CHAPTER II
YOUTH EDUCATION

> *We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels—early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, para. 25)*

ALL youth have a right to education. While education must not be reduced to considerations of youth livelihoods and transitions to the world of work, it is widely accepted that this is a major aspect of youth education. Globally, efforts towards universal education in recent decades saw the years of primary school enrolment increase and lead to the demand for secondary schooling. However, secondary and tertiary enrolment remains low in many developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Inadequate infrastructure, lack of opportunities, and affordability and accessibility concerns characterize many educational systems in those regions. Elsewhere, many education and training systems are not adequately preparing students to meet the demands of a globalized world. Insufficient and/or poor-quality education, training and employment exacerbate the social and economic vulnerability of youth.

Formal education and training systems often do not reach marginalized youth or cater to young women, rural or indigenous youth, or youth with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities, leaving them without the skills needed to realize their potential or aspirations. This calls attention to the importance of leaving no youth behind and of finding new and innovative ways to provide all youth with the hard and soft skills and training necessary for today's labour market. The provision for quality education includes a comprehensive pedagogical curriculum, complemented by vocational, formal, informal, and non-formal education opportunities and skills development. As an essential element in the eradication of poverty and hunger, quality education should embrace the diversity of youth livelihoods and in so doing address gender inequalities and the needs of marginalized and vulnerable youth.

In the Millennium Development Goals era prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the assumption that education was predominantly a human capital investment in preparing youth for the labour market was widely held. While this argument remains influential, the Sustainable Development Goals identify additional instrumental roles for education in supporting the wider sustainable development agenda.

The Millennium Development Goals committed the world to universal primary education by 2015—something that should have been achieved by 1970 according to previous commitments. Significant progress was made between 2000 and 2015, but the goal was still not attained. Moreover, the goal for universal primary education failed to address a major youth-related aspiration of achieving universal secondary education.

Globally, of the 263 million children and youth under the age of 19 who were out of school in 2014, 142 million were of upper secondary age (UNESCO, 2016a, pp. xviii, 178, 182). Estimates published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicate that in low-income countries, nearly 30 per cent of the poorest children aged 12-14 years never attended school at all (ibid., p. 181). The proportion of youth completing upper secondary education between 2008 and 2014 also varied widely on the basis of national income; 84 per cent of youth in high-income countries completed upper secondary education, but the corresponding figure was only 43 per cent for middle-income countries and a meagre 14 per cent for low-income countries. Disparities within countries are also stark; in low-income countries only 7 young people living in poverty complete upper secondary education for every 100 rich youth who do so. Only 23 per cent of countries have gender parity in upper secondary education (ibid., pp. xviii, 185).

One widespread criticism of Millennium Development Goal 2 was that it focused on measuring enrolment rather than learning (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 176). Between 2000 and 2015 the number of out-of-school children and youth declined, but the quality of education declined as well on an unprecedented scale (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 2). In 2012, UNESCO stated that the growth in primary enrolment was leading to a "crisis in learning", as inadequately educated and trained teachers were not equipped to impart foundational literacy and numeracy skills (UNESCO, 2012, p. 130). Estimates for the period 2005-2014 suggest a youth literacy rate of 91 per cent, meaning that roughly 114 million young people aged 15-24 years were unable to read or to write even a simple sentence. Unsurprisingly, given other educational statistics, gender inequality has also persisted. Globally, there were 96 literate young women for every 100 literate young men aged 15-24 years, but in low-income countries the female-to-male literacy ratio for this age group was only 0.85. (UNESCO, 2016a, p. xviii, 278, 280, table 15.1).

Without rapid acceleration in the rate of education expansion, Sustainable Development Goal target 4.1 on universal secondary education is not likely to be achieved by 2030 (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 151). It is projected that in 2030,

only 69 per cent of 15-19 year olds will complete their upper secondary studies. Even high-income countries are not expected to achieve universal upper secondary education until 2048. This is projected to occur after 2080 in most regions. If present trends continue, millions of youth will not be able to access or complete the education promised to them in the 2030 Agenda (ibid., pp. 152-153, table 7.2).

The global gross enrolment ratio for upper secondary education now stands at close to 75 per cent (ILO, 2016, p. viii), and tertiary-level enrolment more than doubled between 2000 and 2014 (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 229, table 12.3). However, challenges relating to educational access, content and quality persist. The education system should impart academic knowledge, career and life skills, social norms, values and accepted behaviours to successive generations; all too often, however, this ideal is not met. Disparities in educational access and quality are pronounced both globally and within individual countries. Many young people—including those with disabilities, youth from ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous youth, young refugees, and young women—face unique barriers to accessing opportunities through the education system.

Regional differences in tertiary education participation remain sizeable. In Europe and Northern America the tertiary gross enrolment ratio is 75 per cent, compared with 23 per cent in Southern Asia and 8 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 228, 229, table 12.3). There are also marked gender disparities and striking wealth inequalities in tertiary education. Data indicate that the enrolment gap between men and women widens by the time they complete their post-secondary education. In many Arab and Caribbean countries, more than twice as many young women as young men graduate from tertiary institutions; while not as pronounced, this gender dynamic is present in other countries and regions as well. In Costa Rica, for example, the tertiary entry ratio of men to women was 0.80 in 2011, but by graduation the ratio had dropped to 0.53 (ibid., p. 228-230). There are also significant income-based disparities among students aged 25-29 years in terms of completing a minimum of four years of tertiary education. Recent statistics indicate that in the Philippines, for instance, of the 21 per cent of students in that age bracket who finished at least four years of tertiary studies, just 1 per cent were from the poorest income group, while 52 per cent were from the wealthiest (ibid., p. 230). In an increasingly polarized labour market, such disparities can have huge implications for young people seeking to secure their first decent job or build a sustainable livelihood.

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION

The rights-based approach to education establishes fundamental principles and benchmarks, making it clear that education issues are not just about access or even about quality as measured by standard considerations of examination or testing outcomes. The first United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Ms. Katarina Tomaševski, developed a comprehensive framework on the right to education, which was subsequently adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment 13 on the right to education.[20]

The framework suggests that education needs to exhibit the following interrelated features if it is to meet rights obligations:

- **Availability.** Education is free, and there are adequate resources, infrastructure and trained teachers able to support the delivery of education for all.

- **Accessibility.** The education system is non-discriminatory and physically and economically accessible to all, and positive steps are taken to include the most marginalized.

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[20] United Nations, Economic and Social Council (1999), para. 6; see also Tomaševski (2001).

- **Acceptability.** The form and content of education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate, and of good quality; schools are safe and teachers are professional.

- **Adaptability.** Education evolves with the changing needs of society and challenges inequalities such as gender discrimination, and it adapts to specific local needs and contexts.

Table 2.1 elucidates these concepts.

TABLE 2.1. TOMAŠEVSKI'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION		
RIGHT TO EDUCATION	AVAILABILITY	• Fiscal allocations matching human rights obligations • Schools matching school-aged children (number, diversity) • Teachers (education and training, recruitment, labour rights, trade union freedoms)
	ACCESSIBILITY	• Elimination of legal and administrative barriers • Elimination of financial obstacles • Identification and elimination of discriminatory denials of access • Elimination of obstacles to compulsory schooling (fees, distance, schedule)
RIGHTS IN EDUCATION	ACCEPTABILITY	• Parental choice of education for their children (with human rights correctives) • Enforcement of minimal standards (quality, safety, environmental health) • Language of instruction • Freedom from censorship • Recognition of children as subjects of rights
	ADAPTABILITY	• Minority children • Indigenous children • Working children • Children with disabilities • Child migrants, travelers
RIGHTS THROUGH EDUCATION	ADAPTABILITY	• Concordance of age-determined rights • Elimination of child marriage • Elimination of child labour • Prevention of child soldiering

Source: Tomaševski (2001), p. 12, box 1.

YOUTH AT RISK

Young women

Although figures for gender parity at the upper secondary education level indicate that progress is being made in many regions and in upper-middle- and high-income countries, young women continue to face a particularly challenging set of educational barriers. For instance, patriarchal values often lead to the exclusion of many young women from education owing to issues such as poverty and the perceived opportunity costs of educating girls, as well as more practical issues such as a lack of access to toilets, in particular after first menstruation.

BOX 2.1.
THE IMPACT OF PREGNANCY ON YOUNG WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Tomaševski presents this issue powerfully through the case of Tatu Shabani, a single young woman sentenced in 2003 to six months in prison for not attending school. A primary school student in Tanzania, Shabani was expelled from school for becoming pregnant, this being a disciplinary offence in the Tanzania school system. However, this meant that she was in breach of the law regarding compulsory school attendance and was then prosecuted on that basis (Tomaševski, 2005). Provisions for expelling pregnant students have been removed in some countries after rights campaigns. Tomaševski notes a case in Colombia in which the Supreme Court ruled that "the conversion of pregnancy—through school regulations—into a ground for punishment violates fundamental rights to equality, privacy, free development of personality, and to education" (Supreme Court of Colombia, 1998). The Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued a similar ruling.

Early marriage and pregnancy contribute to further excluding young women from schooling due to health issues, stigma, social roles and expectations for young women, and punitive regulations governing pregnancy and school attendance (see box 2.1). While ILO data show a significant decline in global maternity rates among young women between the ages of 15 and 19 since 1990, the rates remain especially high in countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa (38 per cent)[21] and in sub-Saharan Africa (16 per cent) (Elder and Kring, 2016).

A problem in many systems and in particular locales is the low number of female teachers. In such contexts, the range of positive role models girls have is limited, which is likely to weaken their "capacity to aspire". This is particularly the case in upper secondary education and in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects. There is also evidence of widespread gender bias among teachers, both male and female. Frequently, boys receive more praise, are given the opportunity to answer questions more often, and are perceived as being naturally more intelligent.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a significant impediment to the education of girls and young women, as it affects education attendance and attainment and undermines overall health and well-being at all levels of development. The United Nations (2015f) estimates that one third of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner, at some point in their lives. Much gender-based violence occurs in the home and forms the backdrop to women's educational decisions and experiences. However, the journey to school and back can also be fraught with danger.

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[21]   Based on data for Egypt, Jordan, the State of Palestine and Tunisia.

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[21] Based on data for Egypt, Jordan, the State of Palestine and Tunisia.

It is important to remember that gender-based violence takes many forms and is largely embedded in behavioural stereotypes constructed at both the societal and individual levels. It may be manifested in men's abuse of women or women's abuse of men, or reflected in the complexities surrounding situations in which masculinities are being aggressively policed in certain settings, with boys being bullied for real or perceived infractions of dominant masculine attitudes and behaviours. There is growing awareness of the extent to which certain groups may be especially vulnerable. In the United States of America, for example, 85 per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students surveyed reported experiencing gender-based violence (UNESCO, 2016b, p. 52). School-related violence and threats are commonplace and comprise psychological, physical and sexual forms of aggression.

A systematic review of international surveys of violence against children found that approximately 1 billion children between the ages of 2 and 17, or more than half of the world's population in that age group, had experienced some form of violence (Hillis and others, 2016, p. 1).[22] Perhaps not surprisingly, girls and young women were found to be disproportionately affected.

A UNESCO/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) survey of school curricula in 10 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa found that in many cases gender-based violence was not addressed. While the survey results indicated that there was some coverage of human rights issues, the tendency was to keep well away from issues of sexual rights or child marriage, even though the latter remains prevalent in some of the countries of the region. Sexual diversity was also largely ignored (UNESCO and UNFPA, 2012).

As part of the background work for the first *Global Education Monitoring Report*, UNESCO reviewed more than 110 national curriculum framework documents for primary and secondary education in 78 countries for the period 2005-2015. The review essentially provided a baseline for Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7, which relates to the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for human rights; gender equality; peace, nonviolence and human security; sustainable development; and global citizenship/interconnectedness. The analysis found that less than 15 per cent of the countries integrated key terms such as gender empowerment, gender parity or gender sensitivity in their curriculum content, textbooks and other learning materials, and only about half mentioned gender equality. (UNESCO, 2016b, p. 53)

Youth with disabilities

Children with disabilities have a lower probability of entering and staying in education than do those without disabilities. Among youth living with disabilities, dropout and illiteracy rates are disproportionately high, and relatively few progress to upper secondary and tertiary education.[23] Children and youth with mental and intellectual impairments are especially disadvantaged. In many countries, instead of attending school, children and youth with mental and intellectual disabilities are institutionalized in facilities that do not offer education.[24] Those who do attend school are often not provided with quality education owing to a lack of training and awareness among teachers around provisions for inclusive and accessible education for children and youth with disabilities.[25] Much of Tomaševski's 4-A schematic analysis is particularly pertinent here.

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[22]   Thirty-eight reports provided quality data for 96 countries on past-year prevalence of violence against children (Hillis and others, 2016, p. 1).

[23]   WHO and World Bank (2011).

[24]   WHO (2009).

[25]   UNICEF (2013).

Youth affected by migration, displacement and conflict

Educational experiences are profoundly affected by migration (whether planned or forced) and by conflict and emergency situations. Programme for International Student Assessment data show that first-generation migrants in high-income countries scored an average of 50 points lower in reading and mathematics than did those from "native" populations, and second-generation immigrant learners scored 20 points lower (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 271).

Conflict undermines education in a number of ways. Only 79 per cent of young people are literate in conflict-affected poor countries, compared with 93 per cent in other poor countries (UNESCO, 2011, p. 2). The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has pushed more than a million learners to flee their homes and places of education (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 272). Globally, 75 per cent of refugees of secondary education age are not in school; in Bangladesh, Kenya and Pakistan the proportion is closer to 95 per cent (ibid., pp. xviii, 272). Not only are children and youth treated as legitimate targets in armed conflicts, in clear violation of international human rights law, but they are often forced to become combatants. The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011* found evidence of the use of child soldiers in 24 countries (UNESCO, 2011, p. 15), and even many developed countries allow military service to begin at the age of 16 or 17.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The first decade of the 2000s saw a growing programmatic focus on entrepreneurship education (McGrath and others, 1995). Helping aspiring young entrepreneurs acquire education can equip them with the acumen needed to navigate the world of business creation and development. In this regard, it is important to differentiate between necessity entrepreneurship and opportunity entrepreneurship. Necessity or subsistence entrepreneurs are those who are self-employed because they cannot secure work elsewhere and are forced into self-employment by economic necessity. They make up a large share of the informal economy but lack the capacity to become true engines of growth. Opportunity entrepreneurs are those positioned to take advantage of economic opportunities and push forward frontiers in more dynamic business development.

Entrepreneurship education and training programmes generally teach technical and business skills, as well as non-cognitive skills that are more conventionally understood as attitudes (including risk-taking and resilience). Whereas early entrepreneurship education focused on potential opportunity entrepreneurs with high levels of existing cognitive skills in developed countries, the continued challenge of youth unemployment in developing countries has led to the growth of programmes targeting those who are likely to be entrepreneurs by necessity and who often have lower levels of formal schooling. Such programmes are potentially attractive to funders and Governments owing to their low cost and their focus on individuals rather than systems and structure (DeJaeghere, 2017). However, a World Bank data review indicates that there is far more evidence of success from programmes aimed at opportunity entrepreneurs (Valerio, Parton and Robb, 2014). Programmes focused on necessity entrepreneurs have been shown to have an uneven, and largely short-term, positive impact on reducing abject poverty but constitute a poor tool for promoting growth, innovation and job creation as reflected in the Schumpeterian vision of economic development.

DeJaeghere (2017) argues that a broader approach to entrepreneurship education is needed that pays attention both to strengthening the social connections within which youth are embedded and to addressing the inequalities that limit their life prospects. This requires that entrepreneurship education be evaluated for its impact on the well-being of youth and not just for its effectiveness in placing them in some form of work, no matter how precarious.

TABLE 2.2.
YOUTH AND EDUCATION TARGETS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

TARGET / TEXT	
3.7	By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
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
4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
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
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
4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
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
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
4.b	By 2020, 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
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
5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

table continues on next page

TARGET / TEXT *(TABLE 2.2 CONTINUED)*	
8.3	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
8.5	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
8.6	By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
8.7	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms
8.b	By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization
12.8	By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
13.3	Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4: ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Ensuring access to quality education is central to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals and constitutes a core foundation on which successful transitions to the workforce and decent work depend. Strengthening this foundation requires further effort to ensure that young men and women have access to free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education. In a global environment in which a premium is placed on technical and adaptive skills, countries must also continue to invest in providing youth with equal access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education that supplies them with skills relevant to employment and entrepreneurship.

The Sustainable Development Goal targets relating to youth education (including the nexus with youth employment) are enumerated in table 2.2.

The targets listed in table 2.2 can be divided into the following three groups:

- **Education targets that address matters of educational access and quality.** These include all the education targets in the table, with the exception of 4.7 and 16.2 insofar as they cover

the right to education in terms of specific content or as a measurement of violence against children.

- **An additional group of content-oriented targets that include an education component.** These include 4.7 as well as targets that specifically address environmental issues (12.8 and 13.3) and health education issues (3.7).

- **Youth employment targets under Sustainable Development Goal 8.** Target 8.6 has an explicit education and training dimension, but this is implicit in the other Goal 8 targets included in the table 2.2.

Youth-related targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4: extending the focus of education

Sustainable Development Goal 4 marks an important shift from previous international goals on education, in particular Millennium Development Goal 2. With its provision for lifelong education, Sustainable Development Goal 4 incorporates targets that extend the age coverage of the Goal at both ends. This extension beyond basic education is highly significant for youth.

Millennium Development Goal 2 reflected a narrowing of the education agenda to the primary school

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level, though Goal 3 included a measure of secondary and tertiary education enrolments among girls and young women within the framework of achieving gender equality and empowerment. As table 2.2 shows, Sustainable Development Goal 4 includes a focus on completing secondary education and on access to vocational and tertiary education. Though not listed under the education goal, the part of target 16.2 that relates to violence against children also reflects a rights-based approach to education and therefore exemplifies the broader approach to education overall.

Target 4.1 integrates four key concepts in its explicit focus on ensuring that all school-age children and youth "complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education". It emphasizes that education must be completed, addressing dropout issues but also advocating complete schooling and not just primary education. The mention of free is highly significant in the light of the active encouragement of private education by a number of national Governments and international development organizations in recent years. Equitability has sometimes been seen as irrelevant if universal coverage is to be reached; however, the use of the word here points to the development of a clear framework by the right-to-education community regarding equity and inclusion. Quality is also important. While the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All included specific directives relating to learning outcomes, these were neglected under the Millennium Development Goals, with well-documented and serious consequences for educational achievement, as noted above.

Although target 4.1 holds much promise, there are a number of concerns about this target and the accompanying indicator from a youth-rights perspective. As noted in table 2.2, target 4.1 addresses the completion of secondary education; however, there is no proposed indicator for upper secondary education. This means there is a strong likelihood that upper secondary education will not be prioritized under the Sustainable Development Goals. This has serious implications for youth development and livelihoods.

Target 4.1 explicitly calls for free education, but in the years since agreement was reached on this target, it is evident that some signatory Governments have not implemented measures to provide free education to all, whether domestically or in their ODA activities. None of the most recently published indicators addresses this key element of the right to education.

Quality education in indicator 4.1.1 is reduced to meeting minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. This goes against the accepted understanding of education as defined in international human rights law, which holds that education in all its forms and at all levels should be characterized by availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. Understanding of the terms "inclusive", "equitable" and "quality" as they relate to education (and the indicators for monitoring their application) needs to be underpinned by these concepts.

Moreover, the indicator that has been adopted to measure progress in achieving target 4.1 is considered by many to be reductive, implying that the concept of a minimum proficiency threshold will be defined subsequently by experts rather than internationally established, giving rise to concerns about the risk that low measurement thresholds will be set which in turn will impact the achievement of quality education.

CONCLUSIONS

As articulated by successive international frameworks, education is a fundamental right for all youth throughout the world. The 2030 Agenda holistically addresses key priorities for the education of youth within a broader sustainable development framework. Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. To achieve this, there is a need for concerted efforts to ensure that young women and men have access to free, equitable and quality education as

well as targeted training opportunities. The most recent statistics suggest that there are profound global disparities in education, leaving universal secondary education an improbable aspiration for many, especially in poorer nations. Importantly, those education systems that exhibit a high degree of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability are better positioned to create and sustain a rights-based foundation that goes beyond abstract considerations of examination or testing outcomes.

Addressing educational barriers stemming from structural, institutional and cultural norms, including gender-based violence and early marriage and childbearing, is a crucial step towards the realization of higher school attendance and completion for young women. Equally important is the promotion of gender equality in education curricula, coupled with efforts to address evolving issues of sexual identity and diversity. This goes hand in hand with ensuring that countries adopt a human-rights-based approach to gender and

BOX 2.2.
FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), established in 2002 to mobilize support for education in developing countries, is a multi-stakeholder partnership of developing country Governments, donor nations, international and multilateral development organizations, civil society, teacher organizations, philanthropic foundations, and the private sector (Global Partnership for Education, 2017). GPE has disbursed $4.6 billion to the education sector, focusing mainly on poor and conflict-affected countries (ibid.). Against the decline in ODA to education, GPE disbursements have increased by 14 per cent since 2010. In 2015, GPE disbursements made up 12 per cent of basic and secondary education ODA among its partner countries, compared with 6 per cent in 2010 (UNESCO, 2017, p. 5). GPE is currently seeking to replenish its funding, with a goal of reaching $2 billion per annum by 2020 and $4 billion by 2030. This initiative is not primarily youth-focused, as priority has historically been given to primary and lower secondary education.

Education Commission

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, commonly known as the Education Commission, was established after the Sustainable Development Goals launch with principal funding from Norway. The Commission's members "are current and former heads of State and Government, government ministers, five Nobel laureates, and leaders in the fields of education, business, economics, development, health, and security" (International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016, p. 6). The Commission advocates for an increase in both domestic and external funding for education. It envisages the latter rising from $16 billion to $89 billion per year and believes that $20 billion of the annual total could come from philanthropy, while multilateral development banks would increase their education spending sixfold, potentially leveraging up to an additional $20 billion annually.

The Education Commission acknowledges that even this increased funding might not be enough to fully deliver on Sustainable Development Goal 4. Its projections suggest that while universal primary education can be achieved by 2030 in the narrow sense of enrolments, about one third of primary graduates will not meet minimum learning targets (ibid., p. 40).

sexuality. Young persons with disabilities, migrant youth, and youth affected by conflict are also an intrinsic part of any comprehensive education model. Research shows that educational experiences are significantly affected by migration, income level, emergencies, refugee status and conflict. Another factor to consider in the context of youth livelihoods and transitions to the world of work is entrepreneurship education, with precedence given to programmes focusing on the development of opportunity entrepreneurs, who promote more stable growth, innovation and job creation than do necessity entrepreneurs.

Ensuring access to inclusive and equitable quality education is essential for successful transitions to the labour force and decent work and is key to the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals. Quality primary and secondary education should be complemented by affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education that provides youth with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship.

The Commission anticipates that universal secondary education will not be achieved by 2030, forecasting a completion rate of only 62 per cent for low-income countries.

Education Cannot Wait
A third major international funding initiative for education has emerged quite recently. Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Education Cannot Wait fund focuses explicitly on children and youth aged 3-18 years living in crisis-affected countries. It has a target population of 75 million children and youth in 35 countries and proposes to raise $11.7 billion per annum.

Resource optimization in financing for education
Donors will need to work in a coordinated manner to ensure that these three initiatives complement each other, avoid duplication, operate within the wider context of financing for development, and remain aligned with the broader sustainable development agenda. The International Education Funders Group has emerged to address this need, acting as a coordinating structure for large numbers of givers. The Group describes its mandate as follows:

> *Much of our work contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, and we aim for foundations' grant-making, convening, and collaborating activities to have a marked positive impact on global basic education. … We are diverse—with over 100 member organizations from wide geographic, thematic and political angles. As such, we do not do advocacy, nor pitch or fund projects, but rather focus on ensuring our members keep up with developments and best practices in the field, better identifying our role in catalysing change in the short- and long-term, and in creating opportunities for members to network and learn from each other. (International Education Funders Group, www.iefg.org)*

No official figures are available from this rather private group, but it appears that there is a small youth dimension to its work, including some technical and vocational education and training (TVET) support.

Initiatives such as these can constitute an important source of education funding and coordination, but it is also essential that every country honour its ODA/GNI commitments to education as specified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Efforts should be made to ensure that education allocations go to the countries where they are most needed.