

The background of the cover is a photograph of a lecture hall. In the foreground, the backs of several students' heads and shoulders are visible as they sit in rows of chairs, facing towards the front of the room. A person, presumably a presenter, is standing at the front of the hall, partially obscured by the large text. The room has large windows on the right side, looking out onto a cityscape. The overall lighting is somewhat dim, with a yellowish light source visible on the ceiling.

EASG

Education & Academia Stakeholder Group

RESPONSE TO THE UN SDG REPORT 2024

The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG) recognizes the critical insights presented in the UN's 2024 findings on SDG 4. The slow progress towards ensuring quality education for all – the foundation upon which so much rests – remains of grave concern, with only 58% of students worldwide achieving minimum proficiency in reading by the end of primary school and one in five young people neither in education, training nor employment.

Challenges such as inadequate educational infrastructure, teacher shortages, and insufficient training continue to hinder progress. While technology has expanded educational opportunities, it has also widened inequalities, especially for marginalized and low-income communities. Addressing these disparities must be a top priority.

The world is grappling with unprecedented crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts, which have significantly impacted global education systems and exacerbated existing inequalities. Vulnerable populations have been disproportionately affected, highlighting the urgent need for inclusive and resilient educational frameworks.

Achieving the revised 2030 education targets requires urgent action, including enrolling 1.4 million children in early education annually and significantly improving primary completion rates. We advocate for increased funding, better teacher training, and the creation of inclusive and accessible schools. Additionally, bridging the digital divide is essential to ensure equitable access to education. While regions like Eastern and South-Eastern Asia have made significant strides, other areas, such as sub-Saharan Africa, still face considerable challenges. The report's gender disparity findings also highlight the need for focused efforts to provide equal educational opportunities for all students.

Education must be viewed not only as a fundamental human right but also as a cornerstone of sustainable development. The double role of education encompasses both its intrinsic value as a human right and its instrumental role in achieving broader goals. Education is a fundamental human right, since it empowers people with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to participate fully in their communities and societies, but education and lifelong learning are instrumental in achieving poverty reduction, gender equality, enabling climate action, reducing inequalities, improving health outcomes, and fostering peaceful and inclusive societies.

By addressing systemic issues and adopting a holistic approach that prioritizes teacher empowerment, increased funding, non-formal education, equity, lifelong learning, and community engagement, we can transform the education system into a resilient, equitable, and potent tool for sustainable development. Investing in education is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for building a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable future for all.

Efforts must intensify to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups by addressing barriers such as economic hardships, security concerns, and social stigmatization. Education fields with a transformative potential, like Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) should be integrated to empower individuals to participate actively and responsibly in a global society. Lifelong learning programs must be promoted to equip learners with the necessary knowledge and skills for a rapidly evolving world, including vocational training, critical thinking, and media literacy. Non-formal education programs should be developed to reach underserved populations and foster social cohesion and community development. Educators must be empowered through comprehensive training, adequate resources, social recognition, and fair compensation, even in resource-constrained settings.

Addressing the root causes of crises and systemic issues through education is crucial. This involves integrating global citizenship and sustainability into education to promote social and ecological justice. Ensuring that essential services, particularly education, remain primarily public is vital for fostering equitable access and social cohesion. Increased public funding and progressive tax reforms are essential for supporting equitable and quality education.

Student representatives and unions play a critical role in making these goals achievable. Their involvement in decision-making processes, advocacy, and policy implementation is essential for ensuring that the needs and perspectives of students are adequately represented. Student unions have been instrumental in promoting educational equity, supporting marginalized groups, bringing their needs into the focus of research and academia, and advocating for increased funding and resources. By actively participating in educational reforms, student representatives ensure that policies are learner-centered and effectively address the challenges faced by diverse groups of learners.

Academia, particularly higher education institutions, serve as vital facilitators, bringing together diverse stakeholders and leveraging their expertise in teaching, research, and community engagement to foster collaborative partnerships. Through participatory knowledge building, sharing, mobilization, and transfer, academia contributes to innovative solutions and evidence-based practices that drive progress towards achieving SDG4. By fostering interdisciplinary and collaborative research and teaching approaches, academia equips educators across all educational levels to deliver high-quality education and effectively engage with the broad goals of sustainable development

The EASG urges governments and stakeholders to prioritize legal guarantees and financial support for pre-primary education, as it is critical for ensuring school readiness and equal opportunities. The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group is committed to advocating for quality education and calls for a united effort from all educational stakeholders to accelerate progress towards SDG 4. By adopting a comprehensive and transformative approach, we can ensure that education systems are resilient, equitable, and capable of driving sustainable development. Together, we can ensure that every student and learner has access to the education they deserve.

THE ORGANISING PARTNERS OF EASG

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION
VERNOR MUÑOZ

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT EDUCATION
KATARINA POPOVIĆ

GLOBAL STUDENT FORUM
JACOB BLASIUŠ

Follow the work of EASG

www.educationacademia.org