

**EDUCATION & ACADEMIA**

STAKEHOLDER GROUP

**Quality education and lifelong learning for all – a sustainable respond to crises**

Executive Summary of the SECTORAL PAPER - HLPF 2022

Armed conflicts, climate change and the ongoing pandemic has caused the huge interruption of educational process around the globe, with insurmountable scale of loss to children's schooling, leaving also millions of various groups of learners outside of the processes of formal and non-formal education. Individual, social and economic consequences are dramatic, and some of them are yet to be seen. New report published by the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF states that this generation of students now risks losing \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value, or about 14 percent of today's global GDP, as a result of COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures.

Pandemic has also exposed deep-rooted vulnerabilities and structural problems that exacerbated the consequences of pandemic, especially affecting vulnerable groups depriving them in their right to education. Women and girls belong to the most affected group, whose losses in education had detrimental effects on other areas of life and work; but also older people, people living in poverty, etc. Increasing privatization and the weakening of education financing are aspects that continue to aggravate the full realization of the right to education of these communities, added to the onslaught of public debt and the absence, in many countries, of tax justice.

Schools reopening is therefore not enough for sustainable recovery and for the development of individual and social resiliences when facing future crises. A new social contract for transformative education is needed that can repair injustices while transforming the future (as defined in the UNESCO report *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*). It must be grounded in the understanding of education as a human right, as public and common good, whereby governments remain the main duty-bearer for the provision of education, either by securing education for the most marginalised, or by coordinating and regulating participation of other actors in education. Sustainable recovery requires focus both on schools and other educational institutions, as well as on lifelong learning opportunities at every age. It is necessary to create inclusive policies, tackle urgent problems and develop long-term strategies and increase investments in education and lifelong learning.

Further on, sustainable recovery requires not only adaptive education and learning, helping people to keep up with the changes in the environment, but transformative one, including critical thinking and developing values like autonomy, emancipation, freedom, democracy, and the agency of learners. Further more, although vocational education remains very important, illiteracy is still one of the biggest problems humankind is facing, so curricula for the changing world have to be based on literacy, and include global active citizenship, peace education, education for sustainable development, etc.

We strongly argue for actions built upon inclusive and equitable quality learning opportunities and outcomes, across the lifespan. It includes adult learning in all its many and creative manifestations, in work and life, formal, non-formal and informal. Therefore SDG 4 should be implemented in its all-embracing character, having in mind that adult education is the longest phase in lifelong learning process, but also because of the demographic changes, as well as the urgency around climate crises, that requires immediate educational actions.

During pandemic, technology helped to bridge the learning gap and reduce new “learning poverty”, introducing significant changes in the ways teaching and learning is organised, requiring new, digital skills. While technology can be a driver of progress in education, it can also create new barriers to access, make social or collective learning more challenging, widen existing social divides and create new ones. Therefore, inscribing access to digital as a new “human right” bears the risk of neglecting numerous groups of learners, as well as areas of learning that require other methodologies. The problems of our world are not technological, but pedagogical, therefore the challenges that education sector has to meet can not be solved by digital tools, learning e-platforms and artificial intelligence. Right to education must not be replaced by the right to connectivity.