

EASG Vision Meeting

08 October 2025

EASG

**Education & Academia
Stakeholder Group**

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Success and Challenges for EASG

08.10.2025

Success



EASG Specific

- Stronger EASG Coordination with regular meetings
- Active participation in Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism
- Publications of reports and statements
- One central EASG hub on the website: educationacademia.org

MGoS broadly

- Countries and the UN know about stakeholders
- Long history of participation
- MGoS is inclusive in its way of working





Challenges

EASG Specific

- We come from various parts of the educational landscape
- EASG does not have its own funding
- Education is not in vogue
- We have limited people in New York

MGoS Broadly

- The SDGs are losing momentum → HLPF is a less critical platform
- Geopolitical tensions → Spillover effect
- Other CSO alliances are better coordinated
- In need of a stronger core message in line with the times.

Global contexts and implications for education advocacy

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1.ODA Cuts on Education

- **Projected Decline in Education Funding:** UNICEF estimates that international aid to education is set to fall by US\$3.2 billion by 2026—a 24% drop from 2023 levels. This reduction threatens to increase the number of out-of-school children from 272 million to 278 million, with a significant portion of this increase occurring in humanitarian settings ([UNICEF](#))
- **Quality of Education at Risk:** Beyond access, the cuts jeopardize the quality of education. Reduced support for curriculum development, teacher training, and learning assessments could lead to a decline in educational standards, affecting at least 290 million students.
- Adult education often targets vulnerable groups with limited formal schooling. Cuts to ODA disproportionately harm these groups, worsening social and economic inequalities

(In Mali, a **\$25 million USAID-funded adult literacy program** was shut down in 2025 due to a 90% cut in foreign aid. The program taught approximately **20,000 Malians** to read and write in local languages and equipped them with vocational skills)

2. Gender backlash

- **HLPF 2025 and Beyond:** Erosion of gender equality commitments: Several member states showed resistance to including strong gender equality language in the Ministerial Declaration at the High-Level Political Forum (US, Paraguay and Iran)
- **Family and Gender Debates:** Controversies around definitions of “family” and “gender” at the UN, where some states insist on strictly “traditional” family models, opposing recognition of diverse gender identities and roles (Russia against the use of gender to refer to LGBTQI)
- **Opposition to Sexual and Reproductive Rights:** Persistent debates and clashes, especially in UN forums like the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) or Human Rights Council, over inclusion of sexual rights and feminism (China)
- **Gender Backlash in Funding:** Some donor countries have tied aid to restrictions on gender programs or have cut funds to organizations promoting gender equality and comprehensive sexuality education

3. Rise of Nationalism, Authoritarianism and Conflicts

- **Suppression of civil society:** Authoritarian regimes often **limit advocacy, restrict funding for NGOs**, and criminalize dissent, making it harder for education movements to operate freely
- **Curriculum control:** Some governments push nationalistic, exclusionary narratives in school curricula, weakening inclusive education and academic freedom
- **Restrictions on gender and LGBTQ+ education:** Populist leaders politicise education around identity, banning or censoring gender-sensitive or human rights content
- **Disruption of education systems:** Ongoing and emerging conflicts (e.g. Ukraine-Russia, Israel-Palestine, Sudan, Ethiopia) destroy infrastructure, displace teachers and students, and redirect government resources away from education.
- **Education in emergencies:** Political instability leads to an increase in **refugee and displaced populations**, who often lose access to education.
- **Security-first agendas:** In conflict-prone regions and developed countries, national and global security priorities, overriding investments in education and public services

4. UN80 Reforms

The reforms have **three main workstreams**:

1. Efficiencies & Improvements (streamlining operations, reducing overheads)
2. Mandate Implementation Review (reviewing existing resolutions/mandates, how they are delivered and overlapping mandates)
3. Structural Changes & Programme Realignment (reorganizing UN agencies or functions to remove duplication, possibly reassigning or merging programmes)

CSO positions

- Inclusion of CSO / Civil Society Voices in the processes/ maintaining institutionalized CSO mechanisms
- Concerns that proposed budget cuts under UN80 will disproportionately harm the human rights pillar of the UN system. Given that human rights work is often already underfunded, further cuts may severely impair monitoring, protection, and advocacy
- Ensuring that reforms don't weaken field operations or local response capacity
- Maintaining UN values: transparency, accountability, human rights, inclusion

Members' Reflections: plenary

Question: Since your organisation joined the EASG, what do you think have been the successes and challenges of education advocacy under the EASG?

Plenary:

Comments and Suggestions for EASG

- Grassroots mobilisation - how can we have effective engagement at the grassroots level? How stakeholder groups have discussions with Permanent Missions?
- Success: EASG coordination and preparation for interventions, link up to colleagues who did not travel, capacity building
- Visa processes - decreased participation, bring more grassroots actors, bring knowledge to them
- We need to link up with other sectors - climate, environment, health and other SDGs
- Structures very helpful for newcomers to HLPF, and other groups, but we do not reach them - how to strategise to make those links to become stronger - other stakeholders, women, etc
- What support we can do, more visibility and communications
- How safe is the structure considering the contexts? There are other structures being formed e.g. impact coalitions, how much energy do we devote to securing our structure?
- How much do we want to grow?
- Consistency of the group - where we are every year, coordinate side events, reports
- We are all connected to education, how do we take advantage of this?
- How are other MGOs funded? State level? Individually?
- Post 2030 agenda - do we know where and how to go?
- Effective in profiling education/SDG 4, remains as a dedicated mechanism to coordinate at the global level; education mentioned in the general sense, to have more substantive inputs on education through EASG;
- VNR also securing SDG 4 and speaking roles, navigate the spaces in partnership with other CSOs
- Re-imagining how we work together
- Participate in many opportunities in bigger general meetings in the coming years
- Make our voice louder to be seen and heard
- Connection with other SDGs and other agendas beyond the SDGs, beyond 2030

Group Discussions

Guide questions:

- *Strengthening SDG 4 advocacy in the remaining 5 years of SDG 4 – What should we do better to push governments to fulfil their SDG4 commitments in the remaining 5 years of Agenda 2030? (10 min)*
- *Anticipating the future – Post 2030, what do we see as the future work of the EASG? What should be our priority agenda? How can we strengthen our solidarity? (10 min)*

Group:

Challenges and suggestions for EASG

- Lack of funding for education of governments
- Governments are suffering from massive debt - difficult to expect them to spend more on education
- Entire generation of people not getting education - how to supplement this? where to get revenues? to work with governments on education?
- Engaging financing for development, go deeper to the causes of the problem - debt architecture must be changed and fair taxation
- All stakeholders must support the work of the financing for development group
- Partnerships - we must be advocating for Ministries at the national level; collaborating with more networks, major groups, partnerships with UN bodies; MOUs with stakeholders, UN agencies, mission in NY
- Connecting with UN friends of education to advocate for our positions
- Addressing the digital divide which is a hindrance to education - should be a priority in education, technology is at the forefront
- Public-private partnerships - companies can address the gap nexus, expand education with government
- What you offer government - is important to define PPPs; but CSOs needed to curb corruption and ensure participation with communities
- Strengthen work of EASG in VNR ensuring SDG 4 and also regional solidarity
- Post 2030 - do we convince governments to do what can be done in the next 5 years or focus on post 2030? But everything is overshadowed by UN80

5. Education issues – post 2030?