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Unpacking SDG 4 - Education 2030 Commitments

BRIEFING NOTE 2

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This note attempts to provide a better understanding of the education goal and targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides broad guidance for implementation. More specifically, it outlines: **Key features** of the global Education 2030 agenda and their **implications** for implementation; **Principles and actions for implementation** of SDG 4 - Education 2030 at the country level. Appendix 1 lists **key strategic messages** for Education 2030, while Appendix 2 summarizes the **commitments related to the SDG 4 targets** as articulated in the Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

Education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is an inter-governmental commitment comprised of 17 aspirational goals that address shared challenges at the global and local levels. They result from what is arguably the most inclusive process of consultation in the history of the United Nations, reflecting substantive input from all sectors of society, all actors of the international community and all parts of the world. All Member States, the entire UN system, experts and a cross-section of civil society, business and, most importantly, millions of people from all corners of the globe, have committed themselves to this comprehensive agenda seeking to address globally-shared concerns and to promote the common good.

Education is central to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Within the comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, education is essentially articulated as a stand-alone goal (SDG 4) with its ten targets (seven outcome targets and three means of implementation). SDG 4 goal and targets are presented in detail and discussed in the SDG 4 - [Education 2030 Framework for Action](#) which also outlines the vision and principles, as well as the issues related to implementation.

Education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is not only restricted to SDG 4 but also includes a number of targets in other SDGs related to: Ending poverty (SDG Target 1.a); Health and well-being (SDG Target 3.7); Gender equality (SDG Target 5.6); Decent work (SDG Target 8.6); Responsible consumption and production (SDG Target 12.8); and Climate change mitigation (SDG Target 13.3). [See separate Briefing Note 4 on Global Monitoring of Education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for more detail on each of the targets and global indicators].

Since education is not only an integral part of, but also a key enabler for sustainable development, it should be part of the strategies to achieving all SDGs. Importantly, all SDGs are inter-dependent and can only be achieved if implemented together, reinforcing each other.

Key Features of SDG 4 – Education 2030

A universal agenda: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is framed by two main objectives: poverty eradication and sustainable development. The concern for sustainable development and its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – is at the heart of the 2030 global development agenda. This globally shared concern for sustainability implies a *universal agenda* relevant to all societies both in the global North and the global South. This can be understood as a universality of principles (i.e. as human rights), universality of reach (i.e. leaving no one behind), and universality of country coverage as highlighted in the SDG 4 - Education 2030 Framework for Action.

Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all: Education 2030 is a commitment to ensure equitable opportunities to education in a holistic and *lifelong learning* perspective based on a humanistic approach to learning in which education is seen as a *fundamental human right* and a *public good*. The scope of education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development builds on and widens the horizon for learning to go beyond the EFA agenda.

Ensuring basic education for all: Recognizing that the EFA commitment ‘to meet the *basic learning needs* of all children, youth and adults’ has not been achieved, SDG 4 includes commitments to ensure at least one year of pre-primary education and a full cycle of free, publicly funded, inclusive, equitable, quality primary and secondary education of 12 years, of which at least nine years are compulsory, as well as universal youth literacy by 2030 leading to effective and relevant learning outcomes for all.

Ensuring equal opportunity to post-basic education: In addition, SDG 4 also commits to ensuring *equal opportunity in access to post-basic learning opportunities* whether through vocational skills development at secondary and post-secondary levels, including through university studies.

Renewed focus on equity and inclusion: SDG 4 – Education 2030 includes a renewed focus on inclusion, *equity* and gender equality. This is particularly explicit in target 4.5 which aims to eliminate gender disparities and ensure more equitable access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable populations.

Renewed focus on effective learning: SDG 4 – Education 2030 includes a renewed focus on *effective learning* and the acquisition of basic competencies. This is evident in the targets and global indicators for primary and secondary education (4.1), as well as for youth and adult literacy (4.6).

New focus on relevance of learning: What is new in the SDG 4 - Education 2030 is the focus on the *relevance of learning*, both in terms of vocational and technical skills for decent work (4.4), as well as for citizenship in plural, interdependent, and interconnected world (Target 4.7).

Implications for implementation

Key Features	Implications for Implementation
<p>Universally-relevant agenda with sustainability at its core</p>	<p>Collaboration, cooperation and partnerships: As a universally-relevant agenda, SDG 4 – Education 2030 is a collective commitment of all countries regardless of their level of development. This has implications for patterns of cooperation, partnerships, and coordination among stakeholders within and across countries.</p> <p>Inter-sectoral coordination at country level: The inter-linkages between SDGs require going beyond a ‘silo approach’ to education. Any strategies that aim to realize SDG 4, and ultimately all SDGs, should be based on an inter-sectoral coordination mechanism that is linked to the wider SDG coordination.</p>
<p>Expanded access to all levels of education in a holistic and lifelong learning approach based on the principles of education as a basic human right and as a public good</p>	<p>Legislation: The commitment to universal youth literacy, to at least one-year of pre-primary education, to 12 years of public and free primary and secondary education (of which at least nine years are compulsory), and to equal opportunity in access to post-basic education and training may require adjustment/strengthening of national legislation.</p> <p>Sector-wide policy, planning and coordination: The fact that the Education 2030 agenda concerns all levels of formal and non-formal education, as well as learners of all age groups, requires a truly sector-wide approach to education policy, planning, and coordination.</p> <p>Recognition, validation and accreditation of learning: A lifelong learning approach requires a system of recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of learning and competencies acquired outside formal education and training institutions. RVA is essential for the establishment and facilitation of pathways between formal and less formal learning opportunities, as well as between education, training and work.</p> <p>Financing: The ambition of the SDG 4 - Education 2030 agenda to expand access to learning opportunities for all throughout life places greater pressure on public funding of education. At the same time, there is also a need to ensure more efficient use of scarce resources and to promote greater accountability in the use of public resources for education. These all point to the need for complementary or new ways to increase public education budgets through greater fiscal capacity, innovative partnerships with non-state actors, as well as through advocacy for increased official development assistance.</p>
<p>Renewed focus on equity and inclusion</p>	<p>Inclusive policy dialogue and formulation: A focus on equity implies inclusive policy dialogue that allows for diverse constituencies to have greater voice in decision making process and ensure the legitimacy of national education policy choices.</p> <p>Targeted strategies: Ensuring equity and inclusion would need well-designed strategies for targeting the groups that are most vulnerable and disadvantaged in terms of access to quality learning opportunities.</p>

	<p>Monitoring: Monitoring progress towards SDG 4 – Education 2030 implementation from an equity lens will require having access to more reliable and disaggregated data, as well as the strengthened capacity to analyse data on participation and learning outcomes at all levels.</p>
Renewed focus on effective basic learning	<p>Curriculum and teacher training: Focus on effective and relevant learning may require review of existing curricula frameworks; teaching and learning contents, pedagogy, materials and classroom teaching practice; assessment frameworks; as well as teacher training and professional development. A holistic and coherent curricular approach will require alignment between curriculum content, assessment, teacher training, as well as school leadership and management.</p>
New focus on relevance of learning both for the world of work and civic life	<p>Assessment of learning outcomes: Focus on effective and relevant learning requires fairer and more balanced mechanisms for capturing and validating knowledge, skills and competencies across a broader spectrum of learners’ expectations and thus greater flexibility in assessment practice.</p> <p>Quality assurance and qualification frameworks: Focus on the effective acquisition of competencies and the relevance of learning for the world of work and civic life requires the establishment or the strengthening of national quality assurance and qualification frameworks.</p>

Principles for implementation

The scale and ambition of the SDG 4 - Education 2030 agenda requires a revitalized global mechanism and partnership to ensure its implementation. While the SDG 4 - Education 2030 Framework for Action provides Member States and partners with actionable strategies to implement this agenda, much remains to be done to translate these strategies into achievable national actions. Any attempt to unpack the mechanism and partnership conceivable for viable SDG 4 – Education 2030 implementation arrangements will need:

- To recognize the universality of the agenda;
- To ensure that the implementation of SDG 4 - Education 2030 is country-owned and country-led;
- To ensure that SDG 4 goal and targets will lead to political and, where relevant, financial mobilization, as well as effective communication and monitoring;
- To promote an integrated, systems-oriented and system-wide approach, and innovation, including for financing;
- To recognize the distinct roles of different types of cooperation actors, and thus the importance of partnerships as an effective mean of implementation.

National actions to implement SDG 4 – Education 2030

Implementing the SDG 4 - Education 2030 agenda implies broad and systematic engagement of and coordination among various sectors, and a wide range of actors and stakeholders at all levels. As a rule of thumb, the general principles for effective development cooperation, in particular country ownership, focus on results, partnerships, transparency and shared responsibility¹ will apply to all actors, levels and stages of public education policy formulation and its implementation. Governments are expected to translate the global education goal and targets into achievable national targets, policies, plans, initiatives and actions based on

¹ Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan, Republic of Korea, 29 November - 1 December 2011).

their national development needs, policy and planning cycle, institutional capacity, organization of the education systems, and availability of resources. Partners are expected to share their vision and align their efforts with governments and national development priorities.

The actions listed below outline what Member States and partners alike can do to maximize their efforts towards the achievement of SDG 4 – Education 2030. The actions must necessarily be adapted at both national and regional levels according to the specific contexts, systems and capacities. They are not to be seen as separate or sequential steps, but rather as a course of action for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

Building a common understanding and high-level political commitment

Not all countries, constituencies, and partners have a shared understanding of SDG 4 - Education 2030. As a first step, it is important to unpack the Education 2030 Framework for Action and build a common understanding of the vision and principles, as well as the challenges and responsibilities it represents in each context. High-level political commitment and ownership by the country will need to be ensured, strengthened and maintained. Consultation meetings convened by UNESCO in collaboration with partners at national, regional and/or sub-regional levels can help achieve this. In addition to identifying policy challenges and capacity gaps in view of SDG 4 - Education 2030 implementation, these consultations also provide the basis for UNESCO and its partners to determine the type and level of support that can need to be provided to countries.

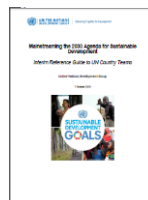
Mapping existing national policies and gaps

Where and when relevant, countries might consider conducting national consultations, policy reviews or specific theme-based analyses to map out the education related initiatives that they have taken; assess the situation; and identify gaps in terms of legislation, capacity, data and funding and the likely policy implications in view of achieving SDG 4 - Education 2030 at the national level. These exercises should take into account the UN guidance on mainstreaming the SDGs. This process should be voluntary, inclusive, led by countries and integrated into national policy frameworks and governance structures aiming to enhance cooperation across sectors and institutions, reduce silos in the implementation of interrelated and education-related SDGs and mobilize necessary support and partnerships. This exercise should provide UNESCO and its partners with a comprehensive overview of country needs for support in any or all of the following areas: institutional development, technical assistance, policy research and analysis, policy review, capacity development and/or funding support.²

Resources:



[Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals](#)



[Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Interim Reference Guide to UN Country Teams](#)

² Note that UNESCO is currently reviewing and adapting existing technical guidelines and tools for sector-wide policy and planning for SDG 4 targets and focus areas. Additionally, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is leading work on indicator development for monitoring of progress towards the SDG 4 targets (see Briefing Note 4 on Monitoring).

Planning for country level priorities and actions

Not all SDG 4 targets will be equally relevant for every country context. The results of the mapping exercise should provide the basis for countries to define their education development priorities and plans in light of SDG 4 – Education 2030 for required actions in order to achieve SDG 4 targets. Depending on the country context and its development status, the overall process of planning for country-level priorities and actions can lead to varied degrees of adjustment to national education legislation, policies and/or budget. This can range from a light touch to a comprehensive reform of the education sector. The approaches, methodologies and tools used in education sector analysis and planning should be applied for these purposes. Possible outputs of this process may range from a national education situation analysis report to a national sub-sectoral plan or to a full-fledged national education sector strategy.

Ensuring appropriate coordination mechanisms

Achieving the education goal and targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require a coordinated effort. It is therefore important to identify and agree on the appropriate functions of coordination mechanisms at different levels (regional, national, and subnational) and the working arrangements that would best support these functions. These coordination mechanisms should be linked to the overall SDG coordination mechanism and build on existing systems and processes, without overburdening or duplicating them, in order to integrate planning and implementation within and across development sectors, as well as levels of government.

Regional coordination: At the regional/sub-regional levels, the coordination mechanism should build on and be in line with existing regional/sub-regional strategies and frameworks, as well as with that of the broader UN coordination mechanisms for monitoring and reporting established for the overall SDG framework.

National coordination: At the national level, the following principles should be considered:

Build on existing structures and avoid duplication: coordination mechanisms should not add additional costs or layers of bureaucracy, nor duplicate or add to fragmentation of efforts. Rather, they must be led by the government and be integrated, to the extent possible, into existing national systems, structures and mechanisms. These may include Education Working Groups, National Education Development Fora, National Education Commissions, Intersectorial Coordination Fora.³ Any such coordination mechanism needs to ensure the participation of all relevant stakeholders and reflect the reality of education delivery in the country. Where necessary and possible, the national existing coordination mechanisms will have to be strengthened or adjusted to capture the ambition of the global SDG 4.

Go beyond the silo of the education sector: National coordination mechanisms need to *avoid a silo approach* to implementing SDG4-Education 2030 by going beyond the Ministry of Education to include other Ministerial departments, in particular Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Labor, etc. This is necessary to secure high-level political support, inter-governmental cooperation, and adequate funding.

Ensure linkage with broader SDG coordination: Linkages must also be ensured between the national coordination of SDG 4 on education with the broader coordination national mechanisms for the overall SDG framework. [See **Briefing Note 3** on Education 2030 coordination].

³ National structures and/or mechanisms for education coordination may be labelled differently depending on the country context. Regardless of the label used to designate the education sector coordination mechanism in particular contexts, what is important for SDG 4 – Education 2030, is that there should not be duplication with existing mechanisms.

Functions of National Coordination Mechanisms

1. Ensure that there is a coherent, coordinated, and all-inclusive participatory approach for the effective localization, implementation, and coordination for SDG 4.
2. Support alignment and mainstreaming (as appropriate) of SDG 4 into national planning and implementation at both national and subnational levels, integrating both vertical/sector and horizontal/cross sector collaboration and coordination⁴.
3. Ensure appropriate education sector links to cross sectoral national architecture⁵ for SDG support, monitoring and implementation, and to relevant sector and cross sectoral regional and global SDG architecture.
4. Support government and partners to prioritize “education development enablers” based on country’s overall development needs.
5. Facilitate domestic resource mobilization that may include focus on increased domestic funding allocations to education sector based on prioritization and/or gap filling; innovative financing; improved predictability and sustainability of external financing.

Monitoring and reporting on progress

While the work on development of global indicators is being finalized, countries are encouraged to map available data, data sources and technical capacity for monitoring SDG 4 – Education 2030 at the national level in line with the mapping exercise of existing national policies and gaps they are engaged in. Based on SDG 4 targets and the [list of thematic indicators](#) developed by the Technical Advisory Group on Education Indicators (TAG) and the further work to be developed by the Technical Coordination Group on Education 2030 Indicators led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)⁶, countries might want to consider selecting a set of indicators based on the country requirements, capacity and data availability that allow for both systematic monitoring of progress in all aspects of national implementation of SDG 4 – Education 2030 and comparison at regional and international levels including through the annual Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report serving as an analytical reference for reviewing and advancing the global follow-up and review of education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The second in the GEM Report series will investigate, analyze and propose concrete recommendations related to [accountability in education](#) [See separate **Briefing Note 4** on Global Monitoring of Education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development].

⁴ ‘Alignment’ and ‘mainstreaming’ is understood as the translation of the global education agenda into achievable national policies, plans, targets, initiatives and actions based on national development needs, policy and planning cycles, institutional capacity, organization of the education system and the availability of resources.

⁵ Many countries are in the process of establishing some type of structure or mechanism and process for the coordination of the overall SDG agenda across all sectors and for all goals. This structure may represent diverse levels of authority and may include, in some instances, a Commission or High Level Committee chaired by the Office of the President and/or Prime Minister. Members are drawn from various government departments including: environment, natural resources and climate change; planning and infrastructure; finance; social ministries (e.g., gender, health); energy; and education. This “horizontal” mechanism/structure is expected to facilitate coordination across various ministries/stakeholders in government; ensure harmonized budgeting and financing plans; and ensure genuine cooperation and collaboration between sectors and government departments based on related programme-implementation plans. In addition to this overall national SDG coordination, the education sector will still require a “vertical” coordination mechanism.

⁶ The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) led the Technical Advisory Group and is now leading the Technical Coordination Group on Education 2030 Indicators (TCG ED2030) while representing UNESCO at the level of the UN discussions on SDGs monitoring within the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The Institute has a designated mandate within the Education 2030 Framework for Action to produce the cross-nationally comparable indicators to monitor the SDGs, as well as to lead the development of new indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to better assess progress across the education-related targets.

FURTHER UPDATES

Global Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

An open, inclusive and transparent process of informal consultations with Member States has been launched, as addressed in the report of the Secretary-General outlining milestones and ways forward towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A High Level Political Forum (HLPF) meeting is scheduled for 11-20 July 2016.

The Secretary-General's report and related background information can be accessed at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/follow-up>

2016 GEM Report: Education, sustainability and development post-2015

Starting in 2016, a new series of reports entitled the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Reports will monitor the state of education in the new framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The first report in the series, the 2016 Report, will establish a new monitoring framework for education post-2015 and discuss different strategies and challenges related to the monitoring of the 10 global education targets under SDG4. It will be launched in early September 2016. The Report will also focus on 'Education, sustainability and the post-2015 development agenda', examining the complex interrelationships and links between education and key development sectors. It will determine which education strategies, policies and programmes are most effectively linked to the economic, social, environmental and political priorities of the new sustainable development agenda.

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity

[The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity](#) is a major new global initiative engaging world leaders, policy makers and researchers to develop a renewed and compelling investment case and financing pathway for achieving equal educational opportunity for children and young people.

The Commission brings together the best research and policy analysis on the actions necessary to increase investment in concrete, relevant learning outcomes that have a positive impact on economic and social development. While the entire education system will be considered starting in the early years, the Commission will pay particular attention to the provision of basic education and its role in improving life chances and generating equal opportunities for young people to access further education, enter the workforce and engage in society. The Commission aims to secure increased, more effective investments and contribute to the mobilization of new partnerships to achieve these aims, particularly in middle-income and low-income countries.

Appendix 1 - Key Strategic Messages for Education 2030

1. **Beyond a silo approach to education:** All SDGs are interdependent. They can only be achieved if implemented together. It is necessary to go beyond silo approach to SDG 4 implementation and ensure that education development is better articulated with other development sectors.
2. **Education is at the heart of the SDGs:** Education is key for progress towards the achievement of all of the SDGs and should therefore be part of the strategies to achieve each of them.
3. **SDG 4 - Education 2030:** In addition to a stand-alone goal on education (SDG 4), the 2030 Agenda also includes targets on education under several other SDGs, notably those on health, economic growth and decent work, sustainable consumption and production and climate change. The term SDG 4 - Education 2030 encompasses both SDG 4, as well as education-related targets across the SDGs.
4. **National ownership and leadership:** Implementation of SDG 4 - Education 2030 must be government owned and led to translate the global education agenda into achievable national policies, plans, targets, initiatives or actions based on their national development needs, policy and planning cycle, institutional capacity, organization of the education systems and the availability of resources.
5. **No separate SDG 4-Education 2030 plan** should be developed, but rather, 2030 goals and targets should be mainstreamed/translated into national wide policies and plans as appropriate.
6. **Building on/strengthening existing coordination mechanisms:** National and regional coordination mechanisms for SDG 4 – Education 2030 implementation should – to the extent possible - build on existing coordination mechanisms, systems and processes, and linked to broader SDG coordination mechanisms at national, regional, and global levels.
7. **Enhanced multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementation, monitoring and accountability:** The ambition of SDG 4 – Education 2030 requires enhanced multi-stakeholder partnerships between state and non-state actors for transparent implementation, monitoring, and accountability.

Appendix 2 - SDG 4 Targets and Commitments

Defining the concepts of the targets as per the Incheon Declaration and the SDG4-Education 2030 Framework for Action

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

The provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, inclusive, equitable, quality primary and secondary education – of which at least nine years⁷ are compulsory, leading to relevant learning outcomes – should be ensured for all, without discrimination.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

The provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education is encouraged, to be delivered by well-trained educators. This should be put in place taking into account different national realities, capacities, levels of development, resources and infrastructure.

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

It is imperative to reduce barriers to skills development and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), starting from the secondary level, as well as to tertiary education, including university, and to provide lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults. The provision of tertiary education should be made progressively free, in line with existing international agreements.

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

1. Access: Equitable access to TVET needs to be expanded while quality is ensured. Learning opportunities should be increased and diversified, using a wide range of education and training modalities, so that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, can acquire relevant knowledge, skills and competencies for decent work and life.
2. Skills acquisition: Beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution, which can be used across a range of occupational fields. Moreover, learners should be provided with opportunities to update their skills continuously through lifelong learning.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

⁷ The first nine years of formal education, i.e. the cumulative duration of ISCED 1 and 2: ISCED 1 is the primary level, typically lasting six years (with variation across countries between four and seven years), and ISCED 2 is lower secondary, typically lasting three years (again, with variation). (UIS. 2012. International Standard Classification of Education: ISCED 2011. www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf.)

1. Inclusion and equity: All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Vulnerable groups that require particular attention and targeted strategies include persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and the poor.
2. Gender equality: All girls and boys, women and men, should have equal opportunity to enjoy education of high quality, achieve at equal levels and enjoy equal benefits from education. Adolescent girls and young women, who may be subject to gender-based violence, child marriage, early pregnancy and a heavy load of household chores, as well as those living in poor and remote rural areas, require special attention. In contexts in which boys are disadvantaged, targeted action should be taken for them.

Policies aimed at overcoming gender inequality are more effective when they are part of an overall package that also promotes health, justice, good governance and freedom from child labour.

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

The principles, strategies and actions for this target are underpinned by the contemporary understanding of literacy as a continuum of proficiency levels in a given context. It goes beyond the understanding of a simple dichotomy of 'literate' versus 'illiterate'. Therefore, action for this target aims at ensuring that by 2030, all young people and adults across the world should have achieved relevant and recognized proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are equivalent to levels achieved at successful completion of basic education.

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

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

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

This target addresses the need for adequate physical infrastructure and safe, inclusive environments that nurture learning for all, regardless of background or disability status.

4.b By 2030, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

Scholarship programmes can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education. Where developed countries offer scholarships to students from developing countries, these should be structured to build the capability of the developing country. While the importance of scholarships is recognized, donor countries are encouraged to increase other forms of support to education. In line with the SDG4 - Education 2030 focus on equity, inclusion and quality, scholarships should be transparently targeted at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

Teachers are the key to achieving all of the SDG4 targets, so this target is critical. It requires urgent attention, with a more immediate deadline, because the equity gap in education is exacerbated by the shortage and uneven distribution of professionally trained teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas. As teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified, and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.