



UNESCO: Education needs to fundamentally change if we are to reach our global development goals

The new [Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\) Report](#) by UNESCO, shows the potential for education to propel progress towards all global goals outlined in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). It also shows that education needs a major transformation to fulfill that potential and meet the current challenges facing humanity and the planet.

There is an urgent need for greater headway in education. On current trends, the world will achieve universal primary education in 2042, universal lower secondary education in 2059 and universal upper secondary education in 2084. This means the world would be half a century late for the 2030 SDG deadline.

The Report, *Education for people and planet*, shows the need for education systems to step up attention to environmental concerns. While in the majority of countries, education is the best indicator of climate change awareness, half of countries' curricula worldwide do not explicitly mention climate change in their content. In OECD countries, almost 40% of 15-year-old students only have basic knowledge about environmental issues.

“A fundamental change is needed in the way we think about education’s role in global development, because it has a catalytic impact on the well-being of individuals and the future of our planet,” said UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova. *“Now, more than ever, education has a responsibility to be in gear with 21st century challenges and aspirations, and foster the right types of values and skills that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth, and peaceful living together.”*

Education systems must take care to protect minority cultures and their associated languages, which contain vital information about the functioning of ecosystems. But the Report shows 40% of the global population are taught in a language they don't understand.

Education systems need to ensure they are giving people vital skills and knowledge that can support the transition to greener industries, and find new solutions for environmental problems. This also requires education to continue beyond the school walls, in communities and the workplace throughout adulthood. Yet two-thirds of all adults lack financial literacy; only 6% of adults in the poorest countries attend literacy programmes.

“If we want a greener planet, and sustainable futures for all, we must ask more from our education systems than just a transfer of knowledge. We need our schools and lifelong learning programmes to focus on economic, environmental and social perspectives that help nurture empowered, critical, mindful and competent citizens.” said Aaron Benavot, Director of the GEM Report.

There is also an urgent need for education systems to impart higher skills aligned with the demands of growing economies, where job skill sets are fast changing, many being

automated. On current trends, by 2020, there will be 45 million too few workers with tertiary education relative to demand. The Report shows this change is vital: achieving universal upper secondary education by 2030 in low income countries would lift 60 million out of poverty by 2050.

Inequality in education, interacting with wider disparities, heightens the risk of violence and conflict. Across 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, regions that have very low average education had a 50% chance of experiencing conflict within 21 years. The Report calls on governments to start taking inequalities in education seriously, tracking them by collecting information directly from families.

The Report emphasizes that the new global development agenda calls for education ministers and other education actors to work in collaboration with other sectors. It lists various benefits that could come from this way of working, including:

- Health interventions could be delivered through schools: by one estimation, delivering simple treatments such as micronutrient pills through schools is one tenth of the cost of doing it through mobile health units.
- Farmer field schools could help increase crop yields by 12% leading to sustainable increases in food production
- Educating mothers to lower secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 could prevent 3.5 million child deaths between 2050-60.

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For more information, for photos, b-roll, infographics, an online video and interviews please contact –

Kate Redman on 0033 602049345 k.redman@unesco.org

Notes to Editors

Download the Report: <https://bitly.com/sdg4all>

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[The Global Education Monitoring Report](#) (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It replaces UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR). [World Education Blog](#) / [Educación Mundial Blog](#)