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Sectoral position paper related to the theme of the 2019 High-Level Political Forum "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*"

Executive Summary

The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group endorses fully the vision, principles, goals and targets laid out under SDG 4 within 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', in the Incheon Declaration and the 'Education 2030 Framework for Action'. SDG 4, its targets and means of implementation, especially its adoption of a lifelong learning perspective, explicitly acknowledges the right of every human being to enjoy free and inclusive quality public education. The framing of SDG 4 also implies a whole-sector approach, from early childhood to tertiary education and adult education, acknowledging the interconnected nature of the education sector.

Education and lifelong learning play a crucial role in the development of individuals, communities and societies, contributing to the creation of inclusive, equal and sustainable world. The mutual linkages between education and other goals are clear - education helps eradicate poverty and hunger and promotes peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Education is powerful in its potential to strengthen individuals' skills for decent work and contribute to economic and social development.

Progress in other areas has multiple effects on education. Social and cultural barriers, economic instability and financial crises, environmental degradation and catastrophes, as well as armed conflicts and violence, put millions of children, young people and adults into the risk of not achieving even the minimum of literacy skills, skills for life, work and individual development. A safe and supportive learning environment, quality education and educated teachers are pathways to the empowerment of people and creation of inclusive and equitable societies.

Education and lifelong learning are directly related to work and employment. Education links skills, training and education, by integrating literacy, skills for work and for life, and as such education is the best and most sustainable opportunity for those living in dire material

conditions to move out of poverty. It provides people with skills needed for work, but helps them also to become lifelong learners so they can cope with continuous challenges of the fast changing world of work and have better chances for decent work in the globalized economy and unpredictable labor market.

Further on, education and lifelong learning empower people not only by helping them to adapt to the new challenges, but also to challenge and deconstruct the systems that reproduce various kind of inequalities. Critical thinking is thus a tool not only for personal development, but even more for active and participatory citizenship and contribution to the democratic, peaceful and tolerant societies.

Education as a public good is key to promoting social, economic and environmental justice. When it comes to combating the climate change, its contribution ranges from awareness raising, encouragement of people to change attitudes and behavior towards climate change-related problems, the increase of resilience capacities, and of skills and knowledge for sustainable development.

It is proven that education can address structural inequalities and discriminations, paying particular attention to those most in need including those discriminated against based on poverty, gender, disability, ethnicity, language, sexual identity, or migrant or refugee status. One of the most important contributions of education is its potential to reduce gender inequalities and to eliminate gender disparities in education and work, especially by empowering girls and women and providing them equal chances through education.

This requires governments who have not yet done so to enact legal frameworks on the right to education, to work on comprehensive, inclusive and integrative education policies, to increase investment in education and lifelong learning and to fund global, regional and country-level data as a public good, strengthening national, regional and international data collection.

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1. Introduction

The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group endorses fully the vision, principles, goals and targets laid out **under** SDG 4 within 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', in the Incheon Declaration and the 'Education 2030 Framework for Action'.

Education is understood as a public good and public responsibility, a fundamental human right and an important basis for ensuring personal fulfilment and for the realization of other rights, essential for peace and sustainable development. Governments have the primary responsibility to deliver on the right to education and a central role as custodians of efficient, equitable and effective management and financing of public education accessible to all. But in many countries around the globe, the progress in implementing the SDG 4 agenda would not be possible without partners and the common efforts of various stakeholders to achieve the targets.

The role of civil society organizations in the implementation of SDG 4 - Education 2030, and their engagement and involvement at all stages, from policy formulation and planning through to monitoring and evaluation, proved to be crucial in many countries. This refers especially to awareness raising and advocacy, contributing to the shaping of national planning, and promoting linkages between education and the other SDGs. They have also developed new types of networks and partnerships and new mechanisms of cooperation with the purpose of contributing with the full capacity of education and lifelong learning to other areas and burning issues of social, economic and environmental reality, while connecting local perspectives with national, regional and global agendas. Their role is crucial in holding governments accountable for their commitments to the SDGs.

The double character of education and lifelong learning remain one the main characteristics of the SDG 4: While it is a stand-alone goal and a fundamental human right, it is also instrumental for achieving goals in other fields. The Brussels Declaration, adopted at the Global Education Meeting in December 2018, reaffirmed that education has the potential to be a great equalizer in society, transforming individuals' life chances and progress of the member states towards sustainable development.

Still, despite some progress, on current trends, we are not on track to achieve SDG 4's goals and targets, with a high risk of leaving hundreds of millions of children, young people and adults behind, and missing the contributions to several closely related SDGs.

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[Education and the SDGs under review in the 2019 HLPF](#)[1]

- [Goal 4](#)**.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- [Goal 8](#)**.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- [Goal 10](#)**.** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- [Goal 13](#)**.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- [Goal 16](#)**.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- [Goal 17](#)**.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

2. The right to education in the Agenda 2030 (SDG 4)

In line with the international human rights law, Sustainable Development Goal 4 acknowledges education as a fundamental human right. Its targets and means of implementation, especially its adoption of a lifelong learning perspective, explicitly acknowledges the right of every human being to enjoy free and inclusive quality public education.

The framing of SDG 4 also implies a whole-sector approach, from early childhood to tertiary and adult education, acknowledging the interconnected nature of the education sector. Furthermore, within the SDG's framework, education is not only appreciated for its potential to strengthen individuals' skills for decent work and contribute to economic and social development, but also for its role in expanding individuals' freedoms, their opportunities to fully develop their personality, and to contribute to the mutual understanding between different cultures and societies.

Despite the fact that SDG 4 and its plan for action are highly coherent with the content of international human rights law, there is a significant gap between national states' rhetoric of respect, protection and fulfilment to the right to education and what is observable on the ground. The United Nations (2017) estimates that in 2014 over 263 million children and young people were out of school, including 61 million children of primary school age. Worldwide, the adjusted net enrolment rates were 91% for primary education, 84% for

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[1] Source: ICSU and ISSC (2015).

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lower secondary education, 63% for upper secondary education, and 37% for tertiary education.[2]

Children and young people living in rural and remote areas, girls, women, non-binary people, people living with a disability, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and those living in conflict and climate change-related emergencies are more likely to be out of school or to leave before completing primary education.

Children, young people, and adults living in rural and remote areas consistently experience greater obstacles to ensure their right to education. Even when children and young people are able to access school in these areas, classes repeatedly lack the continuity needed to secure high-quality education. In several cases, teachers are not available (Boly-Barry, 2017).

The United Nations (2018) estimates that over 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age worldwide are not achieving a minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics. UNESCO (2016a) reports that children and young people living in rural areas consistently score lower than their peers living in urban settings.

Several obstacles need to be removed to guarantee free, inclusive quality public education for all, including children, young people and adults at all academic levels.

Disability

The World Report on Disability evidences that people of all genders with a disability have considerably lower opportunities to complete primary school when comparing with those without a disability, 46% and 57%, respectively. In addition, women with a disability have lower opportunities than men with a disability (51% compared to 42%).

Gender and Sexuality

In several parts of the world, parents often privilege boys when investing in education. In these contexts, as Boly-Barry (2017: 7) stresses, one of the most significant challenges faced by girls and women to enjoy their right to education is poverty. Furthermore, barriers for girls and women appear to be more salient in countries affected by conflict and crises - they are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys and men.

Social and cultural barriers remain a considerable challenge to overcome gender inequalities, including gender disparities related to unfair distribution of education opportunities for both men and women disregard their gender identity or sexual orientation. Young people and adults with a diverse sexual orientation or gender identity

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[2] Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/SDG 4 on March 23rd, 2019.

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are subjected to various forms of violence and oppression during their education in different parts of the world.

Refugees and Forcibly Displaced People

The gender imbalance adds complexities to the already very concerning barriers children and young people with a refugee background encounter when accessing their right to education. A recent report published by UNCHR (2017) suggests that more than 50% of refugees of school age are unable to attend school. Data based on the 19.9 million of refugees under UNHCR protection reveal that only 61% of refugee children attend primary school.

The access to education for refugees becomes more critical in further education levels: only 23% of refugee children are enrolled in secondary school and 1% in higher education (UNHCR, 2017). These figures strikingly contrast with the global average of 92% children attending primary education, 84% attending secondary education, and 37% attending higher education.

Higher Education

Progress has been made on SDG target 4.3 with the global tertiary enrolment rate (GTER) in 2017 reaching 37%, and exceeding 50% in upper middle income countries for the first time in 2016. There has also been progress on female participation, with more female than male students in undergraduate tertiary study. However further progress is required.

The affordability of tertiary education varies around the world and can present a major barrier, exceeding 60% of the average national income in most sub-Saharan African countries. Female enrolment at undergraduate level is not maintained into postgraduate study with a lack of female PhD candidates and in science, technology, engineering and maths disciplines. (UNESCO, 2018)

Higher education institutions produce research that is a key foundation for achieving the SDGs, however a global inequity persists in the relative research output and capacity of universities in the global south. 75% of PhD's globally graduate from OECD countries[3]. For many countries in the developing world there is a rapidly growing demand for higher education and a shortage of PhD qualified teaching and research staff, compromising both the quality of teaching and research. More can be done to strengthen the teaching and research capacity of universities in the global south through aid and international partnerships, along with reducing barriers to knowledge production and publication.

Corporal Punishment

Barriers to enjoy the right to education are far beyond equal access to school and education opportunities. Even those who access schools struggle to enjoy their right to education for a

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[3] Source: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/02/countries-with-most-doctoral-graduates/

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variety of reasons including discrimination within school facilities, corporal punishment and destruction of education infrastructure by armed groups.

Concerning corporal punishment at schools, Gershoff (2017) estimates that it is legally allowed as a means of disciplining children in a third of the world's countries. Although the issue is more common in developing countries, in particular in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, the problem can be also observed in wealthy nations such as Australia, the Republic of Korea, and the United States (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2016).

Beyond the fact that corporal punishment is against children's rights and their opportunities to enjoy education, evidence suggests that it affects their academic performance. Those who are victims of corporal punishment consistently show lower performance on different subjects, including lower ability to read, spell and maths (Baker-Henningham et al., 2009) and lower motivation to learn (Talwar, Carlson, & Lee, 2011).

Violence and Conflict

Education facilities continue to be under attack by armed forces from all sides in different parts of the world. Between 2013 and 2017 there were more than 12,700 attacks against schools and universities, harming more than 21,000 students and educators in at least 70 countries.[4]

In contexts of conflict and violence, access to school is often neglected even before an attack is perpetrated. In February 2019, the Minister of Education of Burkina Faso denounced that over 1,100 schools were temporarily closed, affecting more than 150,000 students, because of the threat of violence[5].

Financial Matters and Education Funding

The removal of financial barriers is at the heart of the challenges to be overcome to effectively protect and fulfil the right to education in all corners of the world. Both low income countries and wealthy nations not only have failed to commit the maximum of their resources available to the protection of the right to education, but some have adopted regressive measures in terms of securing free education for all.

The rise of privatization of education systems has worsened inequality in education, deepened broader social and economic divides, and undermined the opportunities to deliver quality public education for all. What is more, the provision of low-cost private schools, school vouchers and public-private partnerships, amongst other forms of privatization of education systems, left millions of children, young people and adults behind.

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[4] http://eua2018.protectingeducation.org/#introduction

[5] https://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/2088674/fear-of-attacks-keeps-150k-children-away-from-school-in-burkina-faso/, Online search on March 29th, 2019.

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To reverse these regressive trends, governments should not only secure new domestic resources to be invested in education but also adopt progressive measures to spend their education budgets with a greater sensitivity to equity, gender equality, inclusion and quality, while recognizing the necessity of a balanced whole sector approach. In doing so, governments should expand domestic systems of taxation, review tax and royalty agreements in the extractive industry sector, closing loopholes which enable tax avoidance and evasion by the private sector, and develop other forms of progressive taxation on wealth, property, land, trade and excise.

States should plan and deliver their education strategies in line with their legal national and international obligations and make public their advances and challenges to pursue SDG 4 by 2030.

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3. Education, work and employment (SDG 8)

Despite progress made to decrease unemployment rates worldwide, employment opportunities still not open for all. In several regions of the world, opportunities to find a job are more related to gender, life stage, social, cultural, and ethnic background. Women, young people, ethnic minorities, refugees, internally displaced people, and asylum seekers are often overrepresented amongst those unemployed, those who work in insecure environmental conditions, and those in the informal labor market. By 2016, 61% of all workers around the world were engaged in informal employment (United Nations, 2018).[6]

To illustrate the magnitude of inequalities in the labor market, it is worth highlighting that the unemployment rates in 2016 for young people is three times that for adults: 12.8% compared to 4.4%, respectively. In more than 76% of the countries with data included in the United Nations SDGs' Global Report, over 10% of young people are neither enrolled in the education system nor in the labor market.

The United Nations (2018) stresses that young women are more likely than young men to fall into that category in almost 70% of countries with data. Inequalities in the labor market are also evident in the gender pay gap which still remains an issue around the world, including in the wealthiest economies. Drawing on data from 45 countries, United Nations (2018) suggests that gender inequality in earnings against women is still pervasive: in 89% of these countries the median hourly pay gap is 12.5%.

Education is an important opportunity for those living in poverty, however for those in dire conditions this opportunity may not be realized. Parents and young people may find that schools and universities may not provide the skills they require to find a job in the formal labor market. The latter aspect is related to early school abandonment, especially for boys and men.

Indeed, it is worth mentioning that while young people (aged 18-24) struggle to find job opportunities, child labor (5 to 17 years) is still a significant source of concern. By 2012, the United Nations (2017) estimated that over 168 million of children were taking part in the labor market; over 50% of them were taking part in hazardous work.

Those figures reveal the urgent need for institutions responsible for regulating the labor market and education systems to work together at local and national levels. The education system should adopt effective policies to secure a place for every child and prevent early abandonment. At the same time, the labor market should be regulated by state institutions to avoiding child exploitation. Moreover, social policies, especially social protection

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[6] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8. Online search on March 25th, 2019.

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programmes should be implemented as a way to compensate families for the income earned by children.

Education is valuable in and of itself. States should emphasize the message that education matters as an intrinsic good, not only for finding a good job and contributing to economic growth. However, there is also a need to reinforce the links between education, work and employment. States should develop social policies to secure that parents and students, especially those living below the poverty and extreme poverty line, experience the value of education for both accessing knowledge and moving out of poverty.

Post-secondary and higher education can play an important role in developing the skills required amongst individuals and across economies for decent and productive work. Young people with post-secondary education living in middle and low-income countries have a much higher chance of finding a decent job than those with only secondary or primary education (ILO, 2014)[7].

Economies are undergoing rapid change and disruption driven by technological advances. This will increasingly demand education systems with robust technical and vocational education and training (TVET), tertiary education and lifelong learning to retrain and upskill individuals. A whole-sector approach should be taken in order to consider the pathways for mobility between basic education, TVET and higher education.

Higher education, through its production of research and engagement with business and government, also performs a critical role in creating decent work through fostering innovation and strategies for sustainable economic growth.

Investments in education do not automatically affect the chances of moving out of poverty, (all other things being equal). States should therefore deliver effective social policies to secure that education matters at all levels. These policies must include clear regulations against any form of discrimination in the labor market, strategies to increase the employability of the social groups more excluded, including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, and people affected by conflict and climate-change related emergencies.

In all cases, a clear policy to eliminate gender imbalances, especially clear commitments to eliminate the gender pay gap, in all sectors of the labor market, should be considered.

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[7] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_326260.pdf

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4. Education as a driver for social inclusion and equality

There is a need to improve how we look at the core values and reasons for education. It is essential to ensure that learners are being offered the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that foster social cohesion, diversity and equality.

Inequalities and exclusion starts early in life and therefore requires to be tackling at very early stages of education. We need to start by addressing inequalities in the education system itself, which should in return allow us to progress to a more equal society in which each identity is considered and valued. If an individual feels unequal due to a system that protects privilege or blocks access to knowledge, they will simultaneously be put on a path that will lead to social exclusion in society, as has been seen in the examples of indigenous people and minority groups around the world.

Education has a key role to play in deconstructing the system that reproduces inequalities. It is evident that whilst many education institutions are widening their accessibility clauses and highlighting anti-discrimination values as part of their core values, the system itself is still not designed to reflect the diversity within society at large. Further actions are required to address about the fact that many educational systems and processes are still designed to unfairly advantage students who fall within certain backgrounds.

A fundamental aim is to ensure that school encourages equal participation of people through equitable educational approaches. This requires a new perspective on the way we perceive education: inclusive education should take an intersectional approach that looks into transforming the dynamics of our current education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. This means enhancing the quality of education holistically and at all levels; by improving the effectiveness of teachers, promoting learning-centered methodologies, developing appropriate learning materials, and ensuring that schools are safe and hospitable for all, including people that tend to be socially excluded or disadvantaged.

Strengthening links within the community particularly the relationship between teachers, students, parents and society at large are crucial for developing and supporting inclusive learning environments.

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5. Combating climate change through education (SDG 13)

Education plays a vital role in combating climate change. Higher education institutions develop the research to not only understand the causes, consequences and magnitude of climate change and climate-change related emergencies, but also develop strategies to mitigate the problem and its impacts. Education has a key role in raising awareness of all members of society, and as UNESCO (2010) and (2016b) highlights, education can also encourage people to change attitudes and behavior towards climate change-related problems and enhance their skills to adapt to emergencies.

Climate change-related emergencies leave millions of children out of school every year. Climate-change related refugees, forced migrants, and internally displaced people are overrepresented amongst those who abandon school for months and even years. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2018) reported over 18.8 million of new displacements related to climate-change disasters in 2017 across 135 countries; the worst affected being China, Philippines, Cuba, the United States, India, Bangladesh, Somalia, Vietnam and Ethiopia. The causes of these humanitarian emergencies who include extreme temperatures, landslides, wildfires, droughts, floods, storms, cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons.

Despite the massive magnitude of such emergencies and their multiple negative impacts, those internally displaced by climate change are rarely included in the SDGs planning and monitoring frameworks. As Cazabat (2018) highlights, internally displaced people are amongst the vulnerable groups affected by climate change, and do not receive the attention required in the SDGs country's planning actions.

Planning at all levels, including early warning strategies, quick humanitarian response to emergencies, and long-term durable solutions for those affected, is one of the most significant challenges for achieving the sustainable development agenda in multiple corners of the world. Cazabat (2018) and IDMC (2018) also highlight that all SDGs impact internal displacement and, at the same time, internal displacement impacts all SDGs[8].

Several actions need to be taken at all levels to mitigate the impacts of climate change through education. Low income and wealthy nations should make climate change education a more central and visible part of the international response to climate change (UNESCO, 2010). Initiatives to prevent and mitigate the impact of climate change through education may allow children, young people and adults to get a better understating of the impact of global warming on their possibilities to enjoy their fundamental human rights. In this regard,

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[8] http://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/while-the-migration-agenda-moves-forward-idps-keep-getting-side-tracked

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states should demonstrate financial commitment to provide quality climate change education for all.

Financial resources are needed to promote both formal and non-formal education, to develop teaching strategies to engage children, young people and adults with climate change-related problems, strategies to adapt to climate change emergencies and to reduce one's footprint on earth. Putting all these measures in practice, requires significant investment in teachers, education, and training. In addition, we recommend the design of tool kits to be adapted to the needs of all people according to their age, abilities to learn, disabilities, and the risks and harms present in every geographical context.

6. Justiciability of the right to education as a practice for democracy (SDG 16)

Education can play a critical role in supporting peace, reconciliation and democracy. This requires equitable access to education at all levels, including for historically disadvantaged groups, and appropriate curricula. There is a need for increased attention to ensure education systems help to build peaceful and sustainable societies. This includes integrating education for peace and conflict prevention, as and when appropriate, across the entire education system.

The right to education must have judicial and quasi-judicial guarantees that allow people to claim it whenever it is violated or threatened. The justiciability of the right to education is a democratic exercise that guarantees access to justice in this vital issue for sustainable development. At the same time, as the GEMR 2019 states, better education is also needed for law enforcement officers to achieve SDG16 on justice for all[9].

According to the Brussels Declaration, for the right to education to be fully realized it must be effectively implemented at the national level through the ratification of international human rights law and the adoption of solid constitutional provisions, legislation, and policies. [10,11] Enforcement mechanisms must also be in place so when this right is violated, in order for the right-holder is able to have legal recourse before certain international and regional human rights mechanism. Ensuring a legal course for these rights requires independent and impartial law courts, ombudsman or administrative tribunals, and if the claim is upheld, to be granted a remedy which can then be enforced[12]. These legal practices and outcomes should be based

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[9] UNESCO. 2018. Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls. Paris, UNESCO, p. 230.

[10] https://www.SDG 4education2030.org/brussels-declaration-5-december-2018

[11] See status of ratification:
http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/index.php?action=basicsearch&lng=en

[12] https://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/justiciability

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on the principle that the right to education "will be exercised without discrimination of any kind"[13].

The weakness of inbuilt accountability mechanisms is still a concern and may primarily affect those people who have been historically marginalized[14]. Conversely, the accessibility of legal mechanisms for reaching effective remedies to the violation of educational rights has proved to be an answer for the enforcement of these rights and promoting accountable and inclusive societies for sustainable development, as stated in SDG 16.

<u>The Importance of Litigation and the Establishment of Case Law</u>

The following two examples show that judicial resolutions to the violations of the right to education have high strategic value since they create jurisprudence applicable in other similar cases.

In Sri Lanka, in April 2016, ruling on a case involving a 5-year-old boy who was denied admission to school because he was believed to be HIV-positive, the Supreme Court said children living with or affected by HIV have the full right to education. The court also reminded the government of its obligation to take steps to protect, promote and respect the human rights of people living with HIV.[15]

The decision of *Tripartite Steering Committee*, the Eastern Cape High Court in South Africa held that the constitutional right to a basic education is 'meaningless' unless students have access to transport to and from school, at Government's expense, in appropriate cases[16].

These two examples show litigation is also an important advocacy mechanism and a way to raise awareness about state obligations on education.

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[13] Antônio Augusto Cançado Trindade, cited by Kishore Singh. Report of the UN Special Rapporteour on the right to education. A/HRC/23/35. 10 May 2013.
[14] https://crowd360.org/accountability-from-a-human-rights-perspective-the-incorporation-and-enforcement-of-the-right-to-education-in-the-domestic-legal-order/

[15] Cited by Ibid. See RTE 2016. *Sri Lanka's Supreme Court Rules to Prohibit Discrimination in Education Settings*.
[16] Cited by Ibid. *Tripartite Steering Committee and Another v Minister of Basic Education and Others* (1830/2015) [2015] ZAECGHC 67; 2015 (5) SA 107 (ECG); [2015] 3 All SA 718 (ECG) (25 June 2015).

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7. Financing of education, SDGs and partnerships, accountability and transparency

It is crucial that the principles of transparency and equity are kept in mind when creating progressive systems for financing the whole 2030 Agenda. It is necessary for national and global governments to be transparent about how they are funding the SDGs. The SDGs require long term and future oriented investment, synergies and policy coherence. This is a key aspect of its implementation, and should be extended to financial frameworks at national, regional and global levels.

Given this, it is imperative that states adhere to the international benchmarks of allocating at least 4-6% of Gross Domestic Project and/or at least 15-20% of total public expenditure to education. [17]

We also ask states to increase their contributions to international aid to reach the agreed target of 0.7% of GNP for international aid. Countries that are most in need of aid should be prioritized to receiving money from this fund.

It is essential that all forms of education are funded through national budgets, this includes early childhood education, primary, secondary, tertiary, higher education, adult learning and non-formal education.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

In Europe between 2011-2015, there was no financial increase in Global Citizenship Education and no well-established partnerships between ministries of education and GCE national delivery[18]. This lack of long-term investment indicates that emphasis on education that is about global citizenship and sustainable development is not a national priority when it should be the opposite. We call for 3% of ODA to be spent on global citizenship education in domestic spending for GCE.

The Privatization of Education and Public and Private Partnerships

The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG) strongly advocates for the delivering of free, inclusive quality public education, as a central obligation of states. We are deeply concerned with the ways in which growing privatization and commodification of education is impacting on progress towards achieving the right to education. This concern goes beyond the operation of individual private schools (which may range from excellent to

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[17] https://www.globalpartnership.org/funding
[18] https://concordeurope.org/blog/2018/03/07/gce-funding-report-2018/

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appalling), and focuses primarily on whether privatization trends are helping – or hindering – movement towards making a good quality, free education available to all.[19]

In the context of partnership, shared responsibility and blended financing of education, the trend to work through public-private partnership occurred worldwide. Thus, the state is no longer a main provider of education, but engages with the private sector and non-state entities and institutions in the delivery of education.

However, as Verger and Moschetti (2017) pointed out, despite the fact that public-private partnerships are portrayed as innovative solutions, the most well-known public-private partnership policy instruments in education tend to replicate long-standing privatization and quasi-market interventions widely advocated for since the 1980s[20].

Engagement with the private sector in public-private partnerships has shown to increase the risk of the international commercialization of education and the dominance of a discourse that understands education as a commodity and not as the human right. Public-private partnerships have a negative impact on the availability and accessibility of free education to marginalized groups (Rizvi, 2016). It also decreases the participation of girls and women in education (Rizvi, 2016). "So whereas the public-private partnerships can be useful, they are not the panacea to the challenge of taming the excesses of privatization in education. What is required is the reassertion of the social democratic goals of education. This means detaching the role of the private sector in education from the neoliberal imaginary in which it has become increasingly embedded." (Rizvi, 2016: 10)

<u>Successful Partnerships</u>

Partnerships are an essential to achieve 2030 Agenda. Partnerships should be measured by both quantitative and qualitative means and it is crucial that the qualitative measures capture both the quality of the partnership itself and the quality of the impact generated by the partnership towards achieving the remainder of the goals.

Specific measures to determine what makes a partnership effective and criteria for what constitutes a partnership should be developed at national level and not digress from, global and thematic indicator frameworks. All partnerships with national governments should be transparent and adhere to international commitments and treaties, including to The

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[19] Global Campaign for Education. Public good over private profit. A toolkit for Civil Society to resist the privatisation of education 2017.
[20] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247327

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Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the New York Declaration, the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees.

Finally, none of the potential benefits of partnerships frees the state from fulfilling its obligations regarding the financing of education. These obligations require the implementation of budgetary mechanisms in four dimensions:

a) increasing the share of the budget going to education,
b) increasing the size of the overall budget through increasing tax revenues,
c) increasing the sensitivity of spending, meaning the ability to analyze spending within the education sector through an equity lens, and
d) increasing citizen scrutiny of the budget.

8. Challenges in implementing the SDGs in partnership with education civil society

The Brussels Declaration adopted at the Global Education Meeting (GEM) 2018 states that we are not on track to achieve the SDG 4 targets by 2030. There are still 750 million young people and adults who are not literate, two thirds of whom are women, and 263 million children and young people who do not attend school. This warns that indicator 4.3.1 (participation rate of young people and adults in formal and non-formal education and training) is far from being achieved by 2030.

A revitalized and all-inclusive global partnership for sustainable development is important for achieving all the SDGs. When it comes to education and lifelong learning, the partnership with civil society is crucial for an inclusive approach that would leave no one behind and boost full potential of education to contribute to the implementation of all goals. Civil society demonstrates the ability to work across sectors and to engage with a complex and multi-thematic process.

In many countries civil society is an irreplaceable carrier of educational work for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, playing an important role in service delivery and is main partner for many governments in areas like literacy. Civil society helps education to be organized in an integrated and holistic manner, incorporating formal, non-formal and informal learning, and recognizing a diversity of ways of learning and knowing.

Civil society stakeholders take on a variety of functions in the implementation process of education – they engage with decision-makers at different levels; support and advice governments and hold them accountable; advocate for education among different actors;

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implement concrete measures, programmes and projects; build on the experience on the ground and help to reach and empower vulnerable groups and communities.

In several countries civil society supports data collection efforts and monitoring processes, not least by the participation in the preparation of VNRs. It is therefore of utmost importance to strengthening their capacities to monitor and evaluate equity and quality in education and training and to ensure more transparent reporting for public accountability.

And yet, civil society and academic freedom is under threat in many countries, especially those working in international development and for the protection of human rights. Over a hundred governments have introduced restrictive laws over the past couple of years that have significantly closed down the space for civil society organizations in different parts of the world (European Parliament, 2017). Some of them face severe challenges, including violence, harassment and imprisonment. Restrictions on civil society are intensifying in non-democratic but also democratic countries. While this trend is a reason for broader concern about democracy and human rights, it specifically undermines the SDGs and their social dimension, and directly jeopardizes efforts to achieve quality education and lifelong learning for all, since partnership is decisive when aiming for this goal.

Therefore, the EASG endorses the Brussels Declaration in the commitment "to support meaningful involvement of young people, students, teachers, school and post-secondary institution leaders, and their representative organizations, as well as communities, parents, civil society and academia at all stages, from planning to monitoring progress in ensuring the right to quality education for all."

Participants on Global Education Meeting (GEM) reaffirmed the universal relevance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the centrality of education for reaching all SDGs, calling for a holistic approach: one that includes all areas (literacy, especially functional literacy, technical and vocational education, health, civic education, digital and information literacy_ marginalized and vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, those in remote rural areas, ethnic minorities, the poor, women and girls, migrants, refugees and displaced persons) and all learning pathways and learning sites.

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9. EASG´s recommendations for the SDG implementation

Governments should:

1) Governments must **ensure the strengthening of free quality public education systems, in compliance with their role as duty bearers in the respect, protection and realization of the right to education.**

   a) Challenge trends towards education privatization, commercialization and profit making in, and through, education.

   b) Discourage low fee private schools; they should not receive any public funding – be it national or international, in the same way as no other for profit commercial or noncommercial education initiative.

   c) While public education systems must be strengthened, private education should be regulated according to human rights standards.

2) Governments and donors should **support a balanced whole-sector approach, from early childhood to tertiary education and adult education, to support and sustain gains in basic education.**

3) Governments must **ensure coherent legislation, policies and practices that address the respect, protection and fulfillment of the right to education, including in the full implementation of SDG 4.**

   a) Promote both universal policies and affirmative actions that address structural inequalities and discriminations,

   b) Pay particular attention to those most in need including those discriminated against based on poverty, gender, disability, ethnicity, language, sexual identity, or migrant or refugee status.

4) **Understand education quality in a holistic manner to promote life and work skills, active citizenship, peaceful resolution of conflict, democracy, and the fulfillment of all peoples' potential.**

   a) Focus particular attention to pedagogy, the promotion of critical thinking, participation of children and young people in their educational trajectories, as well as to teacher's education, training and materials.

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5) **Ensure effective and meaningful civil society engagement in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda**, not only informal involvement, but also through secured role in formal spaces.

   a) Have an enabling environment in which civil society can work freely, enjoying the right to freedom of opinion and expression, but also having access to funding and other resources.

6) **Ensure meaningful participation of young people, students, teachers, as well as parents, communities, civil society and academia,**

   a) Participation should be at all stages from educational debate to its planning, policy making and monitoring.

   b) Reverse trends of closure of civil society spaces and of rising criminalization is adamant.

   c) Access to justice is much needed in cases of education rights violations. Jurisprudence must be better systematized and made public.

7) **Invest in data production and analysis, including by making national statistical systems more robust, transparent and democratic**, while also acknowledging data produced by civil society and the academia.

   a) Adopt an equity lens requires access to reliable disaggregated data.

   b) Fund global, regional and country-level data as a public good,

   c) Strengthen national, regional and international data collection for education and lifelong learning and increase funding for more, better and robust data at all levels, for both formal and non-formal education and learning.

8) **Public financing of education should address primarily public education systems, and prioritize adequate domestic financing, as well as international cooperation.**

   a) Allocate at least 4% to 6% of GDP or 15% to 20% of the total public expenditure to education.

   b) Increase public revenues, allocate more of these additional revenues to education (to meet or exceed international benchmarks) and prioritize spending on the most marginalized groups.

   c) Governments, particularly in low and middle-income countries, should be encouraged to progressively enlarge and broaden the tax base, so as to meet the financing gap, through tax reform, anti-corruption measures and the tracking of illicit

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financial flows as agreed in the Addis Ababa Conference in Financing for Development.

9) **Invest in teachers and educators**

   a) Increase and improve the supply, quality and motivation of trained and qualified teachers

   b) Expand and strengthen initial teacher education,

   c) Recruit and allocate sufficient numbers of teachers

   d) Provide teachers with continuous professional development, ensuring professional autonomy and improving teachers' benefits and working conditions.

   e) Strengthen the leading role of education workers, especially trainers and facilitators in non-formal education.

   f) Give special consideration should to female teachers, teachers from rural areas and linguistic communities, and educators of people with disabilities.

10) **The education of young people and adults must be guaranteed, financed and promoted under the principle of lifelong learning**

   a) Adapt the plans, programs, infrastructure and methodologies to respond to the diverse social and cultural needs of the adult population.

11) **Invest in outreach to marginalized population groups,** which can also be facilitated by civil society organizations.

   a) Non-discrimination and inclusive education should be the guiding principles for a human rights based education,

   b) Adopt the principle that learners should learn together, regardless of difference, and must have access to and be accommodated in the general education system.

12) **Stop the negative trends of industrialization, consumerism, violence and environmental depredation.**

   a) The transforming nature of education must be based on the implementation of critical, liberating and decolonizing approaches to the curriculum, which promote respect, inclusion, peace and human rights as a way of life.

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13) Configure public policies aimed at the realization of the sustainable development agenda in its entirety.

a) Thematic interrelation should be sought and compartmentalized visions avoided.

b) Consider that these public policies have to respond to the indivisibility of the human rights that seek to respect, protect and fulfill.

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