

2017 High-Level Political Forum
Submission of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee

The following submission is from the SDG Education 2030 Steering Committee in response to the call by the HLPF Secretariat:

...to provide substantive input to the 2017 HLPF showcasing your intergovernmental body's contribution towards the SDG Agenda in general, and particularly for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and respective targets that are most relevant to your intergovernmental body's mandate. The following template inspired by the report of the Secretary-General on global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/70/684) could be considered in providing inputs:

- (a) an assessment of the situation regarding the principle of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" at the global level;*
- (b) the identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges;*
- (c) valuable lessons learned on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity;*
- (d) emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity;*
- (e) areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required;*
- (f) policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication.*

This submission is based on the commitments outlined in the 2015 Incheon Declaration *Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all* and the *Education 2030 Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG 4*. Unless otherwise stated, the statistics draw on the UNESCO Institute of Statistics database and analyses from the 2013/14 EFA Global Monitoring Report and the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, as well as its associated Gender Review. The publications drawn on for this submission document the reciprocal linkages between education, poverty and prosperity.

The meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will be held from Monday, 10 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2017; including the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum from Monday, 17 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2017. The theme will be "*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*". The set of goals to be reviewed in depth will be the following, including Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Introduction

The continued challenge of extreme poverty and high income inequality

The incidence of extreme poverty has declined globally since 2000 with the share of people living on less than US\$ 1.90 a day falling globally from 29% in 1999 to 13% in 2012, partly because of rapid economic development in China. But the benefits of growth have not been evenly distributed and income inequality remains high. Almost 900 million people still lived in extreme poverty in 2012, concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where 19% and 43% respectively of the population are poor. Moreover, despite a substantial increase in wealth and income globally, the gap between the rich and poor remains high. According to Oxfam (2017) eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity. Similarly, among the 34 OECD member states, the richest 10% of the population earn 9.6 times the income of the poorest 10%. Economic growth alone is insufficient to combat poverty, improve the living conditions of all the population or guarantee development.

Centrality of education for poverty eradication and the promotion of prosperity

In this global development context, education has acquired increasing international legitimacy as a promising strategy in the fight against poverty (SDG 1) and inequality (SDG 10). Education is a public good and responsibility. As a basic human right, education is an *enabling* right for other social and economic rights, such as the right to a decent income. In addition to the individual benefits of schooling, education also plays important social and economic roles. It is no surprise then that in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, meeting the education goal (SDG 4) is regarded as key to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity; and progress on other goals is key to meeting the education challenge. Indeed, a multidimensional definition of poverty goes beyond income and recognizes that better access to quality education and other services are key poverty-reducing interventions.

Linkages between education and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

Given its centrality for the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, education is articulated as a stand-alone goal (SDG 4) with seven outcome targets and three means of implementation which aim to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. The key elements of the education goal – access to basic skills, equity and lifelong learning – are key drivers for achieving social, economic and environmental goals. But education also cuts across the 2030 Agenda. With respect to the Sustainable Development Goals covered in this review, improved education attainment and learning achievement increase the earning capacity of individuals and the economic growth of nations, which in turn help reduce poverty. The importance of public expenditure on education (alongside health and social protection) as a percentage of total government expenditure is reflected in its selection as a global indicator under SDG 1. Research and development in agriculture is key to achieve food security and sustainable practices; likewise, education, particularly for women, is an essential ingredient of improved nutrition – both of which come under SDG 2. Education is one of the most powerful ways of achieving SDG 3 on health and of making sure the benefits are passed on to future generations. With respect to SDG 5, achieving gender equality requires an approach, which ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only access education and training but are also empowered equally in and through education and lifelong learning. Good quality education also holds the key for innovation-led economic growth, one of the objectives of SDG 9. In addition to education's role in the achievement of specific SDGs, schools, universities and the education sector more generally, have a critical role to play in raising awareness of Agenda 2030, and to galvanize commitments by teaching about the SDGs, undertaking research on sustainable development and supporting local sustainability efforts.

The 2015 *Incheon Declaration* and the *Education 2030 Framework for Action* provide guidance to translate the new vision of education into reality, including through integrated action across the other SDGs in order to realize the education goal as well as the overall SDG agenda to transform lives.

Poverty as a barrier to education

But poverty is also a major barrier to access to education and quality learning outcomes. In turn, prosperity seems increasingly unreachable for many because of the lack of a quality education. Even when schooling is officially fee-free, additional costs for textbooks and other school requirements, appropriate school clothing or uniforms, meals, teacher salaries, miscellaneous fees, as well as contributions to school maintenance, can create financial barriers for many families. The lower a family's income, the greater the effect that the associated costs of schooling will have on a family's ability to ensure the education of their children. This is a vicious cycle, as lack of access in turn limits families' ability to climb out of the trap of poverty. Furthermore, malnourished children living in conditions of poor sanitation are unable to develop to their full potential and benefit from schooling and other learning opportunities. Gender discrimination also perpetuates the exclusion of women from education. The cost of educating children, youth and adults is far outweighed by the cost of not educating them. Adults who lack basic skills have greater difficulty finding well-paying jobs and escaping poverty. Education for girls has particularly striking social benefits: incomes are higher and maternal and infant mortality rates are lower for educated women, who also have more personal freedom in making choices. But there are many examples of countries that have been successful in reducing the disparities in education associated with socioeconomic status and gender. These countries demonstrate that it is possible to achieve relatively high levels of literacy and numeracy while mitigating the effects of social and economic disadvantage.

(a) Assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world” at the global level

Beyond income, lack of education is a key dimension of poverty. **Despite considerable progress observed in primary enrolment since 2000, the world is still far from ensuring that all children and youth have access to primary and secondary education.** In 2014, one out of ten primary school-age children worldwide had either dropped out or had never set foot in a classroom. Moreover, this rate has been stagnating since 2008, reflecting persistent pockets of exclusion. Similarly, out-of-school rates for adolescents of lower and upper secondary school-age are stagnating at 16% and 37% since 2011 and 2013 respectively. Currently, about 263 million children and youth are out of school of which 61 million children of primary school-age, 60 million adolescents of lower secondary school-age and 142 million youth of upper secondary school-age. They largely reside in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia where population growth exerts a substantial pressure on education systems.

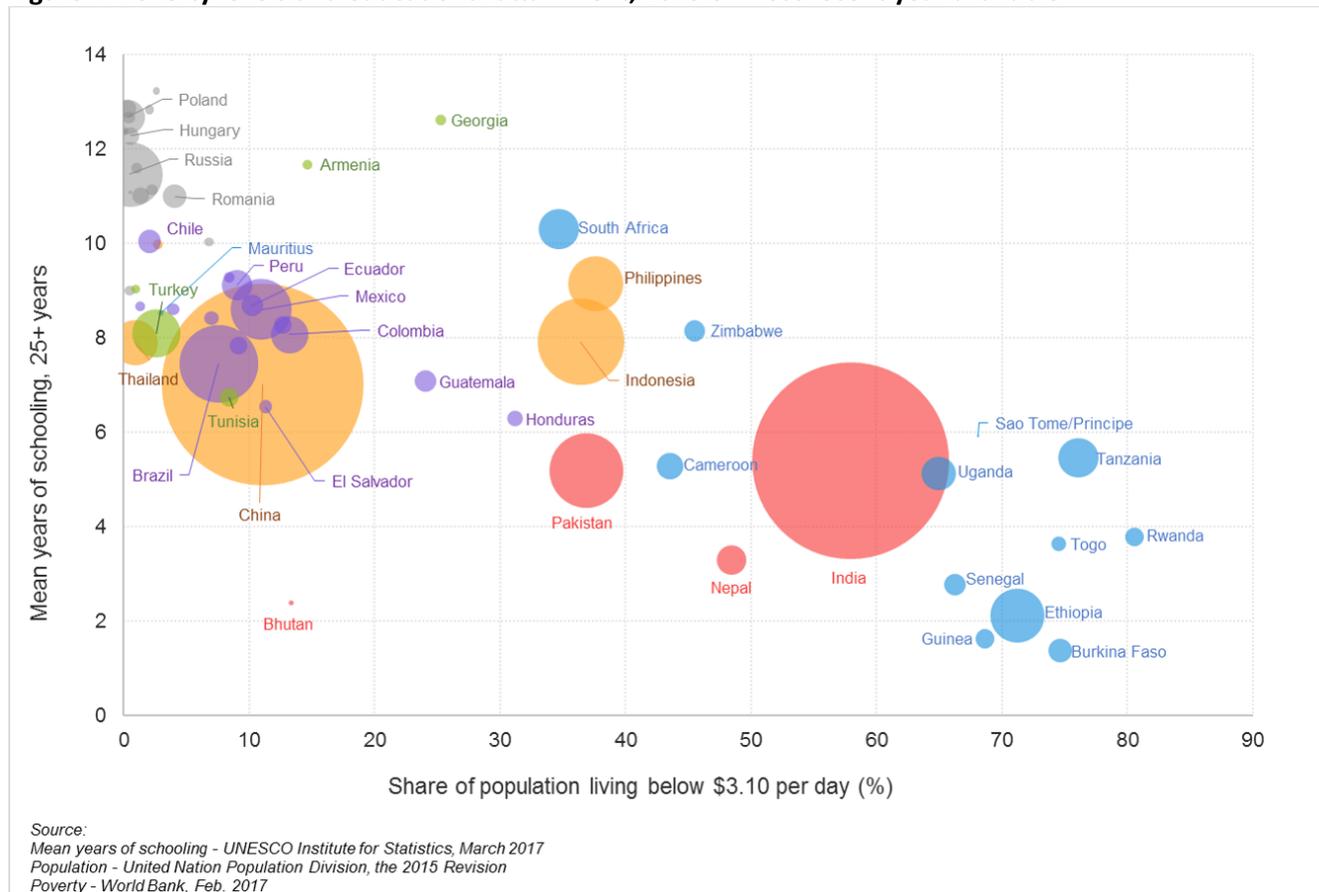
Despite progress, disparities persist in pre-primary and early childhood care and education. Over 200 million children are not enrolled in pre-primary education, the majority from poor and other marginalized groups, depriving them of the necessary foundation for education achievement. Pre-primary access in low income countries is still hovering at 17% compared to 83% for high income countries: In countries where data is available, the poorest children are more than 2 times less likely to participate in early learning opportunities than their richest peers. In low and lower middle income countries these numbers are exacerbated and poor kids are 3 times less likely to be in preschool compared to kids living in wealthiest families in the same countries.

Although access to education has expanded, disparities in school completion persist between the rich and poor across and within countries. Analysis of household survey data suggests that, as of 2011, the upper secondary completion rate ranged from 14% in low-income, 38% in lower middle-income, 43% in upper middle-income, and to 84% in high-income countries. While 93% of youth from the richest 20% of households in high-income countries did not complete upper secondary school, only 1% of the girls from the poorest 20% of

households in low-income countries completed upper secondary school. Moreover, if current trends continue, universal primary completion will only be achieved in 2042, universal lower secondary completion in 2059, and universal upper secondary completion only in 2084.

Even in countries where there has been much progress, education outcomes remain much worse for disadvantaged groups, partly because of pro-rich biases in the incidence of public spending. Indeed, almost 60 percent of the poorest youth population (aged 20–24 years) in sub-Saharan Africa has fewer than 4 years of schooling compared to 15 percent in the richest quintile.

Figure 1: Poverty levels and educational attainment, 2015 or most recent year available



Note: The size of a bubble is proportional to the country population in 2015.

Disparities are even starker when it comes to higher education, both across and within countries. An analysis of global trends by UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report indicates that across 76 countries only 1% of the poorest quintile have spent at least 4 years in higher education compared to 20% of the richest quintile. In the Philippines, students from the richest households are 50 times more likely to have completed four years of higher education than those from the poorest. Access to higher education has expanded rapidly in wealthier countries with enrolment in the richest countries at 74%, compared to 8% in the poorest. But even in the richest countries significant disparities in access among the rich and poor are observed.

The interaction of poverty with gender is a potent form of exclusion. In sub-Saharan Africa, there is gender parity in the percentage of those who have ever been to school and those who have completed primary education among the richest 20%. However, among the poorest 20% there were 89 females for every 100 males who had ever been to school and 83 females for every 100 males who had completed primary school. The disparity widens to 73 females for lower secondary completion and 40 females for upper secondary completion. By contrast, there is considerable disparity at the expense of the poorest males in East and South-

East Asia in lower and upper secondary completion. In many countries, living in rural or disadvantaged areas often puts children and adolescents at greater risk of not completing school.

Despite global expansion of access to education, many children and youth still do not acquire the basic skills that set the foundation for lifelong learning, employment and sustainable development. The gap in education is visible not only in access and completion of schooling but also in the skills they are learning while there. In developed regions, nearly every student achieves basic math and reading levels in middle school. However, more than a third to a half of developing country students do not meet basic learning levels. In Latin America, learning assessment data indicates that only six pupils out of ten achieve the minimum proficiency in reading in early grades (TERCE). Moreover, in many sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries only half of all pupils attain minimum proficiency levels in reading or mathematics at the end of primary education (PASEC, SACMEQ and TERCE). Existing research indicates that failure to learn to read by the time a student reaches grade 3 is strongly associated with grade repetition and risk of dropout. By the end of lower secondary education, the latest results from international large-scale assessments (PISA and TIMSS) show that in half of the participating countries, mostly middle-income countries, about 15% of students failed to achieve the minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics. What is of great concern is the disparity in learning outcomes between students from different backgrounds, income groups, and urban/rural schools. For instance, the percentage of lower secondary students in urban schools achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading is 1.1 times (median) higher than their peers from rural schools. And, the percentage for students from the top wealth quantile households is 1.4 times (median) higher than their peer from the lowest wealth quantile households.

(b) The identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges

Poverty remains a key barrier for educational access, attainment and achievement and represents a major risk for the sustainable development agenda.

Likewise, the sustainable development agenda requires changes in the production and consumption model for continued and shared prosperity in a globalized world, with significant implications for education. Accordingly, education systems must be relevant and respond to rapidly changing labour markets, technological advances, urbanization, migration, political instability, environmental degradation, natural hazards and disasters, competition for natural resources, demographic challenges, increasing global unemployment, persistent poverty, widening inequality and expanding threats to peace and safety. Beyond economic imperatives and new skills for changing working environments and demands, as highlighted by the focus of SDG target 4.7, education systems need to prepare the ground for these changes by ensuring that children and youth acquire the competencies to communicate appropriately with people from other cultures, language backgrounds or countries; to understand other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings; to adjust their own behaviours to fit new contexts; and to process information in a critical manner. These skills and competencies are key to **responsible citizenship** in a more complex, plural and interconnected world.

In addition, in a world in which technological change is increasing productivity and simultaneously eliminating jobs, acquiring new skills or raising skill levels is critical for reducing the dispersion of earnings. To meet this challenge and improve the income prospects of future generations, improving education quality, eliminating financial barriers to secondary and higher education, and providing improved and relevant technical and vocational training is essential. Moreover, low- and middle-income countries may need to expand their access and capacity to use technology, noting that a complex array of skills, knowledge and organizational structures are required to accomplish any process of technological change. Education has a critical role to play in this regard. In supporting this process it must ensure the building of capabilities to absorb, master, use, and innovate new technologies is equitable and does not further marginalize the poor and other disadvantaged groups.

In respect to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity through education, **areas requiring urgent attention** include:

- **Inequality in access to education:** Equity issues in education constitute a major policy challenge for the 2030 ambition of leaving no one behind. UIS analysis shows that being poor, female, and living in rural areas is strongly associated with low levels of school participation, completion and learning outcomes. Evidence from about 80 developing countries indicates that a poor rural girl has a 76% chance of attending lower secondary education and less than 20% probability of actually completing this level in half of the countries (median value). Inequity issues accumulate as one goes further through the education cycle as disadvantages are compounded.
- **Inequity in education quality and learning outcomes:** Inequity in learning outcomes may reproduce the structure of poverty, marginalization and discrimination. While parity indices show growing advantages for girls as they progress through the educational cycle, poor and rural students consistently perform at a lower level than their peers from urban and with wealthier family backgrounds. In certain countries, the disparity in learning outcomes between the rich and poor can be as much as two to five times.
- **Education disparities in countries in conflict and emergency situations:** 3.7 million refugee school-age children have no school to go to -1.75 million (or 50 %) were not in primary school and 1.95 million refugee adolescents were not in secondary school (78%). Refugees are five times more likely to be out of school than the global average (UNHCR, 2016).
- **Means of implementation and enabling conditions of governance are conducive to quality outcomes:** It is also crucial to strengthen the means of implementation to achieve the sustainable education development goal to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Providing education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all is important because gender intersects with poverty, disability and other inequalities to exacerbate further marginalization and vulnerability to gender-based violence within and outside schools. A range of countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, need to invest substantially in school infrastructure, strengthening the provision of pre-primary and early childhood development services and human capital as the lack of trained teachers and appropriate school conditions is jeopardizing the prospect of quality education for all. The equitable distribution of high quality teachers to low-income schools and students is a challenge globally. Sub-Saharan Africa has a relatively low percentage of trained teachers in pre-primary (41%), primary (72%), and secondary education (55%). Similarly, in Mexico. Teachers tend to be distributed in a way that favors advantaged students. In South Korea, on the other hand, the distribution of qualified teachers favors disadvantaged children. Schooling conditions can lack basic amenities long taken for granted in other parts of the world and limit learning opportunities for sub-Saharan African children. Only some one-quarter of schools in the region have access to electricity and many schools still do not have single-sex basic sanitation facilities.
- **Filling the education finance gap:** Government spending on education (excluding post-secondary education) by low income countries, will need to increase by 50% as a share of GDP between 2012 and 2030. The **total annual financing gap** between available domestic resources and the amount necessary to reach the new education targets is projected to average \$US39 billion between 2015 and 2030. The gap is particularly large in low income countries, where it constitutes 42% of annual total costs. Aid will thus remain a crucial source of education finance over the next 15 years if the targets are to be met. Across low and lower middle income countries, donor aid for pre-primary, primary and secondary education will need to increase by at least six times.

- **More equitable allocation of education finances:** A challenge is in the way education finances are allocated often favoring the more advantaged. [In Malawi, for example, the top 10 per cent use 68 per cent of all public resources for education; this means that only 32 per cent in Malawi is used by the remaining 90 per cent.](#) To address this, countries such as Brazil, India, and South Africa have introduced funding formulas that target more resources to disadvantaged areas to help narrow gaps in access and learning.
- **Overcoming data gaps where evidence is most needed:** The 2030 SDG agenda is an opportunity to influence policies and strategic planning at all levels. The results of UIS surveys to assess country readiness to monitor SDG 4 show that data are available for barely half of the global indicators proposed to monitor SDG 4 targets across the four regions surveyed (53% in Latin American and the Caribbean, 47% in the Arab States, 47% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 44% in Asia and the Pacific). Disaggregated data required to monitor educational equality are also seriously lacking. In the four regions surveyed, less than one-fifth of the available data for the global indicators can be disaggregated by students' wealth background and disability status. By comparison, disaggregate data by sex, school location, and age are more likely available (85%, 74%, and 63% respectively).
- **The weak availability of data in conflict-affected countries or those in emergency situations** deserves urgent attention. When comparing data availability in conflict-affected countries with non-conflict affected countries, UIS data confirms that conflict-affected countries are more likely to lack the data to monitor targets in SDG 4. Data availability to monitor the progress on equitable and quality primary and secondary education (Target 4.1) is available in only 25% of conflict-affected countries as compared to 40% of non-conflict affected countries.
- In many countries, there is a **major gap in the availability and quality of data on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**, especially relative to work-based training. There is also an urgent need to ensure **greater coordination with ministerial departments** beyond the ministries of education and to go beyond supply-side data on TVET. School-based TVET varies considerably in coverage - South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Caribbean register very low TVE coverage of total secondary enrolment. Thus, South and West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean register 1%, 2% and 2% respectively. On the other hand, East Asia, Latin America and Central Asia total 11%, 10% and 11% respectively (GMR 2012).
- Apart from quantitative data, extensive use should be made of **other administrative data and qualitative data** and reports describing the education and training systems as a whole, as well as context elements such as the governance and quality assurance of different levels and strands of education and the main challenges addressed in past, current and future educational reforms.

(c) Valuable lessons learned on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

A wealth of evidence indicates that education is one of the most powerful tools for reducing poverty and promoting prosperity. **Education helps reduce chronic poverty, helps reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and improves wages of individuals.** If all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty, equivalent to a 12% reduction in the world total.

In the poorest countries, **achieving universal secondary education by 2030 could bring the eradication of poverty forward by 10 years.** The proportion of the population living below the poverty line of US\$1.25 (at 2005 purchasing power parity) in low-income countries would be 24% instead of 28% at current education expansion rates by 2030, and 2% instead of 9% by 2050. With 875 million people expected to be living in low-

income countries in 2050 under the scenario of universal secondary completion by 2030, this would correspond to more than 60 million fewer million people in poverty.

There is very strong evidence of the diverse effects of education on health. There are few more dramatic illustrations of the power of education than the estimate that **2.1 million lives of children under 5 were saved between 1990 and 2009 because of improvements in the education of women of reproductive age**. That is more than half the total of 4 million lives saved by reducing child mortality during the period. By contrast, economic growth accounted for less than 10% of the total. Achieving universal upper secondary education by 2030 would reduce the under-5 mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa from 68 to 54 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030 and from 51 to 38 by 2050.

Education can reduce maternal mortality, which is caused by pregnancy complications such as preeclampsia, bleeding and infections, and by unsafe abortion. **If all women completed primary education, maternal mortality would fall from 210 to 71 deaths per 100,000 births, or by 66%. This would save the lives of 189,000 women every year.**

Education helps women overcome unequal and oppressive social expectations so they can make choices about their lives. When girls spend more years in school, they tend to marry later and have their first child later, but the effect of education goes beyond this to give girls and young women greater awareness of their rights and improve their confidence in their ability to make decisions that affect their lives. In middle-income countries in Latin America, such as Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador and Mexico, **the proportion of women in paid employment increases sharply as women's education level rises**, according to analysis of labour force survey data. Ensuring that girls stay in school is one of the most effective ways to **avert child marriage**. If all girls had primary education in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, child marriage would fall by 14%, from almost 2.9 million to less than 2.5 million, and if they had secondary education it would fall by 64% to just over one million.

Education improves stability, peace and security. Every year of schooling decreases the chance of youth engaging in violent conflict by 20 percent. A lack of opportunity for education for displaced and refugee children can perpetuate cycles of migration; this was one of the motivating factors for Syrian families seeking refuge in Europe in 2015.

(d) Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity

The effects of expanding schooling and improving education quality on poverty reduction can, however, be mitigated by several factors. First of all, as the sophistication of economies has increased, it is no longer sufficient to aim simply for getting all children and youth to school and ensuring basic literacy and numeracy skills, which were once the ticket for escaping poverty. **The extent to which countries can productively employ large numbers of workers will largely depend on their ability to provide other skills.** The export-led manufacturing growth model of Asia offers limited guidance. The loss of middle skill jobs and the unpreparedness of education systems to provide transferable skills leave large numbers of people at risk of vulnerable employment and exclusion from further learning opportunities.

As requirements are shifting, education systems need to adjust to fulfil their role. **The emphasis on lifelong learning in SDG4 is important for ensuring that individuals' skills and competencies are maintained and improved as work, technology, and skill requirements change.** Accordingly, there is a need to re-orient training systems to offer relevant quality training while ensuring equal access to training for the poor. Beyond specialist technical knowledge and skills (enterprise, business know-how, financial skills) vocational education and training should include basic skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT skills), 'employability' skills (communication, application of numbers, team working, problem solving, learning to learn etc.), higher order skills (logic, reasoning, analysis, synthesis, statistics, etc.), attitudinal and behavioural skills (initiative, confidence,

willingness, perseverance, determination), as well as life skills (social, health, interpersonal skills). While mainstreaming is crucial, targeted programmes are still needed to reach out to the most vulnerable groups and ensure their faster access to skills and employment. In developing countries with currently low levels of education attainment, policies that promote more equal access to basic education (for example, cash transfers aimed at encouraging better attendance at primary schools, or spending on public education that benefits the poor) and targeted TVET programmes could help reduce inequality by facilitating the accumulation of human capital, and making educational opportunities less dependent on socioeconomic circumstances.

The most critical challenge is for economic growth to be broad-based to ensure that its results are spread to the largest possible extent. **The equal distribution of education opportunities can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable model of production and consumption** but such an economic model is also a prerequisite for education's potential to be realized.

The effects of poverty reduction on improving education attainment and achievement can also be allayed for a number of reasons. Demographic issues, such as fast population growth, rapid urbanization or spurts of migration, have consequences that call for flexibility in education planning. For instance, slums in several low- and middle-income countries host populations that do not enjoy full social and economic rights and are not provided with access to basic services, including education. The growing prevalence of private schools in slums and its effect on equality of opportunity and social cohesion is often underestimated or even disregarded. **Even if overall living standards are improving, equity and inclusion will not be achieved unless education is integrated in urban planning.**

Natural and human disasters also strongly affect the capacity of education systems to deliver services for vulnerable populations affected by climate change and conflict. This is especially relevant in the case of refugees considering that more than half of them are under 18, and many unaccompanied by their families. The percentage of out-of-school children who live in conflict-affected countries increased from 29% in 2000 to 35% in 2014; among girls, it was 37%. In North Africa and Western Asia, the share increased from 63% in 2000 to 91% in 2014. Globally, the percentage of out-of-school adolescents who live in conflict-affected countries also increased from 21% to 25% over the same period. **Given the long-term nature of displacement and the magnitude of the challenge in some countries, education systems that receive forcibly displaced children and youth need to adapt to support their long-term integration.**

To ensure education is more equitable and focused on the most disadvantaged learners will require changes in the design of education systems, practices in and out of school, and in the way in which resources are allocated. This may include managing school choice, providing second chance opportunities and alternate pathways, emphasis on inclusion and targeted assistance to marginalized and vulnerable groups, strengthening linkages between school, home and community, and greater investment in early childhood care and education in particular targeting the poor.

(e) Areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required

Unless urgent action is taken, the goal of poverty eradication will be missed, directly, because our progress toward the education goal is off track and, indirectly, because the world will lose the beneficial effects of education. The High-Level Political Forum, as the apex institution of the follow-up and review mechanism in the sustainable development agenda, is accountable for prioritizing actions in response to the submissions of inter-governmental forums and bodies, as well as major groups and other stakeholders representing civil society, providing political guidance on the next steps.

At the meeting of the High-Level Political Forum, political guidance is needed in two areas related to education and its links with poverty and prosperity.

1. There is need to support more and better-targeted external finance for education in the poorest countries.

There is no doubt that the bulk of resources for financing education will come from domestic resources and the view of the Steering Committee is that the High-Level Political Forum will give sufficient attention to the efforts required to broaden the tax base, and to fight tax evasion and avoidance particularly by multinational firms, which results in the loss of billions from national treasuries. However, it is also clear that external finance will remain critical for the poorest countries at least for the next generation. Even assuming domestic revenue mobilization is improved, an annual US\$39 billion financing gap remains for the period 2015-2030 to ensure that every child and adolescent in low- and lower-middle-income countries has access to good quality education from the pre-primary to upper secondary level. Yet, external financing for education is well below its 2010 levels with no signs of recovery.

There are currently three initiatives to raise the level of external financing to levels commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge. First, the pledges for the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education fund need to be completed this year. Second, following a recommendation of the International Commission for the Financing of Global Education Opportunity, steps have been taken to set up a new International Financing Facility for Education (IFFEd) that is expected to raise the capital of multilateral development banks to be allocated to education through loans. Third, the Education Cannot Wait fund for education in emergencies has been established to address the chronic underfunding of humanitarian aid for education. **The High-Level Political Forum needs to stress the importance of achieving progress with the three initiatives and need for continued strengthening of coordination of education responses in emergencies and crises.** This will include the issue of clearer and consistent criteria that will ensure aid to education reaches those who need it most.

2. Progress on sustainable development requires more coherence between sectoral policies, including at the level of both domestic and international financing. There needs to be a clear integration of the income generating, social protection, and education, health, and nutrition, water and sanitation dimensions of poverty reduction programmes. However, in practice, integrated development planning remains an exception rather than the rule. **The High-Level Political Forum needs to champion the idea of integrated planning, which should be seen as the cornerstone of policy making under the sustainable development agenda.** It should draw attention to examples of good practice among government and donor interventions that coordinate different sectors.

(f) Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication

The recommendations of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee to the HLPF from the perspective of education in the SDGs and its connection to poverty eradication and prosperity are outlined below. They relate both to policies which aim to help achieve SDG 4 on education as a dimension of poverty, as well as to policies aiming to increase the effectiveness of education in contributing to poverty eradication and increased prosperity:

- **Countries must ensure that levels of domestic funding for education are in line with the international benchmarks of at least 15% of public expenditure and 4% of GDP** as outlined in the 2015 *Incheon Declaration* and the *Education 2030 Framework for Action*. In 2014, at least 35 countries did not meet this commitment and would need to either increase their domestic resource mobilization efforts and/or their prioritization of education.
- **More and better-targeted external finance for education in the poorest countries and within countries.** The level and predictability of external financing of education must also be ensured. Current levels of aid to education remain well below need in the poorest countries where there is a financing gap equivalent to 42% of the total cost of ensuring access to good quality education from the pre-primary to upper secondary level in low-income countries. Initiatives to increase and better target development and humanitarian aid – and improve their articulation – need to be given the utmost

priority by the international community. Filling the US\$ 39 billion education financing gap for 2015-2030 will require increased and better harmonized external funding. In this regard the Global Partnership for Education, the proposed International Financing Facility and the Education Cannot Wait fund for education in emergencies must be fully aligned and coordinated to ensure increased funds for all levels of education and that they target aid to education to reach those who need it most. Efforts for their integration should be pursued.

- **Prioritise the commitment to free primary and secondary education and ensure a lower cost burden of education for families.** Even where fees are abolished in legislation, the share of total education expenditure borne by households at each level can remain high. An analysis of 50 countries showed that the household share of total education expenditure was 18% in high-income countries, 34% in middle-income countries and 49% in low-income countries. The burden of the direct and indirect costs of education for families can be reduced through such strategies as conditional cash transfers, provision of free learning materials, targeted funding to the poor and other excluded groups, or through village savings and loan associations.
- **Achieve universal secondary education completion.** In addition to providing financial support to poor families to cover the direct and indirect costs of schooling, policies must support the provision of a complete cycle of quality secondary education for all, as investment in secondary education provides a clear boost to economic development, much more than can be achieved by universal primary education alone. The policy mix needed to do this will depend on the context. In some countries, it will be necessary to extend the coverage of compulsory education to at least nine years in line with international commitments. In other countries, it will be important to raise the minimum age for admission to employment and enforce more strictly the implementation of the relevant legislation. In other countries it may be advisable to make secondary education more relevant to young people. Across the board, the supply of secondary schools will need to increase, as will 'second chance' programmes and pathways for youth and adults who have not had the opportunity to access a complete secondary education.
- **Promote coherence between sectoral policies,** including through integration of the income generating, social protection, and education, health, and nutrition, water and sanitation dimensions of poverty reduction programmes. Member States should adopt strategies for integrated planning, and policy making for sustainable development, drawing on good practice among government and donors interventions that link education and related interventions with poverty eradication efforts.
- **Improve information and statistical analysis of data on children, youth and adults who are excluded from education opportunities:** For many countries, data availability, quality and use, are insufficient to reliably inform policies and interventions not least SDG pro-poor equity focused ones. Countries and implementing partners must ensure data is disaggregated by disability, gender, socio-economic status, geographic regions, and other relevant factors contributing to exclusion or disadvantage in access to quality education.
- **Strengthen role of civil society in delivery of services, as well as in monitoring the local implementation of the SDGs.** Civil society can produce shadow reports, particularly when it believes that a country report is inadequate and does not highlight the plight of the poorest and most marginalized citizens. With respect to education, citizen reports on the access to and quality of education services and outcomes may be an important source of information to policy makers on the impact of such services, are they equitable and non-discriminatory, whether they are reaching the poor and other most in need etc.

- **Strengthen policies to reduce inequality:** Policy-makers must ensure that changes in labour market, such as technological progress and easing of labour market restrictions, do not excessively penalize disadvantaged individuals, who are disproportionately employed in lower paying and less secure jobs, often in the informal sector. Cooperation is needed to reduce prejudice and lift any policy-related and legal obstacles to full economic participation by women and minority groups. Skills, capacities and capabilities should be developed among all education actors at all levels of the education system to understand and apply gender perspectives in their work.
- **Adapt the content of education to develop skills for sustainability:** Develop short-term strategies focused on workforce retraining and upskilling, together with long-term strategies to improve or revise curricula at all levels of education. Reinforce or introduce Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as captured in SDG 4.7 to enable children, youth and adults to deal with global challenges - extreme violence, climate change, financial crises or health pandemics - collectively in an increasingly interconnected world. In addition to vocational skills, such social and civic skills are paramount in creating stable institutions and societies, which are conducive contextual factors for eradicating poverty.