

The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet:

Response by the Global Campaign for Education

The Global Campaign for Education welcomes the work of the UN Secretary-General in putting together the wide array of inputs in a comprehensive report that acknowledges the principles of human rights, non-regression of agreed standards and the need for high levels of ambition. It encompasses the critical areas of rights, agency and empowerment of people. People have to be the actors and agents of change that will bring about the transformation that is aspired for. We are glad it recognises the world's complexity and retains all 17 goals. It, likewise, recognises the importance of youth and children in the new agenda. We welcome the re-affirmation that no target should be considered met unless it is met for all social and economic groups in every country.

Therefore, we consider it very important that the report likewise lays the foundations for a process in the coming year that is in tune with these premises. We are concerned that the report shows signs of regression over the negotiated positions in its approach to education. We regret that the report fails to recognise the transformational role of education which is both a critical part of the existing body of human rights, and has long been recognised as an enabler of other goals and not least as a potential equaliser of inequality. Furthermore, education has emerged as the most important issue picked by the 4.6 million of the 7 million respondents that took the My World Survey worldwide – the top rated issue for all demographics. The purpose of education, furthermore, should not be restricted to be to *“deliver learning and knowledge in response to a safe global workplace, driven by technology”*, but be in line with the direction of the current goal: *“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”*, and contributes towards the fulfilment of all the 17 goals. There is concern in the education community, especially in regional and national dialogues, about the impending and looming crisis of global warming and planetary limits short-changing the human dimension of development, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. It is essential that the standalone goal on education is not diluted or weakened and the related targets and indicators are formulated to reflect the overarching goal of human dignity, empowerment, and capability in fulfilling SDG2030.

As a network intensively involved in the negotiations in the OWG and actively taking part in the definition of education targets in the EFA process, we were glad to see that the last set of goals of the OWG was overall in tune with the Education For All (EFA) Muscat Agreement which is, in turn, the result of political negotiations with education ministries worldwide and of the broader education community. We hope that the alignment of targets into the six clusters would not lead to reducing the scale of ambition. The clustering should serve as a communication tool and not as a means of reducing the targets during subsequent negotiations process. At the same time, the original education targets need to be retained having emerged from the same intensive process of negotiations both with the education community and the diplomatic processes in New York. The framework thus created should not be lost in subsequent negotiations.

More specifically, the report, while retaining the education goal in its narrative, fails to reiterate the principles of lifelong learning from early childhood and including adult and continuous education, restricting the focus on education only to “*young people*”. Indeed, the final education SDG targets should push the scale of ambition further to commit to universal literacy. The regional EFA consultations undertaken since global meeting in Muscat have done precisely that – embraced the Muscat Agreement and stepped up the ambition further by recognising the need for universality of adult literacy and lifelong education.

We are glad that the report flags the criticality of teachers to the education endeavour. We would like to reiterate the need for inclusion of teachers as a target in its own right and retaining the means of implementation (MOI) on learning environment.

The theme of People in the clustering of objectives should emphasise their role not only as beneficiaries of development and services, but also as contributors and actors in realising the multi-dimensional sustainable development goals. The principle of integrating the six clusters of objectives - in addition to the focus on the broad UN goals, the human rights themes, and the universality of goals – should include the agency and empowerment of people, through learning and the enhancement of people’s capabilities to advance the sustainable development agenda. Giving education and learning an overarching role with a strong standalone goal and reflecting this in appropriate targets and indicators should not be negotiated away in setting the final list of goals, targets and indicators.

Furthermore, we feel that the process of development of indicators should not be considered only as a technical process left to UN agencies, academia and scientific community, but should also entail a process of dialogue with civil society and governments. Doing so would ensure that the spirit of the original indicators is not lost by looking at measurability. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that the education targets and indicators are backed by adequate financing commitments.

In conclusion, we think that the synthesis report should not regress from the negotiated position on education. We are glad that it retains education as a standalone goal, but we hope that the targets would likewise be retained and indeed improved in the subsequent negotiations by recognising the inclusion of Early Childhood Care and Education, Universal adult literacy and by including a separate stronger target on teachers, not just considering them as a means of implementation.