are women, were unable to read and write. Low literacy skills are a concern globally, including in middle and high income countries. About 20% of adults in Europe lack the literacy skills they need to fully participate in society. The benefits of literacy for the most marginalized, especially regarding poverty eradication, are well documented. Adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills face multiple sources of disadvantage. They are more likely to be unemployed, and those who are employed receive lower wages. They find it more difficult to make use of opportunities in society and to exercise their rights. They are also more likely to be in poor health.

It is critical to ensure that, all young people and adults across the world have achieved relevant and recognized proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are equivalent to levels achieved at successful completion of basic education. The required levels, and how people apply reading and writing skills, depend on specific contexts.

Target 4.7

It is vital to give a central place to strengthening education's contribution to the fulfilment of human rights, peace and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development and health. The content of such education must be relevant, with a focus on both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED), which includes peace and human rights education as well as intercultural education and education for international understanding. Learning environments, how schools are organised and managed is also important for sustainable development.

While considerable progress has been made in recent years, only 50% of UNESCO's Member States indicate that they have, for example, integrated ESD into relevant policies. Further efforts are needed to integrate these subjects at all levels of the education systems. Regarding peace building, policies and practices in education for peace need to be strengthened.

Target 4.a

To ensure that no one is left behind, there is need for adequate physical infrastructure and safe, inclusive environments that nurture learning for all, regardless of background or disability status. School-related gender-based violence is a significant barrier to girls' education. Many children are constantly exposed to violence in schools: an estimated 246 million girls and boys are harassed and abused in and around school every year. In 61% of the countries (in the period 2010-2014, countries where data is available) in which there is gender disparity in lower secondary education, it is at the expense of girls. Absence of private toilets, lack of access to sanitary pads and hygiene-related stigma when girls begin menstruating can harm their education, increasing their absenteeism rates and lowering their educational performance. Similarly, lack of attention to the rights and needs of children, youth and adults with disabilities severely limits their participation in education.



There is need to establish policies and strategies to protect learners, teachers and staff from violence within the framework of violence-free schools, and, in areas of armed conflict, commit to and comply with international humanitarian law, which protects schools as civilian objects, and pursue accountability for violation thereof, in implementing SDG4.

Target 4.b

ODA for scholarships amounted to USD 1.2 billion in 2014. When imputed student costs are included the amount is USD 3.7 billion, corresponding to a significant part of total aid to education. Scholarship programmes can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education. Where developed countries offer scholarships to students from developing countries, these should be structured to build the capability of the developing country. While the importance of scholarships is recognized, donor countries are encouraged to increase other forms of support to education. In line with the SDG4 -Education 2030 focus on equity, inclusion and quality, scholarships should be transparently targeted at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and from poor countries, leaving no one behind.

Target 4.c

Teachers are the key to achieving all of the SDG4 targets. Countries will need to hire additional teachers who are empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified and well-trained and supported in order to meet the challenges of universal primary and secondary education. The distribution of teachers within countries is highly inequitable. Equity in training and deployment in rural and urban areas, between sub-regions, between and within schools needs to be ensured. At secondary level some subject matter teachers are in short supply. Recent estimates show that the total demand for new primary teachers will rise to nearly 26 million by 2030 of which 23 million will be needed to replace teachers leaving the profession through retirement or for other reasons. Africa is the region facing the greatest challenges with nearly 7 in 10 countries facing acute shortages of primary teachers. Two-thirds of the new teaching posts needed (2.2 million of the 3.2 million new posts) to achieve universal primary education globally will need to be created in Africa.

The region faces further challenges in recruiting sufficient numbers of trained teachers. At the primary level in 2013, only 71% of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa and 84% in Northern Africa were trained according to national standards. As the demand for new teachers grows, the proportions of trained teachers have actually been falling (from 85% in 2000 in Sub-Saharan Africa and 96% in 2005 in Northern Africa). The trends in pre-primary and secondary education are similar but with usually even lower shares of trained teachers.

Leaving no one behind also means providing lifelong-learning opportunities for all. Lifelong learning reflects the need for all of us to learn throughout our lives, from cradle to grave, in formal education and non-formal education, from on-the-job training and professional development to adult education and second chance programmes.

2. The identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges:

Children and youth's education opportunities are increasingly shattered by conflict, epidemics and natural disaster. Many of the largest education gaps are found in conflict and emergency situations. Around 21 million of the world's out-of-school children, or 36%, lived in conflict-affected areas in 2012, up from 30% in 2000. It is, therefore, critical to develop education systems that are more resilient and responsive in the face of conflict, social unrest and natural hazards – and to ensure that education is maintained during emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations. Schools and educational institutions – and the routes to and from them –



must be free from attack, forced recruitment, kidnapping and sexual violence. Better education is also central to preventing and mitigating conflicts and crises and to promoting peace.

Underfunding of education risks jeopardizing the achievement of ‘ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all’ and the larger objectives of poverty eradication and sustainable development. Education is not a priority in many national budgets. As a share of government spending, expenditure on education has changed little since 1999 and at 13.7% in 2012, falls short of the recommended 15% to 20% target. Pre-primary education and adult literacy, in particular, remain substantially underfunded by both governments and donors. Latest estimated aid figures for education show that levels went down by almost US\$600 million, or 4%, between 2013 and 2014. The share of total aid being allocated to education also fell from 9.5% to 8.2%, indicating that the sector is falling further down the list of priorities for donors. Aid to basic education, providing for pre-primary and primary education as well as basic life skills, has decreased by 5% since 2013, an even greater fall than for education as a whole. Aid to education needs to increase by at least six times to fill the annual finance gap of \$39 billion in order to provide the global target of 12 years of quality education for all by 2030. Yet the latest analysis shows that, rather than rising, levels of aid to the sector are 8% lower than they were in 2010. To fill the remaining gap and reach the target, these aid levels now need to increase seven-fold. Countries may also consider to reallocate their existing budget towards education, making it a priority, while also improving the efficiency of overall spending.

Resources need to be targeted equitably. Children who would benefit most from education funding receive the least public support. In many countries, the wealthiest quintile of children benefits from 5 to 10 times more education resources than the poorest quintile. Education resources – textbooks and teachers, for example – tend to be concentrated in wealthy, urban areas and schools. On average, in low-income countries, 46 per cent of public education resources are allocated to educate the 10 per cent of students who are most educated. In lower middle- income countries, the percentage is 26 and in upper middle-income and high-income countries, the percentage is 13.

While the gap in access to education still remains, the gap in education quality and learning outcomes increasingly becomes a challenge for education. Quality, equity and inclusion are at the heart of SDG 4 but the quality of education often varies and tends to reproduce structures of marginalisation and discrimination, i.e. the most privileged have access to education of a much higher quality than the least privileged. This is further exacerbated by the growth of private and fee-charging schools, effectively excluding those that cannot pay. At the same time, many of these private providers operate in an unregulated environment, where no quality standards are enforced. Education is a public good of which the state is the duty bearer. To implement SDG 4 and guarantee that no one is left behind, governments must ensure that education is publically funded and regulated. In cases where this is not possible, governments must ensure that private actors adhere to public standards and do not run schools for profit.

Gender equality in education requires urgent attention. Almost 16 million girls between the ages of about 6 and 11 will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school compared to about 8 million boys if current trends continue. Across sub-Saharan Africa, more than 30 million children between the ages of about 6 and 11 are out of school. Some of these children will start at a later age but many more will remain entirely excluded with girls facing the biggest barriers: 9.5 million girls will never set foot in a classroom compared to 5 million boys. The gender gap is even wider in South and West Asia, where 80% of girls out of school will never start compared to 16% of out-of-school boys. About 4 million girls across the region will never get the chance to learn to read and write in primary school, compared to almost 1 million boys. In the wake of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, these data are a stark reminder that much more needs to be done to ensure that girls and women are not left behind.

There are several cultural and social factors that cause education gaps. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong



learning opportunities. Big education gaps exist for Nomadic groups, for example. Reaching these groups will require special efforts.

Greater national and global efforts are needed to bridge gaps in measuring equity and inclusion (for which data disaggregation by population and vulnerable groups is crucial), as well as quality and learning outcomes. In order to better measure and monitor quality, equity and inclusion, efforts should be made to increase the capacity of governments to disaggregate data appropriately and use them effectively for planning and policy-making. Capacity of governments to measure broader learning outcomes needs to be strengthened. Better data is needed on particularly vulnerable groups but also data for greater accountability at all levels of an education system – from communities upwards. The new global education agenda widens the focus on skills development in schools and work to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that promote citizenship, resilience, empathy, tolerance, sustainability and peace. The approach when measuring is challenging. To support countries, UNESCO is bringing together major stakeholders through the Global Alliance for Learning, the Inter-Agency Group on Education Inequality Indicators and the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG4 – Education 2030.

Filling capacity gaps is required to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education. Increased funding support to education and enhanced government capacity are inseparable to deliver results. Capacity building efforts and investment in efficient use of public spending, gender mainstreaming, disaggregated data collection and analysis, evidenced-based policy development and planning, and monitoring equality and inclusion are critical to ensuring that no one is left behind. Coordinated technical support to meet the capacity needs of the governments should be provided by diverse stakeholders.

3. Valuable lessons learned on ensuring that no one is left behind:

Education is absolutely central to ensuring that no one is left behind. More equal societies have better general health, more innovation and higher social mobility. Equity equals efficiency and well-being. Equitable investment in education does not only benefit the most marginalized but everyone in society.

Investing in education will help countries to reach progress towards all SDGs.

The cost of inaction to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and provide lifelong-learning opportunities for all by far exceeds the cost of action. On average, one year of education is associated with a 10% increase in wage earnings. Returns to schooling are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the need to invest in education in the region.

Ensuring equitable progress in education is vital if we are to leave no one behind, as the following selected examples show:

- Education is critical to escape chronic **poverty**. For some people, poverty is transitory. But the more vulnerable remain poor for long periods, even all their lives, passing on their poverty to their children. If all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day would fall by 12%. Education prevents the transmission of poverty between generations.
- One in four children under the age of 5 suffers from moderate or severe stunting, a sign of chronic **malnutrition**. But the solution is not just about growing more food. Education is also essential. In low income countries, 12.2 million fewer children would suffer from stunting if all women had completed secondary education.
- Policy-makers focusing on **health** often neglect the fact that education is itself a health intervention. Educated people are better informed about specific diseases, so they can take measures to prevent them or act on early signs. They also tend to seek out and use health care services more often and more effectively. This is partly — but not only — because they can afford to spend more on health



care. Education strengthens people's confidence and belief in their ability to achieve goals and make necessary changes to their life. Most of all, educated people tend to have healthier children. Mothers' education has saved millions of children's lives. Between 1990 and 2015, the number of deaths of children under 5 fell from 12.7 to almost 6 million. Maternal education accounts for half of all lives saved through lower child mortality rates, while economic growth accounts for less than a tenth.

- Education can be part of a social transformation process involving men, women, boys and girls towards developing a more **gender** just society. Education can empower women to overcome forms of gender discrimination so they can make more informed choices about their lives. Such empowerment benefits women but also benefits the living conditions of their children and strengthens society.
- Good quality education enables people to make informed judgments about issues that concern them and engage constructively in national and local **political** debates. In many parts of the world, however, unfair elections, corrupt officials, and weak justice systems jeopardize human rights and citizens' confidence in government. When disenfranchised groups feel they have no means to voice their concerns, such failures can lead to conflict. The likelihood of conflict doubles in countries with high levels of inequality in education.

We will not reach the most marginalised if we continue with business as usual – there is need for targeted approaches, better data on who is out of school or not learning, more investment in education global public goods to drive evidence based decision making and focus on children in crises. Innovation needs to be harnessed to reach the most marginalised and to improve data.

By abolishing tuition fees at primary school level within the context of MDGs and Education for All (EFA) implementation, **countries increased enrolment rates and reached groups that thus far had been excluded.**

Another important lesson learnt from MDGs/EFA is that of the **critical role of teachers** – their training, equitable allocation in urban, rural and other underserved communities, professional development, remuneration, engagement in social dialogue and support. Ensuring the achievement of SDG 4 and other education related SDGs by 2030 will require a more immediate deadline for achieving Target 4.c.

4. Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of this principle:

Children's education opportunities are increasingly shattered by conflict, epidemics and natural disaster. Around 21 million of the world's out-of-school children, or 36%, lived in conflict-affected areas in 2012, up from 30% in 2000. It is crucial to maintain education during emergency, conflict, post-conflict and post-disaster situations, and to address the educational needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Increasingly, the world is witness to unprecedented human mobility: in 2015, an estimated 244 million people were international migrants. Addressing the needs of migrants and providing them with basic skills have become pressing concerns in all regions. In addition, recognizing their skills is important to facilitate their integration in society. Children and youth are particularly vulnerable.

Slow progress in regional integration, inadequate human and financial capacities are a major issue for some regions such as Africa.

5. Areas where political guidance by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is required:



- How can we make the most of the transformative power of education, especially for the most marginalized?
- How can we ensure that education is maintained in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations and that it contributes to peace?
- How can education-systems be prepared to deal with the significant increase of migrants?
- How can we ensure that inclusive and equitable access to education also translates into equitable learning outcomes? How can we transform education systems to deliver relevant learning outcomes for all?
- How can we expand access in secondary education while ensuring quality education?
- What is needed to ensure a shift in focus from gender parity to gender equality in education?
- How can education financing be stepped up and resources best be targeted towards the most vulnerable and marginalized?

6. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress for those at risk of being left behind:

Equity and inclusion in and through education needs to be ensured and all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparity, vulnerability and inequality in education access, participation, retention and completion and in learning outcomes be addressed. This requires targeted interventions. Inclusive education for all should be ensured by designing and implementing transformative public policies to respond to learners' diversity and needs, and to address the multiple forms of discrimination and of situations, including emergencies, which impede the fulfilment of the right to education. Particular attention needs to be paid to gender-based discrimination as well as to vulnerable groups, and to ensuring that no one is left behind. No education target should be considered met unless it is met by all.

Cross-sector policies and plans should be developed or improved, consistent with the overall 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to address the social, cultural and economic barriers that deprive millions of children, youth and adults of education and quality learning. Relevant and realistic intermediate benchmarks and stepping stones should be set at the national level. This must include changes as appropriate in education content, approaches, structures and funding strategies to address the situation of excluded children, youth and adults. Evidence-based policies and strategies to address exclusion may include elimination of cost barriers through, for example, cash transfer programmes; provision of school meals/nutrition and health services; learning and teaching materials and transport services; second chance/re-entry programmes; inclusive school facilities; teacher training on inclusive education; and language policies to address exclusion. To measure marginalization in education, set targets for reducing inequity and monitor progress towards these targets, all countries should collect, analyse and use disaggregated data, broken down by the specific characteristics of given population groups, and ensure that indicators measure progress towards reducing inequality.

ICTs can be a powerful tool of inclusion. They must be harnessed to disseminate knowledge, provide access to information and promote quality and effective learning within the context of rethinking teaching and learning processes, school structures and curriculum.

To ensure gender equality, education systems must act explicitly to eliminate gender bias and discrimination resulting from social and cultural attitudes and practices and economic status. Governments and partners need to put in place gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstream gender issues in teacher training and curricula monitoring processes, and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in education institutions to ensure that teaching and learning have an equal impact on girls and boys, women and men, and to eliminate gender stereotypes and advance gender equality. Special measures should be put in place to ensure the personal security of girls and women in education institutions and on the journey to and from them, in all situations but in particular during conflict and crises.

Given the significant challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing quality education opportunities and the lack of data to support effective interventions, particular attention is needed to ensure access to and outcomes of quality education and learning for children, youth and adults with disabilities. There needs to be a



focus on all children and youth regardless of their individual characteristics and background can achieve excellence and contribute to their communities and society. In this it is critical to more fully involve families and communities in all aspects of education at all levels.

Financing does matter. Do you want your country to prosper? Do you want more equity? Then you need to invest in education and do so in an equitable manner:

- Education is an investment with high returns – in individual growth and well-being and in societies' peaceful development and stability. Realizing the promise of 'ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all' requires sustained, innovative and well-targeted financing and efficient implementation arrangements, especially in those countries furthest from achieving quality education for all at all levels and in emergency situations. Funding has to be tied to national strategic planning and monitoring to be effective.
- Recognizing the finance and resource challenges, the Oslo Summit on Education established a high-level International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity as a decisive first step to reinvigorate the case for investment in education and to reverse the current underfunding. Actions to support realization of SDG4 should be closely aligned to the recommendations of Commission after it is presented to the UN Secretary General in September 2016.
- Efforts to close the funding gap must start with domestic funding. At the same time, international public finance plays an important role in complementing the efforts of countries to mobilize public resources domestically, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries with limited domestic resources. Alternative and innovative funding approaches will also be needed.
- Countries should need to increase public funding for education in accordance with country context. As urged for in the Incheon Declaration countries should adhere to the benchmarks of allocating at least 4% to 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) to education; and/or allocating at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education.
- The decline in aid to education must be reversed. Developed countries, traditional and emerging donors, middle income countries and international financing mechanisms are called upon to increase funding to education and to support the implementation of SDG4 according to countries' needs and priorities. The fulfilment of all commitments related to ODA is crucial here, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7% of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15% to 0.2% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries in accordance with their commitments.
- Getting serious about equity, inclusion and quality is an innovation in most systems. All investments – current and new – should be screened against a key criterion: do they help ensure that all people, including the most marginalized and vulnerable, acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills that they need for their lives and livelihoods and for the full realization of their right to education? Financing for education needs to prioritize those most in need. Disadvantaged children, youth and adults, as well as women and girls and people in conflict affected areas typically have the greatest education needs and financing should therefore be targeted towards them. Financing should be sensitive to their needs and based on evidence of what works.

Ensuring to leave no one behind requires inclusive decision-making processes. Over the 15 years to 2030, democratization of decision-making processes is expected to increase, with the voices and priorities of citizens reflected in the development and implementation of education policies at all levels. Planning, implementation and monitoring can benefit from the support of strong, multifaceted partnerships that bring together all key actors: governments, civil society organizations, teachers and educators and their organizations, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and foundations, the research community as well as youth, students and their organizations.

Honoring the commitment of leaving no one behind necessitates a strong partnership aiming at the elimination of gaps in education for children, adolescents and young people in conflict affected areas. We must commit to ensuring safe, quality and inclusive access to primary and secondary education and vocational opportunities during and after crises, including for children and young people with disabilities. We have to



provide primary, secondary and vocational education and certification for those living in displacement, in line with national qualifications and standards. We must provide sufficient domestic and international funding to enable all children and adolescents to receive education and vocational training opportunities, including in crisis settings. Programmes that successfully integrate refugee youth into communities, providing education, vocational training and employment opportunities and platforms to address grievances, have to be developed.
