

6TH ASIA-PACIFIC MEETING ON EDUCATION 2030 (APMED 6)

Accelerating actions: Transforming the what and how of learning for a sustainable future 10-13 September 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand

Recommendations from the Asia-Pacific region

Throughout the Asia-Pacific region, a growing number of students are in classrooms, yet far too many are not truly learning. A polycrisis of conflict, climate change, and the impacts of COVID-19, including mental health challenges, continue to drive persistent inequities and displacements in education, work, and everyday life. Beyond the halfway point of Education 2030, the 6th Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 6) is a critical moment to **confront multiple challenges, including learning losses**, take stock of our progress, and reset priority actions at all levels.

Equity, inclusion, and gender equality must guide all actions to empower the most marginalized through their right to quality education, supported by **sustainable financing**. The aim is to ensure that transformative and harmonized approaches fulfill the purposes of education and achieve meaningful learning outcomes. The overall focus of APMED 6 is to stimulate the acceleration of SDG4 implementation in the region, and to inform the 2024 Global Education Meeting taking place in Brazil. Participants in APMED 6 identified the following recommendations and interconnected priorities.

1. General considerations

- The Asia-Pacific region is the most populous region in the world, inherently diverse, and most prone to disasters and climate change impacts. While progress towards SDG4 has been noted since 2015, the region is significantly off track from achieving the Education 2030 agenda.
- Learning poverty remains a substantial barrier to achieving SDG4, including a rise from 35% to 45% in East Asia and Pacific, and from 60% to 78% of learners in South Asia. The region is home to 456 million illiterate adults, most of whom are women.
- To fulfill the promise of education as a fundamental human right, the Asia-Pacific region is committed to urgently accelerate action toward all SDG4 targets by 2030, ensuring inclusive access, quality learning achievement and safeguarding well-being for all learners.

2. Priority actions to unlock the transformative power of education

- **Strengthening foundational learning:** Basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills, together with social and emotional learning, are core building blocks for all other learning and higher order skills. Guided by the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#), improve foundational learning outcomes, particularly for the most marginalized, by enrolling all children in school, providing access to remedial learning, investing in quality trained teachers and supporting teachers for at scale implementation of the best pedagogical approaches such as targeted instruction and structured pedagogy.
- **Strengthening education systems to be resilient, advancing education for sustainable development, global citizenship, peace, and climate action:** Lifelong learning pathways should embed sustainability principles and core competencies, prioritizing greening curricula and education system resilience for climate action, including the [Comprehensive School Safety Framework](#).

Supporting climate-smart education systems including climate change education, can drive stakeholder actions across sectors and generations. Stakeholders agree to set a crosscutting target of 90% of countries implementing green curricula and climate-resilient lifelong learning systems by 2030.

- **Enhancing digital transformation, including through the considered and appropriate use of AI:** Address the digital divide in all levels and areas of education and learning, including in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), ensuring safe, supportive, and conducive learning environments for all learners from marginalized communities. This includes promoting and mobilizing innovative investments in digital transformation from both public and private sectors in partnership. The goal is to provide all learners with free, high-quality digital learning resources, enhance pedagogical capacity through AI-driven innovation, and ensure the safe use of technology with robust data protection policies in Asia-Pacific.

3. Transformative actions to accelerate progress towards SDG4

a) Inclusion, equity and gender equality

- **Ensuring gender equality in education:** Challenge gender inequalities and all forms of discrimination in and through education using a whole-system approach and ensuring equal access to education for all learners, from early childhood to adulthood, and specifically attentive to marginalized groups and communities. This will be pursued by promoting inclusive and gender transformative education at all educational levels and ensuring gender parity and non-discrimination in learning spaces, and in teaching and education leadership positions.
- **Ensuring effective learning environments:** Create effective, safe, gender-transformative, and inclusive learning environments with the involvement of the community and attentive to ethno-linguistic diversities, ensuring supportive infrastructures and accessible water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene management facilities. Implement measures to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence, provide free and nutritious meals, comprehensive sexuality education, and ensure services for learners' physical and psychosocial well-being, care, and support. Address immediate needs linked to learning poverty and ensure mechanisms exist and respond to emergencies, especially to protracted crises where vulnerabilities are most pronounced.
- **Increasing capacity to address disparities:** Invest in institutional and human capacity of the education sector, including policy and financing, across formal, non formal and informal systems to **identify and take action on disparities.**

b) Teaching and the teaching profession

- **Investing in teachers:** Tackle the teacher shortage by hiring quality trained teachers, making the teaching profession more attractive for the younger generation, **ensuring support and decent working conditions**, and enhancing status of teachers, including through wages comparable with professions requiring similar levels of qualifications and continuous professional development as called in the [UNSG High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession Recommendations](#).
- **Developing digital competency frameworks with and for teachers:** Collaboratively develop tools informed by pedagogical practice, curricula, and context considerations that respond to the needs of teachers and learners. Ensure the active involvement of teachers in the design, piloting, implementation, and evaluation of digital tools considered for use in education to enhance relevance and effectiveness. Ensure systems **maintain pedagogical autonomy** when integrating ICT and AI competencies for teachers and keep **people at the centre**.
- **Advocating for partnerships and collaboration:** Strengthen collaboration among educational institutions, governments, teachers and their organizations, social partners and relevant stakeholders **to support institutionalized social and policy dialogue on teacher policy.** Ensure

provision of adequate time, financial resources, and learning opportunities to support their continuous professional development, including **promoting learning teams** and enhancing **digital knowledge, experience and skills**.

c) Learning assessments and their use

- **Formulating national benchmarks for Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPLs) for literacy and numeracy:** Strengthen and support countries in producing quality learning data for SDG 4.1.1 through national, regional, and international large-scale assessments ensuring the international standards to produce MPLs in reading and mathematics to inform policies and improve learning. Governments need to continue developing and strengthening existing mechanisms to monitor SDG4 progress, including establishing national benchmarks for MPLs in reading and mathematics under SDG 4.1.1.
- **Strengthening system capacity to improve timely collection, analysis, and use of learning assessment data,** in particular by **middle tier management** at districts/sub-districts, local government level for monitoring and supporting teachers and schools, and holding the government accountable for achieving learning outcomes.
- **Promoting global, regional and national cooperation on assessment and SDG monitoring and reporting,** including through the development of appropriate and cost-effective methodologies, approaches and tools to produce internationally comparable learning data to fill the learning data gaps in the region.

d) Lifelong learning and skills development for the work of the future

- **Engaging youth and adults to transform skills development:** Skill, upskill and empower young people and adults for well-being and healthy development, ensuring their diverse needs and voices shape relevant content and pedagogies for green and digital societies and the future of work, and for ensuring sustainability of the planet.
- **Codeveloping online and offline flexible learning pathways for youth and adult learners:** Building on the [Marrakech Framework for Action on Adult Learning and Education](#), ensure gender-transformative access to formal, non-formal, and informal learning, through online or offline micro-credentialing platforms and community learning programmes, that provide relevant skills development especially for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Promote fair validation of skills, micro-credentials, and qualifications across academic and professional settings, enhancing transparency and coherence in recognition policies and practices.
- **Enhancing skills data:** Bridge gaps and address fragmentation in learner data to generate demand-driven insights that inform learning. Ensure skills development opportunities are inclusive of all youth and adults, prioritizing vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

e) Governance and leadership in education

- **Promoting cross-sector collaboration in education policy and practice:** Empower youth and students to take leadership roles in the design and implementation of educational policies and programs, ensuring their perspectives and innovative ideas drive educational transformation. Ensure **participatory governance** in education led by the government and providing institutionalized spaces for the engagement of marginalized learners, teachers, civil society and development partners in the follow-up of education commitments and the continued review of SDG4 progress at local, national, regional, and global levels.

- **Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system for SDG4:** Transform data systems and expand innovative and non-traditional data collection methods to better generate sex- and age-disaggregated data and understand intersections between characteristics such as gender, disability, ethnicity, location and language, which compound marginalization, inequality, and learning poverty. **Improve measurement indicators** on education financing, teaching workforce, and SDG 4.7—tracking how countries mainstream Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development in their education systems—to build stronger, more inclusive lifelong learning systems that deliver real, measurable value.

4. Investing more, more equitably and more efficiently in education

- **Ensuring adequate and equitable funding for education and lifelong learning:** Commit to allocating at least 4-6% of GDP and/or 15-20% of total public expenditure to education to meet international benchmarks for sustainable education funding.
- **Promoting tax justice and reforms:** Collaborate with stakeholders to design measures that ensure a more equitable tax system, increasing the education budget sustainably and addressing disparities in resource allocation.
- **Enhancing efficiency and equity in investment:** Implement evidence-based policies that prioritize high-impact areas in education, streamline administrative processes, and ensure transparent allocation and utilization of resources. Regular audits and optimization of financial resources are essential.
- **Leveraging partnerships and innovative financing to reach all learners:** Align national education plans and aid and prioritize the most marginalized by ensuring resources adhere to aid effectiveness principles. Foster innovative financing mechanisms and mobilize cross-sectoral resources through public-private partnerships, leveraging private sector expertise and commitments from governments and educational institutions to diversify funding, drive innovation, and scale successful initiatives.
- **Strengthening accountability and transparency:** Establish robust frameworks to ensure accountability and transparency in the allocation and utilization of education funds, enhancing capacity, trust and effectiveness in financial management.

Based on the **Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG4**, APMED 6 reaffirmed the latest commitments made during the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister’s Conference and the global Transforming Education Summit in New York in 2022. To date, that promise remains incomplete. Two years later, the United Nations and young people are calling for decisive action in education transformation—to guide the upcoming Summit of the Future later this month and the 2024 Global Education Meeting.

To sustain action, we must foster regional cooperation and knowledge sharing, leverage successful strategies, and highlight local innovations to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG4. We urge all countries and partners to act decisively on these priorities.

We request UNESCO, together with UNICEF and the regional Learning and Education 2030+ Networking group, to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of SDG4 as Member States respond.