



# HLPF 2019 REVIEW OF SDG 4: EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WWF BRIEFING

## WWF Recommends

### ***Embed Education for Sustainable Development in both formal and informal education in order to promote achievement of the SDGs***

At HLPF 2019 under the theme of “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, WWF calls upon member states and all other stakeholders to recognise and include the following elements as fundamental for the full and effective implementation of SDG 4 and related targets:

- **Integrate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** in all existing education laws, policies, curricula, textbooks and other instructional materials, teacher education, and student assessments **to better support national and global progress on all 17 SDGs**. A continuous and binding ESD policy should be implemented at national and sub-national level to incorporate messages for ‘people and planet’ and **promote teaching methods of Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Environmental Education (EE) and Conservation Education (CE)** (*related targets: 12.1, 12.3, 12.8*);
- **Make sustainability a quality standard** for the accreditation of educational institutions at **all levels**, from primary school to university (*related targets: 12.1, 12.3, 12.8*);
- **Ensure lifelong learning**: the right to free, equally accessible and quality education belongs not only to children, but is a continuous process that will continue throughout an individual’s life **both in formal and informal education**;
- **Promote interdisciplinary learning** at all levels of education. The interdisciplinary approach carries the potential toward an understanding of complex and ‘real world problems’ related to issues of societal and global sustainability (*related targets: 12.1, 12.3, 12.8*);
- **Measure and monitor learning under target 4.7 in terms of attitudes, behaviour, skills and content knowledge** for all learners, from primary to university level. Educational institutions should actively and publicly report on measures taken to integrate and implement sustainability in their formal and informal education activities;
- **Equip teachers to promote student engagement and agency** in Target 4.7 by embedding ESD and related teaching methods (i.e. GCED, EE, CE) in pedagogy materials and teachers’ curricula;
- Fulfil international funding commitments and develop sustainable domestic **financing towards quality education** that is both inclusive and equitable (*related targets: 17.1, 17.2, 17.3, 17.16*).

## Background

### Education is a cornerstone of sustainable development: Target 4.7 is therefore central for the full implementation of SDG 4

Education is not only a fundamental right; it also forms a cornerstone of development. In the same way, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is fundamental to sustainable development. By shaping values and perspectives, and developing skills and knowledge, it plays a crucial role in the transformation towards a sustainable, equitable and peaceful society. Living sustainably requires a huge shift in mindset. The SDGs will therefore not be achieved without significant reform to current systems of education. It is today's learners who will be called upon to implement the SDGs and live with their consequences. Target 4.7 should serve as main anchor point in this regard as it determines the very nature of 'quality education'.

Quality education cannot be achieved without an approach to education that contributes to halting the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality, as well as adequate understanding of the nature of sustainable development and the important role of environmental protection and conservation. ESD should be promoted in both formal education settings and in informal education settings outside the classroom, such as in after-school programs, community-based organisations, museums and libraries.

### Education empowers individuals to act sustainably and engage in society

Education is a human right, which enhances the ability of individuals to achieve other human rights and is also shown to have multiple benefits for families, communities and society as a whole. By shaping values and mindsets and by developing skills and knowledge, education contributes to progress on all SDGs, including the eradication of poverty, improved health and gender equality, conservation of natural habitats and mitigation of climate change. Education enhances democracy and good governance, as people of voting age with a primary education are 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than those with no education<sup>1</sup>. ESD and related Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Environmental Education (EE) and Conservation Education (CE) methods like role-playing, reverse teaching, outdoor and peer teaching help to create and foster a culture of tolerance, understanding, non-violence and respect.

### Education contributes to ending poverty

Education has a vital role to play in combatting poverty, both on an individual and a societal level. Statistics suggest that one extra year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by up to 10 per cent<sup>2</sup>, and if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty, resulting in a 12 per cent<sup>3</sup> decrease in global poverty. As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) notes, each additional year of schooling raises the average GDP growth of a country by 0.37 per cent<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, 2009. EFA Global Monitoring Report – Overcoming Inequalities: Why governance matters.

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/>.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, 2011. EFA Global Monitoring Report – The Hidden Crisis: Armed conflict and education.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO 2011. EFA Global Monitoring Report – Towards the Millennium Development Goals.

## Education contributes to health and nutrition

Progress in health, nutrition, gender equality and social inclusion is correlated with progress in education. For example, research suggests that each extra year of a mother's schooling reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5-10 per cent<sup>5</sup>, and a child born to a mother who can read is 50 per cent more likely to survive past age five<sup>6</sup>.

## Invest more in education and ESD to increase inclusion and equality

Increased spending and national budgets on education were important ingredients in positive educational outcomes in the initial period following the announcement of the MDGs. However, there has been less support recently for ESD and other international assistance related to education, highlighting the need for sustainable domestic financing of targets to ensure quality education that is both inclusive and equitable, building on prior international commitments and a diverse network of international, regional, national and local institutions and actors.

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<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, 2011. EFA Global Monitoring Report – The Hidden Crisis: Armed conflict and education.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/>