

LEARNING BRIEF

Learning from what we've done and how we did it

The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Policy Framework: A strategic vehicle for the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals

<p>Date: July 2021</p> <p>Author Patricia Martin</p> <p>Contact bashni@miet.co.za</p> <p>Key words Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL); COVID-19 pandemic; Decade of Action to deliver sustainable development; SADC Policy Framework on CSTL; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</p> <p>References See list at the end of the document</p>	<p>Key points</p> <p>Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, sub-Saharan Africa was at risk of not achieving the SDGs. But the pandemic has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalled pre-COVID progress that had been made in achieving the SDGs • Adversely impacted socioeconomic, environmental & political conditions • Significantly affected children's right to develop to their full potential <p>In 2020, the UN called on all Member States to commit to a <i>Decade of Action to deliver the sustainable development</i> to accelerate responses to the world's gravest challenges. Strategic actions required include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening systems for universalizing developmentally critical rights • Creating enabling environments throughout the life of the child • Ensuring universal health coverage of essential health services • Developing the civic & political agency of affected/targeted populations, including youth • Involving caregivers & communities as co-educators <p>The <i>SADC Policy Framework on CSTL</i> provides an ideal vehicle for driving the <i>Decade of Action</i> for sustainable development. It requires Member States to develop national educational ecosystems that provide a suite of services critical to accelerate progress. The building of CSTL schools as hubs of educational ecosystems will accelerate & scale up the proven strategies for developing children as agents of change.</p>	<p>MIET AFRICA's learning briefs are developed to share new ideas, best practices and learnings arising from our specific experience in implementing a project or through some other activity, so as to grow knowledge and share learning, with the ultimate aim of <i>improving the lives of children and youth</i>.</p>
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Introduction

Global progress in achieving the SDGs had slowed before the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.¹ COVID-19 exposed the fragility of progress made and the remaining, often deepening inequalities and deprivations.² For the first time since 2015, average global progress, as measured using the SDG Index Score, decreased in 2021 because of the social, economic, environmental and political impact of the pandemic. Sub-Saharan Africa scored the lowest on the SDG Index score in 2021.³

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating across the world, but in sub-Saharan Africa it has:

- Exposed the slow progress in achieving sustainable development, and persistently deep inequalities and chronic exclusion of vulnerable populations
- Stalled pre-COVID progress in achieving the transformational SDGs and left most of the population, notably children and youth, extremely vulnerable to the social, economic and political shocks wrought by the pandemic
- Impacted negatively on social, economic, environmental and political conditions through increased poverty, job losses, authoritarian governance, decreased access to critical services and reprioritization of resources

As a result, there has been a steep deterioration in core SDGs, including those related to:

- Poverty
 - Inequality
 - HIV&AIDS
 - Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services
- Impacted significantly on children's right to develop to their full potential—the bedrock of sustainable development

The human capital foundations required to reverse an already tenuous situation have been fundamentally weakened. Children's developmentally critical rights, already at risk before COVID-19, have been adversely affected, notably (especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized), the rights to:⁴

- Health, including SRH and protection from HIV&AIDS
 - Nutrition, water and sanitation
 - Protection from harmful cultural practices (including early marriage, and early and unintended pregnancies)
 - Quality 21st century education to enable children and youth to address the region's development challenges
- Fuelled the inter-generational poverty cycle that drives the multiple deprivations

It therefore precludes the present and future generations of vulnerable and marginalized children and youth from the social, economic, civil and political participation necessary for sustainable, inclusive development.

The Decade of Action to deliver sustainable development

Even before COVID-19, sub-Saharan Africa was already at risk of not achieving the SDGs.⁵ Deepening poverty, inequality and exclusions have set the region on course to fall even further behind as its human capital foundations are further eroded.⁶

In 2020, the United Nations called on all Member States to commit to a decade of action to deliver the SDGs and to take strategic action to advance a shared vision and accelerate responses to the world's gravest challenges—from eliminating poverty and hunger to reversing climate change.⁷

To achieve the SDGs in the medium term (by 2030), and Africa's longer-term goals as set out in Africa's *Agenda 2063* (and Africa's *Agenda for Children 2040*), Member States of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) will need to heed this call to action and, as a matter of urgency, take strategic action.

In this Decade of Action, Member States must *act now* to ensure sustainable human capital foundations are built to drive recovery in the post-COVID period, and secure lasting development in the longer term (2040 and 2063).

This requires that Member States prioritize transformational measures that will:

- Permanently address the deficits that underpinned the slow pre-COVID progress
- Ensure catch-up in the areas most severely affected by COVID-19

What strategic action is required?

Africa's own *Agenda 2063* and Africa's *Agenda for Children*, along with several SDG and related progress reports, offer clear direction and valuable lessons as to what is required to set the region back on course for achieving its sustainable development vision and goals.

Lessons can be learnt from the experiences of other regions, countries and sectors, whether:

- They were not doing well pre-COVID (and the reasons underpinning that slow progress)
- They were making better pre-COVID progress
- They were better prepared to withstand the impact of COVID-19 and were more resilient to the negative social, economic, environmental and political effects of the pandemic
- They have experienced reduced negative impacts and quicker recoveries, and have resumed progress towards achieving the SDGs

Strategic action necessary for accelerated, sustained achievement of the SDGs

- Strengthen integrated systems for universalizing developmentally critical rights (notably health, nutrition, protection, quality education and participation in all decisions—for all children) with special measures to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are systematically reached
- Develop systems that will create and sustain enabling environments across the continuum of care throughout the life of the child—i.e. enable all responsible duty bearers (caregivers,* communities, schools, the media, NGOs, government) to fulfil children's rights
- Strengthen social security systems for the identification of vulnerable children and provision of material support to ensure access to developmentally essential services
- Ensure universal health coverage of essential promotive and preventative health services, including nutritional support, HIV&AIDS prevention and treatment, and SRH services, including comprehensive sexuality education (or CSE)

Countries with robust public health systems that secure universal coverage of essential preventative and promotive treatment and rehabilitative and palliative care experienced fewer and shorter disruptions in access to essential services, and therefore fewer effects on key negative outcomes such as:⁸

- Early and unintended pregnancies
- HIV&AIDS transmission
- Failed adherence to antiretroviral therapy
- Develop the civic and political agency of affected/targeted populations, including youth, to act responsibly and make informed decisions in the best interests of the wider community, through access to relevant accurate information, competencies and opportunities to participate and make informed decisions
- Ensure inclusive access to quality education for the development of the agency of all children, especially the most vulnerable, to address the region's most pressing development challenges

Education for agency has been a key strategy to enable and empower responsible action by all individuals in the best interests of the wider community to curtail the spread of COVID-19 and successful HIV&AIDS prevention interventions among young people.

- Involve caregivers and communities as co-educators that are an integral part of the system
- Develop a cohort of 21st century co-educators to deliver quality, inclusive transformational education in pursuit of their shared vision of accelerating sustainable human capital for development

* In this brief, "caregivers" is used to designate parents, other members of the family, guardians or other adults who provide daily care to the learner.

- Provide technology, infrastructure and related skills for remote outreach and access to services and opportunities⁹

Digital technologies have played a central role in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations—in sustaining social services, education, social security payments and healthcare during lockdown. This has highlighted the importance of universalized access to technology for ensuring agency for development.

CSTL: A vehicle for the Decade of Action for sustainable development

SADC has a planning framework that was developed and endorsed by all education ministers as a planning vehicle for coordinated, country-wide, multisectoral accelerated and strategic development of the region's human capital, in and through the education system.

The SADC Policy Framework on Care and Support for Teaching and Learning provides an ideal vehicle for driving the Decade of Action for sustainable development in the SADC Region, and beyond.

The Framework provides a mandate and roadmap for multi-sectoral coordinated action in and through national educational eco-systems of care, support and quality 21st century teaching and learning to (re)build human capital foundations to address persistent development challenges and inequities aggravated in the post-COVID context:

- Inequality
- HIV&AIDS
- Early and unintended pregnancies and early marriage
- Unsafe and unhealthy SRH behaviour
- Climate change

The Policy Framework requires SADC Member States to take strategic and systemic action to develop national educational ecosystems that provide a suite of services and support critical to accelerate progress. In effect, it requires the development of systems that enable and sustain all schools—as a platform that reaches all children—to be facilitative, coordinating hubs of multisectoral support for vulnerable children, and the provision of quality transformational education for the development of their civic, political, social and economic agency.

The *CSTL Policy Framework* provides a mandate and system's strengthening roadmap to universalize CSTL schools as hubs of transformational educational ecosystems—which, if implemented by all Member States in the SADC—has the potential to drive the region's Decade of Action for delivering sustainable development.

The *Policy Framework*, as augmented by the *Child and Youth Agency Framework*, currently being piloted in four Member States,^{*} requires the adoption of policies and supporting systems to establish, enable and sustain all schools in the region as CSTL schools, built on eight consolidated pillars that align with strategic actions that have proven successful in building resilient human capital. The building of CSTL schools as hubs of educational ecosystems will accelerate and scale up the proven strategies and action the lessons learnt for developing children as resilient agents of change.

^{*} Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe



CSTL PILLARS: THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR ACCELERATED, SUSTAINED HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

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