

Investing in Education Systems for Sustainable Development and Children's Wellbeing

Context

The world's interconnected crises, from climate change to economic and food security, affect the wellbeing of children, denying them their basic rights. Estimates show that 244 million children will not set foot in a classroom this year, while 1 billion children are at extremely high risk of suffering from the climate crisis, impacting their health and ability to learn. The economic downturn and debt challenges mean the poorest families are forced to decide whether and which children can go to school. Girls are often more at risk of dropping out of school and being forced into domestic labor and early marriage. These crises also dramatically impact the longer-term investment required to transform education systems and ensure their resilience to future disruption.

Education (SDG4) is the key to accelerating all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. For example, investing in education yields improved earnings, economic growth, and reduced poverty and inequality. If all girls receive 12 years of schooling, human capital wealth could increase by \$15–30 trillion.¹ Quality education dramatically reduces vulnerability to death from weather-related disasters², which are on the rise with climate change. Learning about climate and environmental protection in addition to developing 21st century skills can strengthen an individual's resilience, including the ability to think critically and other socio-emotional competences that are central for environmental and climate action.³ Strong outcomes on education also lead to better health outcomes and enhanced social cohesion and political stability.

While we have made progress on SDG4, it is not fast enough to achieve quality education for all children by 2030. And vulnerable children from marginalized backgrounds and in lower income countries are at risk of being left even further behind. Amidst mounting national debt and fiscal austerity, lower income countries are confronted with challenging decisions on investment priorities, often deprioritizing already strained education budgets.

Getting back on track to achieve SDG4 requires education to be prioritized at the highest political levels and to be fully financed. Multi-sectoral approaches, which are aligned to national priorities and built on the strengths and comparative advantages of all stakeholders can help maximize investments in education. For example, school feeding programs deliver \$9 in return for every \$1 invested. Innovative sources of financing for the education sector also can create more fiscal space for countries to invest in domestic education systems and help prioritize essential interventions to ensure all children are learning.

A year on from the Transforming Education Summit, and on the occasion of the SDG Summit, the international community must identify ways to close gaps on SDG 4, which can be taken forward in 2024 during the African Union's Year of Education and during preparations for the 2024 Summit of the Future. As world leaders converge at UNGA 2023, there is a unique opportunity to increase political will

¹ Missed opportunities: the high cost of not educating girls, p.5

² (UNESCO, 2016)

³ (UNESCO, 2021).

for supporting countries' own efforts to transform education and accelerate achievement of all the SDGs.

Event Proposal and Objectives

Investing in Education Systems for Sustainable Development and Children's Well-being is a high-Level side event at UNGA78 co-hosted by GPE, the Roger Federer Foundation, the Government of Kenya, UNICEF and co-sponsored by the Government of Switzerland. It will bring together global influencers and champions from UN Member States, the UN and other multilateral bodies, civil society, foundations, and youth movements to increase political will to drive progress towards SDG4 through crucial investments in education systems and collaborative efforts across sectors and stakeholders.

Date: Sept 18, 2023

Time: 16:30- 18:00

Venue: UNHQ, Room CR-11

Objectives:

- Demonstrate the value of transforming education systems as an accelerator to achieve all the SDGs and showcase how multisectoral approaches to education can maximize outcomes across the SDGs.
- Build broad, far-reaching momentum at the highest levels to make education a policy and investment priority and advance SDG4.
- Make the case for increased investments, including innovative financing, in education – aligned behind country priorities.

Format:

A panel style discussion that brings together champions and leaders to address key challenges and discuss new, innovative, and effective opportunities to transforming education systems, and thus respond to the needs and rights of children to learn and thrive, and to enable a sustainable future for all.

Moderator:

- Ms. Janet Mbugua, Media Personality and GPE Champion

Confirmed Speakers

- H.E. William Ruto, President of Kenya (TBC)
- H.E. Alain Berset, President of Switzerland (TBC)
- H. Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General
- Mr. Roger Federer, former Professional Tennis Player and Founder and Board President of the Roger Federer Foundation
- H.E. Toyin Saraki, Founder and President, Wellbeing Foundation Africa
- Ms. Laura Frigenti, CEO, GPE
- Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director, UNICEF
- Ms. Temilade Salami, GPE Youth Leader

