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# UNESCO Education Strategy 2014–2021



UNESCO  
Education  
Strategy  
2014–2021

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Designed by Aurélia Mazoyer

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# FOREWORD

Since 2009, I have been determined to promote education development as the top priority of the Organization – because education is a basic human right and the foundation for more sustainable, inclusive and just development.

Taking this forward involved, first, strengthening UNESCO's leadership position in the international education community, by reinforcing our coordination of the global Education for All (EFA) movement, by enhancing our policy advice and capacity-building with Member States. The Organization renewed the global EFA coordination and monitoring mechanism. We provided full support to Member States to reach their EFA goals, winning also greater confidence from traditional and new donors as well as the private sector, mobilizing more resources to support education in developing countries. In 2012, UNESCO was entrusted by the United Nations Secretary-General to coordinate his Global Education First Initiative, to spearhead accelerated efforts towards 2015 and to shape an ambitious new agenda to follow. All of these are signs of effective leadership on a question at the heart of all efforts to craft more inclusive and sustainable development.

The world stands now at a critical juncture. Remarkable progress has been made on some of the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of Education for All – the results have been more disappointing on others. At the same time, the international community is working to craft a new global sustainable development agenda to follow 2015, with UNESCO and UNICEF co-leading the consultation on the future of education. The recommendations made by the UNESCO-hosted EFA Steering Committee, with the support of the 2014 Global EFA Meeting (Muscat, Oman in May 2014) led by our Organization, have effectively supported the negotiations in the United Nations on formulating an ambitious post-2015 sustainable development agenda, with education at its heart.

To shape the Organization's actions during this crucial period, UNESCO's General Conference at its 37<sup>th</sup> session in November 2013 adopted the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy (2014–2021). This Strategy spells out the approaches that UNESCO will adopt over the next eight years in education, the natural and social sciences, culture, and communication and information.

This publication elaborates on the education component of the Medium-Term Strategy. While continuing to focus efforts on the 'unfinished business' of EFA, such as literacy, teachers and vocational skills development, UNESCO will lead and advocate for strengthened action towards empowering learners to be creative and responsible citizens. In a world

of change, when individuals are increasingly called upon to make a positive contribution to their communities through the promotion of peace, solidarity, and respect for others and the environment, I am convinced that Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education must also be considered crucial elements for well-rounded educational systems.

I am confident that this Strategy faithfully reflects the needs and goals of UNESCO's 195 Member States, and I will bring all of the expertise, networks and experience of UNESCO to implementing it – to ensure every girl and boy, every woman or man can benefit from quality education and lifelong learning. This is an essential foundation for building a better future for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irina Bokova".

Irina Bokova  
Director-General of UNESCO

October 2014  
Paris, France

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is a result of extensive collective work by my colleagues in UNESCO's Education Sector over the past two years. It elaborates on UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2014–2021), which was drafted by the Organization's Secretariat and approved by the 37<sup>th</sup> session of its General Conference in November 2013.

At present, with the finalization of this publication, I recall the days during which my colleagues in different entities of the Education Sector were working hard to prepare the sector's input to the draft Medium-Term Strategy. I also remember that during various sessions of UNESCO's Executive Board and of the Education Commission of the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference, I presented our major thinking on the strategy while my colleagues were listening carefully to the comments and guidance given to us by the representatives of Member States, and striving to satisfy their interests and needs.

Over the past two years, the leadership team of the Education Sector has been fully mobilized in the preparation of this strategy paper. They have set out for the international education community the broad lines of action that UNESCO will take over the next eight years in the field of education. Allow me to mention the names of the directors in the Education Sector heading our divisions, institutes and regional bureaus who made valuable contributions to this paper: Mmantsetsa Marope, Svein Ostveit, Pauline Rose, David Atchoarena, Soo Choi, Olav Seim, Georges Haddad, Khalil Mahshi, Arne Carlsen, Clementina Acedo, Jorge Sequeira, GwangJo Kim, Ann-Therese Ndong Jatta, Hamed Al-Hammami and Caroline Pontefract. Our chiefs of section, Edem Adubra, Borhene Chakroun, Christopher Castle, Paulina Gonzalez-Pose, Maki Hayashikawa, Subbarao Ilapavuluri, Alexander Leicht and Francesc Pedró, as well as senior staff members Fengchun Miao, Margarete Sachs-Israel and Nyi Nyi Thaung, also gave input on the subjects in their field of expertise. Astrid Gillet and Sohæ Lee of the sector's Executive Office, and Elspeth McOmish of my office, provided efficient backstopping to this exercise. I would also like to add the names of colleagues from the Bureau of Strategic Planning: Jean-Yves Le Saux and Ranwa Safadi, who provided valuable suggestions when reviewing the strategy. Without these valuable and appreciated contributions, this publication would not have been possible.

I must emphasize that all the efforts in formulating this strategy for UNESCO's education programme were made under the leadership of Director-General Irina Bokova. With far-sighted vision, she has consistently guided me and the sector on our programme's strategic orientation. After setting the direction, she has always delegated full authority to me, enabling our programme to be implemented effectively and efficiently. Serving as a member of her senior management team has been a privilege for me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Qian Tang".

Qian Tang, Ph.D.  
Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

# CONTENTS

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<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 – IMPETUS FOR THE STRATEGY</b>	<b>11</b>
I. The changing global context	12
II. The unfinished EFA agenda	17
<b>CHAPTER 2 – TOWARDS A NEW EDUCATION AGENDA AFTER 2015</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 – UNESCO’S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2014–2021</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Strategic objective 1</b>	
Developing education systems to foster quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all	33
1. Supporting sector-wide planning, policies and reforms	34
2. Promoting literacy	36
3. Developing skills for the world of work	37
4. Supporting equitable access to higher education	38
5. Addressing teacher issues and improving the quality of teaching	40
6. Improving learning processes and outcomes	41
7. Expanding learning opportunities and the quality of education through ICT	43
<b>Strategic objective 2</b>	
Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens	45
1. Reinforcing global citizenship education	46
2. Strengthening education for sustainable development	47
3. Promoting health through education	48
<b>Strategic objective 3</b>	
Shaping the future education agenda	50
1. Rethinking education for the future: foresight and research	51
2. Monitoring global education development, including through normative instruments	52
3. Building effective partnerships for education	53
<b>CHAPTER 4 – FUTURE MILESTONES AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>55</b>

# INTRODUCTION

We live in a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world where knowledge and innovation are major drivers of development. This means good quality education and learning are becoming even more important determinants of the well-being of individuals, the progress of countries and the quality of humanity's common future.

The past decade has seen the educational attainment of the world's population reach a level never before reached, and the promise of universal basic education for all has come closer to realization. The opportunities offered by developments such as information and communication technology (ICT) and the knowledge revolution, increasing capacity for innovation and closer global cooperation for overcoming obstacles to progress have never been greater. Yet a number of challenges remain in areas concerning quality, equity and learning outcomes. The gap in learning outcomes between rich and poor – within and between countries – is high and often growing, and an increasing number of graduates find that their education did not adequately prepare them for the world of work.

Thus, although the challenges that education systems will face during the period covered by this strategy are many, so are the opportunities for progress in achieving quality education for all worldwide and in contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.

In this context, UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency in education, supports Member States in strengthening their education systems' responsiveness to current and future demands and ability to sustain and accelerate education progress. UNESCO has a key role to play both technically and intellectually. Traditionally it has been the lower income countries that have sought, and benefited from, the Organization's technical support, while its intellectual role is framed in a broader, forward-looking, humanistic vision of sustainable development relevant to all societies. Within this intellectual role, UNESCO serves as a catalyst for international dialogue on education development.

The nature of the demand for assistance is evolving, with Member States requesting support in developing more knowledge- and capacity-intensive policies and programmes to address national education challenges. The stakes are high, as the choices they make will have long-term ramifications. Therefore, policy decisions must be evidence-based and reflect a long-term strategic and holistic approach towards the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development.

The global education aid architecture is also changing rapidly, with many new players and important changes in the roles of traditional bilateral donors. Demand for support

within UNESCO's education mandate is also likely to rise as education systems grow increasingly interconnected and there is more need to set global standards in various spheres of education.

To respond effectively in this context, UNESCO needs a robust strategy that can guide and focus its priorities in education from 2014 to 2021, corresponding to the eight-year medium-term strategy of the Organization. This document articulates UNESCO's vision and strategic priorities in education over that period. Chapter 1 outlines the impetus for the strategy in terms of responding to demands external to education and changes in processes within education systems of Member States. Chapter 2 proposes a vision for a post-2015 global education agenda. Chapter 3 defines peace and sustainable development as the overarching education mission of UNESCO. It explains how the vision and mission translate into programmatic actions for 2014–2021 and sets out three strategic priorities that will guide the Organization's support to Member States' education systems up to 2021: (i) developing education systems to foster quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all, (ii) empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens, and (iii) shaping the future education agenda. The last chapter presents future milestones and implementation arrangements.

At the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of UNESCO's General Conference (Paris, November 2013), UNESCO's Member States approved the strategic directions of the Organization as outlined in the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy (document 37 C/4) and Programme and Budget 2014–2017 (document 37 C/5). This strategy paper is fully aligned with and builds upon these documents, presenting UNESCO's education strategy for 2014–2021. It may be considered as an elaboration of the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy in the field of education.

The strategy comes at an opportune time, as this is a critical period for education development worldwide, with the post-2015 global education agenda being developed and the role of education within the global development agenda still being determined. UNESCO has been playing an active role in facilitating Member States' formulation of the post-2015 education agenda. This strategy is therefore also an opportunity for UNESCO to articulate its role and the strategic directions it will take in order to contribute fully to the post-2015 global education agenda as part of the new global development agenda. However, since the post-2015 agenda with its goals and targets has still not been finalized, there may be a need for further adjustments to the strategy to ensure full alignment with the final agenda to be approved at the UN in September 2015.

# CHAPTER 1

## IMPETUS FOR THE STRATEGY

# I. The changing global context

During the period covered by this strategy, the education sector as a whole will need to respond to increasingly complex, rapid and often unpredictable developments beyond the sector itself. This chapter discusses some of the likely external challenges and also seeks to respond to the current context within education development, stressing that Education for All (EFA) remains an unfinished agenda at a time when the international community is still formulating the post-2015 education agenda.

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## **Demographic trends**

The strong impact of education on factors such as fertility and health has been widely documented. Population dynamics, in turn, affect education in many ways. From 2005 to 2010, the population aged 0 to 4 decreased annually by 0.9% in Latin America and by 0.1% in East, South and West Asia, but increased by 2% in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, while most developing regions can shift resources from expansion of primary education to quality and equity, as well as expansion of post-primary education, most African countries must deal with these challenges in a context where access to primary education still needs to be expanded because of population growth.

In 2011, 89% of the world's population aged 0 to 14 was in developing regions. The population overall, however, is ageing in all regions. In Europe, the percentage of the population aged 60 and above is projected to increase from 22% in 2011 to 34% in 2050. The corresponding figures for Africa are 6% and 10%, and for Asia and Latin America 10% to 24% (United Nations, 2011). The ageing process shifts age dependency from the 0–14 age group to those over 65, with corresponding pressure to shift public budgets. At the same time, ageing populations put demands on education systems to provide opportunities for adult re-skilling and up-skilling. Furthermore, about half the world's population lives in urban areas, ranging from one-third in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to almost four-fifths in Europe and the Americas. Rapid urbanization adds to pressure on urban schools and indicates that the population served by rural schools may be more thinly spread, necessitating new provision modalities. Finally, today there are 214 million international migrants. The impact of international migration is likely to increase considerably, leading to high levels of 'brain drain' for some countries and 'brain gain' for others, and indicating that education must prepare learners to live and work abroad and that qualification systems will have to adapt to increasing demand for more transparency and effective approaches for recognition of qualifications.

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## Poverty and hunger

The world is on track to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG): to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1.25 a day (World Bank, 2011a). Nevertheless, the number of the absolute poor is projected to be as high as 883 million in 2015, down from 1.4 billion in 2005 and 1.8 billion in 1990. Thus, even if this MDG is reached, a huge number of people will continue to suffer from poverty and hunger. The World Food Programme currently estimates that 870 million people are chronically hungry and that 66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world, including 23 million in Africa alone (FAO, 2014).

The links between education and economic growth, income distribution and poverty reduction are well established.<sup>1</sup> While many factors affect the strength of this relationship, accelerated progress towards the EFA goals is necessary for the reduction of poverty and hunger. Broadening access to good quality education for all will help achieve this MDG in a number of ways, including by increasing productivity, promoting more pro-poor economic growth, enhancing health and nutrition, and empowering women. Education

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<sup>1</sup> Research has long documented the important role education and training play in labour productivity and economic growth. For example, an exercise modelling the impact of attainment in fifty countries between 1960 and 2000 found that an additional year of schooling could increase a person's earnings by 10% and average annual GDP by 0.37% (Hanushek et al., 2008, cited in UNESCO, 2010). Another cross-country study suggested that each additional year of education increased income by 10% (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004, cited in UNESCO, 2010). The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4* indicates that an 'increase in the average educational attainment of a country's population by one year increases annual per capita GDP growth from 2% to 2.5%' (UNESCO, 2014, p. 151).

in rural communities is key to increasing agricultural productivity and overall food security (De Muro and Burchi, 2007). Education is also a key contributor to the alleviation not only of income poverty but also of capability poverty. Conversely, poverty and hunger are key impediments to effective uptake of education opportunities. Education policies, strategies and programmes therefore need to adopt a pro-poor perspective and remove poverty-related barriers to realizing the right to education. While the effect of education on health is articulated above, the converse is also true. Better educated people achieve better health outcomes, and healthier learners achieve higher educational outcomes.

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## **Peace, security and democracy**

One in four people on the planet, more than 1.5 billion, live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence (World Bank, 2011c). Conflicts may have their roots in a variety of political, economic, religious or ethnic factors, and though many are long-standing, some may be relatively new in character or manifestation. For example, environmental or natural resource issues, such as access to clean water or the effects of desertification, flooding or pollution, may be of heightened importance in coming years, as may changing patterns of internal and external migration, terrorism, organized crime and epidemics. Today, some 40 million people are refugees or internally displaced (UNHCR, 2014).

Conflict and uprooting severely affects education opportunities. Some 40% of out-of-school children live in conflict-affected countries, and armed conflict is a major barrier to the realization of EFA goals. At the same time, education has a key role to play in promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes which can enable children, youth and adults to avoid and prevent conflict and violence. Education can help create conditions conducive to peace by cultivating respect for others and fostering global citizenship. This assertion is based on the belief that well-functioning democracies require responsible citizens and that sustainable development can best be achieved if individuals and societies are empowered to engage and assume active roles locally and globally to face and resolve common challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world. Education can empower learners of all ages and equip them with values, knowledge and skills that are based on and instil respect for democracy, human rights, social justice, cultural diversity, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

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## **Information and communication technology**

Technology supports cost-effective delivery of both basic and higher education, widens access, improves quality and aids in teacher training and professional development. It can play a central role in developing skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and improving access to lifelong learning opportunities. Growth in open educational resources (OER) and free online

courses by universities and institutions of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are dramatically changing education. Beyond its scope for improving learning in school settings, ICT can also enable informal and non-formal learning.

Capacity is needed to harness the potential of technology for a range of learners at all levels and in various contexts. The amount of data, information and knowledge accessible from an infinity of sources makes critical thinking a key requirement for education and learning, along with ethical and responsive handling. If these needs are not addressed, attempts to integrate technology can lead to breakdown and failure in education systems. Policy-makers need to examine how to better exploit the potential of ICT in education. Sustainable infrastructure, funding, content and quality assurance are key challenges in this area, as are the means of developing and implementing multilevel policies on e-safety and e-ethics.

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## The knowledge economy and the labour market

The growing importance of the knowledge economy has profound implications for the role of education as a determinant of economic growth. Increasingly, countries' ability to compete in the global economy and to respond to existing and emerging challenges depends on their education systems' ability to impart foundation skills, which enable further learning, and to impart transversal skills, which foster mobility. Therefore, it is more important than ever for economic growth strategies to be underpinned by an education and training system which develops a literate and trainable workforce. Entrepreneurial talent and the ability to absorb, adapt and apply knowledge and technology are increasingly key. Economic success also requires education and training systems that impart broad-based problem-solving skills as well as the social and interpersonal skills and attitudes required for effective teamwork. To achieve all this, there is a need for lifelong learning strategies that ensure that education and training, as well as qualification systems, open up to the full range of learning opportunities.

The challenges are particularly daunting for youth entering the labour force. Youth unemployment rates tend to be higher than those for more experienced adults. Unemployment rates among people aged 15 to 24 are two to three times those of adults in industrial countries, and up to five to seven times higher in some developing countries (World Bank, 2006). Although youth unemployment has many causes, a mismatch between skills demand and supply continues to be a contributing factor. Education may not be the whole solution, but it can play a crucial part in better equipping young people to enter the labour force. Education systems in many countries are not yet relevant to fast-changing labour market opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Sustained efforts are needed to better equip learners with skills that make them trainable and adaptable to new opportunities. The challenge is to determine how the education sector can meet the challenges proactively, and to equip policy-makers to chart the way forward.

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<sup>2</sup> A survey of youth in nine Arab States (IIDB and IFC, 2011) found that only a third of those surveyed believed that their education prepared them adequately for the job market. Despite average annual GDP growth of almost 5% over 2000–2010, the region has the world's highest youth unemployment, around 25%, and over 30% for young women.

## **Sustainable development and consumption patterns**

Environmental degradation has reached alarming levels and there is increasing consensus that the current model of economic growth is not sustainable. The concept of 'green economy' has been proposed as a powerful means of enabling a global transition to sustainability.<sup>3</sup> Sustainable development emphasizes not merely strong economic performance but a holistic, equitable and far-sighted approach that rests on a balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental goals and objectives in both public and private decision-making. Education plays a key role in changing attitudes and dispositions affecting behaviour.

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3 The OECD (2013) states: 'Green growth means promoting economic growth while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing waste and inefficient use of natural resources, and maintaining biodiversity. Green growth means improving health prospects for populations and strengthening energy security through less dependence on imported fossil fuels. It also means making investment in the environment a driver for economic growth. Green growth will require a shift in both public and private investments, with the limited public funds available carefully targeted and accompanied by the right policy frameworks to help leverage private financing.'

## II. The unfinished EFA agenda

There has been significant progress towards achieving universal access to and completion of primary education (EFA goal 2), and gender parity and equality (EFA goal 5), both part of the MDGs (MDG 2 and 3). Progress on the other four EFA goals, however, has been more modest, especially with regard to expanding provision of early childhood care and education (ECCE); ensuring education quality, relevance and equity; and providing learning opportunities to youth and adults who have received little or no education. Accelerating progress towards these more neglected goals before the target year of 2015 has thus been a key challenge. The lack of achievement of EFA particularly affects the poor and other marginalized groups for which basic human capital is crucial including in regard to lifelong learning. The interdependence between education and other national and global development goals means that slow progress on EFA also hurts progress on development. In addition, poor quality in basic education has an impact on the quality of learning at higher levels.

This section provides an overview of progress on the six EFA goals (Box 1) since 1999 and, where feasible, considers projections to 2015. It should be borne in mind that goals 1 (expanding ECCE access), 6 (improving the quality and relevance of education) and 3 (skills for youth and adults) have no specific targets. Moreover, goal 3 is formulated in such a way that there is no consensus on what it covers. Thus, measuring progress on these three goals has been difficult.

#### **Box 1: The six Education for All goals**

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

#### **EFA Goal 1. Half the world's children still lack access to early childhood education, and one-quarter of children under 5 are moderately or severely stunted. On current trends, one in five children under 5 will still be suffering from stunting in 2015.**

The first EFA goal, early childhood care and education, has no specific targets. Nevertheless, it is clear that great progress has been made, as the level of participation in pre-primary education programmes increased from 33% in 1999 to 50% in 2011 (UNESCO, 2014a).

Progress was greater in middle income countries than in low income countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, moreover, the gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education was only 18% in 2011. Gender parity in pre-primary education was achieved everywhere but in the Arab States region, which nonetheless made significant progress. Within countries, enrolment rates for ECCE differ widely by location and wealth. Children in remote, underserved areas and children of poorer households have fewer opportunities to attend pre-school, even though evidence suggests that they are likely to benefit from it most.

ECCE, however, is not merely about enrolment in pre-school. Young children also need equitable access to high quality health care and nutrition. Health is often measured by the percentage of children who will survive beyond their fifth birthday. The child mortality rate

fell from 90 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 in 2012, but current rates of decline are insufficient to achieve the MDG target of 30 by 2015. Stunting (low height for age) is an appropriate measure of chronic child malnutrition; there has been progress in reducing stunting over the last two decades in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of stunted children increased from 39 million in 1990 to 51 million in 2011. Nearly one in four children under 5 suffered from stunting in 2012.

Extensive research shows that investing in ECCE yields high returns in many areas.<sup>4</sup> Yet underinvestment remains a key reason for the low coverage of pre-school, which accounts for less than 10% of the education budget in most countries and whose share tends to be particularly low in poor countries.

**EFA Goal 2. Impressive progress towards universal primary education (UPE) has been made since 1999. However, progress has stagnated since 2008, and on current trends the goal is likely to be missed by a large margin. In addition, dropout remains a serious problem.**

Since 1999, the number of primary school-age children out of school has decreased, from 107 million to 57 million, but two-thirds of the reduction was achieved between 1999 and 2004. There are large differences in progress between regions. In 1999, both South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa each had around 40 million children of primary age out of school. In South and West Asia the number fell by 28 million, while the reduction in sub-Saharan Africa was only 12 million (UNESCO, 2012c).

Despite overall improvements in getting children into school, dropout remains a serious problem. The survival rate to the last grade of primary education has hardly changed since 1999, with only around 75% of those who started primary school reaching the last grade in 2010. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion making it to the last grade even fell slightly, from 58% to 56% (UNESCO, 2014a).

There are many obstacles to achieving UPE, but poverty and conflict remain important barriers. Half the out-of-school children live in conflict-affected countries. Insufficient attention to the marginalized is a key reason for limited progress in recent years. Looking within countries, in at least ten countries, 9 out of 10 of the poorest young women have not completed primary school, severely limiting their chances of accessing further learning or decent work (UNESCO–UIS, 2014). In some countries, while the number of years that children and young people spend in school has increased over the decade on average, urban males from wealth homes have improved at a faster rate than the poorest rural girls, widening even further an already large gap.

<sup>4</sup> These include improving brain development, facility for learning, school readiness, sociability, social adjustment, health and long-term earnings; breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle; increasing social equity, the internal efficiency of the education and training system and the efficiency of children's health and nutrition services; enhancing women's participation in the labour market and resultant earnings; and improving siblings' participation in schooling (UNESCO, 2006).

**EFA Goal 3.** Some 69 million adolescents of lower secondary school age were out of school in 2011, a 31% reduction since 1999. But most of the reduction had taken place by 2004. In the current global context, there is a heightened sense of urgency about addressing the learning needs of youth and adults.

Goal 3, associated with skills, has proved difficult to measure due to ambiguity in its phrasing. The 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* presented a framework to facilitate future monitoring, incorporating (a) foundation skills (literacy and numeracy) and transferable skills (problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, etc.) both of which should be gained by completing a good quality, relevant secondary education; and (b) technical and vocational skills related to particular occupations, most appropriately gained through apprenticeships and on-the-job training (UNESCO, 2012c). The limited and scattered nature of available data affects the capacity to assess global progress towards these skill sets, but there are illustrations of the shortcomings; for example, by 2011, 69 million adolescents were out of school, suggesting that large numbers are still not even acquiring foundation skills. While that number represents a 31% reduction since 1999, once again most of the reduction had taken place by 2004.

In the absence of relevant targets, goal 3 has been measured through gross enrolment ratio in secondary education, which rose by 19% globally since 1999 to reach 71% in 2011. Despite this progress, however, it is important to recall that enrolment in secondary education was still only 31% in low income countries in 2011, while the proportion of secondary school pupils enrolled in TVET programmes has remained at 11% since 1999.

Today, there is a sense of urgency on addressing the learning needs of youth and adults. The number of young people is rising and reaching a historical high. About one in six of the world's people are aged between 15 and 24, and of these one in eight are unemployed.

Furthermore, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2014), if current trends continue, global unemployment is set to worsen further, albeit gradually, reaching more than 215 million jobseekers by 2018. Around 40 million net new jobs would be created every year, while 42.6 million people are expected to enter the labour market annually. The global unemployment rate, on these trends, would remain broadly constant to 2018 at half a percentage point higher than before the financial crisis in 2008.

Given the current social and economic challenges, skills development for the world of work has progressively become more central to government policies on improving youth transition to labour market.

**EFA Goal 4.** The number of illiterate adults dropped by just 12% between 1985–1994 and 2005–2011. By 2015, 743 million adults globally will still be illiterate.

About 774 million adults, two-thirds of them women, were unable to read or write in 2011. Over 50% of this illiterate adult population lived in South and West Asia and about one-quarter in sub-Saharan Africa; just ten countries account for 72% of the total. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of illiterate adults has actually grown, rising by 37% over the past twenty

years, to 182 million in 2011. It is projected that by 2015 the global total will still be 743 million, a reduction of only 16% since the 1985–1994 literacy data reference period (UNESCO, 2014a). This is the EFA goal that is furthest from being met.

Although illiteracy is mostly concentrated in developing and heavily populated countries, it remains a problem that affects the whole world. Developed countries also show significant pockets of deprivation, with assessments indicating that as many as one in five adults, around 160 million, have very poor literacy skills, being unable to use reading, writing and calculation effectively in their day-to-day lives (UNESCO, 2012c).

Literacy is not only a core competency but is also a prerequisite for all forms and levels of lifelong learning and a foundation of quality education for all. Lack of basic literacy skills is a strong factor of exclusion from many aspects of life, and has significant gender and poverty dimensions. Governments and donors pay insufficient attention to literacy. Typically, less than 3% of the national education budget is allocated to literacy and adult education programmes (UNESCO, 2011).

#### **EFA Goal 5. The world is edging towards gender parity in education but more needs to be done to achieve gender equality.**

Narrowing the gap in enrolment between boys and girls has been one of the biggest successes of the EFA movement since 2000. Considerable progress has been made in reducing gender disparities over the past decade, but many countries still have a long way to go. They have not only missed the deadline that was set for 2005, but are in danger of missing an extended deadline to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2014a).

At the primary level, 68 countries out of 173 with data had still not achieved gender parity in 2011, and the imparity was to girls' disadvantage in 57 of them. Despite significant progress since 1999, countries that have yet to achieve parity are mainly concentrated in the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa. Gender parity in primary education was reached in South and West Asia by 2010.

A key reason fewer girls are in school is that they are less likely to start school in the first place. Once in school, their chances of progressing through the system are similar to those of boys. At the secondary level, gender disparities are narrowing, but 97 countries still have not reached gender parity, girls being disadvantaged in 50 of them. In much of the Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa gender disparities are at the expense of girls, while many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in East Asia and the Pacific, by contrast, face a 'reverse gender gap', with more girls enrolled than boys (UNESCO, 2012c).

Globally, reaching gender parity remains a challenge in many countries, but it should be stressed that the goal is not only about making sure equal numbers of boys and girls enter and progress through school. It is also about assuring equality in their learning processes and outcomes.

**EFA Goal 6. Out of 652 million children of primary school age, as many as 250 million either do not reach grade 4 or, if they do, fail to attain minimum learning standards. Improving all aspects of the quality of education remains a key challenge.**

Defining education quality evokes much debate. Two principles which characterize most attempts to define quality in education are (a) learners' cognitive development and (b) education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development (UNESCO, 2004). As these objectives are difficult to assess and compare across countries, the progress towards achievement of EFA goal 6 has been monitored through proxy indicators, including pupil/teacher ratio in primary education.

The real advance towards realization of EFA in terms of improving/expanding access to school should be appraised in light of students' level of acquisition of foundation knowledge and life skills. In southern Africa, not only do few children reach grade 4, but among those who do, many do not achieve the minimum benchmark set by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ).

Teachers are a critical factor affecting the quality of education and are key in enhancing student learning and improving performance.<sup>5</sup> However, the expansion of primary enrolment in many countries has led to a chronic shortage of teachers. Around 1.6 million additional teachers are needed by 2015 to achieve UPE and make sure all children are in school with no more than 40 students for every teacher. Teacher shortage is an important issue in sub-Saharan Africa, which had the highest pupil/teacher ratio (43:1) of any region in 2011. With 900,000 additional teachers needed, this region accounts for 56% of the total recruitment of primary school teachers needed globally to achieve UPE by 2015.

Moreover, where education systems have expanded rapidly, teachers have sometimes been recruited with few qualifications and may lack the necessary subject knowledge and the ability to turn subject knowledge into effective approaches to instruction. In 35 countries, out of 98 with data for the primary level, less than 75% of teachers were trained to national standards in 2011.

UNESCO and many Member States remain mobilized to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals in a last big push up to 2015, yet projections indicate that the goals will not be reached by then. The implications of this unfinished business for issues of equity, quality and relevance of learning need to be fully integrated in the post-2015 education agenda.

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5 Quality of education is affected by various factors, such as learners and their diversity; national economic and social context; material and human resources; teaching and learning processes; and the outcomes and benefits of education (UNESCO, 2004).

# CHAPTER 2

# TOWARDS A NEW

# EDUCATION AGENDA

# AFTER 2015

The post-2015 development agenda, and education's role within this agenda, is increasingly being addressed in interlinked processes at the global, regional and national levels. UNESCO continue to contribute actively to these processes to forge a shared vision for the future education agenda. For example, UNESCO and UNICEF jointly led the thematic consultation process on education, and based on these consultations have prepared a UNESCO position paper on education beyond 2015, which was discussed and strongly supported at the 194th session of UNESCO's Executive Board in April 2014. UNESCO is also the convener of the EFA Steering Committee,<sup>6</sup> a representative body of key international education stakeholders, which has developed a comprehensive vision for education beyond 2015. At the 2014 Global EFA Meeting, organized by UNESCO in Oman in May 2014, worldwide education leaders endorsed this vision through the adoption of the Muscat Agreement (UNESCO, 2014b).

Through this process, UNESCO aims to facilitate Member States' discussions and negotiations on the global post-2015 development agenda in New York. In this context, the Director-General of UNESCO transmitted the Muscat Agreement to the United Nations Secretary-General and the co-chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) of the United Nations General Assembly. UNESCO and UNICEF actively facilitated the members of the OWG in their debate. The final Outcome Document of the OWG, The Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals, contains 17 goals, including a proposed goal on education<sup>7</sup> and a set of global targets that are closely aligned to those proposed in the Muscat Agreement.

Defining UNESCO's education strategy for the next eight years at a time when the education community is still defining the broader post-2015 development agenda – of which education

6 The EFA Steering Committee is composed of Member State representatives from all six regional groups of UNESCO, along with representatives of the E9 initiative, the host country of the World Education Forum 2015, the five EFA convening agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNPF and the World Bank), the OECD, the Global Partnership for Education, civil society, the teaching profession and the private sector.

7 The OWG proposed as its fourth goal: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.'

must be an integral part – is challenging, as the Organization may need to adapt its strategy to the future international agenda. It is, however, also a means of contributing to this process of rethinking the future. This section outlines the vision of the Organization as regards the global education agenda after 2015, which is a work in progress as the future agenda is being shaped in constant dialogue with all stakeholders concerned.

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## **Vision**

UNESCO strongly believes in the need for an aspirational, transformative and holistic post-2015 education agenda of universal relevance, mobilizing all countries, irrespective of their development status. This agenda must be framed by a stand-alone, overarching education goal in the broader post-2015 development agenda, with measurable targets and indicators, that encompasses but goes beyond the unfinished EFA agenda. In addition, education must be integrated into other development goals as an important element of their implementation.

UNESCO advocates a humanistic and holistic vision of education as a fundamental human right that is essential to personal and socio-economic development. The objective of such education must be envisaged in a broad lifelong learning perspective that aims at empowering people to realize their right to education, fulfil their personal expectations for a decent, healthy life and work, and contribute to the achievement of their societies' socio-economic development objectives. In addition to the acquisition of basic knowledge, attitudes and cognitive, social and emotional skills, the content of learning must promote problem-solving and creative thinking; understanding and respect for human rights; inclusion and equity; and cultural diversity, all of which are essential to the realization of peace, responsible citizenship and sustainable development.

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## **Guiding principles**

In defining the post-2015 education agenda, UNESCO suggests building on what has been achieved in EFA since 2000 and completing the unfinished agenda, while taking into consideration emerging trends and broader socio-economic development issues and their implications for education. The following principles may be applied to guide the agenda:

- (i) Education is a fundamental human right and contributes significantly to the realization of other rights.
- (ii) Education is a public good. The state is the custodian of education as a public good. At the same time, the role of civil society, communities, parents and other stakeholders is crucial in the provision of quality education.
- (iii) Education is a foundation for human fulfilment, peace, sustainable development, economic growth, decent work, gender equality and responsible global citizenship.

- (iv) Education is a key contributor to the reduction of inequality and poverty as it bequeaths the conditions and generates the opportunities for better, more sustainable societies.
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## **Overarching goal**

UNESCO recommends the following as a possible overarching education goal, aiming to achieve just, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable societies: 'Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030.'

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## **Targets and imperatives for education after 2015**

It is proposed that this overarching goal should be translated into seven specific global targets relating to the following areas (1) ECCE; (2) quality basic education; (3) youth and adult literacy; (4) skills for work and life through technical/vocational, upper secondary and tertiary education; (5) knowledge and skills for sustainable and peaceful societies, including global citizenship education and education for sustainable development; (6) teachers; and (7) financing. The following targets, currently being proposed, have been endorsed by the EFA Steering Committee on Education post-2015. The first five are outcome targets and the two last input targets, the latter being considered indispensable for the realization of the former.

**Target 1:** By 2030, at least x% of girls and boys are ready for primary school through participation in quality early childhood care and education, including at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.

**Target 2:** By 2030, all girls and boys complete free and compulsory quality basic education of at least 9 years and achieve relevant learning outcomes, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.

**Target 3:** By 2030, all youth and at least x% of adults reach a proficiency level in literacy and numeracy sufficient to fully participate in society, with particular attention to girls and women and the most marginalized.

**Target 4:** By 2030, at least x% of youth and y% of adults have the knowledge and skills for decent work and life through technical and vocational, upper secondary and tertiary education and training, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.

**Target 5:** By 2030, all learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to establish sustainable and peaceful societies, including through global citizenship education and education for sustainable development.

**Target 6:** By 2030, all governments ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally trained, motivated and well-supported teachers.

**Target 7:** By 2030, all countries allocate at least 4–6% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or at least 15–20% of their public expenditure to education, prioritizing groups most in need; and strengthen financial cooperation for education, prioritizing countries most in need.

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## Further consultation with stakeholders

At the 37<sup>th</sup> session of UNESCO's General Conference, Member States entrusted UNESCO with a clear mandate to continue consultations with a view to developing global objectives and targets, as well as a post-2015 'framework for action' for education. This framework is being discussed in 2014 by all stakeholders through the existing global and regional EFA and MDG coordination mechanisms, including a series of regional consultations, before its adoption at the World Education Forum 2015, which will be convened by UNESCO and hosted in Incheon by the Republic of Korea. It is hoped that all Member States will embrace the resulting recommendations when deciding on the global post-2015 development agenda at the UN Summit in September 2015.

UNESCO is also supporting stocktaking of the EFA experiences through national EFA 2015 reviews. UNESCO, through its Institute for Statistics, is coordinating a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that includes experts from UNICEF, the World Bank, the OECD, the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* team and the UNESCO Education Sector. The group's task is to identify and review existing indicators that could be used for the new education agenda and help develop new indicators for monitoring of global education progress.

The future education agenda should provide a common approach to monitoring of international goals, while offering the flexibility to respond to countries' aspirations. Therefore, in addition to global benchmarks and indicators, the agenda will include provisions for target-setting and indicator development at the country level that reflect specific priorities and contexts. UNESCO will support Member States in their development of institutional capacities for this purpose. At the same time, it will continue to support independent monitoring to track progress at the global level through mechanisms such as the 2015 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*.



# CHAPTER 3

# UNESCO'S STRATEGIC

# OBJECTIVES FOR

# 2014–2021

UNESCO was created in the aftermath of the Second World War to contribute to world peace and security. ‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.’ Its mandate to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law, for human rights and for fundamental freedoms is enshrined in the preamble to its Constitution.

This mission remains at the heart of the Organization’s work. Education is a powerful means of strengthening sustainable development and can help counter some of the factors discussed in Chapter 1 that threaten peace and stability. Education is both a basic human right and a vector for the realization of other human rights and international development objectives, as it has a direct impact on poverty reduction, health promotion, gender equality and environmental sustainability. It is at the heart of social inclusion and social transformation. A fundamental objective of education is to promote values, attitudes and behaviours that empower learners to be proactive contributors to a more just, equal, peaceful and sustainable society. UNESCO, with its interdisciplinary mandate, is uniquely placed to promote global citizenship through education.

To achieve this overarching mission to contribute to peace and sustainable development, UNESCO’s work on education from 2014 to 2021 will be guided by three strategic objectives (Table 1): to help develop and strengthen education systems so that they provide learning opportunities throughout life; to continue to support Member States in empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens; and to contribute to the shaping of the future education agenda.

**Table 1: UNESCO's strategic objectives for education for 2014–2021**

UNESCO's overarching mission: Education for peace and sustainable development		
Strategic objective 1	Strategic objective 2	Strategic objective 3
Supporting Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all	Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens	Advancing Education for All (EFA) and shaping the future international education agenda
Thematic areas of expected results		
Sector-wide planning, policies and reform	Global citizenship education	Foresight and research
Literacy	Education for sustainable development	Monitoring of education development and the right to education
Skills development for work	Health education	Partnerships for and coordination of education
Higher education		
Teachers		
Learning processes and outcomes		
ICT in education		

This chapter describes the key strategic directions of each objective. UNESCO's work in this period will entail two four-year programme cycles (2014–2017 and 2018–2021) and four two-year budget cycles voted by Member States at the General Conference. The Organization will identify the expected results of each strategic objective. A more detailed results matrix and corresponding budgets will be found in UNESCO technical planning documentation.<sup>8</sup>

UNESCO's Education programme contributes to the two overarching global priorities of UNESCO: on gender equality and Africa.

<sup>8</sup> For the 2014–2017 Programme and Budget, see, for example, UNESCO Document 37 C/5.

### **Box 2: Priority on gender equality**

Despite progress, gender disparities in education persist, continuing to deprive millions of children, youth and adults – the majority of them girls and women – of opportunities for learning. UNESCO will continue to promote education and gender equality as fundamental and inalienable human rights, pursuing the dual approach of mainstreaming gender in and through education and through gender-specific programming in targeted programme areas, as articulated in UNESCO's Gender Equality Action Plan II (GEAP II). This will entail action at multiple levels to eliminate gender disparities: (a) in terms of access to education, by providing equal opportunities for learning through gender-sensitive education laws, policies and plans; (b) in education, through quality gender-sensitive/transformative educational contents, pedagogies and learning environments; and (c) through education, ensuring equality of outcome, life and work opportunities. In so doing, UNESCO will seek to capitalize on strategies that have proved to be successful, such as gender-sensitive pedagogies and safe learning settings. It will build upon achievements of UNESCO's Global Partnerships for Girls' and Women's Education so as to strengthen partnerships to promote education for girls and women.

### **Box 3: Priority on Africa**

Since 2000, significant progress has been made in many African countries towards the EFA goals. For instance, the number of out-of-school children fell by 12 million between 1999 and 2012, and gender parity in primary education improved from 0.87 in 1999 to 0.95 in 2010. Yet sub-Saharan Africa still accounts for half of the world's out-of-school children and lags behind in many important areas of education, hindering socio-economic development. To help address these challenges, UNESCO will give priority to Africa in terms of both budgetary allocation and programmatic action.

As regards programmatic action, particular importance will be given to improving access to, equity, quality and relevance of education in Africa. In line with the Organization's global priority on gender equality, programmes will be implemented with a strong focus on gender issues. In supporting education systems in Africa, UNESCO will take a comprehensive and holistic approach, covering all the thematic areas mentioned in this strategy. Nevertheless, to accelerate progress and respond to urgent needs and priority concerns of African Member States, UNESCO's support will emphasize five thematic areas: teachers; sector-wide policy and planning; literacy; skills development for the world of work; and higher education.

## **Strategic objective 1**

### **Developing education systems to foster quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all**

The lifelong learning paradigm has been framed and promoted by UNESCO since the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Today there is increasing recognition that, as the 2009 Belém Framework for Action put it, 'lifelong learning is the philosophy, conceptual framework and organizing principle for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' (UIL, 2010), and that the concept of learning for empowerment is central. If education is to respond effectively to challenges posed by the rapid and constant changes which characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its development, learning will have to take place throughout life.

Recognizing the importance and interdependence of all education levels and delivery modes, whether formal, non-formal or informal, UNESCO promotes a holistic approach to education to foster balanced development of education systems that respond to a range of learning needs. However, to achieve greater impact with limited financial and human resources, for the first half of the period covered by this strategy (i.e. 2014–2017), UNESCO is giving priority to three strategic thematic areas: literacy, skills development for work, and higher education. Many Member States express interest and request support from UNESCO in these areas; they are of particular importance to lifelong learning, and they are areas in which UNESCO has a comparative advantage. The needs of youth will be at the centre of this work. The prioritization also recognizes the important contributions of other agencies and partners, such as the World Bank and UNICEF, in other areas of education.

While priority is given to these three areas, issues related to important education challenges raised in Chapter 1, such as strengthening ECCE and facilitating the transition to secondary education, will be addressed through UNESCO's work in areas such as sector-wide policy and planning, learning assessments and teacher issues.

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, UNESCO's 1972 publication *Learning to Be*, also referred to as the Faure Report (UNESCO, 1972).

#### **Box 4: Lifelong learning**

To ensure that lifelong learning becomes a reality for all requires a holistic, sector-wide approach in which the entire education system is designed to facilitate lifelong and 'life-wide' learning and the creation of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities for people of all ages. To this end, policies to support lifelong learning need to be based on a broad social consensus, and their implementation supported by legislative instruments and coordination mechanisms. UNESCO will work to facilitate collaboration among the various sectors and stakeholders within and between Member States for the implementation of lifelong learning policies.

Lifelong learning in the UNESCO perspective fosters the values of peace, democracy, tolerance, intercultural understanding, gender equity and care for the planet. One of the key factors of the success of lifelong learning policies is the investment that countries make. In particular, UNESCO will advocate for the need to invest more in quality learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

The concept of lifelong learning requires a paradigm shift away from the ideas of teaching and training towards those of learning, from knowledge-conveying instruction to learning for personal development and from the acquisition of special skills to broader discovery and the releasing and harnessing of creative potential. This shift is needed at all levels of education and types of provision, whether formal, non-formal or informal. UNESCO will facilitate increased support by Member States to administrators and educators in professional development to transform teaching and learning.

To successfully embed lifelong learning systems in policies and practices, and provide incentives to learners, a coordinated approach to assessment is needed, with recognition of learning outcomes in non-formal and informal settings. In addition to traditional qualification systems, which mostly acknowledge formal learning, many Member States have recently developed or are developing integrated national qualification frameworks and mechanisms for recognition of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. UNESCO will continue to provide technical support for recognition, validation and accreditation of such outcomes.

Strengthening capacity among policy-makers and researchers in Member States can further support the development of lifelong learning policies. UNESCO will develop capacity-building programmes which enhance understanding of lifelong learning, in particular through a network of cities promoting lifelong learning. It will also strengthen capacity in evidence-based policy-making and in implementation of accessible, relevant and effective lifelong learning programmes. To put the rhetoric of lifelong learning into action, one approach is to promote decentralization of governance structures and involvement of stakeholders such as employers, workers and civil society.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) plays a key role in promoting lifelong learning policy and practice at operational levels, with a focus on adult learning and education, particularly literacy and non-formal education and alternative learning opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

The main strategic directions of the seven thematic areas under this strategic objective are described below.

#### **1. Supporting sector-wide planning, policies and reforms**

The formulation of effective policies and plans remains central for achieving education development goals and contributing effectively to lifelong learning. While maintaining a focus on sector-wide planning, UNESCO will place growing emphasis on providing further support to countries in shaping and guiding their reform agenda through effective policy-

making, implementation and evaluation. In addition to capacity development, technical assistance and normative work, greater focus will be given to peer-learning opportunities across Member States. Priority will be given to countries facing particular development challenges or recovering from armed conflicts, political crisis or natural disasters. In these contexts, UNESCO's engagement will combine capacity development and technical assistance in sector-wide policy and planning with facilitation of sector dialogue. UNESCO's programme on policies and sector-wide planning will focus on the following three areas: policy analysis and review; sector-wide planning; and education policy and planning in contexts of emergency and fragility.

In addition to support through technical assistance and capacity development, there is growing demand for policy review and policy learning, seeking reform paths that have proved to be effective in improving education quality and equity. In most countries, policy challenges with regard to teaching quality, learning outcomes, school dropout, gender equality, socio-economic inequality and transition from school to work are inadequately addressed. Facilitating exchange between countries, providing independent policy reviews and building knowledge systems at international level can help improve policy formulation and implementation. As addressing governance issues, including funding mechanisms, remains a key challenge, opportunities for peer learning across Member States have to be maximized.

Education planning involves rigorous analysis of context and data to guide priority setting and financial allocations. Although data and their availability are recognized as critical to planning, monitoring and evaluation, many governments still struggle to take a systemic approach to education information. Hence, UNESCO will support the development of education management information systems as the foundation of sound policy and plan formulation, an approach that will include data related to learning achievement. Planning is not just a technical process but also a social one, depending upon engagement and ownership by all stakeholders. Education planning is needed to respond to financial challenges and prioritize courses of action, but also to help address the increasing inequity in societies. Planning will be key after 2015 as the focus moves from primary education access to learners' transition to other levels and to managing the links between formal, non-formal and informal settings. UNESCO will therefore continue to provide support for sector-wide planning, in particular for countries facing challenges in relation to education and development goals and needing institutional capacity-building. The UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), in addition to its diversified training programmes for education planners, will increase support to senior policy-makers in terms of evidence-based advice and opportunities for joint reflection and exchange with peers in their countries and internationally.

UNESCO has been called upon to play a greater role, alongside other UN organizations, in responding to emergency situations and contributing to the reconstruction of education systems following natural disasters or armed conflicts. UNESCO can mobilize its broad expertise, both at sector level and across sectors, in disaster prevention and assist with the provision of education both during conflict and disasters and in the subsequent recovery

and development phases. While maintaining its capacity to engage with coordination mechanisms of international aid and Humanitarian Reform processes in emergency situations, UNESCO will also focus on integrating disaster risk reduction into planning and on providing technical assistance and capacity development for system reconstruction and development. UNESCO will continue to provide technical support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) programme providing education and learning opportunities for 500,000 Palestinian refugee children amid a situation of protracted conflict in Syria, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan.

## **2. Promoting literacy**

Basic literacy skills, comprising reading, writing and computing, are the foundation skills enabling people to function effectively in today's text-mediated knowledge societies and to make informed life choices. UNESCO takes an integrated, holistic approach to literacy, recognizing that it is acquired and developed throughout life via formal, non-formal and informal learning. UNESCO recognizes that there is a continuum of literacy levels and that the minimum level of basic skills varies with individuals' life context. Notions of what constitutes a minimum threshold of functional literacy are changing as a result of progress in science and technology. Given the determining role that literacy and numeracy play in increasing an individual's life chances, improving family welfare and contributing to national development, the poor progress in improving youth and adult literacy, especially for women, represents huge missed opportunities at all levels of society. UNESCO has identified four key factors that need to be worked on to achieve the goal of attaining good quality literacy for all. It will address all four during the period of this strategy.

First, literacy is not adequately integrated into sector-wide and multi-sector education and development strategies. As literacy is not yet perceived as a development imperative, governments and donors give it insufficient attention and funding. UNESCO will therefore strengthen evidence-based advocacy to make a development case for investing in literacy. It will promote research to analyse aspects of literacy and its impact on education and other development agendas.

Second, good quality literacy programmes need to be scaled up to comprehensively and innovatively address the literacy needs of diverse populations. UNESCO will promote participation by communities and learners in all aspects of literacy provision, professionalizing literacy providers and managers, producing literacy materials of good quality, developing literacy-rich environments, developing indicators for literacy and, in particular, using ICT in innovative ways to accelerate the pace and quality of progress. Community-owned, country-driven literacy initiatives will be encouraged to scale up effective, gender-sensitive and development-responsive literacy programmes. Developing literacy-rich environments and a literate culture, particularly in multilingual contexts, will help create a more inclusive, sustainable, literate world. UNESCO will advocate for the strengthening of literate environments, including through innovative use of ICT, and support multiple dimensions and

uses of literacy. It will enhance national capacities with regard to the review, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of literacy policies and programmes. As the clearing house for literacy, UNESCO will gather, transfer, disseminate and share knowledge and effective practices and will identify and pilot innovative approaches.

Third, because of poor quality, education systems continue to 'graduate' learners who have not acquired sustainable literacy skills and thus become illiterate youth and adults. Hence, UNESCO will partner with other agencies to strengthen non-formal pathways to good quality general education for out-of-school children and youth, and help establish credible equivalency systems enabling learners to move from one system to another.

Fourth, women's literacy is an issue of high concern. Women account for around 64% of the total illiterate population, a share that has not changed for almost two decades. UNESCO will endeavour to build support for stronger international efforts to drastically improve youth and adult literacy, with special attention to girls and women. In doing so, it will build a coalition of partners aiming to improve literacy levels within and outside formal school settings and across the lifespan of individuals.

### **3. Developing skills for the world of work**

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems are subject to increasing and varied demands and expectations – many challenges, but also a wealth of opportunities. TVET is no panacea for social and economic development challenges such as youth unemployment, poverty, lack of social cohesion or the need to improve entrepreneurial skills and competitiveness. TVET can, however, help society better respond to such issues. A key challenge is how TVET can assist youth in developing skills for successful transition to work and further learning. Much TVET provision is poorly aligned with labour market demand and thus contributing less than expected to expanding decent work opportunities. In addition, unemployment and underemployment are too often experienced disproportionately by girls and women, the poor, the disabled and rural populations. Work skills have a significant redistributive effect and boost poverty alleviation. Strategies that target the participation of marginalized groups in relevant TVET programmes can, therefore, make important contributions to social equity and inclusion.

In preparing for the Third International Congress on TVET (14–16 May 2012, Shanghai, China), UNESCO called for rethinking the field to enhance its contribution to inclusive and sustainable development in a lifelong learning perspective. While positioning TVET as a key part of any education system, UNESCO argues that TVET is closely associated with the world of work. The policy implications of this rethinking suggest that scaling up existing models of TVET provision to include more youth and adults is not the solution. Instead, the way TVET is conceived, governed and funded needs to be transformed. In its approach to such transformation, building on the mid-term review of the UNESCO Strategy for TVET (2010–2015), UNESCO will focus on three areas of action in this strategy period.

First, transforming TVET requires policies which pave the way for approaches that are both context-specific and context-relevant. UNESCO will amplify its provision of upstream policy advice and capacity-building for the effective design and implementation of TVET policies to ensure that they reflect broad national partnerships, address youth unemployment challenges, set up approaches for steering the education-training and employment relationships and articulate policy areas such as job creation, transitions, youth policies, agriculture, and rural and industrial development. UNESCO will strengthen the role of the UNESCO-UNEVOC international centre as a key platform for capacity-building.

Second, to maximize the relevance of TVET policies to the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development, UNESCO will aid in further mapping skills and skills development programmes. In partnership with other international organizations, such as the ILO, OECD, the World Bank and European Training Foundation, UNESCO has begun developing a framework and a set of indicators for monitoring and evaluating national, regional and global progress in TVET. In particular, it will work with its partners to develop cross-national statistical frameworks and data platforms for regional and global monitoring of TVET and for skills development. In addition, it will revise its 2001 Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and develop supporting guidelines for its implementation. These will give Member States an international reference and enhance the evidence upon which they might base TVET policies and programmes and monitor their impact on key outcomes, including responsiveness to current and emerging patterns of labour market demand, employability, productivity, gender equity and lifelong learning. Closely linked to these areas is the interest in recognizing qualifications and reforming qualification systems to better focus on learning outcomes and foster lifelong learning opportunities. Here UNESCO will establish an international task force to develop international guidelines on quality assurance for the recognition of qualifications based on learning outcomes. It will also work to map policies in developing learning pathways and identify world reference levels in order to facilitate international comparison and recognition of TVET qualifications.

Third, UNESCO will strengthen international partnerships to this end, using the revitalized UNESCO-UNEVOC Network and, when relevant, UNESCO Chairs. It will collect and disseminate evidence on the multiple and diverse policy approaches for transforming and expanding TVET and use its convening power to promote knowledge production and sharing as well as regional and global TVET advocacy.

#### **4. Supporting equitable access to higher education**

In many developing countries, progress towards EFA is increasing pressure on higher education. Rising secondary education completion rates, coupled with the need for skills and lifelong learning opportunities, have added to the effect, substantially raising demand for access to various forms of higher education. Global enrolment in higher education was 97 million in 2000, 178 million in 2010 (UIS, 2012) and projected to reach 263 million in 2025 (Daniel, 2009, citing British Council and IDP Australia projections). In this

context, the priority is to find affordable and equitable ways of expanding access to higher education. Diversification of the higher education sector is typically part of the response to this demand.

UNESCO will have three key areas of focus during this period: distance and open higher education; internationalization of higher education; and governance of higher education systems and institutions, including quality assurance and recognition of qualifications. These reflect needs and issues emerging from trends in higher education and the associated policy agenda.

Technology is increasingly transforming the face of higher education provision and participation. Distance education has become a popular option. The development of ICT and expansion of broadband access have led to new avenues for open learning and e-learning. In a growing number of countries, open universities are recognized actors on the higher education stage. New models, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), transform the parameters of higher education participation, including by opening new pathways for international students. Attentive to these developments, UNESCO will document innovations in the field of distance and open learning, including the use of OER, and analyse their implications, in particular for system development, education quality and equity. It will provide policy advice to Member States formulating institutional, national and regional policy directions, guiding them to widen access to good quality higher education through diverse modes of delivery, in particular technology-based solutions, and will support capacity enhancement initiatives.

Internationalization of higher education is a major trend worldwide. As the ease of international movement improves, so does the flow of students moving abroad in search of academic credentials and educational opportunities. At the normative level, the revision process for UNESCO's six regional conventions on recognition of qualifications in higher education provides the framework to facilitate movement of students across countries. UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) will continue to facilitate strengthening and updating the Latin American and the Caribbean regional convention. In addition, UNESCO will explore the possibility of developing a global convention on the recognition of degrees in higher education, which would complement existing regional conventions and further facilitate the international mobility of students and professionals. Furthermore, UNESCO will encourage the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme to strengthen international cooperation among universities and reinforce support for North-South and triangular cooperation in higher education. Refocusing and streamlining this programme will also help build stronger synergy between UNESCO's activities in all its fields of competence and the university community at the international level.

In an effort to respond to today's fast-changing environment, governments are undertaking deep reforms in order to adapt universities' governance and make them more cost-effective, responsive and open to socio-economic demands while maintaining academic excellence. In this context, autonomy and quality assurance emerge as two major areas of policy attention.

Quality challenges are related to technology, infrastructure, the relevance of academic programmes to labour market needs and the quality of teaching staff. UNESCO's previous work in this area has demonstrated the importance of regional networks to disseminate good practices, increase awareness of quality standards and improve accreditation systems. The establishment of systematized, transparent and efficient mechanisms of quality control is an important step towards ensuring that students get a good education, or at least that they have access to adequate information on which to base their choice of an education provider. This context will guide UNESCO's higher education programme. Through a combination of knowledge-sharing, policy advice, technical cooperation and capacity development, UNESCO will support higher education institutions as they address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and provide their contributions to society with quality and equity.

## **5. Addressing teacher issues and improving the quality of teaching**

Teachers, and national policies that shape the teaching profession, are critical for the provision of a good quality education, as teachers are the key facilitators of learning. They often constitute the largest share of the civil service and therefore the highest cost. Nevertheless, it is a challenge for education systems to pay adequate attention to factors affecting teacher effectiveness, such as policies on training, recruitment, deployment, management, assessment and professional development. Teachers often suffer from poor professional status, wages and work conditions. Many countries face acute shortages of qualified teachers. It will be especially difficult to provide the teachers required to rapidly expand coverage of ECCE and post-primary education. Furthermore, there has been a tendency to neglect the important role of teachers in non-formal education. To respond to these challenges, UNESCO recently developed a teacher strategy with three key priorities. In the African region, UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA) will play a central role, in particular in capacity building of teacher training institutions in management and quality assurance and also sharing research and conducting policy dialogue.

The first priority is to address the challenge of teacher shortages by strengthening national institutional capacities to increase the supply of qualified teachers at country level. This requires a focus on teacher training institutions as well as on national capacity development for teacher policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. UNESCO has developed a programme to enlarge training institutions' capacity, particularly through technology-supported solutions. It will also promote a review of continuing training and professional development strategies and disseminate recommendations. And it will offer technical assistance to further strengthen national capacity to assess teaching needs, develop evidence-based teacher policies and support monitoring of the resulting initiatives and their impact on student learning.

The second priority is to contribute to improvement in teaching quality. Some Member States need particular support in relation to the professional qualifications of contract or community

teachers and para-teachers, mainly in primary education. In addition, there is a need to reinforce mechanisms that can assist in raising quality among existing teachers through intensive use of technology-supported solutions. To this end, UNESCO will promote in-service professional development programmes for teachers and teacher educators, particularly through blended training strategies and modalities. It will contribute to the analysis of best practices and support piloting of projects combining professional evaluation with support for professional improvement, as well as the scaling-up of successful initiatives in this area. UNESCO further recognizes that cross-cutting themes such as education for sustainable development, global citizenship education and health education call for teachers to adapt to new learner-centred ways of teaching. UNESCO thus supports ministries of education in the search for innovation and curricular entry points to employ transformative pedagogy, training and systemic reforms so as to empower teachers to use interactive and skill-building methods in their classroom.

To further address the quality issue, UNESCO will work on reinforcing school leadership and supervision. School leaders have long been considered mere institutional or administrative managers. Yet there is growing consensus, driven by empirical evidence, that qualified school leaders can raise the quality of teaching and learning by regularly coaching teachers. UNESCO will help identify characteristics that make school leadership critical for good quality in teaching and learning, and support Member States, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, in their efforts to develop policies and programmes for school leadership.

The third priority will be to inform the global debate about teaching with comparative evidence. UNESCO will pursue its clearing-house function and document progress concerning teachers and teaching worldwide. One of the most effective ways to raise the social esteem and attractiveness of the teaching profession is by documenting efforts by Member States to support teachers in their engagement to offer good quality schooling. UNESCO, with the ILO, will continue to monitor international normative instruments related to teacher status and encourage their use to guide social dialogue about the profession as well. In partnership with stakeholders, it will also support development of teaching standards and guidelines for their implementation.

## **6. Improving learning processes and outcomes**

As recent literacy statistics and large-scale international assessments of learning achievement have shown, many learners across the globe are not mastering the desired knowledge and skills.<sup>10</sup> Growing concerns about quality of learning have led to heightened interest in more effective monitoring and assessment of learning processes and their outcomes. Evidence from research and practice also reveals that the availability of educational opportunities alone is not enough to ensure that learners master the desired knowledge and skills. Indeed, too many children and young people attending school continue to be excluded

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<sup>10</sup> UNESCO (2012c) estimates that 250 million children cannot read, write or count well, even after at least four years of schooling.

from learning, and do not receive the expected benefits of a good quality education. Yet it has been difficult to reach international consensus as to what constitutes desired knowledge and skills that learners at various stages of the learning process should achieve, and how achievement can be measured – particularly as regards skills that go beyond the traditional scope of formal academic learning.

To advance global debates on learning, UNESCO will enhance its policy and technical lead on ways to improve learning processes and outcomes by strengthening its work in three inter-related areas that are critical to attainment of this objective: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment of learning outcomes. Emphasis will be on assuring coherence and synergy among these areas. Through the following actions, UNESCO will endeavour to influence the policy discourse and actions in education towards more just, inclusive and equitable learning societies.

First, UNESCO will promote approaches to learning processes that lead to enhancement of individuals' full potential and capabilities and that ensure that learners' differing needs, abilities, learning expectations and styles are respected. Implementing inclusive approaches to learning involves critically examining the mindsets, cultures, practices and processes of teaching and learning (pedagogy). It requires transformation of education systems at large, notably the way in which schools and other learning settings adapt learning and teaching practices to cater for all learners with respect for diversity. UNESCO will continue to serve as a global knowledge hub on the latest reflections and innovative practices in inclusive learning and teaching, support the translation of the principles of inclusion and equity into teaching practices, and provide technical assistance to improve the content and process of learning.

Second, UNESCO will promote and support development of comprehensive and inclusive curricula that address learning goals. While the core set of essential knowledge and skills will inform curriculum frameworks, curricula should be designed to provide opportunities to enhance those essential skills and expected learning outcomes, and guide teachers in facilitating the learning process (the pedagogy). Efforts to improve learning must begin with articulation of what should be learned and why, and with definition of the desired outcomes of learning, guided by a national vision. UNESCO is well positioned to provide guidance to countries on approaches to rights-based curricula that are fundamental for ensuring that learning processes and outcomes are inclusive and relevant. The UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) will continue to provide technical support and policy advice to countries on curriculum development within the scope of broader education policy dialogue, review and reform.

Third, UNESCO will extend its provision of policy advice and technical assistance to countries to foster a holistic approach to assessment of learning outcomes. This will involve the development and consolidation of a range of competencies, from foundation skills to complex skills and knowledge within the context of lifelong learning. UNESCO will provide a platform for broad-based consultation with diverse stakeholders to identify sets of core competencies by levels and/or areas, starting with basic literacy skills and ranging

from ECCE to youth education. UNESCO will advocate for a move away from the often narrow focus of assessment on cognitive skills and traditional academic knowledge. It will also address increasing concern over providing appropriate and fair assessments of both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning, such as creativity, critical thinking, persistence, adaptability and global citizenship. The first step will be to develop an integrated system of formative assessment to improve learning and summative assessment to benchmark learning.

UNESCO Headquarters, education-related specialized category 1 Institutes and UIS will actively take part and, where appropriate, assume leadership in developing targets and indicators for the post-2015 education agenda and in important global initiatives to define and assess learning outcomes as a step towards arriving at a global consensus on the essential set of competencies and the monitoring of education quality. It will strengthen its collaboration with key partner agencies such as the OECD and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, which administer major international assessments.<sup>11</sup> While continuing to expand its work on system-level assessments by building on its extensive work at regional level,<sup>12</sup> it will develop local capacity in education assessment and provide data on learning achievement for policy-making. By assuming more of a leading role in coordination of regional and global studies and of large-scale learning assessments, and in making data comparable between assessments, UNESCO will further make the case for the importance of systematic assessment, building the evidence and developing a knowledge and information base on desired competencies.

## **7. Expanding learning opportunities and the quality of education through ICT**

Connectivity has become increasingly important to all aspects of societal and individual life, with mobile technology playing a growing role. While schools were once the only place students could get access to ICT, today in a growing number of countries mobile devices and home Internet access have helped enable young people to be heavy ICT users. Most education systems have to better exploit this situation and its potential for learning by paying attention to the many innovative ways learners benefit from ICT for communication, learning and knowledge sharing.

UNESCO is committed to promote the adoption of ICT in education solutions which will facilitate knowledge dissemination, more effective learning and the development of more efficient education services, as well as the reconceptualization of teaching and learning processes. The Organization is convinced that ICT-based solutions, if driven by pedagogy, can make a major contribution to basic education for hard-to-reach, marginalized groups by increasing access and quality, reducing inequality (particularly with regard to girls and

11 Examples include the Programme for International Student Assessment, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

12 Examples include the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education and Southern African Consortium on Monitoring Educational Quality.

women) and promoting the creation, sharing and adaptation of good quality educational resources. To support the effective use of ICT in education, UNESCO will give priority to four areas.

First, UNESCO will support Member States in setting up ICT-based learning strategies to enhance learning outcomes and help reach the targets of the post-2015 agenda. To this end, UNESCO will continue to play an active role in global debates and research on emerging trends in ICT-supported learning. To facilitate benchmarking and peer learning among Member States, UNESCO will continue to convene global and regional ICT policy forums and facilitate policy discussions in view of bringing the information and technology industry together with the education policy-makers and educationalists to jointly discuss the future of learning. UNESCO will also further contribute to the development of indicators on ICT in education.

Second, UNESCO will continue to develop normative frameworks on ICT in education and reinforce national and institutional capacity in planning and implementing related policies. In partnerships with other stakeholders, UNESCO will continue to develop and disseminate policy tools, the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (ICT-CFT) and scale up its capacity-building programmes.

Third, UNESCO will reinforce mobile learning alliances to guide the development and deployment of mobile learning solutions towards achievement of strategic goals, including expanding literacy (particularly for women and girls), supporting teacher development, enhancing personalized skill development and improving education management, including in post-conflict and post-disaster contexts. Mobile technology also presents challenges for security and safety of children and youth. UNESCO will promote technology innovations and institutional strategies to protect learners, particularly younger ones, as well as women and girls.

Fourth, UNESCO will enhance its advocacy of OER worldwide and help develop supportive policy environments. UNESCO has played a key role in promoting the OER movement, for example in the 2012 OER Paris Declaration (UNESCO, 2012a). As a result, growing numbers of national and institutional policies support the adoption of OER to transform access to and processing of learning materials. Among other emerging trends, the open textbook initiative reduces textbook production and delivery costs and encourages deep learning. UNESCO aims to support all Member States to ensure that learning materials developed with public funds are available under open licence. Thus it will analyse effective OER policies and initiatives to inform policy-makers about factors underpinning successful practices, and assist governments in integrating OER policies in sector-wide education development strategies.

The UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO-IITE) will contribute to the implementation of activities related to the development of ICT in education, with a particular focus on policy support, adaptation of the ICT-CFT and promotion of OER.

## **Strategic objective 2**

### Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens

Building peace in the minds of men and women lies at the heart of UNESCO's mandate. In the next eight years, UNESCO will considerably scale up its actions to support Member States in developing effective education systems that help learners acquire knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that are necessary for forging more peaceful, inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies. Education can empower children, youth and adults to take action at local, national and global level and cooperate in meeting current and emerging challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. This dimension of education is fundamental, yet education systems often give it less priority by focusing more on the cognitive aspects of learning. UNESCO, with its intersectoral mandate, combining education, the social and natural sciences, culture, and communication, is uniquely placed to promote 'learning to live together' as a key pillar of any education system. Its action in this regard will focus on three thematic areas: global citizenship education, education for sustainable development and health education. All are concerned with attitudes and dispositions affecting behaviour.

## **1. Reinforcing global citizenship education**

There is growing interest in global citizenship education (GCE) as a framing paradigm that encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need to secure more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. The UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), launched in 2012, has been instrumental in raising awareness about GCE by recognizing education as a way to 'foster global citizenship' as one of its three priority areas. GCE takes a multifaceted approach, employing concepts and methodologies already applied in other areas, including human rights education, peace education, education for sustainable development and education for international understanding. Its implementation takes various forms depending on contexts, regions and communities. GCE builds upon existing practices by taking the agenda a step further, encompassing all these elements and emphasizing how they interconnect. During the period of this strategy, UNESCO's work on GCE will be enhanced significantly with a view to increasing integration of GCE in education policies, programmes, teaching practices, learning materials and the learning environment.

UNESCO will work to clarify the conceptual underpinnings of GCE so as to better understand it and its implications for learning. Building on two landmark events organized by UNESCO in 2013, the Organization will seek to define the parameters of GCE as well as enabling factors for its promotion and implementation. This work will focus on three areas:

First, UNESCO will promote policy dialogue on GCE by organizing major policy events, bringing together GCE experts and other education stakeholders from across the world. It will also provide policy advice to Member States, specifically in light of the discussions on the post-2015 education agenda.

Second, UNESCO will scale up its support to Member States to mainstream GCE into education systems through technical guidance and support. It will, for example, define key GCE concepts and develop GCE learning contents; support the promotion of transformative, participatory and learner-centred pedagogies that encourage core skills development, such as problem-solving and critical thinking; and support professional development of teachers and educators, recognizing their central role in promoting GCE. In light of the challenges in monitoring this important subject, UNESCO will also strengthen its role in the monitoring and evaluation of GCE and work with partners to support development of a measurement framework and appropriate indicators of the post-2015 education agenda.

Third, through its clearing-house function, UNESCO will promote GCE through print and electronic modalities and platforms; support the establishment of networks and a community of practices across regions; and develop innovative partnerships to share experiences and resources on GCE and advance the GCE agenda. It will identify and share good practices, such as curricular and pedagogical approaches, and undertake research on existing teaching and learning practices. In this context, UNESCO will continue to support the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in the area of GCE, education for sustainable development and other key UNESCO priorities through the Associated Schools

Project Network (ASPnet). It will implement the new strategy and plan of action developed in 2013 for ASPnet's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary .

The Organization's capacity in GCE, in particular as regards promoting peace and understanding through education, will be enhanced through collaboration with UNESCO's newly established category 1 Institute, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) in New Delhi, India, and a category 2 Centre, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

## **2. Strengthening education for sustainable development**

Through its work on education for sustainable development (ESD), UNESCO aims at reorienting education so that it gives everyone the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to contribute to sustainable development. This requires substantial changes in what is taught and how it is taught. ESD entails integrating into the curriculum critical issues such as climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction and sustainable consumption and production, which will become increasingly important on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. It promotes responsible global citizenship and innovations needed for transition to greener societies. It helps develop the ability to think critically, imagine future scenarios, participate in decision-making processes, collaborate in addressing current and future challenges across disciplinary boundaries, reflect on and change one's behaviour, and understand the implications of one's actions for others. It also implies mobilizing education and learning for sustainable development in sectors beyond education.

The overall framework of UNESCO's ESD activities has been provided by the UN Decade of ESD (2005–2014), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, and its follow-up Global Action Programme on ESD, which is expected to be launched at the World Conference on ESD (November 2014, Aichi-Nagoya, Japan). In the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), *The Future We Want*, Member States made a commitment 'to promote education for sustainable development and to integrate sustainable development more actively into education beyond the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development'. In order to enable strategic focus and stakeholder commitment, the first phase of the Global Action Programme (2014–2019) will focus on five priority areas which are key leverage points to advance the ESD agenda: policy support, whole-institution approaches, educators, youth and local communities.

UNESCO will support the further integration of ESD into all areas of education and learning, and strengthen education and learning in all agendas, programmes and activities that promote sustainable development. Key strategic target groups for these activities are policy-makers and teachers, in particular teacher educators, though UNESCO recognizes that the final beneficiaries of ESD are youth. In particular, it will focus on the following two areas:

Enhance its lead on ESD at the global level and its advocacy for ESD at the global, regional and national levels. It will promote ESD as a key element of all efforts towards sustainable development and quality education. This includes ensuring that ESD is fully part of a coherent post-2015 agenda – whether the education agenda, the development agenda or, more broadly, the sustainable development agenda and possible future sustainable development goals. Advocacy for ESD, which UNESCO will undertake as global leader as well as through key partnerships and networks, also necessitates strengthening the evidence base regarding the potential of ESD to transform education and accelerate progress towards sustainable development. UNESCO will communicate key evidence in an accessible manner and systematically monitor and report on the progress of Member States and other stakeholders regarding the implementation of ESD.

Enhance its provision of policy advice and technical assistance to Member States to integrate ESD into education policies, plans and curricula. This includes providing targeted policy reviews, building capacity, and collecting and disseminating good practice. A particularly relevant area, in this context, is the promotion of whole-institution approaches to ESD, where reorientation of curricula towards sustainable development and participatory learning methods are accompanied by the creation of a sustainable ('green') school environment and community engagement. Furthermore, learner-driven education approaches, including ICT-based learning, deserve increasing attention for their potential to foster holistic ESD-related competencies.

### **3. Promoting health through education**

Education and health are contributors to and outcomes of inclusive, sustainable and rights-based development policy. Education improves the overall health and well-being of learners, teachers and communities, including in the areas of HIV and sexual and reproductive health. At the same time, healthy learners learn better. Therefore, UNESCO partners with other UN agencies and civil society organizations through the Focusing Resources on Effective School Health partnership.

UNESCO will strengthen support to Member States to deliver health education (including good quality, comprehensive HIV and sexuality education) that contributes to healthy lifestyles and gender equality through safe and equitable learning environments that promote overall well-being, good quality education and learning outcomes for all.

Countries most affected by the HIV epidemic remain a priority, especially in Africa. UNESCO will intensify its efforts in Africa and continue to draw on existing partnerships and collaborations within the UN family and with civil society, aligned with Priority Africa. Noting remarkable progress in the global AIDS response, but recognizing that the epidemic is not over, UNESCO will continue working with Member States and other partners towards the achievement of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Comprehensive sexuality education is increasingly recognized as an effective way to address challenges such as adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. UNESCO's work in this area responds to consistently expressed demand by young people for sexuality education that enables them to prepare for and lead healthier adult lives, and is part of ensuring that they receive a relevant, gender-equitable education of good quality. Building on UNESCO's important work in the area of HIV and comprehensive sexuality education, and through EDUCAIDS, the Organization will continue to emphasize a holistic, sector-wide view of the impact and challenges of HIV and other health issues, with a priority on learning in relation to the achievement of better health and well-being. These other issues include bullying prevention, nutrition and physical activity, substance use prevention and puberty education/menstrual hygiene management. These issues are diverse but have one thing in common: they affect the quality of the educational experience. Thus it is critical for UNESCO to speak to these issues and build the capacity of its Member States to address them.

Health education, whether through school health programmes or informal and non-formal settings, will provide the broader framework for good quality HIV and sexuality education. Growing demand by Member States for support in responding to non-communicable diseases, such as the global epidemic of childhood obesity, that increasingly affect the health of children and youth in all regions, will also be addressed.

Recognizing that school health promotion is more than just learning about health, UNESCO and partners support efforts to make school environments safe and healthy, including violence prevention, promotion of access to safe water and latrines, and referrals to youth-friendly health services.

## **Strategic objective 3**

### Shaping the future education agenda

International cooperation is a key mechanism to support education, especially in developing countries. Over the past 20 years, many new mechanisms have appeared such as donors from emerging economies. UNESCO will work to inspire new modalities of international cooperation. In doing so, it will seek to create an international impetus for scaling up political attention and the allocation of resources to education and learning, integrating a foresight dimension into policy development and planning, and expanding and strengthening partnerships for education.

UNESCO will do this by steering international debates on critical issues and emerging challenges for education. In the lead-up to the 2015 target year for achieving the MDGs and the EFA goals, this will include supporting Member States in reporting on and monitoring progress towards the goals, critically reviewing the lessons learned and guiding the debate on international education and development agendas beyond 2015. Equal partnerships between countries will be fostered through South-South and North-South-South cooperation, in particular by strengthening technical cooperation between developing countries and engaging new donors such as BRICS (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa). Recognizing the many isolated actions taking place in local and global settings and sectors, UNESCO will reach beyond its traditional multilateral partners to build a broad coalition of partnerships for education that will include civil society, academia and the private sector, and encompass expertise from related sectors such as health and labour.

UNESCO's activities contributing to this strategic objective can be clustered into three key thematic areas, described below.

## **1. Rethinking education for the future: foresight and research**

The current conceptualization of education is still largely rooted in the industrial model of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This, however, is increasingly being challenged by accelerating factors of change, as described in Chapter 1, and by unforeseen crises and shocks. In this global environment, there is a need to be more responsive to increasingly rapid changes and the new demands they place on education worldwide. With this changing global environment in mind, and in view of consolidating its intellectual mandate, UNESCO seeks to strengthen its capacity for foresight and its resultant agility in exploiting and responding to emerging and unpredictable opportunities and challenges in the coming years. This capacity is crucial for the Organization to substantively anticipate and catalyse global discourse with regard to paradigm shifts in response to changes in the global development context. Strengthening the foresight function will further reinforce UNESCO's role as a laboratory and clearing house of ideas. It will do so through its specialized category 1 Institutes and academic networks and expertise such as UNITWIN and UNESCO Chairs.

As thinking about education and learning evolves, it will be necessary to look beyond the confines of the education sector and examine wider societal development trends so as to understand their potential implications for the future of education and learning. It will be important to consider how the information, knowledge and communication revolution is transforming people's understandings of time and space, and of individual roles and relationships in societal development. Moreover, the multiplication of new media, combined with greater physical mobility in the context of globalization, is heightening exposure to multiple and often conflicting new value systems and cultural models. The impact of this on the socialization function of formal education needs to be considered. So do the implications of the need for more flexible and adaptable skills to address new and unforeseen changes in science, technology and production. Analysing emerging development trends and understanding their potential implications for education constitute a first step in rethinking education for the future.

One of UNESCO's core functions is to serve as an international forum of ideas, guiding the global debate on international education. Two landmark UNESCO reports are widely recognized as key references for policy and practice in education worldwide: *Learning to Be* (1972), known as the Faure Report, and *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996), the report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, known as the Delors report. Bearing in mind societal transformations under way since the 1990s, UNESCO initiated a re-examination of both reports to determine what portion of their vision remains relevant and what might need to be refined, adapted or further developed. The necessity of formulating a new report on education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be considered based on the report of the high-level expert group and consultations with Member States and the international community.

## **2. Monitoring global education development, including through normative instruments**

There is a growing need for evidence-based policy-making and advocacy, and for strengthening and improving the tools to measure national commitments and accountability in realizing the right to education. UNESCO will continue to play a central role in global monitoring of progress in education through data collection, analysis and dissemination. It will also pursue the monitoring of compliance with international normative instruments that promote various dimensions of the right to education and progress towards reaching the six EFA goals by 2015, and the monitoring of progress and implementation of the post-2015 education agenda.

### **Monitoring global education development**

Through the work of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the Organization has enhanced the comparison of education statistics and indicators across countries, based on a common statistical framework: the revised International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011). To a wide range of users – including national policy-makers, international agencies, development partners, researchers and students – UNESCO education statistics are the sole authoritative reference for monitoring progress and benchmarking the performance of education systems.

After 2015, UNESCO will continue to draw on its capacity in education statistics to monitor progress in realizing the right to education. It will continue to publish the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, on progress towards the EFA goals, until 2015. The evidence and analysis disseminated through this independent report continues to play a key role in informing debate on the education related post-2015 development agenda. The report to be published in 2015 will present a global stock-taking of the goals since 2000 to inform the World Education Forum 2015 in the Republic of Korea in May 2015. With UIS's mandate to collect official education-related data from Member States, UNESCO's strong capacity for analysis of data, as well as its long experience monitoring progress on the Dakar Framework for Action through the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, the Organization is in a unique position to continue its global role in monitoring the post-2015 education agenda.

### **Monitoring realization of the right to education**

Underpinned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 26), UNESCO leads a rights-based approach which promotes education not only for its utilitarian value, but also as an undeniable human right. Ever since the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education – the first legally binding international instrument spelling out core elements of the right to education – UNESCO has developed a wealth of international

normative instruments, such as conventions and recommendations,<sup>13</sup> to promote various dimensions of the right to a good quality education for all. In view of its role in the UN system, an important responsibility devolves upon UNESCO in this field.

UNESCO will give greater focus to the monitoring of compliance with international normative instruments. It will strengthen its capacity to give Member States technical support in reviewing and updating legal frameworks to reflect the right to good quality education for all.<sup>14</sup> Emphasis will also be placed on implementing and enforcing the main components of the right to education. UNESCO will focus on research and analysis of enforcement at grassroots level, notably through the work on justiciability. Efforts will focus on reaching the unreached, making education accessible and meaningful to those deprived of it. UNESCO will continue to sustain monitoring of convention implementation through innovative modalities of reporting, and mobilize global partnerships to raise awareness on key issues relating to the realization of the right to education. UNESCO's close collaboration with the UN treaty bodies and other UN mechanisms will also enable the Organization to give prominence to the right to education.

It is essential for advocacy and awareness-raising to be a permanent concern of all stakeholders. Improving knowledge on the right's importance, its contents and ways to reinforce and claim it should be a constant on the political agenda. UNESCO will seek to create appropriate means to spread knowledge on the right to education for all, and give particular focus to enforcing the right to education to vulnerable and marginalized groups such as nomads, minorities, migrants, women and people with disabilities.

### **3. Building effective partnerships for education**

The extent to which current and emerging education challenges can be successfully addressed will depend on more effective cooperation between stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels and on more effective resource use in the sector. UNESCO, as the coordination agency for the EFA movement and the UN's leading technical agency in education, is in a unique position to bring all partners together and provide a platform for creating new dynamics in education cooperation, particularly in the post-2015 era.

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13 Critical examples are the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), Recommendations concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974), Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers (1966), Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997), Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education (1993) and related regional conventions covering African States, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, the European Region, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Arab and European States Bordering on the Mediterranean, the Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989) and the 2001 Recommendation. In addition, United Nations instruments (notably the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child) carry provisions analogous to those contained in the Convention against Discrimination in Education.

14 Since 1960, 97 countries have ratified the Convention against Discrimination in Education. About 140 countries have inscribed the right to education in their constitutions and 150 to 160 guarantee it and/or its main components in legislation.

UNESCO will further build on its experience in coordinating the EFA movement (2000–2015) to strengthen international dialogue and cooperation, as well as more equal, inclusive and effective partnerships, in order to address existing and emerging issues in the sector. A major objective is to engage countries from all regions in an active, frank and constructive dialogue with each other and with representatives of the relevant multilateral organizations, civil society, the research community and the private sector. In this regard, UNESCO will continue to play a key role as Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative 'Global Education First Initiative' (GEFI).

In line with the new international phenomenon, UNESCO will use its voice and convening power to foster and promote new modalities of international cooperation and sub-regional mechanisms such as South-South and North-South-South cooperation and public-private partnerships. Facilitating collective efforts for global education development through various traditional and new platforms such as BRICS will be a priority for UNESCO. Such cooperation will aim to improve lifelong access to education, and quality and equity in education, by supporting new approaches and innovation, to share information and knowledge, to facilitate analytical work and policy dialogue, to mobilize political and financial commitment and to ensure targeted, effective and efficient support to disadvantaged groups and low income countries.

# CHAPTER 4

## FUTURE MILESTONES AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Through an analysis of how the current context, both within the education sector and external to it, affects education (Chapter 1), UNESCO proposes a vision for a post-2015 education agenda (Chapter 2) and explains how it can be translated into UNESCO's programmatic actions for 2014–2021, a period corresponding to the Organization's eight-year medium term strategy (Chapter 3). This last section elaborates on the 'rolling' nature of the education strategy and the next key milestones that will allow UNESCO to appraise the need to refine it. It also highlights some key drivers of success, along with implementation arrangements that will be needed to put the education strategy into operation.

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## **The post-2015 education agenda is still in the making**

As Chapter 2 explains, the future global development agenda and the role that education will be given within it are the subject of complex intergovernmental negotiations. UNESCO is making an important contribution to this process by informing the education debate through evidence-based data and recommendations so as to facilitate Member States' decision-making. By co-leading (with UNICEF) the thematic consultation process on education and convening the EFA Steering Committee, it has played a key role in forging a joint comprehensive vision of education beyond 2015. It is preparing a 'framework for action' to be adopted at the World Education Forum 2015, and will continue after 2015 to have a significant role in coordinating global efforts in education and in providing technical support to countries for the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 education agenda. The outcome of the negotiation process cannot be foreseen: it will be decided by all countries when adopting the global post-2015 development agenda at the UN in September 2015. UNESCO's 2016–2017 education budget will be approved by Member States at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of its General Conference in November 2015. This will be an occasion to adjust the strategic directions of the education programme if further alignment with the new education agenda is required.

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## **A phased approach**

UNESCO's work in education will cover all 13 thematic areas outlined in Chapter 3 throughout the eight years of this strategy, but will be rolled out in two main implementation phases, each giving increased emphasis to different aspects or priority areas.

The first four years (2014–2017) of implementation will aim to achieve 13 expected results through two biennial budgets (2014–2015 and 2016–2017). For each budget period, implementation and progress towards the achievement of the results will be monitored according to defined milestones and/or performance indicators as part of the Organization-wide monitoring and evaluation process. Given the rolling nature of the four-year programme, the transition from one biennium to the next will be accompanied by a review of implementation and results achieved, assessment of lessons learned and remaining challenges, as well as corrective actions, including budget adjustments, for the following biennium. The first biennium will be characterized by a last big push towards the EFA goals, groundwork for the global stocktaking of EFA since 2000 and preparation of the post-2015 education agenda. This forward-looking agenda will involve regional and global events characterized by forward-looking debates aimed at stimulating discussion on the role of education in development after 2015, in close coordination with all EFA partners. The second biennium will entail translating the agenda into concrete action at country level by putting the new framework for action into operation and assisting countries in setting up national education targets within the global ones, and in adapting national education monitoring systems to the new agenda.

The drives of the second implementation phase (2018–2021) will depend largely on decisions of the international community concerning the post-2015 education agenda and its universal relevance. During this phase, UNESCO will seek to strengthen its relevance to all Member States, regardless of its economic development, by giving increased emphasis to the universality of its education programme in terms of outreach (countries) and content (holistic approach), as well as to innovation in education and the ability to respond through education to contemporary and future challenges.

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## **A unified approach**

The suspension of some Member States' contribution to UNESCO in 2011 meant an approximately 20% cut in the Organization's budget. As a result, the education programme budget has also undergone significant cuts, including a reduction in the number of regular posts. The basic assumption of this strategy is that alternative finance sources will be identified in coming years. The Education Sector has already significantly expanded its extrabudgetary funding base and generated more resources, including from new emerging donors and the private sector. Significant efforts will be devoted to further resource mobilization for key priority areas of the education programme. The Sector is encouraging multi-donor core funding focused on priority programmes so as to make planning more predictable.

The Education Sector is the largest of UNESCO's five programme Sectors. It has close to 300 fixed-term staff members in three implementation entities: UNESCO Headquarters, some 55 field offices and seven category 1 specialized education Institutes.<sup>15</sup> Ensuring delivery of the education programme by a unified UNESCO will mean leveraging the human resources and technical expertise available within the entire Organization. All implementing entities will be mobilized to contribute to achievement of the strategic objectives, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. UNESCO has evaluated the comparative advantages and functions of the respective Institutes to avoid overlap and strengthen synergies.

In addition, over the years, UNESCO has developed an impressive number of networks that it will mobilize as part of its implementation strategy. Examples include the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme, which promotes the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and international inter-university cooperation in key priority areas related to UNESCO's fields of competence. The programme operates in some 124 countries and involves over 650 institutions. Similarly, ASPnet, in its more than 60 years of existence, has generated a global network of 9,900 educational institutions in 181 countries which serve as laboratories for ideas on innovative approaches to quality education and are important agents for positive change. Another example is UNESCO-UNEVOC Network, a global platform of established TVET institutions that provides focal points for service provision and platforms for international cooperation in TVET. Other key implementation partners include National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO Clubs and Goodwill Ambassadors, and the nine category 2 centres<sup>16</sup> in the area of education.

It is crucial to maintain a close link between UNESCO's global coordination and normative function, on the one hand, and its operational country level activities on the other; and its various implementing entities must work together as one. The Education Sector has three education regional bureaus, which play an important coordination role in this regard: in Bangkok (Thailand) for Asia-Pacific, Santiago (Chile) for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Beirut (Lebanon) for the Arab States. In sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO recently undertook a field network reform, which provided an opportunity to further strengthen its delivery capacity and ensure critical mass of expertise in a number of multi-sectoral regional offices. All international staff in Africa will be concentrated in the five multi-sectoral regional offices in sub-Saharan Africa: Dakar (Senegal), Nairobi (Kenya), Abuja (Nigeria), Yaoundé (Cameroon), and Harare (Zimbabwe).

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15 The category 1 Education Institutes are the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE), the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA), the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIP).

16 The category 2 centres, in addition to APCEIU, are the Regional Centre for Adult Education (ASFEC), the International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA), the International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED), the Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States (RCECCE), the Regional Centre for Educational Planning (RCEP), the Regional Centre for Quality and Excellence in Education (RCQE), the South-East Asian Centre for Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development (SEA-CLSD) and the South Asian Centre for Teacher Development.

One of UNESCO's key comparative advantages is the intersectorality of its mandate. The Education Sector can draw upon experts in culture, communication, natural science and social sciences when designing and implementing its activities, and can mainstream education into the programmes of these other sectors. The Education Sector will draw on this comparative advantage, by further harnessing its interdisciplinary expertise to strengthen intersectoral cooperation and deliver more effectively, particularly at the field level.

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## **Building partnerships and strengthening synergies for increased global outreach**

UNESCO has made important efforts, involving all stakeholders, to strengthen the global coordination mechanisms for EFA. In this regard, the EFA Steering Committee has played an increasingly important role in the development of the post-2015 education agenda. A key strategy for UNESCO in coming years will be to continue to strengthen global coordination of the education agenda to ensure better synergies between key partners. UNESCO will seek to make sure its comparative advantages, in areas such normative function, forecasting of education trends, provision of a platform for dialogue, quality assurance, education planning and policy, and upstream capacity development, are recognized and better planned at country level to complement those of its closest partners, particularly UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the World Bank. UNESCO has also developed closer cooperation in the past two years with other UN organizations (e.g. the ILO, UN Women, WHO) and with the OECD, and this cooperation will continue to be nurtured.

Through strategic partnerships with a wide range of private and public sector actors, UNESCO seeks to mobilize knowledge, skills, capacities, visibility and outreach to help it strengthen its programme's scope and impact. It has experience in cooperation with several stakeholders and partners: bilateral government donors, UN funds and programmes, multilateral organizations, multilateral development banks, private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians and members of the media and academia, among others. UNESCO will further explore and strengthen these partnerships, particularly those with the private sector and with new donors such as the BRICS. Such partnerships are not limited to mere funding capacity; this cooperation also pertains to a particular dynamic that can leverage considerable know-how, advocacy, outreach and sustainability for UNESCO's priority objectives and programmes. The Organization has entered into a series of new partnerships with the private sector, particularly in relation to the initiative on girls' and women's education. These partnerships broaden the education cooperation platform, bringing in new key stakeholders. Diversity of stakeholders and partners will be an important asset for UNESCO as it works to achieve the strategic directions described in this strategy by 2021.



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This publication elaborates on the education component of the Medium-Term Strategy. While continuing to focus efforts on the ‘unfinished business’ of EFA, such as literacy, teachers and vocational skills development, UNESCO will lead and advocate for strengthened action towards empowering learners to be creative and responsible citizens. In a world of change, when individuals are increasingly called upon to make a positive contribution to their communities through the promotion of peace, solidarity, and respect for others and the environment, I am convinced that Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education must also be considered crucial elements for well-rounded educational systems.”

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**Irina Bokova**  
Director-General of UNESCO

To know more...

