WG9

POLICY BRIEF

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

CO-LEAD FACILITATORS:
Pila-sande Mkuzo
Jabu Tugwana

CO-FACILITATORS:
Vhonani Petla
Michelle Marais
Professor Halima Khunoethe

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ORGANIZATIONS

Seodin Youth In Arts Service Centre
Seodin Youth in Art Service Centre NPO
Amazing Grace Training and Cosulting
Carel du Toit Trust
City Of Ekurhuleni
REAL LIFE COMMIT
Precious Lives Foundation
Mamodibo Edu-Care NPO
Mokgalaka marumo multipourse centre
Disability connection
Ihubu Community Development Program
Isibani Sempilo Yabantu Foundation
House of Warriors
Courageous Act Foundation
Thutopele Academy
Washington Drop in centre
Traditional Healers Congress of South Africa
OLERATO EARLY LEARNING CENTRE
Ikusasa liqhakazala Ezandleni
Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (South African
representative)
Visionaries Watch
Barendse Griqua House
Greater Eldorado Park Youth Innovation Hub
Hope For Bloemendal Foundation
Majoko Reina
uMnothowesizwe Project and Development Center
SAAPAM
Healthy Legacy ORGANISATION
Sciences without border in our community
UBUNYEBENTU
Young Mother's Organization Foundation
Yizani Sakhe Organisation
Mzansi Act Now
Success foundation for community development
Future Scribes
RINKIES GENERAL CONSULTING SERVICES
IkamvaYouth
Hope of stars day care
Gatsheni Youth Foundation
YOUTH DIALOGUE INDE MEDIA NPC
Inhlangano Yabelaphi Ngenkolo NaNgokomoya
Lesang bana day care
Dyslexia network Sa
SocialWorkSA PTY LTD
Peddie Family Resource Centre
CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
United Front 4 School Governing Bodies
Bokamoso Youth center
Creative Commons
Belittle day care centre
Mpumalanga Cross Disability Group
House of royalty creche
South African BRICS Youth Association
Matlala
HTP
Ukhokhelo Lolutsha
THPs
PPresidential Working Group on Disability
Dr Menzeh holdings
Beyond Limits Multipurpose, Abet and Skills Academy Of
Special Needs

Our Gift Isiphosethu
Equal Education Law Centre
Siyanakekela Community Organisation
Kaboentle Women Power And Development Projects
Tlotlang youth development centre
Reakgona Projects
Karabo Edu-Care
Segoele Early Learning Centre
Light of hope
Ditshipa E.L.C
Lighters Early Learning Center
Kuyenzeka Youth development centre
Bosele Development Foundation
Money Goals NPC
COLOSSEUM GROUP
Rekaofela Development Foundation
Thariemang Early Childhood Development
Child Welfare Tshwane
Resimolotse pre school
Rastafari united front (faith Sector)
Holford Education Institute
Maiteko early learning Centre
Credo Mutwa Foundation
Batsogile Community Organisation
INDIGINIOUS HEALERSOF AFRICA
KwaNtonjane NPO
Socio skills foundation NPC
The Ladder People Consultancy
Power child
On organisation write Dlala Ntombazana Development
Projects
Batlhabine Foundation and CSUCSA
Construction SETA
THALITHA KHUME FOUNDATION
BUTTERFLY PRE SCHOOL
Ithemba Mentorship And Development
Valued Citizens Initiative
OleratoYouth Development npc
Abundance In Light
Baphalaborwa Minister fraternal
Mpudule Research Initiative
Mokopane Need Forum
Bagola Mmogo day care
Noyaba Skills Development Consultant
Minara
CSI Align
Laapeng Foundation
Atlegang Training and Development Organization
Strydenburg Day Care Centre
African Dingaka Organization
Afrosavvy Academy
Indlovukazi centre
Little Angels Academy
Imbumba Youth Organisations
Bagodiseng Pre school
iGnite_Ed!
Impacting Youth
Shibanngwa creche
DISABLED PEOLPE SOUTH AFRICA Western Cape
GloriaM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines the systemic challenges impeding quality education, particularly in the Global South, and offers a multi-faceted approach to address them. It recognises education as a fundamental human right under international instruments such as the ICESCR, CRC, and CRPD, and stresses the need for inclusive, equitable, culturally responsive, and sustainable education systems that prioritise marginalised groups including girls, children with disabilities, displaced learners, and rural communities.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish inter-ministerial councils, adopting cost-of-quality frameworks, expanding sustainable funding, emphasising indigenous languages, and introducing climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Enhanced professional development, leadership pathways, incentive-linked training, inclusive community engagement, subject-specific recruitment, and prioritizing teacher well-being.
- Ratifying international human rights instruments, implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL), funding assistive technologies, and combatting stigma and discrimination.
- Coherent legal reforms, multi-level governance coordination, transparent institutions, stigma reduction campaigns, and universal, stigma-free public services.
- Combating illicit financial flows, reforming debt frameworks to prioritise education, enforcing spending floors, and implementing regulatory frameworks protecting education as a public good.
- Strengthening teacher training, bridging digital access gaps, enforcing inclusive laws, and expanding adult literacy initiatives.

The G20 is urged to adopt ambitious, measurable commitments including an ECCE Acceleration Compact and robust frameworks for financing and governance to realize education's transformative potential worldwide.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality education, as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), goes beyond mere access to schooling; it encompasses learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and effective, with relevant curricula, well-trained teachers, and appropriate resources. While significant progress has been made in increasing enrolment rates globally, disparities in learning outcomes persist, particularly in the global south.

There are several issues that impede the delivery of quality education, including insufficient provisioning and funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), inadequate training and capacitation of educators, lack of equity, inclusion and austerity measures. Addressing these systemic challenges requires a multi-faceted approach encompassing policy reform, investment, and collaborative partnerships.

Aligning with the C20 Education and Culture Working Group 2024 recommendations, this submission reaffirms the right to education as articulated in international human rights instruments, including:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Beyond the above, this working group has identified six key priorities which include three of the key priorities identified by the G20 Education Working which include Quality Foundational Learning, Mutual Recognition of Qualifications and Education Professional Development. The alignment of these key priorities reinforces the symbiotic relationship that ought to exist between states actors and civil society. According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, while global literacy has risen from 68% in 1979 to 86% today, significant disparities persist. Approximately 250 million children lack foundational literacy skills, and 754 million adults (two-thirds of whom are women) cannot read or write with understanding. These issues are most pronounced in developing and low-income countries, with Sub-Saharan Africa having the lowest adult literacy rates.

We support education as a public good and call for culturally responsive, transformative, and ecologically sustainable education systems that centre the lived experiences of the most marginalised, particularly girls, children with disabilities, displaced learners, and rural communities. Inclusive education bridges the transition gaps between special and mainstream schooling and addresses deep disparities between rural and urban learners.

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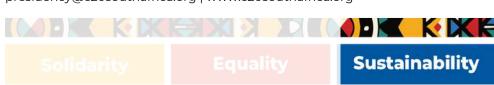
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CONTEXT

A. Substantial Public Financing of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

The early years of life are decisive for shaping cognitive, emotional, and social trajectories, with profound implications for productivity, educational attainment, and social cohesion. ECCE is widely recognised as one of the most cost-effective strategies for strengthening resilience and advancing equitable development. Yet, despite numerous commitments, progress remains uneven, with more than 175 million children still excluded from pre-primary education worldwide. Structural inequalities are most acute in rural areas, among girls, children with disabilities, and undocumented populations. Persistent underinvestment, fragmented delivery systems, and weak caregiver support perpetuate these disparities and undermine broader developmental goals.

ECCE must be approached as a multisectoral undertaking at the intersection of education,health, nutrition, and child protection. Effective governance requires robust inter-ministerial coordination, national councils for alignment, and enforceable policy frameworks that mandate inclusivity. In South Africa, the stark contrasts between well-resourced areas such as Sandton and disadvantaged communities such as Alexandra reveal entrenched disparities. These are compounded by language barriers and the exclusion of undocumented children. A deliberate focus on indigenous language instruction, equitable infrastructure, and climate-resilient facilities is essential to redress such systemic inequalities.

Effective ECCE delivery rests on several interdependent pillars. Governance reforms must institutionalise ECCE within national systems and build inter-ministerial accountability. Sustainable financing demands the adoption of a cost-of-quality framework that prioritises ECCE within national budgets while leveraging multilateral development banks. Human capital development is critical, requiring investment in caregiver professionalisation, expanded training programmes, and structured partnerships with community organisations. Pedagogical innovation should embed play-based, culturally responsive approaches that integrate climate literacy, social-emotional learning, and digital innovations suitable for low-tech environments.

Finally, accountability and monitoring systems (grounded in integrated child data platforms) are essential for tracking enrolment, service coverage, equity, and workforce qualifications.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The G20 should adopt a dedicated ECCE Acceleration Compact anchored in measurable targets and milestones. This includes:

1. **Governance and Policy Reform:** Establish inter-ministerial councils and inclusive legislative frameworks.
2. **Sustainable Financing:** Expand public allocations and mobilise multilateral investment.
3. **Programmatic Priorities:** Scale parenting support, integrate ECCE with health and nutrition, and guarantee at least one year of free pre-primary education.
4. **Equity and Inclusion:** Extend services to marginalised groups, embed indigenous language instruction, and ensure accessibility for undocumented children.
5. **Innovation and Resilience:** Establish an ECCE Innovation Facility, develop climate-resilient infrastructure, and ensure continuity of services during crises.

ECCE is not an optional developmental priority but a structural imperative for achieving sustainable and inclusive futures. A phased roadmap, beginning with governance reforms and pilot initiatives in the first year, expanding parenting and health integration within two to three years, and achieving universal, compulsory, and climate-resilient pre-primary education within five years - offers a pragmatic yet ambitious trajectory. By positioning ECCE at the centre of national and global policy agendas, states can build the foundations of equitable human development and long-term resilience.

B. Teacher Development and Professional Dignity

Teachers are the backbone of education transformation. UNESCO's 2024 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) urges valuing and diversifying the teaching profession. Yet many face overcrowded classrooms, low pay, outdated training, and inadequate mental health support. These challenges directly impact learning outcomes. SDG 4C targets a substantial rise in qualified teachers, a gap particularly wide across sub-Saharan Africa. Equity gaps in access to quality education remain a critical challenge, with rural, urban, and disadvantaged communities often facing unequal access to qualified educators and learning resources, while girls, learners with disabilities, and marginalised groups are disproportionately affected. To prepare learners for future economies, teachers require continuous professional development (CPD) in climate-responsive, inclusive, and digital pedagogies, while older educators nearing retirement also need motivation and mental health support to sustain effective teaching.However, inadequate pay, job insecurity, and the absence of confidential mental health services undermine teacher effectiveness, limiting their ability to identify and support learners' well-being.

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Although the SIAS policy provides a framework for learner support, its impact is restricted by limited teacher awareness and capacity. Supporting teachers as knowledge co-creators, rather than mere curriculum deliverers, enhances pedagogical innovation and learner outcomes. Globally, countries investing in teacher leadership, continuous professional development, and well-being support have demonstrated improved educational outcomes. Addressing systemic inequities requires integrating community engagement, mental health, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability into

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

To strengthen quality education for future sustainability, G20 and national ministries should prioritise investment in:
1. Strengthening Leadership and Mentorship Pathways in Teaching, equipping teachers with the relevant tools and knowledge
2. Linking Teacher Incentives to Professional Development Milestones
3. Improving Pre-Service Teacher Education Quality and Accessibility
4. Fostering Community Engagement and Parental Partnerships: Train teachers to build strong relationships with families and communities.
5. Leveraging Data and Feedback Systems for Teacher Development.
6. Embedding Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Training
7. Ensuring Subject-Specific Teacher Placement and Recruitment.
8. Prioritising Teacher Well-being and Mental Health Support and
9. Governance reform: Establishing a Continental Teacher Professional Standards Framework

C. Inclusive Education for All

Inclusive education is central to achieving SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, and SDG 16, and aligns with the CRPD, CRC, ICESCR, the Salamanca Statement, the Maputo Protocol, CESA 2025, and Agenda 2063.It requires removing barriers in the form of physical, cognitive, linguistic, socio-economic, digital, and attitudinal. Learners with disabilities, neurodiverse learners, religious minorities, and those facing poverty, displacement, or rural disadvantage must be explicitly included. Inclusive systems must reflect diversity, uphold dignity, and equip learners for equitable participation in society.

While global frameworks endorse inclusive education, implementation remains uneven. Equity gaps persist across urban/rural divides, and disability. Education systems often fail to reflect learners' lived realities or do not support alternative pathways for neurodiverse and non-traditional learners.

Educators lack training in inclusive pedagogy, and assistive technology is underfunded. There is also insufficient data (desegregated data) to inform planning, especially disaggregated by disability and geography.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policy and legal priorities:
- G20 governments to ratify and enforce international instruments including but not limited to the CRPD, ICESCR, CRC, and AU mandates. Protect learners from discrimination based on disability, neurodiversity, or socio-economic status.
- Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks- embed non-discrimination, accessibility, and inclusion in education laws. Ensure enforcement mechanisms bridge policy and practice.

2. Programmatic actions:
- national ministries must implement UDL across curricula and pedagogy. Promote inclusive literacy, mother-tongue learning, and flexible assessment. Provide assistive technologies, differentiated assessments, and resources.
- train educators on literacy inclusion, disability, and neurodiversity. Build professional networks to share inclusive practices. Promote early career counselling and peer education.

3. Investment priority: fund inclusive infrastructure, literacy, assistive tech, and co-curricular access. Track budgets to ensure resources reach marginalised learners.

Inclusive education is a non-negotiable foundation for resilient, just, and sustainable societies. By placing literacy, psychosocial well-being, and holistic participation at the heart of inclusion, while recognising the dignity, rights, and potential of learners with disabilities, neurodiversity, and those facing poverty or conflict, we build stronger, more equitable futures. Ensuring no learner is left behind requires bold policy action, targeted resources, and an unwavering commitment.

D. Integrated Governance for Social Justice

Integrated governance refers to a collaborative, inclusive, and coordinated approach to decision-making that transcends silos between government sectors, civil society, private enterprises, and international institutions. It focuses on aligning policies, laws, and resources to address inequality, protect human rights, and promote equitable opportunities for all.

Across the world, deep-rooted inequities, exacerbated by globalisation, climate change, armed conflicts, harmful substance use or abuse and economic instability - demand governance models that are both holistic and participatory. Global frameworks such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasise that social justice cannot be achieved without cross-sector collaboration, strong institutional accountability, and meaningful participation from marginalized groups.

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GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

- Nordic Countries integrate social welfare systems, progressive taxation, and strong labour protections with democratic participation to reduce inequality.
- South Africa's Constitution embeds social justice and equality principles, guiding governance reforms aimed at redressing historical injustices.
- UN Women's Global Initiatives coordinate with governments worldwide to address inequality through multi-sectoral strategies.
- UNAIDS, the Central Drug Authority Act(CDA) and Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) principles, this policy brief proposes a coordinated, equity focused framework to promote long term sustainability, peace and inclusive development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Policy Coherence and Legal reform –** Social, economic, and environmental policiesmust be interconnected, avoiding contradictions that could undermine equity. G20 member states must prioritize evidence-based legislative reform, aligning education and health with international human rights standards.
2. **System Integration and Multi-level Collaboration across sectors –** Establish cross-sectorial governance frameworks that align health, education, social protection, nutrition and justice systems coordination between local, national, regional, and global actors ensures that solutions are context-specific yet globally informed.
3. **Governance reforms: Ensure Good Governance -**Transparency and Accountability– Institutions must uphold open communication, combat corruption, and measure outcomes against clear equity targets.
4. **Programmatic actions: Education, Relevant Knowledge and Stigma Reduction -**Launch inclusive education campaigns to combat stigma including homophobia and transphobia, and literacy in communities.
5. **Equitable and Non-discriminatory Access to Services -** Ensure universal, stigma-free access to Public Institutions. Provide comprehensive harm reduction services Treatment and Rehabilitation centres, Community Health Centres including NSP,OAMT, HIV/TB and Hepatitis care- both in community and custodial settings.

Integrated governance for social justice offers a pathway toward more equitable societies by ensuring that decisions are collaborative, inclusive, and evidence-driven. While the challenges are significant, global experiences show that when governance systems align across sectors and scales, they can create lasting structural change. Achieving this requires political will, civic engagement, and a shared commitment to fairness and human dignity. We support the C20 vision of centering care, justice, equity and participation in global governance.

The G20 must take bold, coordinated action to realize education's potential as a transformative tool for sustainable development and social justice.

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E. Budget Justice - Pro poor and inclusive Budgeting

Public education systems worldwide face severe fiscal pressures that threaten the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. In accordance with the G20 Presidency's theme of "Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability," countries must coordinate to prioritise education investment over debt servicing and create sustainable financing mechanisms for inclusive education systems.

- **Fiscal Space Constraints and Debt Burden-** Developing countries face severe fiscal constraints that limit education investment. Interest payments in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 1.3% of GDP to 3.2% between 2008 and 2023, directly competing with education spending that declined from 3.9% of GDP to 2.9%. This debt-education trade-off undermines long-term development prospects and perpetuates intergenerational poverty.

- **Tax Justice and Revenue Generation-** Tax evasion by transnational corporations costs developing countries an estimated $480 billion annually through tax haven abuse. These revenue losses could fund comprehensive education systems multiple times over. Current international tax architectures favor wealthy nations and multinational corporations at the expense of public education financing in the Global South.

- **Market-Driven Education Risks-** In contexts of limited state capacity, private sector education initiatives may exacerbate inequities through market-driven approaches that disadvantage the most marginalised learners who cannot afford fees and are often more vulnerable to other forms of discrimination. Without transparent and accountable regulatory frameworks, education privatisation risks undermining the principle of education as a public good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Programmatic actions:** Combat corporate tax evasion and implement progressive taxation to unlock the $480 billion annually lost to illicit financial flows to support education funding.
2. **Governance reforms:** Reform G20 debt frameworks to provide immediate fiscal relief for developing countries through expanded eligibility and streamlined debt-for-education swaps.
3. **Investment priorities:** Enforce minimum education spending floors with targeted investment in foundational learning, teacher training, and digital infrastructure.
4. **Legal and Policy priorities:** Establish strong regulatory frameworks to protect public education from privatisation while ensuring responsive budgeting prioritises marginalised learners.

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F. Global prioritisation of the Reading and Literacy Revolution Agenda

Literacy is central to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), enabling inclusive education, social justice, economic growth, and informed citizenship. In the G20 context, it is both an education priority and a driver of sustainable development. Global literacy has improved from 68% in 1979 to 86% today, yet stark inequities persist. Sub-Saharan Africa records adult literacy rates below 35% in countries like Chad and South Sudan. India alone has 287 million illiterate people, while women, refugees, and people with disabilities across Latin America remain disproportionately excluded.In South Africa, one-third of children finish Grade 2 without recognising the alphabet, and 78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning. Urgent action is needed to expand early learning, close the digital divide, and strengthen teacher training to achieve G20 education commitments.

The poor global literacy progress is reflective of deep inequities. Poverty, disability, and rural isolation continue to limit access to education. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia face the most severe literacy gaps, disadvantaged groups across regions remain excluded. The digital divide intensifies these disparities; only 14% of children in Africa have internet access, leaving millions without the digital skills needed for modern economies. Teacher shortages worsen the challenge: an estimated 2.4 million more teachers are required by 2030, many lacking training in literacy pedagogy or inclusive practices. Limited access to diverse, culturally relevant texts contributes to "learning poverty," while 750 million adults worldwide remain illiterate, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of exclusion. Urgent, coordinated action is essential to reverse these trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Governance Reform –** Strengthen G20 accountability and align national strategies with SDG 4 on literacy and inclusion.
2. **Investment Priorities –** Scale early childhood literacy, enhance teacher training, and ensure basic digital infrastructure (10 Mbps, 1:3 learner-device ratio).
3. **Legal & Policy Instruments –** Enforce inclusive education laws and mandate telecom support for educational access.
4. **Programmatic Actions –** Provide local-language reading materials, teach digital/media literacy and climate resilience, and expand community adult literacy programs.

The global literacy crisis threatens the achievement of SDG 4 and undermines G20 commitments to inclusive growth. Literacy is both a human right and a foundation for sustainable societies. Action is urgent: investing in ECD, teacher training, digital equity, and inclusive policies will enable learners and communities to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

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