

## **Transforming Education Summit, September 2022**

**convened by the UN Secretary-General**

### **Concept Note on the Summit Work Streams**

**28 March 2022**

#### **I. Background**

1. Recognizing that education is a foundation for peace, tolerance, human rights and sustainable development, the UN Secretary-General announced in his report to the UN General Assembly on Our Common Agenda his intention to convene a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022. The Summit is aimed at mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions with a view to transforming education between now and 2030.
2. The Summit will require a focused, intensive, and inclusive preparatory process that is built from the ground up, responds to member state priorities, is supported by the Summit secretariat and UN system and ensures the meaningful engagement of young people and the full set of education stakeholders.
3. The Summit preparatory process will be advanced across three intersecting and reinforcing workstreams:
  - a. National Consultations
  - b. Thematic Action Tracks
  - c. Public engagement and mobilization
4. Building on the preparatory document shared with Member States in February, the purpose of this note is to set out proposed parameters of each workstream for member state initial reflection and consideration.

#### **II. Work stream 1: National consultations**

##### **Objective**

5. National consultations aim at developing a shared vision, commitment and alignment of action across constituencies to transform education between now and 2030. Under the leadership of Member States, national consultations are intended to put focus on the policy, planning and budgetary changes needed to recover learning losses, get SDG4 back on track and reimagine education into the future.

##### **Approach**

6. Inclusive dialogues on the transformation of education require broad public engagement and mobilization. Government-led national consultations would seek to ensure meaningful engagement of the full set of education stakeholders, including students and youth organizations, networks of adolescent girls and young women, feminist movements, civil society groups, teacher associations, the private sector, development partners, education advocates, traditional and religious leaders, academia and research institutions, parliamentary networks, as well as other education influencers. Such an approach may require dedicated exchanges with various constituencies, prioritizing youth and student movements, teacher associations, as well as civil society organizations.
7. Transforming education starts with young people as agents of change. A dedicated global youth engagement strategy is being developed in consultation with key youth-led networks to ensure that

young people are involved in the Summit at all levels and empowered to develop and drive initiatives around the Summit. Connecting global and local youth dialogues, the strategy will enable youth and student-led priorities to be proposed and advanced leading up to the Summit.

8. Given the interconnectedness of education and broader development efforts, government participation should ensure cross-sectoral representation beyond the education sector, including health, social protection, food and nutrition, and labour. To the extent possible, national consultations should leverage existing sector coordination mechanisms. Active participation of finance ministries in these national dialogues is also critical.

### **Substantive Focus**

9. National consultations could be comprised of four components with the following objectives:
  - Inspiring targeted action in the lead up to the Summit to ensure full educational recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, building on the available evidence of the multifaceted impacts of the educational disruption (on nutrition, protection of girls, health and well-being, learning loss, disengagement drop out/push out of students, non-reenrollment etc).
  - Identifying a package of levers and priority actions to transform education and accelerate progress towards shared education commitments, by building on lessons and insights gained from educational response and innovation during the pandemic, integrating new thinking, approaches, learning resources and methods in education policy and practice and drawing on the findings of the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education.
  - Reviewing or identifying national education targets and benchmarks in light of the impacts of the pandemic and the ambition needed to maximize progress by 2030, drawing on the seven global and thematic benchmark indicators recently endorsed by the 2019 Global Education Meeting.<sup>1</sup>
  - Generating commitment to increased and more effective public financing of education, which ensures greater equity in resource allocation, and more efficiency in use. It would be important to identify additional innovative and cross-sectoral mechanisms that can ensure sustainable domestic financing of education.

### **Support**

10. National consultations will be led by a government-selected convenor. Guidelines will be provided to Member States to support the process.
11. In addition, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), where they exist, will be mobilized to support this process, with UNICEF and UNESCO playing a key role in in-country consultations, depending on the local context. Technical advice and seed funding will be made available to UNCTs where possible. National Commissions for UNESCO can also help support government-led national consultations.
12. The Special Adviser will work to mobilize global and regional level networks and platforms, including those organized by and for civil society organizations and youth organizations, to support and facilitate the in-country consultations within and beyond their constituencies.

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<sup>1</sup> [National SDG 4 benchmarks: Fulfilling our neglected commitment, UNESCO GEM and UIS](#)

## Outputs

13. Outcomes from the national consultations could be consolidated in a National Roadmap for Transforming Education Systems, capturing national commitments and consensus on priority actions, building on existing plans, programmes, and initiatives. Heads of State and Government will be encouraged to report on progress made in addressing pandemic-related learning losses and to present their national roadmaps at the Summit in September. In some countries, national consultations could also continue after the Summit to further deepen the national reflection for transforming education. Follow-up and accountability for implementing these roadmaps will be undertaken through existing SDG4 monitoring processes, including the SDG4 High Level Steering Committee.

## III. Work stream 2: Thematic Action Tracks

### Objective

14. The objective of the Thematic Action Tracks work stream is to place a spotlight on a small number of areas that require greater attention and action and that can accelerate progress on education and the 2030 Agenda and transform education. Action tracks will identify evidence-based examples of successful policy interventions and mobilize new commitments to action, building on and strengthening existing initiatives, partnerships and coalitions, including those that emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Approach

15. The Thematic Action Tracks will be guided by the 2030 Agenda and its education-related goals and targets. They will also seek to respond to the Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda, as well as the Report of the International Commission for the Futures of Education, *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, convened by UNESCO.
16. Action tracks will build on global commitments made through the 2015 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action on Education 2030 and the UNESCO Global Education Meetings (GEMs). Synergies will be sought with the Focus Areas of the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee.
17. Action Tracks address key accelerators across the education cycle. The COVID-19 crisis heightened the sense of urgency to tackle the educational inequalities and learning crisis while reaffirming the universal relevance of the 2030 Agenda and its SDG 4: *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. On the other hand, the historical educational disruptions invited us to rethink and reimagine the purpose, content and delivery modes of education—in other words, to *transform education* toward peaceful, inclusive and sustainable futures of humanity and the planet.
18. Action Tracks will be convened at the global level and will make full use of existing coalitions and networks, as well as available virtual platforms and tools to allow for engagement and input from across the world. They will ensure consistent engagement with member states and shall be open to all stakeholders, including donors, policy-makers, civil society groups, young people, teachers' networks, education advocates, academia, the private sector and philanthropies. Education-related convenings over the course of 2022, including at the regional level, will also be leveraged. Action tracks will seek to complement and be informed by the National Consultations workstream and the Public Engagement and Mobilization workstream.

## Substantive focus

19. The following five Thematic Action Tracks build on the priority actions identified in the 2020 Global Education Meeting Declaration, to which national political leaders and the global community committed to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 in the COVID-19 context and beyond. They are further guided by the vision, principles and proposals contained in the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda and UNESCO's Report on the Futures of Education.
20. Endorsed by the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee, these Thematic Action Tracks are universally relevant, reflect the lifelong learning perspective of SDG 4 and spotlight the areas that require urgent and concerted action of governments and the global community. As such, they integrate two approaches—focus on the urgent need to address educational inequalities and learning crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis on one hand, and forward-looking aspiration for system-wide transformation on the other. Equity and gender equality in and through education will be proactively mainstreamed in each Thematic Action Track, taking also into account situations of emergency and crisis:

- i. Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools:

Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools are the most effective means to improve learning outcomes, prevent discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, address the health and well-being of all learners, build an inclusive society and ensure the right to education for all. They are not only good for learners, but for the entire system, improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and ensuring a safe workplace with greater job satisfaction. As highlighted in the Report on the Futures of Education, today's gaps in access, participation and outcomes are based on yesterday's exclusions and oppressions. Tomorrow's progress is dependent not only on their correction, but on a questioning of the assumptions and arrangements that resulted in these inequalities. Equity and gender equality are not goals in their own right, but as prerequisites for ensuring the sustainable future of education.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we have been reminded that schools are more than just places of learning, but also places where children and young people rely on socialization and interaction and can have access to school health and nutrition, including school meals, health services including vaccination and health education on a range of locally relevant topics. Schools also provide protection for children and youth, and when schools are closed there is strong evidence that the risks increase for violence and abuse, early and unintended pregnancy, early marriage and child labour, and drop-out. In particular, school closures exacerbated the already dire situations confronting children and youth living in emergency and crisis, in which almost one half of the global out-of-school population is found. Girls are more likely than boys to be out of school in crisis contexts, and the pandemic has negatively affected girls' access to education in more acute and longer-lasting ways than boys.

To advance on SDG 4 and transform education, countries need better data to understand who is excluded, why and at what stage of their educational journey to inform action. They also need legislative frameworks that enshrine the right to education and prevent and address all forms of discrimination and exclusion. An integrated inter-sectoral and coordinated approach is essential to support the holistic development of learners beyond their education to their protection, health and well-being, and the educational inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups including in fragile, emergency and crisis contexts. It demands a change of culture in the classroom, encouraging more collaborative learning, valuing diversity, and the development of skills, values and conditions needed for more just, equitable, healthy and sustainable futures. In short, the futures of education call for urgent and concerted action of governments, the local and global community to turn the principle of leaving no one behind to the practice of full inclusion, empowerment and social justice.

*Key issues: Gender equality, Education in emergencies, Education for persons with disabilities, and School health and nutrition.*

ii. Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development:

Transforming education means empowering learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be resilient, adaptable and prepared for the uncertain future while contributing to human and planetary well-being and sustainable development. However, some 773 million youth and adults still lack basic literacy skills, two-thirds of whom are women; the proportion of children in low- and middle-income who cannot read a simple text by age 10 may increase from the pre-pandemic 50% to potentially up to 70%. Foundational learning, including literacy and numeracy, is indispensable for lifelong learning while life skills are essential to be able to live a healthy and productive life in a changing environment.

Moreover, in an increasingly complex and interconnected world facing an existential threat such as climate change, there is a growing call for education to enable individuals, as agents of change, to lead to acquire knowledge, skills, values and action for green transition and sustainable development of our societies. Curricula must emphasize ecological, intercultural and interdisciplinary learning, so that all learners from early childhood through adulthood not only acquire relevant knowledge, but also are empowered to take action and contribute to global peace, sustainable development and societal transformation.

Unemployment is affecting youth, in particular, and the transition from school to work is disrupted by sluggish economies and changing labour markets. ILO estimates that at 15.6% the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years of age) tripled that of older adults (4.7% of adults above 25 years of age in 2021; and youth employment impacted more by the COVID-19 with 8.7% reduction in 2020 compared with 3.7% for older adults<sup>2</sup>. To enhance employability and enable ecologically sustainable transition, young people and adults also need continuous reskilling and upskilling for rapidly changing labour markets affected by increased digitization and the greening of economies.

*Key issues: Foundational learning (lifelong), Skills for employment and entrepreneurship, and Education for sustainable development including environmental education.*

iii. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession:

The transformation of education and the achievement of SDG 4 rely heavily on teachers, yet progress is severely constrained by three major challenges: teacher shortages, qualifications and emerging professional development needs, and the status and working conditions of teachers and education personnel. It is estimated that 69 million teachers are still needed globally to meet SDG 4. Teachers in many countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, lack basic qualifications and training. The global pandemic has further accelerated the need to transform teaching and to better support teachers and education personnel to respond to a variety of situations, formats and learning needs. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the urgency of equipping teachers with digital and pedagogical skills, together with social and emotional education to ensure their own wellbeing as well as supporting learners.

The educational disruptions and school closures in times of crisis have confirmed the crucial role of teachers not only in maintaining learning continuity, but in sustaining the dynamics of households, families, and communities. However, this high regard for the work of teachers is not fully reflected in current policy measures; and teachers are seldom consulted or invited to participate in decision-making and policy formulation processes. A consequence of this lack of recognition is that the teaching profession is not one of the most appealing careers for students

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<sup>2</sup> ILOSTAT and ILO. 2021. *Statistical Brief: An update on the youth labour market impact of the COVID-19 crisis*.



going into tertiary education. Beyond the working conditions and remuneration, another deterrent for youths to enter the profession and for in-service teachers to deploy their talent lies in the teacher management systems that constrain teachers' agency, autonomy, and decision-making power, undermining teachers' pedagogical judgement. narrowing the curriculum and reducing creativity and innovation. Accelerating toward SDG 4 and transforming education is only possible when teachers are professionalized, trained, motivated and supported – in all settings and all levels of education from early childhood to TVET, adult and higher education.

*Key issues: Teacher shortages, Qualifications and emerging professional development needs, Status and working conditions of teachers and education personnel, Educational leadership and innovation.*

iv. Digital learning and transformation:

During the COVID-19 crisis, we witnessed impressive creativity, innovation and collaboration to provide remote learning, using diverse technologies. However, the pandemic illuminated the connectivity and digital divides within and across countries, with more than two-thirds of school-age learners (1.3 billion children) lacking internet access at home.<sup>3</sup> Digital divides also mean many are left out of remote learning opportunities, including girls and young women who are less likely than boys and men in their households to have digital skills, access to computers and the internet to benefit equally from remote learning, and to access information and social networks. Inclusive, equitable and sustainable approaches to digital technologies as well as safe and productive use of online learning are a key strategy for educational recovery and resilience and for the future of education and learning. In this regard, the Rewired Global Declaration on Connectivity for Education presents concrete actions to commit to under three core principles: center the most marginalized, expand investments in free and high-quality digital education content, and move education to digital spaces through pedagogical innovation and change.

Digital transformation implies an integrated and innovative approach to the provision and management of education, and the organization of teaching and learning. To avoid fragmented technology and content solutions, countries need to plan and build post-pandemic inclusive open school systems that integrate technological solutions, online curriculum-aligned courses, and digital competencies of teachers and students to support human coaching and digital learning. The possible negative impact of digital transformation on well-being, privacy, and security of students and teachers must also be thoroughly investigated and mitigated. The humanistic vision to the use of technology is articulated in the UNESCO' Recommendation on Ethics of AI and in the Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education.

*Key issues: Digital transformation of education systems; Connectivity/narrowing digital divide, inclusive and assistive technologies; Free, open and high-quality digital education content; and Digital citizenship, well-being, privacy and security.*

v. Financing of education:

Education is an investment that requires sustainable funding and domestic resources remain the primary source of funding for education. The 2021 Global Education Meeting Paris Declaration urges all governments to develop strategies to increase resources for education and use these resources effectively and equitably. Reaching the SDG 4 targets will require significantly increased financial resources. Over the last decade, global education spending has grown steadily with low- and middle-income countries registering the fastest growth. But, in many countries, the spending growth has been accompanied by high population growth that will continue to put significant pressure on developing countries' education systems and government budgets over the next 30 years.

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<sup>3</sup> [UNICEF and ITU. 2020. "How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic."](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenge of inadequate national educational budgets and flatlined ODA commitments, jeopardizing the achievement of the SDG 4 targets in many countries. Many countries also face additional costs of reopening schools, keeping them open safely, addressing the learning losses and narrowing the digital divide, in the face of shrinking economies and growing debt burdens. Not only should investments in education increase, but resources should also be spent in the most purposeful and effective way possible. The Summit seeks for better harmonization, alignment, and accountability of stakeholders for (1) ensuring adequate and sustainable financing matched to country needs, including domestic financing, international aid, innovative financing and fiscal space expansion; and (2) increasing equity and efficiency of public and international spending on education.

*Key issues: Ensuring adequate and sustainable financing matched to country needs, including domestic financing, international aid, innovative financing and fiscal space expansion; and Increasing equity and efficiency of public and international spending on education.*

### **Support**

21. Each action track will be co-led by a champion member state(s) and a leading stakeholder, with substantive support provided by one or more UN or multilateral entity and the Special Adviser.
22. Each Action Track will be responsible for developing a discussion paper that synthesizes the research evidence, situation analysis, good practices and innovations, and recommendations on the key issues identified, for discussion with member states and education partners. They will also be responsible for ensuring the quality and consultative processes in developing the initial paper. The Summit Secretariat will provide an outline for the discussion paper and coordinate and support the consultation processes, with a view to maximizing coherence across different action tracks.

### **Outputs**

23. Each Action Track shall develop an initial discussion paper, a set of ideas for action and an online catalogue of evidence-based good practices and innovations. Building on existing coalitions and networks, the Summit Action Tracks should also contribute to successful partnerships and opportunities for multilateral, multisectoral mobilization. These will be discussed initially at the Pre-Summit, with the final outputs presented and showcased at the Summit itself, and inform the Summit Summary.
24. Follow-up implementation and monitoring will be carried out within the framework of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism, spearheaded by the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee.

## **IV. Work Stream 3: Public engagement and mobilization**

### **Objective**

25. Given the speed and scale of change needed to achieve SDG4 and reimagine education, deep and sustained public support and engagement, which translates into political debate at all levels, will be essential. Building off a range of existing efforts, the objective of the public engagement and mobilization work stream is to democratize dialogue around education and to grow a global movement for education transformation.

### **Approach**

26. The public engagement and mobilization workstream will be closely interconnected with the other work streams of the Summit – thematic action tracks and national consultations. It will take a two-fold approach:

27. *Placing youth and children to the forefront:* Transforming education starts with young people as agents of change. A dedicated youth engagement strategy is under development in consultation with key youth-led networks to ensure that young people are involved in the Summit at all levels and empowered to develop and drive initiatives around the Summit. The strategy will enable youth and student-led priorities to be proposed, supported and implemented leading up to the Summit. Guidelines for the national consultations will articulate how best to engage young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women, to contribute both to secure new commitments to achieve SDG 4 at the country level and to raise awareness among children, young people, communities and decision-makers around the importance of transforming education. Young people will also be centrally involved in Summit Action Tracks, as well as in the Pre-Summit and Summit itself.
28. *Increasing public support for education:* Building on existing global education movements and recent advocacy campaigns (e.g., the Save our Future campaign, the GPE replenishment “Raise your hand” campaign, the 100 Million campaign, Keeping girls in the picture, Education *Plus* Initiative, among others), and drawing on the themes identified through the Summit action tracks, targeted mobilization efforts at the global, national and local levels could help strengthen public awareness of, and demand for education and grow an unprecedented global movement for transforming education. Harnessing the power of civil society groups, young people, teachers’ networks, education advocates, academia, business and other education champions and influencers at the global, regional and country levels will be critical. This movement will be multi-sectorial in nature, and closely interconnected with other complementary sectors, in particular health, food, nutrition, child protection and social protection that are key to achieve SDG 4.
29. Public engagement and mobilization will be supported by broader public information and communication, through building a robust online and media presence. A dynamic and inclusive online platform will be designed to capture the Summit process, support knowledge exchange around all areas of work and track Summit outcomes.

### **Support**

30. This workstream will be facilitated by a Public Mobilization Hub involving key UN and other partners’ communications teams at the global and regional levels. It will serve to connect networks, align content and amplify dissemination, connecting the global, regional and country levels, and building in particular on the outcomes of the national consultations. Efforts will be made to identify and engage specific champions or influencers to manage media placements and/or help target specific markets that may be more difficult to reach (e.g., private sector and philanthropies). Youth engagement will ensure the participation of diverse networks of youth-focused organizations and will be facilitated by the SDG4Youth network, which aims to include young education activists in shaping global education policies.

### **Outputs**

31. Outputs from Public engagement and mobilization will include a dedicated online platform to capture the Summit process and outcomes and ensure that a broad range of stakeholders remain engaged throughout the process. A more detailed stakeholders’ engagement plan will also be developed to clarify which groups will be informed, consulted or involved during the preparation phase and Summit itself, and ensure a truly inclusive mobilization process and sense of ownership.
32. Public engagement and mobilization efforts leading up to the Summit will be part of the broader communications and engagement strategy of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism (GCM) for the SDG4, to ensure that the global movement for education created in the lead up to the Summit is sustained and continue advancing efforts to transform education beyond the Summit.



## **V. Follow-ups**

33. The Summit will be an integral part and critical milestone in the roadmap of the renewed Global Cooperation Mechanism (GCM) for education. As such, the follow-up actions to the Summit outcomes will be taken forward by the SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC) under its mandate for the overall coordination and monitoring of SDG4.
34. By helping to build momentum in advance of the 2023 HLPF under the General Assembly, the outcomes of the Summit will further inform the Summit of the Future in 2023.