

Learning in the Sustainable Development Goals

Education and development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path, ensuring that no one is left behind (United Nations, 2015). SDG 4 ensures inclusive and equitable quality education, promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all, and emphasizes that global education efforts must give central importance to quality and learning for all girls and boys (UNESCO, 2016).

The seven education targets under SDG 4 refer to 'quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education' and 'quality primary and secondary education' that help students attain 'relevant and effective learning outcomes' (UNESCO, 2016). Countries are called upon to demonstrate that young people are attaining 'literacy and numeracy', 'relevant skills ... for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship', as well as 'the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development' (UNESCO, 2016).

The three means of implementation for SDG 4 also emphasize learning and quality education for all with a focus on safe and effective learning environments, an increase in scholarships for least developed countries, and an increase in the supply of qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2016).

Beyond SDG 4, education has an influence on each of the 17 SDGs. A good education can: lift people out of poverty and reduce inequalities; promote employment and economic growth; empower women; build peaceful and inclusive societies; support good nutrition and health; and help communities improve their management of water and sanitation, infrastructure, clean energy, environmental resources, and other elements of a sustainable lifestyle (GPE Secretariat, 2015).

SDG 4 targets and means of implementation

Targets

- 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

- 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.
- 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Means of implementation

- 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.
- 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.

Plans and policies

- **Bangladesh:** [National SDG 4 Strategic Framework: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All](#)
- **Botswana:** [Botswana National Implementation Plan For Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4 - Education 2030](#)

Tools

- UNESCO. 2016. [Mainstreaming SDG4-Education 2030 in Sector-wide Policy and Planning: Technical Guidelines for UNESCO Field Offices](#)
- UNESCO. 2017. [Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4](#)

References and sources

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United Nations. 2015. [Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.](#) New York, NY: United Nations.

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