



Call to action!

Strengthen inclusive education for sustainable development using the SADC CSTL and Child and Youth Agency Frameworks

Part 1

Strengthen quality education for developing human capital for inclusive sustainable development using the SADC Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) and Child and Youth Agency Frameworks (CYAF)

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FutureLife-Now!



Part 1:

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Nurturing agency for sustainable development through quality education: A sustainable development priority

Another academic year has passed. Our 2022 graduates are starting their journey into adulthood, and the next generation are at school, preparing to conquer persistent social, economic, civic and political development challenges—notably poverty; inequality; limited employment opportunities and high levels of youth unemployment; high levels of HIV&AIDS, especially among girls and young women; increasing early and unintended pregnancies; civic and political unrest and conflict; climate change.

These young people are the next generation of parents, partners, employees, business owners, religious and political leaders, government administrators and decision-makers, healthcare workers, civil society leaders and educators of future generations of children. The current generation of children are already citizens with the potential, rights and power to participate in decision-making and act to change many of the challenges: how well they fulfil these roles really matters. It will determine whether the Southern African Community Development (SADC) Region can end these challenges. Achieving lasting change in the region depends on providing all children with *quality, inclusive education for sustainable development* that equips them with the knowledge, skills, competencies and opportunities to exercise their agency.

As members of the African Union and the United Nations, SADC Member States have committed to transform society by providing universal education that will build the human capital needed to drive and sustain change. They have committed to equipping every child with the knowledge, skills and opportunities required to empower and enable their social, economic, civic and political participation that will end intergenerational patterns of inequality and exclusion.

“Human capital—the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives—is a central driver of sustainable growth and poverty reduction. More human capital is associated with higher earnings for people, higher income for countries, and stronger cohesion in societies.” WORLD BANK, 2021

Through multiple instruments (including the following), education sectors have committed, to providing quality, transformational **education for sustainable development** (ESD) to prepare all children to fulfil these roles in a way that will bring about lasting change:

- The Kigali Common African Position on Education (2015)
- The Incheon Declaration (2015)
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015)
- Africa's Agenda 2063 (2016)
- Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 (2016)
- The AU Continental Education Strategy (2016)
- The ESA Commitment (2015 and renewed in 2022)
- The SADC CSTL Policy Framework (2016)
- The SADC CYA Framework (2022)

UNESCO defines ESD as a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education that:

- Empowers learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take informed decisions and make responsible actions for a just society.
- Is holistic and transformational, and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.

(<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>)

However, as evidenced by persisting exclusions, inequalities and development challenges, there is still work to be done. Past and current generations of adults have not been equipped to fulfil these roles adequately. Furthermore, despite efforts over the past two decades to develop and implement civic, human rights, comprehensive sexuality and climate change education, along with education to prepare children for the 21st century information economy, limited progress has been made.

The World Bank's 2021 Human Capital Report,¹ the 2022 ESA evaluation report, the 2021 Global Education Monitoring Report² and the 2022 SDG progress report³ all confirm that the world is not on track to achieve most of the SDGs. While some progress had been made in the pre-COVID era, it was slow, fragmented and fragile. Poverty, climate change, gender inequality, violence, political instability, weak governance and corruption, high levels of HIV&AIDS and early and unintended pregnancies has escalated in the past few years, thus further deepening and entrenching exclusions and inequalities along historical equity fault lines. ***The reason is that we are failing to unlock our human capital potential.*** There will be an estimated one billion children in Africa by 2050. Unless education is strengthened, most will only, as is the case today, develop to reach between 30-45% of their full potential.⁴

The 2022 SDG report⁵ calls for urgent transformational action—at a scale never before undertaken—to reverse the losses, accelerate progress and avert the impending human development crisis. Key in this regard is strengthening public education systems to provide quality ESD.

¹ Human Capital Project : Year 3 Progress Report (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/152711635786365470/Human-Capital-Project-Year-3-Progress-Report>

² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379875>

³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>

⁴ World Bank's 2021 Human Capital Index

⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>

Strengthening the quality of inclusive education for sustainable development: a transformational imperative

While we must celebrate the children who passed the 2022 school exit examinations, we must recognise the challenges that many faced, the loss of many children to the system and the bleak prospects for this and future generations.

In September 2022, the global education community came together under the banner of the UN's Transforming Education Summit to examine why education systems have not, despite the many long-standing commitments, fulfilled their transformational mandate.

Participants reaffirmed that **quality ESD** is key to achieving lasting change to drive and sustain inclusive development. Measured against this standard, the summit concluded that there is a “global crisis in education—one of equity and inclusion, quality and relevance. Often slow and unseen, this crisis is having a devastating impact on the futures of children and youth worldwide.”⁶

The summit defined *quality ESD* as education that “develops every person’s values and the capacity to live together in peace; to respect and appreciate human diversity, gender equality, and human rights; and to exercise an active commitment to sustainable development.”

A report by the International Commission on the Futures of Education identified the following systemic gaps that were confirmed as impeding educational transformation:

- Persisting educational exclusions of historically marginalised children and youth
- Poor and inequitable foundational learning
- Poor quality education for sustainable development

The quality of education for sustainable development has failed to develop the agency of all children to become actively engaged citizens capable and motivated to achieve and drive not only economic, but social, civic and political transformation and inclusion.

- Lack of equitable access to technology
- Inadequate public funding of education for sustainable development.

As a result, with less than seven years to the 2030 deadline:⁷

Our humanity and planet Earth are under threat. The [COVID-19] pandemic has only served to prove our fragility and our interconnectedness. Now urgent action, taken together, is needed to change course and reimagine our futures.

We face a dual challenge of making good on the unfulfilled promise to ensure the right to quality education for every child, youth and adult and fully realizing the transformational potential of education as a route for sustainable collective futures.

Summit participants were unanimous in their agreement that we cannot approach the problem the way we have in the past. “Despite over half a century of national and international

⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/about>

⁷ International Commission on the Futures of Education. 2021. Reimagining our futures: A new social contract for education. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

development and education efforts, the promises of a quality education remain unfulfilled. We will not ensure education as a human right across the life span by continuing to do more of the same.”⁸ To get back on track, concrete transformational, publicly funded and sustainable action and accountability is required to strengthen ESD.

The International Commission on the Futures of Education noted that:

To do this, we need a new social contract for education that can repair injustices while transforming the future. This new social contract must be grounded in human rights and based on principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. It must encompass an ethic of care, reciprocity, and solidarity. It must strengthen education as a public endeavour and a common good.⁹

In its final declaration, the summit therefore committed to the following system- strengthening measures to transform education:

The Transforming Education Summit Declaration commitments

1. To ensure that no one is left behind by investing in improving school environments so that they are inclusive, safe and healthy spaces.
2. Strengthen the foundational numeracy, literacy and social and emotional skills.
3. Strengthen the quality education for developing social, economic, civic, political agency of all children, especially the most marginalised to address development challenges, including climate change and gender equality and girls and women’s empowerment.
4. Green the curriculum to develop agency for addressing climate change.
5. Ensure the sustained and meaningful participation of children and youth in education systems strengthening processes and development of policies and programmes to address development challenges, including climate change and gender inequality.
6. Universalise access to digital teaching and learning.
7. Reconceptualise and operationalise coherent educational eco-systems to drive coordinated, collective action necessary to realise these transformational commitments by role-players that extend beyond classrooms and school walls. The Secretary-General on Transforming Education’s Vision Statement: An urgent political imperative for our collective future stressed that transforming education for sustainable development requires “the collective commitment and action of visionary political leaders at all levels, parents, students, teachers, and the public at large.”
8. Ensure all transformational measures are adequately and sustainably funded by governments as a national, rights-based development priority.

⁸ UNESCO’s International Commission on Transforming Education for Just and Sustainable Futures (2022)

⁹ International Commission on the Futures of Education. 2021. Reimagining our futures: A new social contract for education. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

To ensure commitments are actioned, three additional indicators have been added to the SDG 4 monitoring score card. As with all other SDG indicators, these will have to be integrated into national monitoring and reporting frameworks, and Member States must report on actions taken and progress made in:

- Greening education
- Digital transformation
- Youth and student engagement in policy making¹⁰

In addition, five *Thematic Action Tracks* have been established to place the spotlight, ensure action, monitoring and support for the most important systems-strengthening measures that are “key levers to transform education”. They will be overseen by expert teams and provide shared learning platforms to support implementation.¹¹

1. Action Track 1: Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools

To address persistent drivers of educational exclusion (notably poverty, gender inequality, violence and disasters) inclusive, measures must be taken to ensure that all learners have unhindered access to and participation in education, that they are safe and healthy, free from violence and discrimination, and are supported with comprehensive care services within school settings.

2. Action track 2: Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development

The quality and relevance of education must be strengthened to build human capital. “Transforming education means empowering learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be resilient, adaptable and prepared for the uncertain future while contributing to human and planetary well-being and sustainable development. To do so, there must be emphasis on foundational learning for basic literacy and numeracy; education for sustainable development, which encompasses environmental and climate change education; and skills for employment and entrepreneurship.”

3. Action track 3: Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

Transforming education requires transformation of the teaching profession. “Accelerating progress toward SDG 4 and transforming education require that there is an adequate number of teachers to meet learners’ needs, and all education personnel are trained, motivated, and supported. This can only be possible when education is adequately funded, and policies recognize and support the teaching profession, to improve their status and working conditions.”

4. Action track 4: Digital learning and transformation

Transforming education requires digital transformation. It requires “harnessing technology as part of larger systemic efforts to transform education, making it more

¹⁰ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/how-fast-are-countries-transforming-their-education-what-you-need-know-about-new-2023-sdg-4>

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/action-tracks>

inclusive, equitable, effective, relevant and sustainable. Investments and action in digital learning should be guided by the three core principles outlined in the 2021 Rewired Global Declaration on Connectivity in Education:

- Center the most marginalized
- Free, high-quality digital education content
- Pedagogical innovation and change.”

5. Action track 5: Financing education

Transformational measures must be publicly financed. “Addressing the gaps in education financing requires policy actions in three key areas: (1) mobilizing more resources, especially domestic, (2) increasing efficiency and equity of allocations and expenditures, and (3) improving education financing data.”

All countries are encouraged to act with urgency to develop concrete, resourced action plans to ensure the provision of universal, inclusive quality education for sustainable development.

SADC’s CSTL and CYA Frameworks: vehicles for transforming education

SADC is “ahead of the game” and ready to tackle this challenge. All SADC education ministries endorsed the SADC Policy Framework on CSTL in 2016 and the supplementary CYA Framework in 2022.

These two instruments provide a planning framework specifically designed to strengthen education systems to provide inclusive education for sustainable development by taking the following three steps that speak directly to the challenges and priorities identified at the summit:

1. **Creating a network of inclusive, healthy and supportive CSTL schools** that facilitate access to a combination of social and economic services to ensure **all children**—especially the most marginalised who experience multiple, intersecting access barriers—enrol in, attend and complete a quality education, including:
 - Basic preventative and protective health services, including sexual and reproductive services, and developmental screening.
 - Food and nutritional support.
 - Psychosocial support to address grief, trauma and support mental health.
 - Material support to address poverty, including social security, school fee exemptions and subsidies, support with school uniforms, transport, etc.
 - Safety and protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation by peers, teachers, family and community members.
 - Infrastructure support, including healthy, dignified and gender-inclusive water and sanitation, accessible infrastructure for learners with disabilities, environmentally friendly infrastructure and technology.
 - Curriculum and co-curricular development and support to ensure various learning needs and challenges are addressed and children’s holistic development secured.

- Development and support of teachers to empower them to identify learners experiencing access and/or learning challenges, link them with the support they need, and to adopt appropriate inclusive learning practices to unlock the full potential of every child.
 - Parental and community involvement and support for the inclusion and learning of all children.
2. **Improving the quality of education for developing agency**, not just economic, but also social, civil, political of all children and youth to act now and in the future to end persisting development challenges, and to do so by providing a curriculum for sustainable development that provides a combination of:
- *Knowledge*: to provide all children with the information they need to understand the challenges, solutions, legal frameworks, rights and responsibilities, as well as opportunities to exercise their agency and bring about change.
 - *Competencies*: to develop and assess a core set of skills and capacities learners need to use the information provided to make responsible decisions and use available opportunities to bring about change.
- This includes, not only entrepreneurial skills, but also research, critical thinking, rights- and- evidence-based planning, advocacy, written and verbal communications for change and conflict resolution.
- *Opportunities*: to make available opportunities to apply their knowledge to develop and exercise their agency to influence decisions and behaviour of their peers, families, school, community and policy makers to bring an end to persisting development challenges.
- This includes making available youth-friendly health services and psychosocial support to enable responsible behaviour to prevent HIV transmission and early and unintended pregnancies; including learners in school governance processes; supporting learners to identify and develop advocacy campaigns; and enabling learners to participate in local, national and international policy and legal development processes.
3. **Establish the necessary enabling legal frameworks and institutional arrangements** at national and school levels to create a network of CSTL schools that serve as coordinating hubs for the provision of sustainable, adequately resourced ESD.
- At a national level, policies and laws must mandate all role players that make up the extended educational eco-system to work collaboratively in and through schools to provide services and quality ESD.
 - In addition, inclusive institutional arrangements must be established to facilitate the coordinated provision and monitoring of services and education for the development of the agency of every learner, especially the most marginalised.
 - The frameworks provide a roadmap of systemic enablers necessary for coordination of an adequately mandated, resourced and capacitated co-educators to (including teachers, health workers, environmental leaders, civil society, the media, parents, and of course learners) to provide education for agency. Enablers include:
 - Policy and legal enablers.
 - Programmes to deliver on policy commitments at scale.

- Infrastructure and human resources required to support implementation.
- Financial resourcing to ensure sustainable and equitable provisioning.
- Information management, monitoring and reporting.
- Leadership and coordination within and across sectors.