

3rd Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030) (4-7 July 2017, Bangkok, Thailand)

Regional Recommendation for Action on SDG4.7

Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure all learners acquire 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.

Introduction

The world has transformed over the past quarter-century. Youth account for one in four of the 7.5 billion people on this planet and life expectancies are on the rise in many countries. Alongside rapid economic and political shifts, environmental degradation has worsened amid growing concern for climate change. Globalization and the digital revolution have brought people together, integrating markets and increasing mobility, while advances in medicine and knowledge have improved lives. Yet with this growing interconnectedness and progress, the world is also seeing the rise of intolerance and violence. The macro development landscape and the needs of learners have changed just as dramatically.

The Asia-Pacific region, with its push towards synergized regional integration, is not exempt from these multi-dimensional, 21st century challenges. There is a need in this region for education that equips learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors and values they require to engage creatively and responsibly with our rapidly changing world.

These concerns are at the heart of Sustainable Development Goal 4 target 7 (SDG4.7). The target explicitly links education to the broader Agenda for Sustainable Development and captures the transformative aspirations of education in relation to other SDGs. Meaningful implementation of SDG4.7 requires rethinking and redefining the purpose of education and seeing it from a lifelong learning perspective, so that it can become a key enabler for a sustainable future.

SDG4.7 is very broad, but underlying all of its many themes and issues is a humanistic vision of education. Many of its core elements, including human rights, gender equality, as well as health and well-being are already embedded in the national education policies of many countries in the region.

The target is concerned not only with the acquisition of subject knowledge related to these core elements, but also, more importantly, with the acquisition of competencies and the development of the social and emotional skills needed to apply this knowledge. In addition to these challenges, new pedagogical approaches will be necessary to bring SDG4.7 to life. What is urgently called for now is to translate policy into practice.

Context

Following the recommendations of the 2nd APMED2030, the first part of the 3rd APMED2030 focused on SDG4.7 within the context of Asia-Pacific. The meeting deliberated on how to mainstream, operationalize and monitor SDG4.7, and reflected upon the challenges and opportunities in relation to regional priorities. Participants identified the necessary actions at national, sub-regional and regional levels and discussed the capacity development needs for mainstreaming SDG 4.7 at all levels of education and into policies, plans, curricula, teaching and learning practices, as well as student assessment. The meeting emphasized that SDG 4.7 must be mainstreamed and operationalized from early childhood through to higher education and in non-formal education for children, adolescents, youth and adults, always with strong equity and gender lenses. The responsibility of each stakeholder in contributing to the achievement of SDG 4.7 was highlighted. Cross-cutting in nature, the target accelerates the achievement of SDG 4 and all SDGs.

Participants also recognized the importance of partnerships and multi-sectoral cooperation in achieving SDG 4.7. In particular, partnerships with civil society, academia and the private sector were noted as crucial to creating an “ecosystem” involving all stakeholders at the community and other levels that could facilitate the effective implementation of SDG4.7. The SDG4-Education 2030 National Coordinators subsequently reviewed the draft regional recommendations for mainstreaming SDG 4.7 during the 1st SDG4 National Coordinator’s Meeting (Part 2) and endorsed the following set of regional recommendations that are to be carried out by stakeholders, including the private sector, in 2017-2018.

Recommendations for action

Multi-stakeholder, inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial partnerships are key to achieving SDG 4.7. Governments are the ultimate duty-bearers, with an obligation to ensure that appropriate policies and adequate resources are put in place. The following recommendations are addressed to all key stakeholders of SDG4-Education 2030: governments, international/regional organizations, CSO/NGOs, academia, media, the private sector, teacher education institutions and schools. For effective implementation, it will be necessary to prepare follow-up and monitoring mechanisms in each Member State as well as integrated national-level plans of action, indicating not only activities, but also shared tasks and responsibilities. Many of the follow-up actions below will require the involvement of several actors.

Action area 1: Curriculum & learning materials

- ✓ Develop an audit benchmark, review the coverage of SDG4.7 components in existing curricula and learning materials/textbooks, and harmonize existing concepts with SDG4.7;
- ✓ Identify the region’s unique issues related to SDG4.7 and explore different and innovative modalities and means of delivering learning opportunities and materials linked to them;
- ✓ Develop the capacities of key stakeholders in textbook development, including, among others, national curriculum authorities and textbook development bodies and private publishers;
- ✓ Develop curriculum that is inclusive, participatory and based on local knowledge;
- ✓ Develop a new generation of textbooks, open educational resources (OER) and other teaching and learning resources that integrate SDG4.7 into national education standards; and
- ✓ Create a platform for a working group to develop guidelines and sample materials as a reference for countries as they develop the curricula and materials needed to achieve SDG4.7.

Action area 2: Teaching & learning (Teacher training/Pedagogy)

- ✓ Embed SDG4.7 components in existing and new teacher competency frameworks for all levels of education in the content of core subjects and in teaching and learning resources;
- ✓ Review and update curricula and methodologies of pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes through an SDG4.7 lens to promote a learner-centred and interactive pedagogy;
- ✓ Promote research on how SDG4.7-related components are embedded in local cultures, and make use of existing local knowledge and experiences in developing teaching and learning methods;
- ✓ Prepare a national pool of teacher educators/trainers who are well trained to embed SDG 4.7;
- ✓ Organize capacity development workshops for teachers to develop competencies needed to integrate SDG4.7 into teaching, especially in their respective subject areas; and
- ✓ Connect learning to practice within communities to address issues such as peace, cultural and learning diversities, emergencies and natural disasters, conflict, sustainable development, global citizenship and gender equality.

Action area 3: Learning improvement and assessments

- ✓ Develop new and/or adapt existing instruments and methodologies to assess and support the development of skills, behaviors, and values related to SDG4.7 through different levels/types of assessment, but with a focus on classroom- and school-based continuous formative assessment;
- ✓ Design and administer learning assessments to capture the learning opportunities and changes in behavior and actions of children, youth, and adults that contribute to sustainability, resiliency, peace building, respect for diversity and the fulfillment of human rights in communities and wider society;
- ✓ Collect and share good and emerging practices among countries in the assessment of SDG4.7-related learning outcomes at the regional level, including school- and community-based assessments, and inclusive and participatory assessment;
- ✓ Provide capacity development and structured support for teachers and education officers involved in assessments and learning improvement practices;
- ✓ Build on instruments and methodologies for measuring children's development outcomes in pre-school/ECD programmes with assessments of SDG4.7-related skills, competencies, and knowledge;
- ✓ Align learning improvement and assessment schemes to the diversity of SDG4.7
- ✓ Explore the desirability and feasibility of including SDG4.7 components in national exams through core subjects (language, mathematics, science, geography, etc.); and
- ✓ Promote assessments that give equal importance to social and emotional skills.

Action area 4: Monitoring

- ✓ Use global and thematic indicators for SDG4.7 to inform and guide regional and national monitoring frameworks;
- ✓ Seek and mobilize technical and/or financial support from regional as well as global stakeholders/partners when necessary to increase the availability and quality of national data/indicators to effectively monitor SDG4.7;
- ✓ Identify areas of slow or no progress in SDG4.7 thematic areas and inform allocation of resources to accelerate the progress;
- ✓ Conduct research and evaluations around policy, curricula and teaching and learning to generate information and evidence for monitoring SDG4.7;

- ✓ Review and document existing national, regional and global tools and techniques to monitor SDG4.7 and disseminate to relevant partners and stakeholders. Organize and participate in workshops focusing on building capacities and skills required to monitor SDG4.7;
- ✓ Explore potential linkages between SDG4.7 indicators and other SDG targets within and beyond SDG 4 on Education (e.g., the relationships and interactions among various targets/indicators, mapping, trend analyses, etc.);
- ✓ Make efforts to collect and analyze information from CSOs/NGOs, community learning centres and local governments on SDG4.7 to inform policy and programme development and complement administrative data; and
- ✓ Foster a culture of knowledge exchange and data sharing among and between ministries and agencies that will strengthen the use of multiple data sources to monitor SDG4.7.

Conclusion: Ensuring the enabling environment to operationalize SDG4.7

The intent to learn to live together sustainably underpins SDG4.7. Efforts toward achieving SDG4.7 aim to equip children, adolescents, youth and adults with the skills and means to lead meaningful lives and contribute to society as well as helping to achieve other targets and goals related to employment, economic development, gender awareness and equality, peace building, and the responsible use of natural resources. As such, in the Asia-Pacific region, governments, CSOs, UN agencies, teacher education institutions, academia, media and the private sector play important roles in facilitating progress, promoting and supporting the mainstreaming of SDG4.7, clarifying concepts and providing evidence and good practices on operationalizing the key elements of SDG4.7.

The target is cross-cutting, covering areas including, but not limited to, human rights, gender equality, health and wellbeing, inclusion and lifelong learning. These critical aspects of human life go beyond education and require multi-sectoral engagement. Political will and commitment are prerequisites to policy development, financial resource allocation and effective governance. Conversely, monitoring and coordination mechanisms for SDG4.7, as well as financial and technical support from international and regional organizations, are needed to support its operationalization.

In view of the rapid changes in the world and the demands of SDG4.7, innovative practices and new knowledge should be tapped into. The education community should leverage (sub-) regional networks working in different thematic areas (e.g. NEQMAP for learning assessment and ERI-Net for policy research). Greater efforts are needed to ensure that communities, parents and teachers are involved and provided with opportunities to learn about SDG4.7 and apply what is learned throughout their lives.

The drafting of the document was led by the Drafting Group consisting of the following members:

- Mr. Salidin Kaldybaev, Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia)
- Ms. Badra Withanage, Sri Lanka (South Asia)
- Ms. Nur Fakhriyyah El-Emin Muhardi, Malaysia (Southeast/East Asia)
- Ms. Danielle Cochrane Cook Islands (Pacific)
- Ms. Lina Benete, UNESCO Almaty
- Ms. Maki Hayashikawa, UNESCO Bangkok
- Ms. Jun Morohashi, UNESCO Bangkok
- Ms. Malisa Santigul, UNESCO Bangkok
- Ms. Ramya Vivekanandan, UNESCO Bangkok
- Ms. Yoko Mochizuki, UNESCO-MGIEP
- Ms. Josephine Sauvarin, UNFPA
- Mr. Francisco Benavides, UNICEF EAPRO
- Mr. Akihiro Fushimi, UNICEF EAPRO
- Ms. Urmila Sarkar, UNICEF ROSA
- Ms. Cecilia Soriano, ASPBAE
- Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer, ARNEC
- Mr. Mark Bray, ERI-Net
- Ms. Shinobu (Yume) Yamaguchi, ERI-Net
- Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Asia-Pacific Regional Representative to the SDG4-Education 2030 Global Steering Committee