

27 October 2022

Key messages emerging:

SG Report on Programming for the
56th session of the Commission on Population and Development on *“Population,
education and sustainable development”*

I am delighted to be here today to present key messages emerging from UNFPA’s ongoing review of evidence in preparation of the Report of the Secretary General for the 56th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, reviewing programmes and interventions in the context of population, education and sustainable development.

1. Education remains an important determinant of development outcomes, both at individual and country level, making it **the single most important investment that any country can make for its future and its people.**
2. **Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is crucial for promotion of optimal development of children.** It addresses the period from birth to 8 years old, capitalizing on a period of rich brain development for children and, when it is of good quality, it can help them achieve their full potential by laying a strong foundation for good health and nutrition, social-emotional development, learning, educational success, and economic productivity throughout life.

However, despite documented evidence of tangible benefits of investing in ECCE, it is still often underfunded in education budgets, and the marginalised population groups often left behind.

Example programme

The Educate Your Child program in Cuba is a community-based, family centred intervention that was piloted in 1983 and scaled up in 1992 with the objective of developing and improving emotional communication, intelligence, language, motor development, health, and nutrition among children aged six and below, targeting children who do not attend formal childcare centres.

As of 2010, the programme covered 70% of Cuban children below age six and **impact assessments showed that children who participated in the programme fared better in all areas of development** (cognitive, emotional, communication, motor, and habits) compared to children did not. The programme has been replicated in other countries (Venezuela, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador). The success of the programme is attributed to its multisectoral approach, shared responsibility for child development between communities and families, comprehensive training and monitoring of program implementers, cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

- 3. Teenage pregnancy can exacerbate the gender gap in education because it mostly affects girls.** Programs must lower both the incidence and impact of teenage pregnancies and support the continued education of young mothers and fathers.

Exemplar programme

In Argentina, two laws were enacted in 2002 and 2006 to protect pregnant girls' and young parents' right to education, by ensuring provision of breastfeeding rooms in schools, home- and hospital-based education, special regimes of absences and flexibility with regard to examinations, available. By 2017, there were 82 nurseries in schools or nearby kindergartens, where children receive care in an environment that stimulates early learning

while their parents attend classes. Evaluation of the programme showed positive impact.

- 4. Completion of secondary education should be promoted.** Recent analysis has shown that if all adults completed secondary education, 420 million could be lifted out of poverty, reducing the total number of poor people by more than half globally and by almost two-thirds in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The most effective interventions for increasing participation in secondary school education are **those that reduce the cost of schooling**, which include offering unconditional and conditional cash transfers, reducing or eliminating school fees, and providing scholarships and allowances.

Examples from: Kenya, Colombia, Japan, Cambodia, Ethiopia.

- 5. The emphasis quality of education over and above access in SDG4 marked a major shift from the MDG thinking**, one that is supported by research that has shown that it is quality of education (measured in students learning outcomes) rather than years of schooling that matters for development, both at individual and national level.

Some Programmes for improving quality education include:

- Structured pedagogy,
- Curriculum
- Teacher training, recruitment, retention (paying attention to distribution of qualified teachers and school governance)
- Addressing out-of-field teachers

Examples from: South Korea, Malawi, The Gambia, Liberia

6. **Lifelong learning has never been more relevant than now** when the intersection of megatrends comprising globalization, technological progress, climate change, demographic shifts, and the transforming world of work all call for opportunities to learn throughout life, for personal and societal development. Important as foundational skills are, the rapidly changing world calls for all people to have continued access to learning.

Some programmes for increasing access to adult education and lifelong learning

- Community learning centres (including TVET centres) are used by many countries as the main mechanism for facilitating inclusive participation in adult learning. Viet Nam, Indonesia and Morocco have over 5000 centres each, offering content that is adapted to local contexts.
- Student loans, scholarships and grants are common instruments to financing tertiary education.
- Regarding student loans, a number of countries are shifting from the widely used time-based repayment loans to full or partial income-contingent loans systems, including Australia, Ethiopia, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, the United States and England

7. All over the world, **discrimination in education is based on gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes**; the Covid-19 pandemic brought these inequalities in sharp relief.

Countries implement a range of programmes addressing specific educational needs of these groups. Prison education, for example, provides inmates an opportunity to learn new skills and give them a renewed sense of purpose. Research has shown lower recidivism rates among prisoners who participate in education and training programmes while imprisoned. They are also more likely to find employment on release.

Examples include:

- **Singapore:** offers an accelerated secondary school program for students, allowing them to complete O-Levels, in one year compared to four or five years for students in mainstream schools.
- In **Bolivia**, a prison education programme teaches construction skills to women
- In **Uganda**, the Prison Service provides a range of work-related, educational and/or recreational activities and facilities, including prison farms, prison industries, education programmes, music sessions and dance classes

8. Despite progress in the past 20 years, **many countries still do not collect, report or use data on those left behind.** 41% of countries, representing 13% of the global population, have not had a household survey to provide disaggregated data on key education indicators since 2014 and the region with the lowest coverage is Northern Africa and Western Asia.