
Learning in the Sustainable Development Goals

BRIEF 1

Education and development

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize that global efforts in education must give central importance to quality and learning.

The education targets under SDG 4 refer to 'quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education' and 'quality primary and secondary education' that helps 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 means of implementation for SDG 4 also focus on issues related to learning and quality education. Countries are encouraged to build or upgrade their education facilities so that they are 'effective learning environments for all', whereas international collaboration is encouraged to 'substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers' (UNESCO, 2016).

Beyond SDG 4, all of the Sustainable Development Goals depend on quality education and learning. 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, as well as infrastructure, clean energy, and environmental resources, along with other elements of a sustainable lifestyle.

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

The ten SDG 4 [education targets and means of implementation](#) cover a comprehensive array of educational issues. Woven throughout them is a concern with the quality of the educational experience – ensuring the relevance of what is being taught and ensuring that children, young people, and adults are enabled to learn. Learning is thus taking on a central role in regional and national discussions regarding how to implement the global education goals.

Tools

- UIS. 2020. [SDG4 Data Digest. Using House Hold Survey data to Monitor SDG 4](#). Montreal: UNESCO-UIS.
- UIS. 2019. [SDG4 data book. Global education indicators 2019](#). Montreal: UNESCO-UIS.
- UNESCO. 2017. [Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4](#).
- UNESCO. 2016. [Mainstreaming SDG4-Education 2030 in sector-wide policy and planning: technical guidelines for UNESCO field offices](#).

Plans

- [Botswana national implementation plan for sustainable development goal \(SDG\) 4 - Education 2030](#) (2018)

References and sources

UNESCO. 2016. [*Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for action for the implementation of sustainable development goal 4*](#). Paris: UNESCO.

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