2020

Inclusion and education:

ALL MEANS ALL

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Foreword

It has never been more crucial to make education a universal right, and a reality for all. Our rapidly-changing world faces constant major challenges – from technological disruption to climate change, conflict, the forced movement of people, intolerance and hate – which further widen inequalities and exert an impact for decades to come. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed and deepened these inequalities and the fragility of our societies. More than ever, we have a collective responsibility to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, helping to reduce long-lasting societal breaches that threaten our shared humanity.

In the face of these challenges, the messages of the 2020 GEM Report on inclusion in education are even more poignant. It warns that education opportunities continue to be unequally distributed. Barriers to quality education are still too high for too many learners. Even before Covid-19, one in five children, adolescents and youth were entirely excluded from education. Stigma, stereotypes and discrimination mean millions more are further alienated inside classrooms.

The current crisis will further perpetuate these different forms of exclusion. With more than 90 per cent of the global student population affected by Covid-19 related school closures, the world is in the throes of the most unprecedented disruption in the history of education. Social and digital divides have put the most disadvantaged at risk of learning losses and dropping out. Lessons from the past – such as with Ebola – have shown that health crises can leave many behind, in particular the poorest girls, many of whom may never return to school.

This Report's core recommendation for all education actors to widen their understanding of inclusive education to include all learners, no matter their identity, background or ability comes at an opportune time as the world seeks to rebuild back more inclusive education systems.

This Report identifies different forms of exclusion, how they are caused and what we can do about them. As such, it is a call to action we should heed as we seek to pave the way for more resilient and equal societies in the future. A call to collect better data, without which we cannot understand or measure the true scope of the problem. A call to make public policies far more inclusive, based on examples of effective policies currently in force, and by working together to address intersecting disadvantages, just as we saw Ministries and government departments are capable of when addressing Covid-19.

Only by learning from this Report can we understand the path we must take in the future. UNESCO stands ready to help States and the education community so that, together, we can develop the education the world so desperately needs and to ensure that learning never stops.

To rise to the challenges of our time, a move towards more inclusive education is non-negotiable – failure to act is not an option.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO
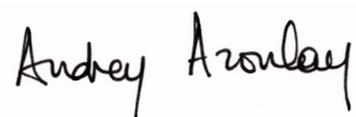
Foreword

Education makes an essential contribution to building inclusive and democratic societies, where differences of opinion can be freely expressed and where the wide range of voices can be heard, in pursuit of social cohesion and in a celebration of diversity.

This year's *Global Education Monitoring Report* reminds us that education systems are only as inclusive as their creators make them. Disadvantage can be created by these systems and their contexts. It exists where people's needs are not taken into account.

Inclusion in education is about ensuring that every learner feels valued and respected, and can enjoy a clear sense of belonging. Yet many hurdles stand in the way of that ideal. Discrimination, stereotypes, and alienation do exclude many. These mechanisms of exclusion are essentially the same, regardless of gender, location, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, sexual orientation, incarceration, religion, and other beliefs and attitudes.

The Report reminds us of continuing and disturbing education disparities, including in ensuring access to all which should be the foundation of inclusion. But an 'all means all' approach to inclusion also means dropping any stigmatizing labels assigned to children. Adopting learning approaches on account of such labels limits their potential, ignoring the benefits that varied learning approaches can bring to all children.

Thus, how education systems are designed is critical. Countries can choose what counts in deciding whether their education system is on the right track or not. They can choose to address an inclusion agenda in a piecemeal approach, or they can tackle the entire set of challenges head on.

There are dilemmas and tensions involved in reaching the ideal of full inclusion. Moving from where we are now to having systems that cater for every learner's needs, including those with severe disabilities, is no small feat, potentially even impossible. And this Report does not deny that the full ideal of inclusion may have downsides too. Well-intended efforts to include can slide into coercion to conform, wear down group identities, drive out languages. Recognizing and helping an excluded group in the name of inclusion could marginalize them at the same time. There are practical challenges too in deciding the speed of change, whether for richer countries looking to backtrack from systems that were originally based on segregation, or for poorer countries looking to create an inclusive system from scratch.

In full recognition of these challenges, though, the Report asks whether it really is necessary to seek justifications for inclusive education to be pursued. It quotes that debating the benefits of inclusive education can be seen as tantamount to debating the benefits of abolition of slavery or indeed of apartheid. Inclusion in education is a process, not an end point. And on that journey, many changes can be made for free, in gestures made by teachers, in the ethos school leaders create for their learning environments, in the way families make decisions when school choices are presented to them, and in what we, as a society, decide we want for our future.

Inclusion is not just a choice for policy makers. Imposed from above it will never work. So, the question you, as readers, are asked in the report is whether you are ready to challenge the current mindset and ready to decide that education is for everyone and must strive to be inclusive of all.

Right Honourable Helen Clark
Chair of the GEM Report Advisory Board

KEY MESSAGES

Identity, background and ability dictate education opportunities.

In all but high-income countries in Europe and Northern America, only 18 of the poorest youth complete secondary school for every 100 of the richest youth. In at least 20 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, hardly any poor rural young women complete secondary school.

Discrimination, stereotyping and stigmatization mechanisms are similar for all learners at risk of exclusion.

While 68% of countries have a definition of inclusive education, only 57% of those definitions cover multiple marginalized groups.

Despite progress, many countries still do not collect, report or use data on those left behind.

Since 2015, 41% of countries, representing 13% of the global population, have not had a publicly available household survey to provide disaggregated data on key education indicators; the region with the lowest coverage is Northern Africa and Western Asia. Recent data from 14 countries using the Child Functioning Module suggest that children with disabilities constitute 15% of the out-of-school population. They face complex barriers. Those with a sensory, physical or intellectual disability are 2.5 times more likely to have never been in school as their peers without disabilities.

Millions are missing out on the opportunity to learn.

In middle income countries, despite a 25-percentage point increase in the past 15 years, only three quarters are still in school by age 15. Of those, only half are learning the basics, a rate that has been stagnant over the period. And many assessments overestimate how well students are doing: three quarters of students who did no better in multiple choice questions than random guessing were considered proficient in reading in a regional assessment of 15 countries in Latin America.

A key barrier to inclusion in education is the lack of belief that it is possible and desirable.

One in three teachers in 43 mostly upper-middle- and high-income countries in 2018 reported that they did not adjust their teaching to students' cultural diversity.

While some countries are transitioning towards inclusion, segregation is still prevalent.

In the case of students with disabilities, laws in 25% of countries (but over 40% in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean) make provisions for education in separate settings, 10% for integration and 17% for inclusion, the remainder opting for combinations of segregation and mainstreaming. In OECD countries, more than two-thirds of all immigrant students attend schools where at least half the students are immigrants.

Financing needs to target those most in need.

Across 32 OECD countries, socio-economically disadvantaged schools and classrooms are more likely to have less qualified teachers. Conditional cash transfers in Latin America since the 1990s have increased education attainment by between 0.5 and 1.5 years. One in four countries has some form of affirmative action programme to help the marginalized get access to tertiary education. About 40% of low- and lower-middle-income countries have not taken any measures to support learners at risk of exclusion during the Covid-19 crisis.

Teachers, teaching materials and learning environments often ignore the benefits of embracing diversity.

Some 25% of teachers in 48 education systems report a high need for professional development on teaching students with special needs. Just 41 countries worldwide recognize sign language as an official language. In Europe, 23 out of 49 countries do not address sexual orientation and gender identity explicitly in their curricula.

The commitment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education' and promote 'lifelong learning for all' is part of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledge to leave no one behind. The agenda promises a 'just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most disadvantaged are met'.

Social, economic and cultural factors may complement or run counter to the achievement of equity and inclusion in education. Education offers a key entry point for inclusive societies if it sees learner diversity not as a problem but as a challenge: to identify individual talent in all shapes and forms and create conditions for it to flourish. Unfortunately, disadvantaged groups are kept out or pushed out of education systems through more or less subtle decisions leading to exclusion from curricula, irrelevant learning objectives, stereotyping in textbooks, discrimination in resource allocation and assessments, tolerance of violence and neglect of needs.

Contextual factors, such as politics, resources and culture, can make the inclusion challenge appear to vary across countries or groups. In reality, the challenge is the same, regardless of context. Education systems need to treat every learner with dignity in order to overcome barriers, raise attainment and improve learning. Systems need to stop labelling learners, a practice adopted on the pretext of easing the planning and delivery of education responses. Inclusion cannot be achieved one group at a time (**Figure 1**). Learners have multiple, intersecting identities. Moreover, no one characteristic is associated with any predetermined ability to learn.

INCLUSION IN EDUCATION IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A PROCESS

Inclusion is for all. Inclusive education is commonly associated with the needs of people with disabilities and the relationship between special and mainstream education. Since 1990, the struggle of people with disabilities has shaped the global perspective on inclusion in education, leading to recognition of the right to inclusive education in Article 24 of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, as General Comment No. 4 on the article recognized in 2016, inclusion is broader in scope. The same mechanisms exclude not only people with disabilities but also others on account of gender, age, location, poverty, disability, ethnicity, indigeneity, language, religion, migration or displacement status, sexual orientation or gender identity expression, incarceration, beliefs and attitudes. It is the system and

FIGURE 1:
The one thing we all have in common is our differences

Out of **100** children...

These may have a **disability**.

Of the rest, these may be **poor**.

Of the rest, these may have **special education needs**.

Of the rest, these may be **LGBTI**.

Of the rest, these may be **migrants, internally displaced or refugees**.

Of the rest, these may belong to an **ethnic, religious or linguistic minority or an indigenous group**.

Of the rest, these may **live in remote rural areas**.

Of the rest, these may **belong to another marginalized group, such as a race or caste**.

Of the rest, these may be **girls**.

Of the rest, these may be **obese, depressed, working after school, disruptive, orphan, delinquent, left-handed, asthmatic, allergic**...

And this last one? He's new here!   Hi!

context that do not take diversity and multiplicity of needs into account, as the Covid-19 pandemic has also laid bare. It is society and culture that determine rules, define normality and perceive difference as deviance. The concept of barriers to participation and learning should replace the concept of special needs.

Inclusion is a process. Inclusive education is a process contributing to achievement of the goal of social inclusion. Defining equitable education requires a distinction between 'equality' and 'equity'. Equality is a state of affairs (what): a result that can be observed in inputs, outputs or outcomes. Equity is a process (how): actions aimed at ensuring equality. Defining inclusive education is more complicated because process and result are conflated. This Report argues for thinking of inclusion as a process: actions that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential, and should be respected, regardless of their background, ability or identity. Yet inclusion is also a state of affairs, a result, which the CRPD and General Comment No. 4 stopped short of defining with precision, likely because of differing views of what the result should be.

INCLUSION IN EDUCATION AS RESULT: START WITH EDUCATION FOR ALL

Poverty and inequality are major constraints. Despite progress in reducing extreme poverty, especially in Asia, it affects 1 in 10 adults and 2 in 10 children – 5 in 10 in sub-Saharan Africa. Income inequality is growing in parts of the world or, if falling, remains unacceptably high among and within countries. Key human development outcomes are also unequally distributed. In 30 low- and middle-income countries, 41% of children under age 5 from the poorest 20% of households were malnourished, more than twice the rate of those from the richest 20%, severely compromising their opportunity to benefit from education.

Progress in education participation is stagnating. An estimated 258 million children, adolescents and youth, or 17% of the total, are not in school (**Figure 2**). Disparities by wealth in attendance rates are large: Among 65 low- and middle-income countries, the average gap in attendance rates between the poorest and the richest

FIGURE 2:

A quarter of a billion children, adolescents and youth are not in school

a. Out-of-school rate of primary and secondary school-age children, adolescents and youth, 1990–2018
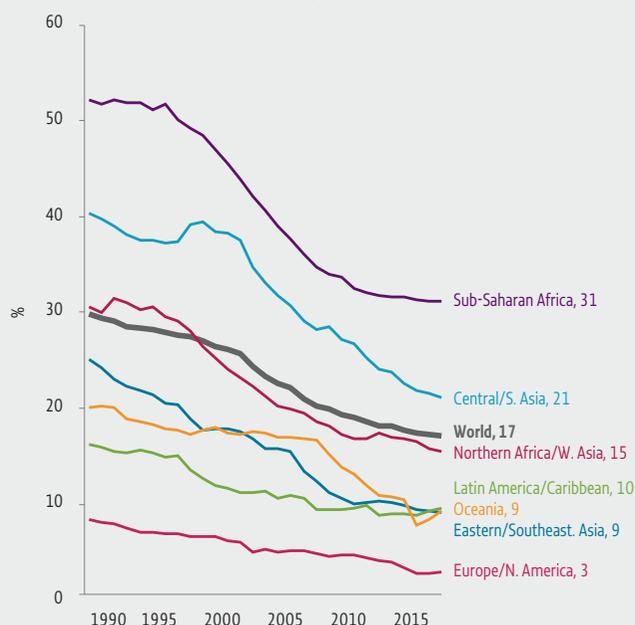
b. Out-of-school primary and secondary school-age children, adolescents and youth, 1990–2018
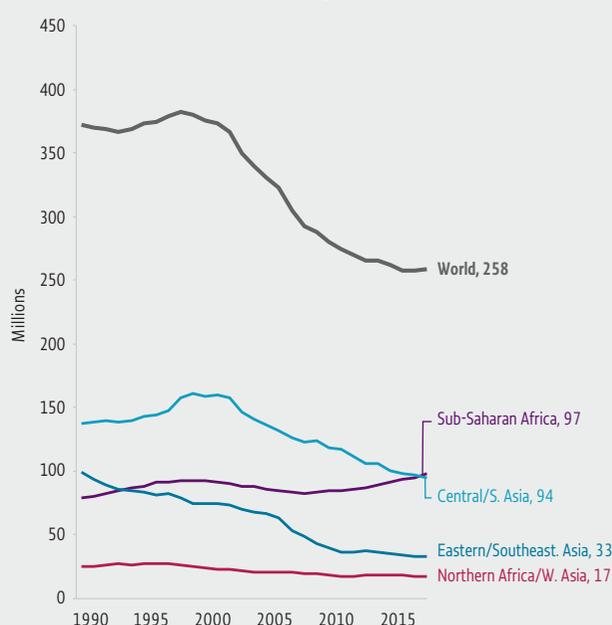
GEM StatLink: http://bit.ly/GEM2020_Summary_fig2
Source: UIS database.

20% of households was 9 percentage points for primary school-age children, 13 for lower secondary school-age adolescents and 27 for upper secondary school-age youth. As the poorest are more likely to repeat and leave school early, wealth gaps are even higher in completion rates: 30 percentage points for primary, 45 for lower secondary and 40 for upper secondary school completion.

Poverty affects attendance, completion and learning opportunities. In all regions except Europe and Northern America, for every 100 adolescents from the richest 20% of households, 87 from the poorest 20% attended lower secondary school and 37 completed it. Of the latter, for every 100 adolescents from the richest 20% of households, about 50 achieved minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics (**Figure 3**). Often, disadvantages intersect. Those most likely to be excluded from education are also disadvantaged due to language, location, gender and ethnicity. In at least 20 countries with data, hardly any poor rural young woman completed upper secondary school.

THE RESULTS OF INCLUSION IN EDUCATION MAY BE ELUSIVE, BUT ARE REAL, NOT ILLUSIVE

While universal access to education is a prerequisite for inclusion, there is less consensus on what else it means to achieve inclusion in education for learners with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups at risk of exclusion.

FIGURE 3:

There are large wealth disparities in attendance, completion and learning

Wealth parity index in attendance, completion and minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics, by education level, selected countries, 2013–17

GEM StatLink: http://bit.ly/GEM2020_Summary_fig3

Note: The sample excludes high-income countries in Europe and Northern America.

Source: GEM Report team analysis using household surveys (attendance and completion) and UIS database (learning).

Inclusion for students with disabilities means more than placement. The CRPD focus on school placement marked a break not just with the historical tendency to exclude children with disabilities from education or to segregate them in special schools but also with the practice of putting them in separate classes for much or most of the time. Inclusion, however, involves many more changes in school support and ethos. The CRPD did not argue special schools violated the convention, but recent reports by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities increasingly point in that direction. The CRPD gave governments a free hand in the form of inclusive education, implicitly recognizing the obstacles to full inclusion. While exclusionary practices by many governments that contravene their CRPD commitments should be exposed, the limits to how flexible mainstream schools and education systems can be should also be acknowledged.

Inclusive education serves multiple objectives. There is a potential tension between the desirable goals of maximizing interaction with others (all children under the same roof and fulfilling learning potential (wherever students learn best Other considerations include the speed with which systems can move towards the ideal and what happens during transition, and the trade-off between early needs identification and the risk of labelling and stigmatization.

Pursuing different objectives simultaneously can be complementary or conflicting. Policymakers, legislators and educators confront delicate and context-specific questions related to inclusion. They need to be aware of opposition by those invested in preserving segregated delivery but also of the potential unsustainability of rapid change, which can harm the welfare of those it is meant to serve. Including children with disabilities in mainstream schools that are not prepared, supported or accountable for achieving inclusion can intensify experiences of exclusion and provoke backlash against making schools and systems more inclusive.
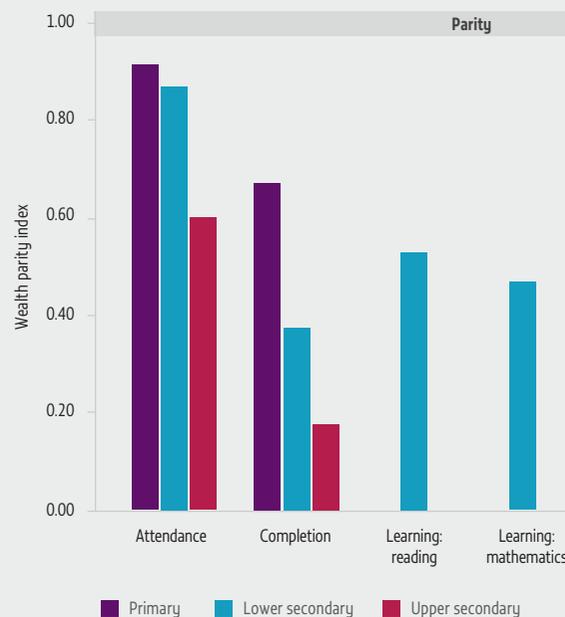
There can be downsides to full inclusion. In some contexts, inclusion may inadvertently intensify pressure to conform. Group identities, practices, languages and beliefs may be devalued, jeopardized or eradicated, undercutting a sense of belonging. The right for a group to preserve its culture and the right to self-determination and self-representation are increasingly recognized. Inclusion may be resisted out of prejudice but also out of recognition that identity may be maintained and empowerment achieved only if a minority is a majority in a given area. Rather than achieve positive social engagement, in some circumstances inclusion policies may exacerbate social exclusion. Exposure to the majority may reinforce dominant prejudices, intensifying minority disadvantage. Targeting assistance can also lead to stigmatization, labelling or unwelcome forms of inclusion.

Resolving dilemmas requires meaningful participation. Inclusive education should be based on dialogue, participation and openness. While policymakers and educators should not compromise, discount or divert from the long-term ideal of inclusion, they should not override the needs and preferences of those affected. Fundamental human rights and principles provide moral and political direction for education decisions, yet fulfilling the inclusive ideal is not trivial. Delivering sufficient differentiated and individualized support requires perseverance, resilience and a long-term perspective. Moving away from education system design that suits some children and obliges others to adapt cannot easily happen by decree. Prevailing attitudes and mindsets must be challenged. Inclusive education may prove intractable, even with the best will and highest commitment. Some, therefore, argue for limiting the ambition of inclusive education, but the only way forward is to acknowledge the barriers and dismantle them.

Inclusion brings benefits. Careful planning and provision of inclusive education can deliver improvement in academic achievement, social and emotional development, self-esteem and peer acceptance. Including diverse students in mainstream classrooms and schools can prevent stigma, stereotyping, discrimination and alienation. There are also potential efficiency savings from eliminating parallel education structures and using resources more effectively in a single inclusive mainstream system. However, economic justification for inclusive education, while valuable for planning, is not sufficient. Few systems come close enough to the ideal to allow estimation of the full cost, and benefits are hard to quantify, as they extend over generations.

Inclusion is a moral imperative. Debating the benefits of inclusive education is akin to debating the benefits of human rights. Inclusion is a prerequisite for sustainable societies. It is a prerequisite for education in, and for, a democracy based on fairness, justice and equity. It provides a systematic framework for removing barriers according to the principle 'every learner matters and matters equally'. It also counteracts education system tendencies that allow exceptions and exclusions, as when schools are evaluated along a single dimension and resource allocation is linked to their performance.

Inclusion improves learning for all students. In recent years, a learning crisis narrative has drawn attention to the majority of school-age children in low- and middle-income countries not achieving minimum proficiency in basic skills. However, this narrative may overlook dysfunctional features of education systems in the countries furthest behind, such as exclusion, elitism and inequity. It is not by accident that SDG 4 explicitly exhorts countries to ensure inclusive education. Mechanical solutions that do not address the deeper barriers of exclusion can only go so far towards improving learning outcomes. Inclusion must be the foundation of approaches to teaching and learning.

The 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report* asks questions related to key policy solutions, obstacles to implementation, coordination mechanisms, financing channels and monitoring of inclusive education. To the extent possible, it examines these questions in view of change over time. However, an area as complex as inclusion has not yet been well documented on a global scale. This Report collects information on how each country, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, addresses the challenge of inclusion in education. The information is available on a new website, PEER, which countries can use to share experiences and learn from one another, especially at the regional level, where contexts are similar. The profiles can serve as a baseline to review qualitative progress to 2030.

The Report recognizes the different contexts and challenges facing countries in providing inclusive education; the various groups at risk of being excluded from education and the barriers individual learners face, especially when characteristics intersect; and the fact that exclusion can be physical, social (in interpersonal and group relations), psychological and systemic. It addresses these challenges through seven elements in respective chapters, while a short section highlights how these challenges have played out in the context of Covid-19.

Laws and policies

Binding legal instruments and non-binding declarations express international aspirations for inclusion.
The 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education and the 1990 World Declaration on
Education for All, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand, called on countries to take measures to ensure 'equality of
treatment in education' and no 'discrimination in access to learning opportunities' for 'underserved groups'.
The 1994 Statement and Framework for Action adopted in Salamanca, Spain, put forward the principle that
all children should be at 'the school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability', which was
endorsed as a right in 2006. These texts have influenced the national laws and policies on which progress
towards inclusion hinges.

National definitions of inclusive education tend to embrace a broader scope. Analysis for this Report shows
that 68% of countries define inclusive education in laws, policies, plans or strategies. Definitions that cover all
marginalized groups are found in 57% of countries. In 17% of countries, the definition of inclusive education
covers exclusively people with disabilities or special needs.

Laws tend to target specific groups at risk of exclusion in education. The broad vision of including all learners
in education is largely absent from national laws. Only 10% of countries reflected comprehensive provisions
for all learners in their general or inclusive education laws. More commonly, legislation originating in education
ministries concerns specific groups. Of all countries, 79% had laws referring to education for people with
disabilities, 60% for linguistic minorities, 50% for gender equality and 49% for ethnic and indigenous groups.

Policies tend to have a broader vision of inclusion in education. About 17% of countries have policies containing
comprehensive provisions for all learners. The tendency is much stronger in less binding texts, with 75% of
national education plans and strategies declaring an intention to include all disadvantaged groups. Some 67% of
countries have policies on inclusion of learners with disabilities, with responsibility for these policies almost
equally split between education ministries and other ministries.

Laws and policies differ on whether students with disabilities should be in mainstream schools. Laws in
25% of countries provide for education in separate settings, with shares exceeding 40% in Asia and in
Latin America and the Caribbean. About 10% of countries mandate integration and 17% inclusion, the remainder
opting for combinations of segregation and mainstreaming. Policies have shifted closer to inclusion: 5% of
countries have policy provisions for education in separate settings, while 12% opt for integration and
38% for inclusion. Despite the good intentions enshrined in laws and policies, governments often do not
ensure implementation.

Policies need to be consistent and coherent across ages and education levels. Access to early childhood care
and education is highly inequitable, conditioned by location and socio-economic status. Quality, especially
interactions, integration, and child-centredness based on play, also determines inclusion. Early identification
of children's needs is crucial to designing the right responses, but labels of difference in the name of inclusion
can misfire. Disproportionately assigning some marginalized groups to special needs categories can indicate
discriminatory procedures, as successful legal challenges over Roma students' right to education demonstrate.

Preventing early school leaving requires policies on multiple fronts. Education systems face a dilemma. Grade
retention appears to increase dropout, but automatic promotion requires systematic approaches to remedial
support, which many countries proclaim but fail to implement. Laws and policies may not be consistent with
inclusion, e.g. in countries with low child labour or marriage age thresholds. Bangladesh is among the few
countries to invest extensively in second-chance programmes, which are indispensable for achieving SDG 4.

Governments are striving to make post-compulsory and adult education policies more inclusive. Technical
and vocational education can facilitate labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups, notably young women

and people with disabilities. Unlocking its potential requires making learning environments safer and accessible, as in Malawi. Inclusion-oriented tertiary education interventions tend to focus on encouraging access for disadvantaged groups through quotas or affordability measures. Yet only 11% of 71 countries had comprehensive equity strategies; another 11% elaborated approaches only for particular groups. Digital inclusion, especially of the elderly, is a major challenge for countries increasingly dependent on information and communication technology (ICT).

Responses to the Covid-19 crisis, which affected 1.6 billion learners, have not paid sufficient attention to including all learners. While 55% of low-income countries opted for online distance learning in primary and secondary education, only 12% of households in least developed countries have internet access at home. Even low-technology approaches cannot ensure learning continuity. Among the poorest 20% of households, just 7% owned a radio in Ethiopia and none owned a television. Overall, about 40% of low- and lower-middle-income countries have not supported learners at risk of exclusion. In France, up to 8% of students had lost contact with teachers after three weeks of lockdown.

Data

Data on and for inclusion in education are essential. Data on inclusion can highlight gaps in education opportunities and outcomes among learner groups, identifying those at risk of being left behind and the severity of the barriers they face. Using such information, governments can develop policies for inclusion and collect further data on implementation and on less easily observed qualitative outcomes.

Formulating appropriate questions on characteristics associated with vulnerability can be sensitive. Data on education disparity at the population level, collected through censuses and surveys, raise education ministries' awareness of disparity. However, depending on their formulation, questions on characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity expression can touch on sensitive personal identities, be intrusive and trigger persecution fears.

The formulation of questions on disability has improved. Agreeing to a valid measure of disability has been a long process. The UN Statistical Commission's Washington Group on Disability Statistics proposed a short set of questions for censuses or surveys in 2006, covering critical functional domains and activities for adults. A child-specific module was then developed with UNICEF. The questions bring disability statistics in line with the social model of disability and resolve serious comparability issues. Their rate of adoption is only slowly picking up.

The evidence that emerges on disability is of higher quality but still patchy. Analysis of 14 countries taking part in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) in 2017–19 and using the wider child-specific module showed a disability prevalence of 12%, ranging from 6% to 24%, as a result of high anxiety and depression rates. Across these countries, children, adolescents and youth with disabilities accounted for 15% of the out-of-school population. Relative to their peers of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school age, those with a disability were more likely to be out of school by 1, 4 and 6 percentage points, respectively, and those with a sensory, physical or intellectual disability by 4, 7 and 11 percentage points.

Some school surveys provide deeper insights into inclusion. In the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), one in five 15-year-old students reported feeling like an outsider at school, but the share exceeded 30% in Brunei Darussalam, the Dominican Republic and the United States. In all participating education systems, students of lower socio-economic status were less likely to feel a sense of belonging. Administrative data can be leveraged to collect qualitative evidence on inclusion. New Zealand systematically monitors soft indicators at the national level, including on whether students feel cared for, safe and secure,

and on their ability to establish and maintain positive relationships, respect others' needs and show empathy. Almost half of low- and middle-income countries collect no administrative data on students with disabilities.

Data show where segregation is still taking place. In Brazil, a policy change increased the share of students with disabilities in mainstream schools from 23% in 2003 to 81% in 2015. In Asia and the Pacific, almost 80% of children with disabilities attended mainstream schools, from 3% in Kyrgyzstan to 100% in Timor-Leste and Thailand. Scattered data record schools catering to specific groups, such as girls, linguistic minorities and religious communities. Their contribution to inclusion is ambiguous: Indigenous schools, for instance, can provide an environment where traditions, cultures and experiences are respected, but they can also perpetuate marginality. School surveys such as PISA show high levels of socio-economic segregation in countries including Chile and Mexico, where half of all students would require school reassignment to achieve a uniform socio-economic mix. This type of school segregation barely changed over 2000–15.

Identification of special education needs can be contentious. Identification can inform teachers about student needs so they can target support and accommodation. Yet children could be reduced to labels by peers, teachers and administrators, which can prompt stereotyped behaviours towards labelled students and encourage a medical approach. Portugal recently legislated a non-categorical approach to determining special needs. Low expectations triggered by a label, such as having learning difficulties, can become self-fulfilling. In Europe, the share of students identified with special education needs ranged from 1% in Sweden to 20% in Scotland. Learning disability was the largest category of special needs in the United States but was unknown in Japan. Such variation is mainly explained by differences in how countries construct this category of education: Institution, funding and training requirements vary, as do policy implications.

Governance and finance

Ensuring inclusive education is not the sole responsibility of education policy actors. Integrating services can improve the way children's needs are considered, as well as services' quality and cost-effectiveness. Integration can be achieved when one service provider acts as a referral point for access to another. A mapping of inclusive education provision in 18 European countries, mostly with reference to students with disabilities, showed education ministries responsible for teachers, school administration and learning materials; health ministries for screening, assessment and rehabilitation services; and social protection ministries for financial aid.

Sharing responsibility does not guarantee horizontal collaboration, cooperation and coordination. Deep-rooted norms, traditions and bureaucratic working cultures hinder smooth transition away from siloed forms of service delivery. Insufficient resources may also be a factor: In Kenya, one-third of county-level Educational Assessment Resource Centres, set up to expand access to education for children with disabilities, had one officer instead of the multidisciplinary teams envisaged. Clearly defined, measurable standards outlining responsibilities are needed. Rwanda developed standards enabling inspectors to assess classroom inclusivity. In Jordan, various actors used separate standards for licensing and accrediting special education centres; the new 10-year strategy will address this issue.

Vertical integration among government tiers and support to local government are needed.
Central governments must fund commitments to local governments fully and develop their capacity. A Republic of Moldova reform to move children out of mostly state boarding schools stumbled because savings were not transferred to the local government institutions and schools absorbing the children. In Nepal, a midterm evaluation of the school sector programme and the first inclusive education workshop showed that, while some central government posts were shifted as part of decentralization, local government capacity to support education service delivery was weak.

Three funding levers are important for equity and inclusion in education. First, governments may or may not compensate for relative disadvantage in allocating resources to local authorities or schools through capitation grants. Argentina's federal government allocates block grants to provincial governments, taking rural and out-of-school populations into account. Provinces co-finance education from their revenue, whose levels vary greatly, contributing to inequality. Second, education financing policies and programmes may target students and their families in the form of cash (e.g. scholarships) and exemptions from payment (e.g. fees). About one in four countries have affirmative action programmes for access to tertiary education. Third, non-education-specific financing policies and programmes can have a large impact on education. Over the long term, conditional cash transfers in Latin America increased education attainment by between 0.5 and 1.5 years.

Financing disability-inclusive education requires additional focus. A twin-track approach to financing is recommended, complementing general mechanisms with targeted programmes. Policymakers need to define standards for services to be delivered and the costs they will cover. They need to address the challenge of expanding costs as special needs identification rates increase, and design ways to prioritize, finance and deliver targeted services for a wide range of needs. They also need to define results in a way that maintains pressure on local authorities and schools to avoid further earmarking services for children with diagnosed special needs and further segregating settings at the expense of other groups or general financing needs. Finland has been moving in this direction.

Even richer countries lack information on financing education for students with disabilities. A project mapping European countries' financing of inclusive education found that only 5 in 18 had relevant information. There is no ideal funding mechanism, since countries vary in history, understanding of inclusive education and levels of decentralization. A few countries are moving away from multiple weights (e.g. by type of impairment), which may inflate the number of students identified with special needs, to a simple funding formula for mainstream schools. Many promote networks to share resources, facilities and capacity development opportunities.

Poorer countries often struggle to finance the shift from special to inclusive education. Some countries have increased their budgets to improve inclusion of students with disabilities. The 2018/19 Mauritius budget quadrupled the annual per capita grant for teaching aids, utilities, furniture and equipment for students with special needs.

Curricula, textbooks and assessments

Curriculum choices can promote or obstruct an inclusive and democratic society. Curricula need to reassure all groups at risk of exclusion that they are fundamental to the education project, whether in terms of content or implementation. Using different curricula of differing standards for some groups hinders inclusion and creates stigma. Yet many countries still teach students with disabilities a special curriculum, offer refugees only the curriculum of their home country to encourage repatriation, and tend to push lower achievers onto slower education tracks. Challenges arise in several contexts: internally displaced populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina; gender issues in Peru; linguistic minorities in Thailand; Burundian and Congolese refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania; indigenous peoples in Canada. In Europe, 23 in 49 countries did not address sexual orientation and gender identity expression explicitly.

Inclusive curricula need to be relevant, flexible and responsive to needs. Evidence from citizen-led assessments in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa highlighted large gaps between curriculum objectives and learning outcomes. When curricula cater to more privileged students and certain types of knowledge, implementation inequality between rural and urban areas arises, as a curriculum study of primary mathematics in Uganda showed. Learning in the mother tongue is vital, especially in primary school, to avoid knowledge gaps and increase the speed of learning and comprehension. In India's Odisha state, multilingual education covered about 1,500 primary schools and 21 tribal languages of instruction. Just 41 countries worldwide recognize sign

language as an official language, of which 21 are in the European Union. In Australia, 19% of students receive adjustments to the curriculum. Curricula should not lead to dead ends in education but offer pathways for continuous education opportunities.

Textbooks can perpetuate stereotypes. Representation of ethnic, linguistic, religious and indigenous minorities in textbooks depends largely on historical and national context. Factors influencing countries' treatment of minorities include the presence of indigenous populations; the demographic, political or economic dominance of one or more ethnic groups; the history of segregation or conflict; the conceptualization of nationhood; and the role of immigration. Textbooks may acknowledge minority groups in ways that mitigate or exacerbate the degree to which they are perceived, or perceive themselves, as 'other'. Inappropriate images and descriptions that associate certain characteristics with particular population groups can make students with non-dominant backgrounds feel misrepresented, misunderstood, frustrated and alienated. In many countries, females are often under-represented and stereotyped. The share of females in secondary school English language textbook text and images was 44% in Indonesia, 37% in Bangladesh and 24% in Punjab province, Pakistan. Women were represented in less prestigious occupations and as introverted.

Good-quality assessments are a fundamental part of an inclusive education system. Assessments are often organized unduly narrowly, determining admission to certain schools or placement in separate school tracks, and sending conflicting signals about government commitment to inclusion. Large-scale, cross-national summative assessments, for instance, tend to exclude students with disabilities or learning difficulties. Assessment should focus on students' tasks: how they tackle them, which ones prove difficult and how some aspects can be adapted to enable success. A shift in emphasis from high-stake summative assessments at the end of the education cycle to low-stake formative assessments over the education trajectory underpins efforts to make assessment fit for the purpose of inclusive education. Test accommodations are essential, but their validity has been questioned in that they appear to fit students to a model. The emphasis should instead be on how the assessment can support students with impairments in demonstration of their learning. In seven sub-Saharan African countries, no teacher had minimum knowledge in student assessment.

Various factors need to be aligned for inclusive curricular, textbook and assessment reforms. Capacity needs to be developed so stakeholders can work collaboratively and think strategically. Partnerships need to be in place to enable all parties to own the process and work towards the same goals. Successful attempts to make curricula, textbooks and assessments inclusive entail participatory processes during design, development and implementation.

Teachers and education support personnel

In inclusive education, all teachers should be prepared to teach all students. Inclusion cannot be realized unless teachers are agents of change, with values, knowledge and attitudes that permit every student to succeed. Teachers' attitudes often mix commitment to the principle of inclusion with doubts about their preparedness and how ready the education system is to support them. Teachers may not be immune to social biases and stereotypes. Inclusive teaching requires teachers to be open to diversity and aware that all students learn by connecting classroom with life experiences. While many teacher education and professional learning opportunities are designed accordingly, entrenched views of some students as deficient, unable to learn or incapable mean teachers may struggle to see that each student's learning capacity is open-ended.

Lack of preparedness for inclusive teaching may result from gaps in pedagogical knowledge. Some 25% of teachers in the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey reported a high need for professional development in teaching students with special needs. Across 10 francophone sub-Saharan African countries, 8% of grade 2 and 6 teachers had received in-service training in inclusive education. Overcoming the legacy of preparing different types of teachers for different types of students in separate settings is important. To be of good quality, teacher education must cover multiple aspects of inclusive teaching for all learners, from

instructional techniques and classroom management to multi-professional teams and learning assessment methods, and should include follow-up support to help teachers integrate new skills into classroom practice. In Canada's New Brunswick province, a comprehensive inclusive education policy introduced training opportunities for teachers to support students with autism spectrum disorders.

Teachers need appropriate working conditions and support to adapt teaching to student needs. In Cambodia, teachers questioned the feasibility of applying child-centred pedagogy in a context of overcrowded classrooms, scarce teaching resources and overambitious curricula. Teaching to standardized content requirements of a learning assessment can make it more difficult for teachers to adapt their practice. Cooperation among teachers in different schools can support them in addressing the challenges of diversity, especially in systems transitioning from segregation to inclusion. Sometimes such collaboration is absent even among teachers at the same school. In Sri Lanka, few teachers in mainstream classes collaborated with peers in special needs units.

A rise in support personnel accompanied the mainstreaming of students with special needs. Yet, globally, provision is lacking. Respondents to a survey of teacher unions reported that support personnel were largely absent or not available in at least 15% of countries. Classroom learning or teaching assistants can be particularly helpful. However, while their role is to supplement teachers' work, they are often put in positions that demand much more. Increased professional expectations, accompanied by often low levels of professional development, can lead to lower-quality learning, interference with peer interaction, decreased access to competent instruction, and stigmatization. In Australia, access of students with disabilities to qualified teachers was partly impeded by the system's overdependence on unqualified support personnel.

Teacher diversity often lags behind population diversity. This is sometimes the result of structural problems preventing members of marginalized groups from acquiring qualifications, teaching in schools once they are qualified and remaining in the profession. Systems should recognize that these teachers can bolster inclusion by offering unique insights and serving as role models to all students. In India, the share of teachers from scheduled castes, which constitute 16% of the country's population, increased from 9% to 13% between 2005 and 2013.

Schools

Inclusion in education requires inclusive schools. School ethos – the explicit and implicit values and beliefs, as well as the interpersonal relationships, that define a school's atmosphere – has been linked to students' social and emotional development and well-being. The share of students in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries who felt they 'belonged' in school fell from 82% in 2003 to 73% in 2015 due to increasing shares of students with immigrant backgrounds and declining levels of a sense of belonging among natives.

Head teachers can foster a shared vision of inclusion. They can guide inclusive pedagogy and plan professional development activities. A cross-country study of teachers of special needs students in mainstream schools found that those who received more instructional leadership reported lower professional development needs. While head teachers' tasks are increasingly complex, nearly one-fifth (rising to half in Croatia) had no instructional leadership training. Across 47 education systems, 15% of head teachers (rising to more than 60% in Viet Nam) reported a high need for professional development in promoting equity and diversity.

School bullying and violence cause exclusion. One-third of 11- to 15-year-olds have been bullied in school. Those perceived as differing from social norms or ideals are the most likely to be victimized, including sexual, ethnic and religious minorities, the poor and those with special needs. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students in New Zealand were three times as likely to be bullied. In Uganda, 84% of children with disabilities versus 53% of those without experienced violence by peers or staff. Classroom management practices, guidance

services and policies should identify staff responsibilities and actions to prevent and address bullying and violence. Punitive approaches should not displace student support and cultivation of a respectful atmosphere.

Schools must be safe and accessible. Transit to school, building design and sanitation facilities often violate accessibility, acceptability and adaptability principles. More than one-quarter of girls in 11 African, Asian and Latin American countries reported never or seldom feeling safe on the way to or from school. No schools in Burundi, Niger and Samoa had 'adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities'. In Slovakia, 15% of primary and 21% of lower secondary schools met such standards. Reliable comparable evidence remains elusive because countries' standards vary and schools do not meet all elements of a standard; in addition, monitoring capacity is weak and data are not independently verified.

Accessible infrastructure often does not support all. The CRPD called for universal design to increase functionality and accommodate everyone's needs, regardless of age, size or ability. Incorporating full-access facilities from the outset increases cost by 1%, compared with 5% or more after completion. Aid programmes helped disseminate universal design principles. Indonesian schools built with Australian support included accessible toilets, handrails and ramps; the government adopted similar measures for all new schools.

Assistive technology can determine participation or marginalization. Assistive devices refer to input technology (adapted keyboards and computer input controls, speech input, dictation software) and output technology (screen readers and magnifiers, three-dimensional printers, Braille note-takers). Alternative and augmentative communication systems replace speech. Assistive listening systems improve sound clarity and reduce background noise. Such technology improves graduation rates, self-esteem and optimism, but is often unavailable due to lack of resources or not used effectively due to lack of teacher education.

Students, parents and communities

Take marginalized students' experiences into account. Documenting disadvantaged students' views without singling them out is difficult. Their inclusion preferences are shown to depend on their vulnerability, type of school attended, experience at a different type of school, and the level and discreetness of specialized support. Vulnerable students in mainstream schools may appreciate separate settings for the sake of increased attention or reduced noise. Pairing students with peers with disabilities can increase acceptance and empathy, although it does not guarantee inclusion outside school.

Majority populations tend to stereotype minority and marginalized students. Negative attitudes lead to less acceptance, isolation and bullying. Syrian refugees in Turkey felt negative stereotypes led to depression, stigmatization and alienation from school. Stereotypes can lower students' expectations and self-esteem. In Switzerland, girls internalized the view that they are less suited than boys for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which discouraged them from pursuing degrees in these fields. Teachers can fight but also perpetuate discrimination in education. Mathematics teachers in São Paulo, Brazil, were more likely to pass white students than their equally proficient and well-behaved black classmates. Teachers in China had less favourable perceptions of rural migrant students than of their urban peers.

Parents drive but also resist inclusive education. Parents may hold discriminatory beliefs about gender, disability, ethnicity, race or religion. Some 15% in Germany and 59% in Hong Kong, China, feared that children with disabilities disturbed others' learning. Given choice, parents wish to send their vulnerable children to schools that ensure their well-being. They need to trust mainstream schools to respond to their needs. As school becomes more demanding with age, parents of children with autism spectrum disorders may have to look for schools that better meet their needs. In Australia's Queensland state, 37% of students in special schools had moved from mainstream schools.

Parental school choice affects inclusion and segregation. Families with choice may avoid disadvantaged local schools. In Danish cities, a seven percentage point increase in the share of migrant students was associated with a one percentage point increase in the share of natives attending private school. In Lebanon, the majority of parents favoured private schools along sectarian lines. In Malaysia, private school streams organized by ethnicity and differentiated by quality contributed to stratification, despite government measures to desegregate schools. The potential of distance and online mainstream education for inclusion notwithstanding, parental preference for self-segregation through homeschooling tests the limits of inclusive education.

Parents of children with disabilities often find themselves in a distressing situation. Parents need support in early identification and management of their children's sleep, behaviour, nursing, comfort and care. Early intervention programmes can help them grow confident, use other support services and enrol children in mainstream schools. Mutual support programmes can provide solidarity, confidence and information. Parents with disabilities are more likely to be poor, less educated and face barriers coming to school or working with teachers. In Viet Nam, children of parents with disabilities had 16% lower attendance rates.

Civil society has been advocate and watchdog for the right to inclusive education. Organizations for people with disabilities, disabled people's organizations, grassroots parental associations and international non-government organizations (NGOs) active in development and education monitor progress on government commitments, campaign for fulfilment of rights and defend against violations of the right to inclusive education. In Armenia, an NGO campaign resulted in a legal and budget framework for rolling out inclusive education nationally by 2025.

Civil society groups provide education services on government contract or their own initiative. These services may support groups governments do not reach (e.g. street children) or be alternatives to government services. The Ghana Inclusive Education Policy calls on NGOs to mobilize resources, advocate for increased funding, contribute to infrastructure development and engage in monitoring and evaluation. The Afghanistan government supports community-based education, which relies on local people. Yet NGO schools set up for specific groups may promote segregation rather than inclusion in education. They should align with policy and not replicate services or compete for limited funds.

ADENE

Recommendations

ALL MEANS ALL: LEARNER DIVERSITY IS A STRENGTH TO BE CELEBRATED

The world has committed to inclusive education not by chance but because it is the foundation of an education system of good quality that enables every child, youth and adult to learn and fulfil their potential. Gender, age, location, poverty, disability, ethnicity, indigeneity, language, religion, migration or displacement status, sexual orientation or gender identity expression, incarceration, beliefs and attitudes should not be the basis for discrimination against anyone in education participation and experience. The prerequisite is to see learner diversity not as a problem but as an opportunity. Inclusion cannot be achieved if it is seen as an inconvenience or if people harbour the belief that learners' levels of ability are fixed. Education systems need to be responsive to all learners' needs.

The following recommendations take into account the deep roots of barriers and the wide scope of issues related to inclusion, which threaten the world's chance to achieve the 2030 targets.

1 **Widen the understanding of inclusive education: It should include all learners, regardless of identity, background or ability**.

Although the right to inclusive education encompasses all learners, many governments are yet to base their laws, policies and practices on this principle. Education systems, which celebrate diversity and believe every person adds value, has potential and should be treated with dignity, enable all to learn not only the basics but the broader range of skills the world needs to build sustainable societies. This is not about setting up an inclusive education department. Rather, it is about not discriminating against anyone, not rejecting anyone, making all reasonable accommodations to cater for diverse needs and working towards gender equality. Interventions should be coherent from early childhood to adulthood to facilitate lifelong learning, and thus an inclusive perspective should be adopted in education sector plan preparation.

2 **Target financing to those left behind: There is no inclusion while millions lack access to education**.

Once legal instruments are in place to address access barriers such as child labour, child marriage and teenage pregnancy, governments need a twin-track approach that allocates general funding to foster an inclusive learning environment for all learners, as well as targeted funding to follow the furthest behind as early as possible. Upon access to school, early interventions can considerably reduce the potential impact of disability on progression and learning.

3 **Share expertise and resources: This is the only way to sustain a transition to inclusion.**

In many ways, achieving inclusion is a management challenge. Human and material resources to address diversity are scarce. Historically they have been concentrated in a few places as a legacy of segregated provision and are unequally distributed. Mechanisms and incentives are needed to move them flexibly to ensure that specialist expertise supports mainstream schools and non-formal education settings.

4 **Engage in meaningful consultation with communities and parents: Inclusion cannot be enforced from above.**

Governments should open space for communities to voice their preferences as equals in the design of policies on inclusion in education. Schools should increase interaction within and outside of school walls on the design and implementation of school practices through parent associations or student pairing systems. Everybody's view should count.

5 **Ensure cooperation across government departments, sectors and tiers: Inclusion in education is but a subset of social inclusion.**

Ministries sharing administrative responsibility for inclusive education must collaborate in identifying needs, exchanging information and designing programmes. Central governments need to ensure human and financial support for local governments to carry out clearly defined inclusive education mandates.

6 **Make space for non-government actors to challenge and fill gaps: They must also make sure they work towards the same inclusion goal.**

Government must provide leadership and maintain dialogue with NGOs to ensure that education service provision leads to inclusion, meets standards and is aligned with national policy. Government should also create conditions enabling NGOs to monitor fulfilment of government commitments and stand up for those excluded from education.

7 **Apply universal design: Ensure inclusive systems fulfil every learner's potential.**

All children should learn from the same flexible, relevant and accessible curriculum, one that recognizes diversity and responds to various learners' needs. Spoken and signed languages and images in textbooks should make everyone visible while removing stereotypes. Assessment should be formative and allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. School infrastructure should not exclude anyone and the huge potential of technology should be exploited.

8 **Prepare, empower and motivate the education workforce: All teachers should be prepared to teach all students**.

Inclusive approaches should not be treated as a specialist topic but as a core element of teacher education, whether initial education or professional development. Such programmes need to focus on tackling entrenched views of some students as deficient and unable to learn. Head teachers should be prepared to implement and communicate an inclusive school ethos. A diverse education workforce also supports inclusion.

9 **Collect data on and for inclusion with attention and respect: Avoid labelling that stigmatises.**

Education ministries must collaborate with other ministries and statistical agencies to collect population-level data coherently so as to understand the scale of disadvantage for the marginalized. On disability, the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions and the Child Functioning Module should be prioritized. Administrative systems should aim to collect data for aid planning and budgeting in provision of inclusive education services, but also data on the experience of inclusion. However, the desire for detailed or robust data should not take priority over ensuring that no learner is harmed.

10 **Learn from peers: A shift to inclusion is not easy.**

Inclusion represents a move away from discrimination and prejudice, and towards a future that can be adapted to various contexts and realities. Neither the pace nor the specific direction of this transition can be dictated. But much can be learned from sharing experiences through teacher networks, national forums, and regional and global platforms.

PEER

A new GEM Report tool for **systematic monitoring** of national education laws and policies

This tool aims to facilitate peer learning and motivate regional policy dialogue on issues central to SDG 4. Authorized country users can edit text to keep content relevant and up to date, and content is downloadable.

The first edition compiles information for more than 160 countries in seven areas relevant to inclusion and education: definitions, school organization, laws and policies, governance, learning environments, teachers and support personnel, and monitoring. Profiles mapping non-state providers and the regulation frameworks of non-state actors will be developed in conjunction with the 2021 GEM Report.

education-profiles.org

SCOPE

A new interactive GEM Report tool for **sharing key trends** towards SDG 4

This tool enables GEM Report readers to engage with data on key SDG 4 monitoring indicators for the first time. Five themes – access, equity, learning, quality and finance – bring together the main stories on progress towards 2030 targets.

The tool is available in seven languages and combines data from multiple sources, notably the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Interactive visualizations, also drawing on past GEM Reports, allow country comparisons with reference to regional and global averages. Users can create images and data files to explore further, print, download, share and use online or in presentations.

education-progress.org

Monitoring education in the Sustainable Development Goals

Development in the SDG 4 monitoring framework. In 2019, the Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on SDG Indicators carried out the first review of the monitoring framework and its 232 global indicators. Two main developments were related to SDG 4.

First, the IAEG approved a UIS proposal to adopt the completion rate as a second global indicator for target 4.1. The proposal leaves open the possibility of estimating the indicator with a statistical model to overcome typical problems associated with household surveys, such as timeliness, volatility and multiple sources, as the *Global Education Monitoring Report* has proposed. Results from the application of this model are a feature of the report's new online monitoring website, Education Progress, which enables users to interact with data to observe trends and compare national, regional and global averages.

Second, after two failed attempts, the IAEG approved a request to upgrade global indicator 4.7.1, on education system efforts to mainstream sustainable development and global citizenship, from tier III status (no established methodology) to tier II (established methodology but countries do not regularly produce data). While the indicator still presents important challenges, the revised proposal introduces some discipline, notably by ensuring that countries provide reference documents to support subjective responses.

By March 2019, the IAEG had upgraded global indicator 4.2.1, on development of 3- to 5-year-olds, from tier III to tier II following submission of a plan by UNICEF, its custodian agency. This means there are now no tier III SDG 4 global indicators; any remaining would have been dropped at the end of the IAEG review. The 12 global indicators are complemented by 31 thematic indicators aimed at enriching the perspective on progress towards SDG 4. As of the 2019 data release, the UIS is reporting on 33 of the 43 global and thematic indicators.

The most important development in the August 2019 Technical Cooperation Group meeting in Yerevan was agreement on developing benchmarks for seven SDG 4 indicators as minimum levels each country in a region should achieve. The most relevant example in education is the European Commission's benchmark-setting process on seven education indicators for EU countries to achieve by 2020, which is being repeated for benchmarks to be achieved by 2030. The proposal received the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee's green light; SDG 4 regional steering committees will review it in 2020.

Major data gaps in SDG 4 monitoring. Three data sources are key for monitoring progress on SDG 4 indicators.

Household surveys are the foundation for disaggregating education indicators, such as the completion rate, by individual characteristics to estimate global indicator 4.5.1, the parity index. Surveys should be frequent, their questions comparable and their data publicly available. These conditions are met for 59% of countries, corresponding to 87% of the population. Northern Africa and Western Asia has the lowest coverage in population terms (46%). Oceania has the lowest coverage in country terms (29%).

Learning assessments are the source of information on global indicator 4.1.1. While many countries opt to report results from their participation in cross-national assessments, national assessments are also used, for instance for data on reading skills in countries such as China (lower secondary education) and India (primary education). The UIS database shows 26% of countries in Africa have reported reading skills data for the early grades of primary education since 2014, corresponding to 28% of the population. The region has been plagued by serious delays in publication of country reports from the fourth round of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality learning assessment and doubts over the validity of its results. The UIS-coordinated Global Data Coalition aims to address the lack of information on donor support to learning assessments in the region and the lack of coordination in donor initiatives.

Administrative data provide information on global indicator 4.c.1, the percentage of trained teachers. About 58% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have reported data on primary education since 2016 but only 25% on upper secondary education. Of the six most populous countries in the region, only the United Republic of Tanzania has reported the number of teachers in primary education more recently than 2015. Data interpretation suffers from lack of clarity in the definition of trained teachers, a challenge the UIS will tackle with a new international standard classification for teachers, a new process approved at the UNESCO General Conference in 2019.

TARGET 4.1 | PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Completion rates stand at 85% in primary, 73% in lower secondary and 49% in upper secondary education. The completion rate diverges from the attendance rate: The former has increased steadily, if slowly, since 2000; the latter has stalled since the mid-2000s. This discrepancy needs to be further investigated. In 2018, sub-Saharan Africa had the most out-of-school children, adolescents and youth, surpassing Central and Southern Asia (**Table 1**). The trend is expected to intensify. Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to account for 25% of the school-age population by 2030, up from 12% in 1990. It also has the most extreme cases of over-age attendance.

The 2018 PISA data highlight slight regression in high-income countries over the past 15 years (one in five students is below minimum proficiency levels). Stagnation in middle-income countries (one in two students is below minimum proficiency levels) should count as progress, since attendance among 15-year-olds in many, including Brazil, Indonesia and Uruguay, has increased, although the rate of progress is below that required to achieve SDG 4. Attention should be paid to the bottom of the distribution of learning outcomes. The report presents new evidence on 'floor effects' suggesting that the number of learners above minimum proficiency in cross-national assessments may have been overestimated in several countries, as that performance could be indistinguishable from random guessing on multiple choice questions.

TABLE 1:
Selected indicators on school participation by age group, 2018

Region	Primary Out-of-school children (000)	(%)	Lower secondary Out-of-school adolescents (000)	(%)	Upper secondary Out-of-school youth (000)	(%)
World	59 141	8	61 478	16	137 796	35
Sub-Saharan Africa	32 214	19	28 251	37	37 026	58
Northern Africa and Western Asia	5 032	9	3 998	14	8 084	30
Central and Southern Asia	12 588	7	16 829	15	64 745	45
Eastern and South-eastern Asia	5 697	3	9 016	10	17 870	21
Latin America and the Caribbean	2 267	4	2 544	7	7 159	23
Oceania	210	5	109	5	408	25
Europe and Northern America	1 133	2	731	2	2 503	7
Low income	20 797	19	21 243	39	26 176	61
Lower middle income	30 444	9	30 706	17	87 730	44
Upper middle income	6 570	3	8 444	7	20 615	20
High income	1 330	2	1 085	3	3 275	8

Source: UIS database.

TARGET 4.2 | EARLY CHILDHOOD

Interpreting data on early childhood education participation depends on how the age group is defined, how different institutional arrangements are captured and country-specific patterns of early entry. For children aged one year younger than primary school entry age, participation in formal education was 67% in 2018 (global indicator 4.2.2; shares ranged from 9% in Djibouti to 100% in Cuba and Viet Nam). Some of the fastest progress was observed in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where pre-primary enrolment increased from 38% in 2011 to 67% in 2018. In 9 of 17 countries with recent MICS data, more children in this age group were in primary than in pre-primary school. For children across the entire age range of pre-primary education, which varies by country from one to four years, participation was 52% in 2018; ratios ranged from 1% in Chad to 115% in Belgium and Ghana (**Figure 4**).

MICS data are used to estimate the Early Childhood Development Index, a measure of the share of children developmentally on track (global indicator 4.2.1). In Mali and Nigeria, just over 60% of children were on track in at least three of the four domains. But the share of children on track in no more than one domain was 5% in Mali and 10% in Nigeria, suggesting greater inequality in the latter.

TARGET 4.3 | TECHNICAL, VOCATIONAL, TERTIARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Northern Africa and Western Asia has had among the most rapid expansion of tertiary education participation in recent years, but there is wide variation by country. In around 2010, about 15% of youth were enrolled in tertiary education in Morocco and Sudan, but while Sudan stagnated, Morocco has seen a rapid increase to 36%. Algeria and Saudi Arabia have rapidly expanded female participation to around two-thirds of young women.

Labour force surveys from the International Labour Organization database have been included as a data source for monitoring global indicator 4.3.1 on participation in adult education and training, increasing coverage from 45 to 106 countries and to regions other than Europe. Challenges remaining include lack of standardized questions on type of adult education and training attended, along with age range variation and reference period misalignment: Many labour force surveys refer to the past month, while the global indicator refers to the past year. The evidence suggests average participation during the month prior to the survey in upper-middle-income countries is just 3% (**Figure 5**). The 2016 Adult Education Survey provided insights into constraints on participation. Dispositional barriers are generally less investigated but are far more likely to hinder adult learning than others: 60% of respondents said they saw no need to participate in adult learning. In all countries except Denmark, women were more likely to mention conflicts with family responsibilities.

There are almost 11 million people in penal institutions with the right to education but a lack of programmes meeting their needs. Prison education has many benefits: A 2013 study in the United States found that inmates who participated in correctional education had a 13 percentage point lower chance of recidivism than those who did not.

TARGET 4.4 | SKILLS FOR WORK

Data availability on basic ICT skills is growing, although it remains heavily skewed towards richer countries. Global indicator 4.4.1 covers nine basic ICT skills; in less than a third of all countries do at least half of adults possess four or more of them, and no low- or middle-income country reports half of adults having more than three of the skills. This year countries are to adopt changes the International Telecommunications Union introduced to the skills set in the recommended questionnaire, e.g. adding skills related to privacy and security.

The European ICT surveys offer insights on digital skills acquisition and the relative importance of school, work and home. Despite ICT skills' relevance for work, 10% of respondents took part in specific on-the-job ICT training in 2018, and 20% participated in at least one general activity to improve their computer, software and application expertise. ICT skills development more often occurs through free online training or self-study,

FIGURE 4:

Few in poor countries benefit from pre-primary education

Gross enrolment ratios for early childhood educational development and pre-primary education, by country income group, 2018
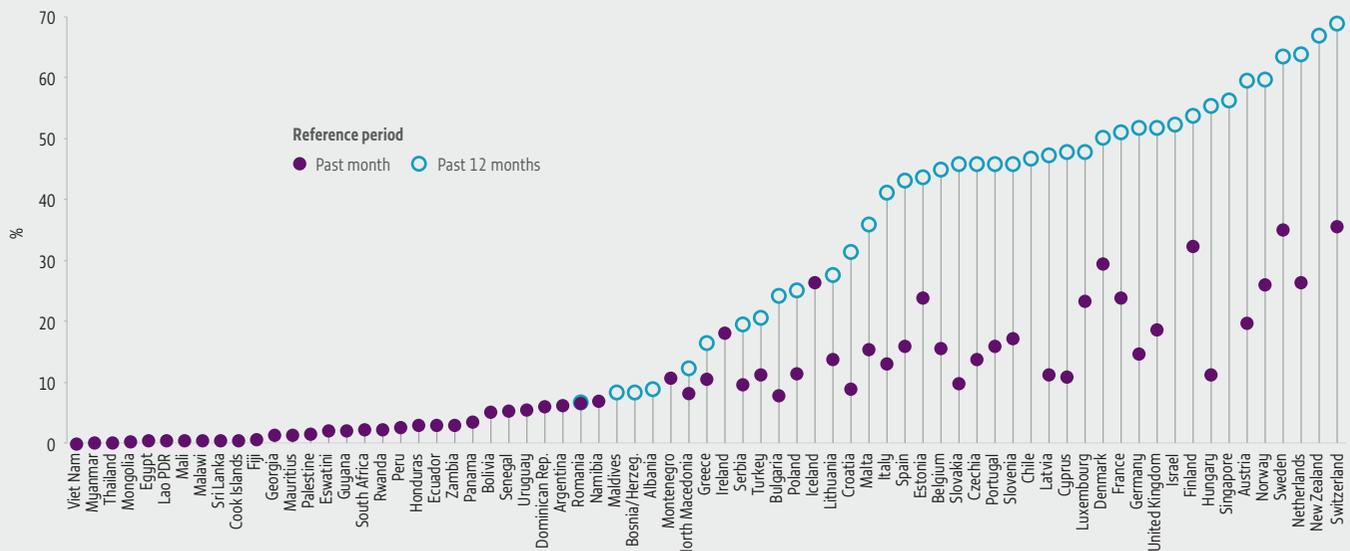

Early childhood educational development

Pre-primary education

FIGURE 5:
Estimates of participation in adult education vary according to the reference period
Percentage of adults who participated in formal or non-formal adult education, by reference period, 2018 or most recent year

GEM StatLink: http://bit.ly/GEM2020_Summary_fig5
Source: Eurostat and UIS databases.

especially among the young. Although these options help overcome cost, schedule and location challenges, gender gaps persist.

Target 4.4 also envisages entrepreneurship skills development. Over 90% of entrepreneurs in Africa and the Arab States and over 80% in Asia and the Pacific work in the informal sector. Training requirements in these regions should be tailored to microenterprises with limited growth prospects.

TARGET 4.5 | EQUITY

Globally, there is gender parity in pre-primary through upper secondary enrolment. However, this hides gaps at the country level. In the bottom quarter of low-income countries, at most 60 girls are enrolled in upper secondary school per 100 boys. In lower-middle-income countries, gender disparities may be at the expense of girls or boys: At most, 92 girls per 100 boys are in the bottom quarter, compared with 91 boys per 100 girls in the top quarter. This Report reviews evidence on the global prevalence of single-sex schools.

Education disparities by wealth commonly compare the bottom 20% of households with the top 20%. As poorer households tend to have more children, cross-country comparisons are distorted if the comparison is between the poorest 20% of children in one country (e.g. Afghanistan) and the poorest 25% in another (e.g. Myanmar).

The addition of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability in the MICS expands knowledge about disability gaps in education. Differing questions produce differing disability prevalence rates between those up to age 17 (questions based on the Child Functioning Module) and those 18 and over, for whom the rates may decline by around 90%. This hampers interpretation of education indicators calculated over age ranges spanning the groups (e.g. age 17 to 19).

Latin America lacks comparable data on indigenous peoples. While most countries use self-identification, some apply additional criteria in censuses and surveys, including official recognition of identity and language. Demographic shifts have blurred ethnic boundaries and given rise to fluid indigenous identities, meaning

different criteria yield different results, including on education indicators. Across household surveys in Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, school attendance among 15- to 17-year-olds is 3 to 20 percentage points lower among indigenous language speakers than among those self-identifying as indigenous.

TARGET 4.6 | ADULT LITERACY

Globally, 86% of adults and 92% of youth are literate. Women remain less likely to be literate, but the gap is closing in the younger generation. These figures include new estimates for 72 countries, including 21 for which the previous national literacy rates were from 2010 or earlier. The number of adults who have not completed primary school will continue declining relatively slowly and may remain above 10% in Africa until the 2050s, even if universal primary completion is achieved by 2030, which means adult literacy will remain a challenge. In 25 countries with relevant data, the adult literacy rate for those with any kind of disability is lower than for other adults, the gap varying from 5% in Mali to 41% in Indonesia.

Results from the third wave of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies added evidence on global indicator 4.6.1. Some 51% of adults in Mexico, 71% in Peru and 72% in Ecuador were below minimum proficiency in literacy in 2017. In the United States, the percentage below minimum proficiency in numeracy increased, from 27.6% in 2012–14 to 29.2% in 2017.

TARGET 4.7 | SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Analysis of the 83 responses to the sixth consultation in 2016/17 on the 1974 Recommendation provides a basis for discussion on global indicator 4.7.1. Only 12% of countries fully reflect or include the Recommendation's guiding principles in education policies, curricula, in-service teacher education and student assessment. Few countries fully train teachers in the sustainable development content their policies and curriculum frameworks prescribe and on which students are assessed. In some countries, such as Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar, students are assessed even though teachers are not trained at all (**Figure 6**). Some 93% of countries teach prevention of gender-based violence, 34% prevention of violent extremism and 29% education for global citizenship.

While there is evidence that curricula are slowly changing to include environmental sustainability and climate change, there is no systematic international data collection on the duration of a 'typical' curricular reform from conception to implementation. The time it takes depends on the intensity of changes, consultations, piloting and validations. Revisions may take up to five years – longer if they are politically contentious and all stages of the process receive due attention. Significantly faster reforms are likely rushed. In Romania, textbooks on the history of minorities were introduced in two years, but teachers had not been trained when they arrived in classrooms.

TARGET 4.A | EDUCATION FACILITIES AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

An estimated 335 million girls attend primary and secondary schools that lack basic menstrual hygiene management. Sanitation facilities may not be accessible for wheelchair users. In El Salvador, Fiji, Peru, Tajikistan and Yemen, at least 80% of schools had improved sanitation facilities, but less than 5% of those were accessible.

In 29 countries, extreme temperatures have a negative effect on education attainment. In South-eastern Asia, a child experiencing temperatures 2 standard deviations above average is predicted to attain 1.5 fewer years of schooling than those experiencing average temperatures.

By February 2020, there were 102 signatories of the 2015 Safe Schools Declaration. However, more than 1,000 schools in Afghanistan were closed due to conflict in late 2018, leaving half a million children out of school.

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, school closures doubled between 2017 and 2019 due to growing insecurity, disrupting education for more than 400,000 children.

While 132 countries have banned corporal punishment in schools, half of all school-age children live in countries where it is not fully prohibited. Strong opposition to corporal punishment at home is positively correlated with lower levels of corporal punishment in schools. In India and the Republic of Korea, corporal punishment in schools is much higher than might be predicted.

There are 6.2 fatalities among 5- to 14-year-olds per 100,000 people in low-income countries, which average 8 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants, compared with 1.7 fatalities in high-income countries, where the average is 528 per 1,000 inhabitants. A survey of nearly 250,000 km of roads in 60 countries found that more than 80% with a traffic flow over 40 km/h and used by pedestrians had no pavement.

TARGET 4.B | SCHOLARSHIPS

Aid for scholarships and imputed student costs totalled US$3.5 billion in 2018. Average scholarship aid per tertiary education student varies widely: Countries with similar student populations differ by a factor of 100 or more. The highest per capita scholarship flows go to small island developing states whose nationals can only study for specialized degrees abroad. Among them, Caribbean islands receive far less scholarship aid per capita than Pacific islands.

Research conducted for this Report estimates 30,000 scholarships were offered to sub-Saharan African students in 2019 by the top 50 providers, which allocate about 94% of all scholarships targeted to those students globally, according to a mapping of more than 200 providers. About 56% of the scholarships were for undergraduate study.

Government-led initiatives dominate scholarship provision for sub-Saharan African students, with China the single largest provider at over 12,000 opportunities per year. Although the volume of scholarship aid globally has

FIGURE 6:

In some countries, students are assessed but teachers are not trained in education for sustainable development

Degree of implementation of the 1974 Recommendation, by domain and pattern, 2016/17
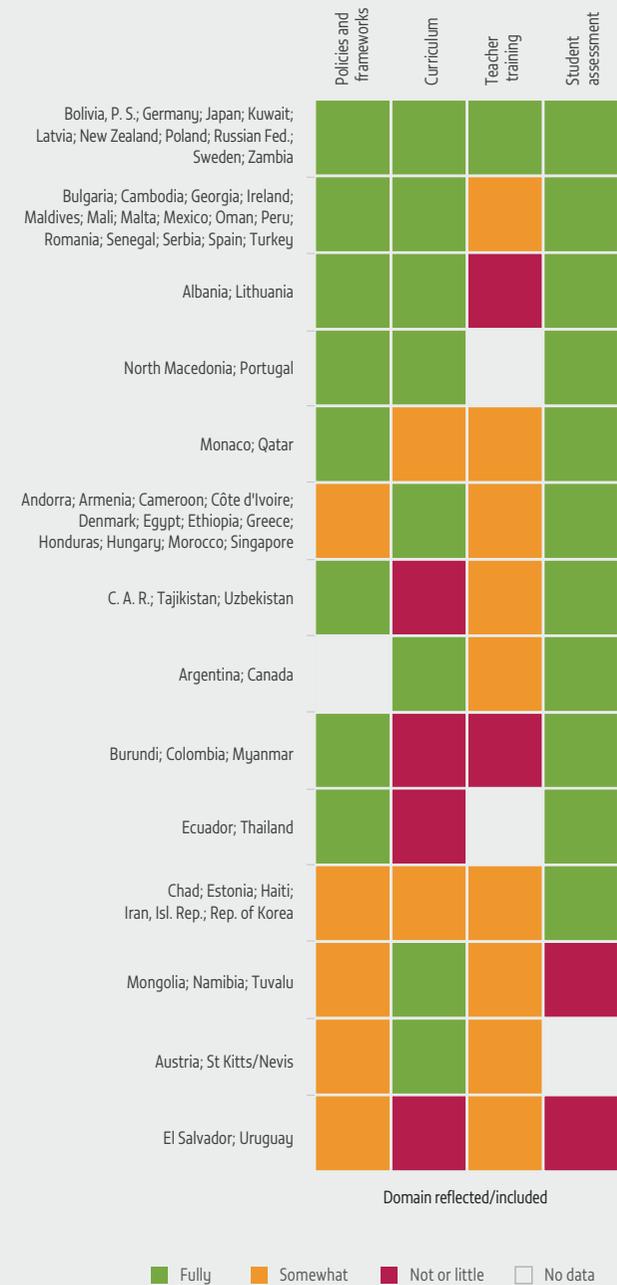
GEM StatLink: http://bit.ly/GEM2020_Summary_fig6
Note: The figure does not show countries with unique response patterns.
Source: UNESCO (2019).

stagnated since 2010, the number of opportunities available to sub-Saharan African students has increased since 2015 and will likely continue to rise in the next five years.

Scholarship providers often have no verifiable metrics on programme performance in terms of inclusiveness. Among 20 providers consulted for this Report, most could provide no detailed information on scholars' individual background characteristics other than gender. Application and selection procedures are poorly aligned with the needs of the 60% of sub-Saharan African students studying outside the region, who also experience learning environments quite unlike what they are used to.

TARGET 4.C | TEACHERS

Globally, an estimated 85% of primary and lower secondary school teachers are trained according to national definitions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the shares are 64% for primary and 58% for lower secondary. Less than half (49%) of pre-primary teachers in the region are trained, and the share for upper secondary is 43%. Interpreting teacher availability data partly depends on information on teaching assistants. Data for low- and middle-income countries rarely clarify whether support staff is engaged in teaching. Data for OECD countries are more explicit and show countries including Chile and the United Kingdom relying a lot on teaching assistants in pre-primary education. Analysis of data on working hours suggests not enough is known about teacher time allocation. In at least a few cases, statutory regulations on working and teaching time might not reflect the reality.

An OECD review of nine countries confirmed pre-primary teachers may be highly qualified but not necessarily trained to work with children; the latter share is a meagre 64% in Iceland. Despite low satisfaction with salary, staff reported high job satisfaction, from 79% in the Republic of Korea to 98% in Israel.

Education in the other SDGs

The goals of gender equality, climate change and partnerships have large and unrealized synergies with education. A review of effective means of combating climate change ranked girls' and women's education and family planning sixth and seventh out of 80 solutions. The review estimated that filling the GEM Report-estimated financing gap of US$39 billion a year could yield a reduction of 51 gigatons of emissions by 2050, an 'incalculable' return on investment. Indigenous peoples and local communities manage at least 17% of the total carbon stored in forest lands in 52 tropical and subtropical countries, making protecting their knowledge vital. As of 2017, 102 of 195 UNESCO member states had a designated education focal point for Action for Climate Empowerment to support provision of climate change mitigation education.

While gender is a cross-cutting priority in all multi-stakeholder funding partnerships, connections between education and climate change are weaker. There has been no clear targeting from global climate finance in 2015–16 for scaling up education systems and girls' education, for behavioural changes in food waste and diet, or for indigenous approaches to land use and management.

Finance

Globally, the median public expenditure on education was 4.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 13.8% of total government expenditure in 2018, compared with the 4% and 15% thresholds agreed in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. In all, 47 of 141 countries with data, or one-third, met neither benchmark – 4 more than the previous year, with 7 fewer countries reporting. Because the set of countries reporting expenditure data changes yearly, consistent time series require imputation. In 2000–18, education spending as a share of GDP has remained stagnant, though this masks considerable regional variation, from 1.7 percentage points higher in Latin America and the Caribbean to 0.5 percentage points lower in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

Aid levels have remained constant at around 0.3% of major donor countries' gross national income since 2005. During this time, aid as a share of GDP in low-income countries has been falling, reaching 7.9% in 2014, rebounding to 9.1% by 2018. Aid to education reached US$15.6 billion in 2018, a historic high. But at most 47% of that amount, or US$7.4 billion, goes to basic and secondary education and to low- and lower-middle-income countries, which are most in need. Humanitarian aid to education has quintupled between 2012 and 2019 to US$705 million.

The OECD is changing its definition and methodology for calculating aid. The new Total Official Support for Sustainable Development is expected to have several implications for education. New codes for multilateral mechanisms, such as the Global Partnership for Education, will reduce the proportion of aid to education previously unallocated to countries. Sector-level information will be provided for humanitarian aid. Contributions to global public goods, policy advisory services and research efforts will also be singled out. Only the grant portion of concessional loans will count as aid.

The poorer the country, the larger the share of household expenditure on education. Data from a small number of countries indicate that the median was 0.5% of GDP in Europe and Northern America but 1.9% in sub-Saharan Africa. Household spending often makes up for insufficient government spending: In six of nine countries where households spent at least 2.5% of GDP on education, governments spent below 4%. Households may display gender bias in expenditure on sons and daughters, although the extent varies by context.

FIGURE 7:

Latin America and the Caribbean recorded the largest increase in education expenditure

Public education expenditure as a share of GDP, 2000–17
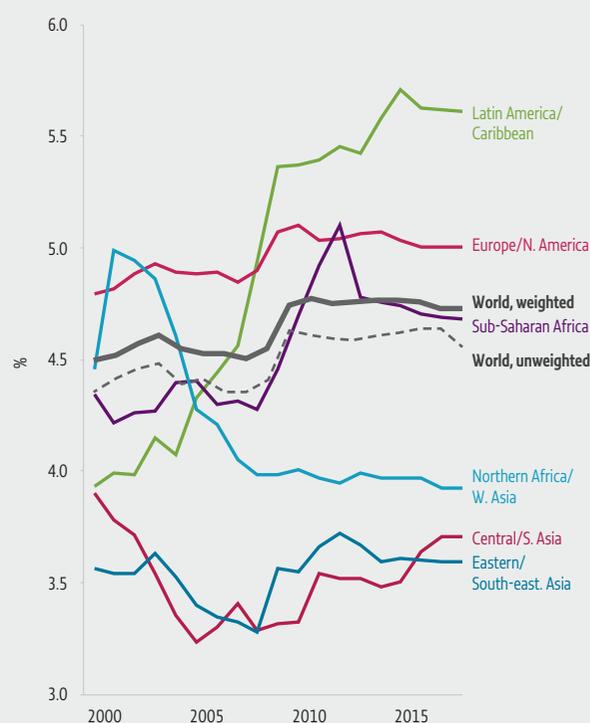
GEM StatLink: http://bit.ly/GEM2020_Summary_fig7
Source: GEM Report team analysis based on the UIS database.

Inclusion and education:
ALL MEANS ALL

The 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report* looks at social, economic and cultural mechanisms that discriminate against disadvantaged children, youth and adults, keeping them out of education or marginalized in it. Spurred by their commitment to fulfil the right to inclusive education, countries are expanding their vision of inclusion in education to put diversity at the core of their systems. Yet implementation of well-meaning laws and policies often falters. Released at the start of the decade of action to 2030, and in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis, which has exacerbated underlying inequalities, the Report argues that resistance to addressing every learner's needs is a real threat to achieving global education targets.

Inclusion and education: All means all identifies the practices in governance and finance; curricula, textbooks and assessments; teacher education; school infrastructure; and relations with students, parents and communities that can unlock the process to inclusion. It provides policy recommendations to make learner diversity a strength to be celebrated, a force for social cohesion.

Two new websites complement the fourth edition of the *Global Education Monitoring Report*. PEER describes how countries approach inclusion, serving as a resource for policy dialogue. SCOPE offers an opportunity to interact with the data and explore selected SDG 4 indicators.

Inclusion imposed from above will never work. So, the question you, as readers, are asked in the 2020 GEM Report is whether you are ready to challenge the current mindset; ready to decide that an education is for everyone – all means all.
The Right Honourable Helen Clark
Chair, GEM Report Advisory Board

A move towards inclusion is non-negotiable. Ignoring inclusion is contrary to reason for anyone striving to build a better world. We may not achieve it in full, but failure to act is not an option.
Audrey Azoulay
Director-General, UNESCO

If we don't push for accessibility and inclusion in schools, we are choosing to raise entire generations believing that segregation is a viable solution to the 'problem' of the existence of diverse individuals.

Ariana Aboulafia
Student, University of Miami
School of Law, United States

The most important step that helped me feel included in school was to place me in the same learning environment as my more able colleagues. I was welcomed along with everyone else and punished like they were. It removed my inferiority complex.

Kikudi Marc
CONEPT,
Democratic Republic of Congo

Inclusive education is but a natural progression of human rights into the education system. It is the need of the hour.

Percy Cardozo
Programme Head and Counsellor,
India

We need to teach children to deal with differences, not as a negative thing, but as something we can all learn from to be better people, better students and better citizens.

Herminio Corrêa
Board Member,
Parents International Portugal

Global Education Monitoring Report

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Sustainable
Development
Goals

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Sustainable
Development
Goals