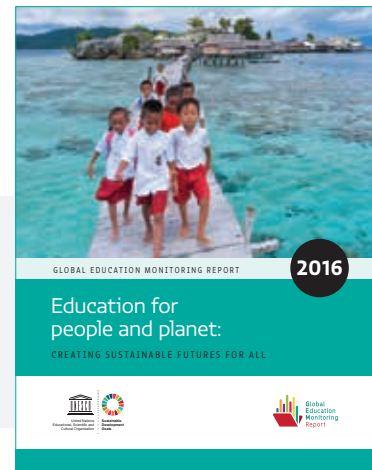




Policy Brief

A brief for policy makers, explaining concrete policy recommendations emerging from the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report: Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all.



This policy brief is designed to assist policy makers working on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by drawing on the evidence-based analysis of the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, *Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all*.

At the World Education Forum (May 2015), the Global Education Monitoring Report was given an official mandate to monitor the new global education goal (SDG 4) in the Sustainable Development Agenda. This is the first GEM Report in a fifteen-year series.

Crucially, for the education community, the Report draws on its experience in monitoring global education goals since 2002 to provide key recommendations for monitoring each of the seven targets and three means of implementation in the fourth SDG on education. It also provides overarching steps that should be taken at the national, regional and global level to assist with reviewing and monitoring the Education 2030 agenda.

The Report continues to show why progress in education is important for all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and why those working in other development sectors need to include education in their policy plans. It also emphasizes that policy makers making plans targeting education alone, without considering its interdependencies with other goals, will fail to have significant impact.



The Monitoring Framework for SDG 4

How will success be measured?

The success of the SDG framework will rely on national policies, plans and programmes. However, the agenda's 17 goals and 169 targets will be monitored and reviewed using global indicators. These global indicators were developed by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015.

For the education goal, 11 global indicators have been proposed to capture the 7 targets and 3 means of implementation, based on an original submission by UNESCO and UNICEF, co-chairs of the Technical Support Team for SDG 4. These 11 global indicators are not meant to capture the full scope of the education agenda. Hence UNESCO set up a Technical Advisory Group on post-2015 education indicators to prepare consolidated recommendations on measurement of an education goal, targets and indicators. Its proposed 43 thematic indicators, which include the 11 global indicators, were incorporated in the Education 2030 Framework for Action as an annex.

In order to implement and develop the thematic monitoring framework, the Technical Advisory Group has become the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) on the Indicators for SDG4-Education 2030, co-convened by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the UNESCO Division of Education 2030 Support and Coordination. Its objective is to promote the production of necessary data at the country level to enable the reporting of cross-nationally comparable measures.

	GLOBAL INDICATORS for all SDGs	THEMATIC INDICATORS for SDG 4
	11 indicators for SDG 4	11 indicators for SDG 4
Status of reporting	Obligatory	Optional
Political oversight	United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)	SDG / ED2030 Steering Committee (SC)
Technical oversight	United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC/ECOSOC)	UNESCO
Proposes indicators	Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG-SDGs) = 28 member states (UN agencies as observers)	Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) = 28 member states of IAEG-SDGs (agencies, CSOs and SC member states as observers)
Secretariat	United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)	UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

What is the follow up and review process for monitoring SDG 4?

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the foundation document of the post- 2015 era, expresses member states' clear intention to take a stronger role in follow up and review mechanisms, including monitoring. Details of these mechanisms were spelled out in the UN Secretary-General's report on 'critical milestones' in January 2016 and are expected to be adopted through a General Assembly resolution.

At the global level, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development is the UN platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda. It will be held every four years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly and in the intervening years under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

Two documents will support the HLPF global follow-up and review process. First, the annual SDG Progress Report will be prepared by the Secretary-General. Second, a Global Sustainable Development Report is to be produced every four years, beginning in 2016, when a HLPF was held.

Each year, the HLPF is expected to carry out at least two sets of reviews. First, there will be voluntary national reviews of countries' contributions to the agenda, and for the first time a platform will be offered to other stakeholders, such as NGOs, to do the same.

Second, there will be thematic reviews of progress. In the July 2016 HLPF, the selected cross-cutting theme was 'Ensuring that no one is left behind'. Themes will change, ensuring that all goals are reviewed over the course of a four-year cycle. Education is scheduled for review in 2019 under the theme 'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness'.

The Secretary-General's January 2016 report identified the World Education Forum as a mechanism that the global follow-up and review process for education should build on. The forum, in its Incheon Declaration, requested an independent Global Education Monitoring Report, hosted and published by UNESCO, as the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the proposed SDG 4 and on education in the other proposed SDGs.

	GLOBAL 'follow up and review' for all SDGs	THEMATIC 'follow up and review' for SDG 4
Framing documents	'Transforming our world' §82-84 'Critical milestones' report	'Transforming our world' §85 'Critical milestones' report §46
Highest level	High-level Political Forum	World Education Forum
Intermediate level		SDG 4 / Education 2030 Steering Committee + Framework for Action
Core output	UNSG Report / SDG Report UNESCO SDG 4 reporting agency	Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report
Secretariat	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)	GEM Report team

GEM Report recommendations for improving monitoring of SDG 4

- 1 National recommendations: Build capacity:**
 - a. Education ministries should use the findings on inequalities in national education systems, and feed into questions in household surveys.
 - b. Establish a national assessment framework that monitors a range of learning outcomes, including skills of those who have never been to school or who left early.
 - c. A focus on education quality should mean more than just a focus on learning outcomes - include curricula and textbooks.
 - d. Monitor a fuller range of lifelong learning opportunities, including adult education.
 - e. Share best practices within organisations of regional cooperation.
 - f. Use a national education accounts approach to improve monitoring of finance.

- 2 Regional recommendations: Support peer learning:**
 - a. Encourage sharing of comparative qualitative information to share countries' policy successes and challenges.
 - b. Involve regional organisations in helping to make the global education agenda more specific to the contexts of their members.

- 3 Global level recommendations: Foster consensus and coordination:**
 - a. Introduce an international household survey program dedicated to education.
 - b. Support the monitoring of learning outcomes. This would include a code of conduct among donors and a common pool of resources.
 - c. Pool resources and establish a research hub related to the new global indicators.
 - d. Give countries a chance to contribute to discussions on indicators for SDG 4 in an informed and meaningful way.
 - e. Set up a decision-making mechanism for the Technical Group working on indicators to foster consensus and strengthen its legitimacy.
 - f. International agencies should not call for a data revolution, but use better coordination between agencies with more resources to carry through plans for improvements.



Target 4.1: Primary and secondary education

- We need shared definitions of what 'relevant and effective learning outcomes' are so that they can be comparative across countries and monitored globally.
- Countries should report on background characteristics, such as wealth, language and disability, which help explain why some are learning and some are not.
- Countries should report on children and adolescents in a relevant age group, and not just those who attend school, so we get a full picture of participation and learning challenges.



Target 4.2: Early Childhood care and education

- National and international surveys should coordinate better so we can monitor participation across the full range of early-childhood services, including those outside of pre-primary education.
- Establish a more appropriate measure of children's developmental potential that is relevant across a wide range of countries.



Target 4.3: TVET, tertiary and adult education

- Establish monitoring tools that can capture the large and growing diversity of institutions and programmes relevant to this target.
- The provision and cost of TVET, tertiary and adult education should be monitored, through basic parameters that can guide government policy.



Target 4.4: Skills for work

- We should find a way to monitor digital literacy skills and not just ICT skills.
- Monitoring digital skills must be done in a way which is culturally relevant and suitable for low income countries too.



Target 4.5: Equality

- All Ministries of Education should monitor disparities in a wide range of education measures.
- We need measures of inequalities that capture multiple forms of disparity, such as language, disability and displacement.
- Create a mechanism to help countries collect and compare information about policies successfully addressing disadvantages in education.



Target 4.6: Literacy and numeracy

- National strategies to directly monitor adult literacy skills should be put in place.
- Monitoring adult literacy must account for the diverse literate environment contexts and variations in national capacity for collecting and analysing data.



Target 4.7: Sustainable development and global citizenship

- A more rigorous approach needs to be taken towards monitoring the content of education, what is taught in classrooms, as well as the contents of teacher education programs.
- The GEM Report recommends collecting and communicating information about the content of curricula; education ministries and regional or international organizations should coordinate to work on the task.



Target 4.a: Safe and effective learning environments

- Be careful not to assume indicators on school infrastructure give a full picture of learning environments.
- Definitions of violence in school should be aligned so that it can be compared cross-nationally and monitored on a global scale.



Target 4.b: Scholarships

- Develop a global mechanism for reporting on scholarships, which includes both information on the scholarships and their recipients, including their origin, destination and field of study.



Target 4.c: Teachers

- Personnel databases need to be better linked to overall education management information systems, so as to monitor the distribution of teachers, their working conditions and teacher attrition.
- Consider expanding tools that collect information directly from teachers to include low and middle-income countries.



Finance

- Support the institutionalization of national education accounts, along the lines of national health accounts.
- Make household income and expenditure survey data available.



Education systems

- Agencies involved in collecting information on education systems should collaborate.
- Regional organizations that have education as one of their objectives should collect in-depth information on comparable aspects of education systems.

Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable development for all.

There are five overarching steps policy makers working across all development sectors, including education, can make to ensure their plans are effectively contributing to sustainable development:

1. **Support collaborations and synergies across all sectors and partners.** Finance and planning ministries need to engage in more systemic planning. Education ministries should be better linked with ministries of health, gender, environment and labour. Civil Society and the private sector should focus on cross-sector collaboration and integrated perspectives as well as in urban planning and research and development strategies. The private sector, civil society, multiple sectors of government and international actors should find more resources for education, since it matters for all aspects of sustainable development. Governments and other donors also need to better investigate and invest in integrated interventions that are likely to have multiplier effects for several development outcomes, including education.
2. **Integrate formal and non-formal education and training into government efforts to tackle complex problems.** Many of the Sustainable Development Goals will require the specialized skills and expertise education can provide, for instance in addressing global health and climate risks. This long term benefit of education should be included in any case for investments made to donors or other investors by all sectors. Investment is particularly needed in low income countries so they can build their own expertise by improving higher education and vocational institutions, as well as informal adult learning initiatives.
3. **Education can be an important means of reducing inequality but cannot be seen as the sole solution.** Policy-makers must ensure that changes in labour markets, such as technological progress and easing of labour market restrictions, do not excessively penalize lower income individuals, who are disproportionately employed in lower paying and less secure jobs. At the same time, cooperation across all sectors and the economy is needed to reduce any policy-related obstacles to full economic participation by women and minority groups.
4. **Increase the level and predictability of education system financing.** Education funding needs to be both adequate and predictable to ensure the provision of good quality primary and secondary education, especially to marginalized groups. This would entail ensuring appropriate inputs and teachers, and transforming school systems to better cover values of social and environmental sustainability in addition to a specific set of cognitive skills. Improved financing is also critical to support non-formal and informal learning initiatives, which are often innovative, localized, targeted to adults and capable of helping address pressing issues such as disaster risk resilience and conflict prevention.

More specifically, those working to promote the sustainable development agenda should consider the following actions to expand education's focus and create more equitable opportunities for all.

Planet: Link with education to lessen environmental degradation and the impact of climate change.

1. Develop whole-school approaches that promote environmental teaching, learning, planning and operations by drawing attention to the ties between the environment, economy and culture.
2. Teach disaster risk-resilience training in schools and equip learners with the means to support communities in times of disasters.
3. Fund efforts to ensure that education infrastructure is resilient to climate change.



4. Engage community elders in curricular development and school governance, produce appropriate learning materials and prepare teachers to teach in mother languages.
5. Promote the value of indigenous livelihoods, traditional knowledge and community-managed or -owned land through actions such as land conservation and locally relevant research.
6. Initiate large-scale awareness campaigns that 'nudge' people to engage in sustainability practices and behaviour.
7. Work with community and religious leaders to spread ideas about environmental stewardship, and incentivize companies that incorporate sustainability into workplace practices.
8. Scale up non-formal education initiatives promoting family planning and maternal well-being.
9. Increase funding of research and development that promote technological innovations in energy, agriculture and food systems.

Prosperity: Utilise education to reduce poverty and stimulate green and inclusive economies.

1. Invest in teaching green skills in formal and non-formal programmes. Coordinate green-focused curricula through cooperation between education and training systems, policy-makers and industry.
2. Train and support teachers and instructors at all education levels and in the workplace to enable learners to acquire green skills.
3. Ensure universal access to education that emphasizes skills and competencies for entry into economically productive, environmentally sustainable industries.
4. Develop short-term strategies focused on workforce retraining and upskilling, together with longer-term strategies to improve or revise curricula in secondary education, initial higher education and vocational training.
5. Incentivize universities to produce graduates and researchers who address large-scale systemic challenges through creative thinking and problem-solving.
6. Promote cooperation across all sectors to reduce policy-related obstacles to full economic participation by women or minority groups, as well as discrimination and prejudice that also act as barriers.

People: Include education in plans to help people fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

1. Target marginalized groups to improve access to good quality education by redistributing existing resources and ramping up funds.
2. Invest in early childhood care and education, where integrated interventions provide children with lifelong benefits.
3. Ministries responsible for education, health, water and sanitation, and gender issues should work together to improve multiple, linked and connected outcomes.
4. Fund integrated delivery of basic services in schools. Ensure that all schools provide meals, access to water and sanitation, adequate gender-specific toilets and child-friendly spaces, and can deliver curricular interventions focused on behavioural change, such as hygiene education, sexual and reproductive health education, and obesity prevention education.
5. Run awareness campaigns and training to boost innovation in service delivery, such as e-government and participatory budgeting.
6. Fund community-oriented education and training programmes on health and sanitation.
7. Ensure all girls complete primary and secondary education to promote their autonomy and decision-making abilities.
8. Invest in programmes that address gender stereotypes and roles by engaging men and women in group education sessions, youth-led campaigns and multipronged empowerment approaches.
9. Support media-based awareness campaigns, the development of positive role models and other initiatives to change gender norms inside and outside the education system.
10. Support efforts to improve participation of girls and women in science, technology, arts and design, and mathematics so as to improve employment prospects.
11. Support social protection programmes, health policies and child-care support that improve maternal education and facilitate men and women's employment-related decision-making.



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Peace: Maximise education's potential to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

1. Expand the emphasis on global citizenship and peace education in curricula.
2. Invest in civic education programmes that contribute to a functioning justice system, including participation and access for marginalized communities.
3. Promote learning emphasizing the values of tolerance and peace education to help build less violent and more constructive societies.
4. Teach in children's mother languages. Countries with high proportions of minorities should consider training teachers in methods for teaching second-language learners.
5. For refugees and internally displaced persons, implement policies that expand the pool of qualified teachers proficient in their languages, including by teachers from among refugees themselves, and address the issue of official validation and certification of learning by refugees.
6. Incorporate education into official foreign policy, transitional justice efforts and the peace-building agenda when trying to prevent and recover from conflict situations.
7. Ensure curricula and learning materials are not biased or prejudiced against ethnic and minority groups. Engender resilience in students and communities in post-conflict societies through curricula, teacher training, transitional justice programmes and supporting integrated schools.
8. Fund civil society organizations and other institutions that provide legal and political education in communities.

Place: How education can foster sustainable, inclusive and prosperous cities and other human settlements

1. Ensure urban areas distribute public resources equitably, including amenities and good quality teachers, so as to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality resulting from education disparity.
2. Take steps to halt segregation stemming from increased opportunities to choose between public and private schools.
3. Work to reduce school-based violence, including gender violence, and discriminatory attitudes among teachers.
4. Develop local autonomy and localized system-wide education planning, especially in populous African and Asian cities, considering education as a local as well as national issue.
5. Better incorporate education into local, national and global agendas focused on improving cities and other human settlements.
6. Educate and engage with those who are disenfranchised, include them in planning, and collaborate with civil society actors who work with them.
7. Fund schools and training programmes for slum dwellers and other disadvantaged groups who live in absolute poverty; so that assistance for them is not limited to basic services such as housing and water and sanitation.
8. Fund urban planning education to increase the numbers of planners, and promote integration of education as well as multidisciplinary approaches.
9. Improve urban planning curricula to include cross-sector engagement, community engagement, learning by doing and the development of locally relevant solutions.
10. Involve communities in any processes to consolidate and improve schools in rural and other areas affected by population declines due to migration.
11. Monitor and address any unintended consequences of the growth of knowledge economies, such as gentrification and middle class flight, with strong economic and housing policies to limit social segregation and societal discontent.



CREDIT: Anna Spysz/GEM Report

Partnerships: Ensure adequate financing, policy coherence and multisector capacity.

1. Education policy makers should make links with tax authorities to improve tax-related knowledge through formal education.
2. Develop equitable funding mechanisms to address in-country disparities in education funding.
3. Use progressive public finance policies to ensure adequate funding of lower levels of education, and combine public allocations and a well-designed system of student grants and loans to finance upper levels of technical, vocational and tertiary education.



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4. Increase multilateral aid mechanisms and engagement with the private sector, learning from health sector efforts to increase and diversify funding. Mobilize domestic resources, stop corporate tax evasion and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies to generate government revenue for fundamental needs such as education and health.
5. Provide political and financial support for planning and implementation of education and other activities to be carried out with an integrated approach to policy and development at the national and local levels. Develop knowledge exchange programmes to learn from successful integrated policies involving education.
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