

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development GCE Response to Final Outcomes Document, UN Sustainable Development Summit, September 2015

The Global Campaign for Education welcomes the final document for adoption at the UN Sustainable Development Summit: [Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). This is the result of over two years of consultations and negotiations. Unlike the MDGs, which were created by a small group of UN experts, this agenda is the result of broad participation of Member States and stakeholders – civil society in particular – and is more reflective of the world’s priorities for global development.

The ambitious and inclusive nature of the new agenda could not have been possible without the sustained efforts of the education community over the past few years. The agenda fulfils many of the expectations and includes demands for which GCE, along with its members and allies, have advocated from the outset. It does so in seven ways:

1. It lays down a broad and ambitious goal that covers the full spectrum of education. “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*” goes far beyond the focus on enrolment in primary education that formed the heart of the education MDG.
2. It has specific targets that include commitments to free, universal, quality education for every child and young person throughout primary and secondary education and free universal access to a minimum of one year of pre-primary education.
3. It includes an explicit commitment to ensuring quality and recognises that quality inputs – especially clear strategies for ensuring qualified, valued, and professional teachers as well as safe and inclusive learning environments – are necessary for improving educational systems. There is also recognition of the need for a broad curriculum that includes human rights, global citizenship education (GCED) and education for sustainable development (ESD). In placing value on learning in domains that go beyond literacy and numeracy, the targets moves closer to the human rights-based interpretation of quality.
4. It has a strong commitment to equity and inclusion both in the SDG agenda as a whole and in the education targets in particular. There is explicit reference to girls, persons with disabilities and indigenous people within the target language.
5. It represents a universal agenda that covers all countries across the world both in the global north and south - and holds the promise of a truly global commitment to education for all.
6. Provides for clearer inter-linkages between the global development agenda, i.e. the SDGs, and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which renews and broadens the commitments embraced at the World Education Forums in 1990 (Jomtien) and in 2000 (Dakar). This is a marked improvement from the preceding period, during which the more holistic and inclusive Education For All agenda was overshadowed by the MDGs (which were much narrower in focus). The thematic mechanisms for monitoring, learning and accountability laid down during the previous 15 years will be retained, but integrated more closely within the global agenda.
7. Provides for mechanisms for monitoring and accountability for the new framework. At the global level, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will oversee a network of processes, including a process of thematic reviews. Progress will be monitored by the world’s heads of State every four years and there will be an annual Sustainable Development Progress Report. National and regional reviews will also take place. Existing mechanisms for monitoring the EFA agenda of the last 15 years will also be retained.

The final SDG agenda, however, is not perfect. GCE regrets the last-minute reduction in ambition, which took place during the last couple of days of negotiations, with countries pulling back from their commitment to ensure that all students are taught by qualified teachers, and that all adults become literate by 2030. Furthermore, the promotion of partnerships with the private sector – without laying down mechanisms for their accountability – is of serious concern. The [Addis Ababa Agenda for Action \(AAAA\)](#), furthermore, has fallen short of making the commitments needed to reform the global financial systems that could have helped to generate the resources necessary for the agenda's implementation. Advocacy on these issues will need to continue in the months and years to come.

Where do we go from here?

While there is much to celebrate in the new Sustainable Development Agenda, it is essential to remain vigilant and ensure that the gains that have been secured so far are not lost during the final stages of the process. The process of indicator development is currently underway, and is of utmost importance. The selection of poor indicators risks shrinking and/or distorting the targets. Some of the indicators being proposed by both the Inter Agency Group for SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) deviate from the spirit of the original framework, and may have profoundly negative consequences for how the education agenda will be implemented in the years to come. Processes for the development of regional and national indicators are also underway and we must ensure the education community is strongly involved.

At the same time, the first steps are being taken for developing mechanisms for monitoring and accountability at the global, regional and national levels. Separate follow-up mechanisms are also being put in place for the Financing for Development process, and as mentioned above it also looks likely that the existing EFA monitoring systems will be retained and strengthened. These processes must provide space for meaningful citizen participation at all levels, and it is essential that civil society continues to engage with them to ensure that they are truly reflective of peoples' aspirations and priorities.

The litmus test of the Education goal and targets will, of course, be in its implementation. Its ambition must be matched by equally ambitious and time-bound action to incorporate the complete set of education targets into national plans, and ensure adequate institutional, human and financial capacity to achieve the goal. All governments and stakeholders must commit to implementing the new agenda as soon as possible. This will in turn entail commitments to its financing. The co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process have suggested that US\$3.5 – 5 trillion would be needed annually to implement all of the goals of the SDG agenda. The EFA Global Monitoring Report calculates that the total annual financing gap between available domestic resources and the amount necessary to reach the new education target of one year free pre-primary, and free primary and secondary education, is projected to average \$US39 billion a year between 2015 and 2030. [As our work on financing has shown](#), finding the resources needed for the implementation of the 2030 agenda is both essential and feasible. There is a need for a renewed global public push in support of the fulfilment of the new education agenda, and awareness must be increased among citizens and government officials alike to ensure accountability. Last but not least, civil society must organise itself to maximise its impact, reach out to new audiences and work together to achieve these shared goals.