



UNESCO

联合国教科文组织

Background Guide

Topic:

Promoting equal education opportunity

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1 Welcome Words

Welcome to the first Chengdu-Chongqing Youth Model United Nations Conference. This conference will be held at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. On behalf of all the members of the Secretariat, I would like to welcome you all. Thank you for your long-term support. We can't wait to meet you next month, gathering on the bank of the Qingshui River.

Xin Huang,

Head of Academic Group

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 is aimed at "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all". Education, a fundamental right to every single person, plays a critical role in imparting knowledge and fostering personal character.

Nevertheless, currently, there are 59 million children of primary school age and 65 million teenagers of secondary school age are deprived of education, among which most are girls. More seriously, at least 250 million children are insufficient to read, write or count, far below the required standard. What's more, 40% of the poorest countries failed to support learners at risk during the pandemic, worsening the situation. Therefore, equity in education and quality education in promoting equality are greatly highlighted.

UNESCO, a principal institution in resolving education problems, shoulders the responsibility of ensuring universal access to quality education. In this conference, we sincerely look forward to innovative and comprehensive countermeasures with regards to the emergency response to the COVID-19 as well as the long-term measures to stably promote equity in education.

2 Committee Introduction

2.1 Overview

"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed."

—UNESCO Constitution

2.2 Introduction

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. Programs under UNESCO contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015^[2].

Mission and Mandate

The General Conference consists of the representatives of UNESCO's Member States. It meets every two years, and is attended by Member States and Associate Members, together with observers for non-Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Each country has one vote, irrespective of its size or the extent of its contribution to the budget.

In this spirit, UNESCO develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance. UNESCO works so that each child and citizen has access to quality education. By promoting cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures, UNESCO strengthens bonds among nations. UNESCO fosters scientific programs and policies as platforms for development and cooperation. UNESCO stands up for freedom of expression, as a fundamental right and a key condition for democracy and development. Serving as a laboratory of ideas, UNESCO helps countries adopt international standards and manages programs that foster the free flow of ideas and knowledge sharing.

UNESCO's founding vision was born in response to a world war that was marked by racist and anti-Semitic violence. Seventy years on and many liberation struggles later, UNESCO's mandate is as relevant as ever. Cultural diversity is under attack and new forms of intolerance,

rejection of scientific facts and threats to freedom of expression challenge peace and human rights. In response, UNESCO's duty remains to reaffirm the humanist missions of education, science and culture.

UNESCO undertakes a unique role in strengthening the foundations of lasting peace and equitable and sustainable development. Advancing cooperation in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information holds strategic stakes currently under the background of the increasing challenges from international community.

Previous actions taken in Education

UNESCO believes that education is a human right for all throughout life and that access must be matched by quality. The Organization is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all aspects of education. It has been entrusted to lead the Global Education 2030 Agenda through Sustainable Development Goal 4. The roadmap to achieve this is the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA).^[3]

UNESCO provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens education systems worldwide and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with gender equality an underlying principle. Its work encompasses educational development from pre-school to higher education and beyond. Themes include global citizenship and sustainable development, human rights and gender equality, health and HIV and AIDS, as well as technical and vocational skills development.^[3]

To accomplish the mission of maintaining peace, eradicating poverty and driving sustainable development, UNESCO has put forward some initiatives such as "Future of Education Initiative"^[4] and "Learning to Become Initiative" to catalyze a global consensus on promoting universal access to education in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and fragility.

Besides, UNESCO works through its extensive global education networks to drive implementation of Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). They serve as a global community of practice and are divided into five groups, one for each Priority Action Area of the GAP. The Networks intensify synergies between the members involved in GAP activities, the Key Partners and catalyze further actions from other ESD stakeholders.^[5]

In addition, UNESCO has 53 branch offices where staff devoted to education maintain close relationships with governments, development partners and civil society. Also, UNESCO has 8 institutes which work as part of UNESCO's Education Sector to assist countries in tackling their particular education challenges. With its close links with education ministries and other partners in 193 countries, UNESCO is in a key position to press for action and change.^[6]

Governance

The General Conference^[7]

The General Conference consists of the representatives of UNESCO's Member States. It meets every two years, and is attended by Member States and Associate Members, together with observers for non-Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Each country has one vote, irrespective of its size or the extent of its contribution to the budget.

The General Conference determines the policies and the main lines of work of the Organization. Its duty is to set the programs and the budget of UNESCO.

The Executive Board^[8]

The Executive Board ensures the overall management of UNESCO. It prepares the work of the General Conference and sees that its decisions are properly carried out. The functions and responsibilities of the Executive Board are derived primarily from the Constitution and from rules or directives laid down by the General Conference.

Every two years the General Conference assigns specific tasks to the Board. Other functions stem from agreements concluded between UNESCO and the United Nations, the specialized UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations.

The Executive Board's fifty-eight members are elected by the General Conference. The choice of these representatives is largely a matter of the diversity of the cultures they represent, as well as their geographic origin. Skillful negotiations may be needed before a balance is reached among the different regions of the world in a way that will reflect the universality of the Organization. The Executive Board meets twice a year.

The Secretariat^[8]

The Secretariat is the Executive Branch of the organization. It consists of the Director-General and the Staff appointed by him or her. The staff is divided into Professional and General Service categories. About 700 staff members work in UNESCO's 53 field offices around the world.

2.3 Conclusion

Since 2015, UNESCO has a new role leading the coordination and monitoring of the Global Education 2030 Agenda. The vision of the Education Sector, under the authority of the Assistant Director-General for Education, is captured in Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". The roadmap for the agenda is *the Framework for Action*.^[9] With its close links with education ministries and other partners in 193 countries, UNESCO is in a key position to press for action and change^[6].

UNESCO assists Member States in developing high-quality and inclusive education system through building their capacities to design and implement education policy^[10]. As the sole UN agency mandated to cover all aspects of education and with a worldwide network of specialized institutes and offices, UNESCO is entrusted to lead and coordinate the achieving of this goal with its partners through the Education 2030 Agenda^[11].

3 Topic Introduction

3.1 Introduction(COVID-19)

3.1.1 Key Definitions

Right to Education

The right to education refers that every people in the world is entitled to be educated. This fundamental right is recorded in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and other provisions on international human rights such as the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention Against Discrimination in Education^[12]. As an essential tool for marginalized children and adults to lift themselves out of poverty and fully participate in society, education urgently required popularization among children, teenagers and adults^[13]. Additionally, the right to education is one of the key principles underpinning the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) adopted by the international community. SDG 4 is rights-based and seeks to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to education as fundamental to achieving sustainable development^[12].

UNESCO lays down international legal obligations universally which recognize and develop the right of every person to enjoy access to education of good quality.^[12] This legal framework is considered of great importance by the Member States and the international community in implementing the right to education.^[12] UNESCO firmly supports States to fulfill their legal obligations domestically to provide comprehensive quality education for all and to implement and monitor education policies and strategies more effectively.

Additionally, several principles under UNESCO provide a solid basis for guaranteeing people's right to education, namely the non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and treatment, universal access to education, and solidarity.^[14]

Universal Access to Education/ Equal Opportunity in Education

Based on the principal right—the right to education, the next problem that emerges is to guarantee the implementation of the right, which is the equality of educational opportunity or the universal access to education.

Box 1.4 The aims of education, from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29 (1)

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; | (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; | (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; | (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; | (e) The development of respect for the natural environment. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

Figure 1: The aims of education, from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29(1)^[15]

This requirement is reiterated in the Education Agenda 2030. Countries must ensure universal and equal access to equitable quality education and learning, which should be free and compulsory^[14]. Education should aim at the full development of the human personality (link is external) and the promotion of understanding, tolerance, friendship and peace.^[14]

The fact is that numerous children and even adults are deprived of educational rights owing to social, economic and cultural factors. Therefore, access to education plays a crucial role in ensuring the popularity of education. It recognizes a right to free, compulsory primary education for all, an obligation to develop secondary education accessible to all, in particular by the progressive introduction of free secondary education, as well as an obligation to develop equitable access to higher education, ideally by the progressive introduction of free higher education.^[14]

Inclusion and Equity

Inclusion is "a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners".^[13] Equity is to "ensure that there is a concern with fairness, such that the education of all learners is seen".^[13] These are the main educational policies in UNESCO.

To better distinguish between inclusion and equity of education, it is concluded that inclusion is aimed to improve an educational system that is already fair. As the UNESCO confirms, an inclusive education system weaves equity into all elements and processes framed by a belief that diversity, be it based on ability, racial, cultural or linguistic communities, socioeconomic status or gender identity, is valued and that quality education for all students is a human right.^[13]

That is to say, inclusion is based on equity.

Meanwhile, distinctions between inclusion and equity principle and special education are worth consideration. Diverse actions are adopted in efforts for promoting education popularity within different regions. Take the educational measures for students with disabilities, for instance, special methods taken for them should be seen as an integral element in promoting the strategy of inclusion and equity rather than a separate policy chain.^[16] Thus, the balance of relative justice is essential for countries.

Primary Education

In Education Agenda 2030, target 4.1 requires a completely free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education for all girls and boys.^[17] To ensure full coverage of primary education, it is of great essentiality to ascertain the scope of primary education.

Primary Education is clearly defined in the International Standard Classification of Education released by UNESCO. According to ISCED, programs in primary education are at ISCED level 1, are "typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education, which focuses on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialization".^[18]

Primary education normally continues until age 10 to 12. It can be diversely referred to such as elementary education or basic education stage 1. It is recognized worldwide to label ISCED Level 1 as primary education.

Universal primary education has been advocated by UNESCO since the 1960s and has become a central project in UNESCO. And the goal of universal primary education has been scheduled on the international agenda since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which requires a free and compulsory elementary education for all children. This goal enjoys many similarities with the Education 2030 Agenda.

Back to Education 2030 Agenda, a 12-year education on the primary and secondary proposal is made and at least 9 years within are compulsory. Though a division on year is precise and concrete, it is still ambiguous to distinguish between primary and secondary education in implementing these projects in practice. A clear and corresponding scope of primary education

Table 4. Classification codes for educational attainment related to ISCED levels 0 to 1 (ISCED-A)

ISCED-A level		Category		Sub-category	
0	Less than primary education	01	Never attended an education programme	010	Never attended an education programme
		02	Some early childhood education	020	Some early childhood education
		03	Some primary education (without level completion)	030	Some primary education (without level completion)
1	Primary education	10	Primary education	100	Including recognised successful completion of a lower secondary programme insufficient for level completion or partial level completion

Figure 2: Classification codes for educational attainment related to ISCED levels 0 to 1 (ISCED-A)^[18]

is highly worth considering.

Quality Education

Equity of Education is the priority. Meanwhile, education quality should not be ignored in promoting equal education.

This essential aspect is mentioned in critical instruments constantly. Goal 2 of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) commits nations to the provision of primary education 'of good quality, and goal 6 includes commitments to improve all aspects of education quality 'so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.' More recently, in Education 2030 Agenda, goals 4.1 and 4.2 especially highlight quality education in implementing universal access to education. Thus, in the course of promoting equal educational opportunities, quality education is a key element.

A new consensus and impetus are building up around the imperative to improve the quality of education. How well students are taught and how much they learn are likely to have a crucial impact on the length and value of their schooling experience.^[15]

To further reconcile the quality of education, several factors merit consideration, concerning the diversity of learners, the national economic and social context, material and human resources, the teaching and learning process and the outcomes and benefits of education.^[15]

3.1.2 Key Contents of Primary Education

Access to primary education is a basic right of every child. An effective primary education can build a solid foundation and open avenues for future success. With its profound implications on both the individual and society, primary education plays a crucial role in reducing extreme poverty and promoting social changes. The Sustainable Development Agenda acknowledges the importance of primary education in Goal 4 which stipulates that by 2030, the world should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, including a target on universal access to primary education.^[19]

Significant progress has been made toward achieving universal primary education. Globally, the adjusted net attendance rate reached 87 per cent in 2019, and about four out of five children attending primary education completed it. Additionally, over the past two decades, the number of out-of-school children was reduced by over 40 per cent. However, there is still a long way to go: 58 million children of primary school age remain out of school, with the majority of them coming from marginalized groups. In addition, recent MICS results show that many children do not have foundational reading and numeracy skills, highlighting the massive challenge to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all.^[19]

The problems mentioned above are related to two key components of primary education: its curricula and its educating objects.

Though there are varying standards, primary education is typically designed for children 6 to 11 years of age. However, the specific primary curriculum content is not clearly defined by UNESCO, and the curriculum content of primary education varies in countries and regions. Curricula should adapt to learners' diverse needs and aspire to an inclusive society. Otherwise, "How can students learn if the system reminds them of their exclusion?"^[20] This also means that marginalized groups require particular attention and targeted strategies as well.

Curricula

An integral part of the right to education is ensuring that education is of sufficient quality to lead to relevant, equitable and effective learning outcomes at all levels and in all settings. Quality education necessitates, at a minimum, that learners develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills as building blocks for further learning, as well as higher-order skills.^[17] This requires relevant teaching and learning content that meets the needs of all learners conducted

by well-arranged curriculum.

The primary curriculum is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life—spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical. According to the existing content and the classification of most countries, we propose to make the following categories: general knowledge education, physical education and arts education.

The curriculum is divided into the following key areas:

- Language – Irish and English
- Mathematics
- Social, Environment and Scientific Education
- Arts Education, including Visual Arts, Music and Drama
- Physical Education
- Social, Personal and Health Education.

Figure 3: The Classification of the Primary Curriculum^[19]

Use of different or non-standard curricula for some groups hinders inclusion.^[20] The imbalance between curricula will have different effects on children's physical and mental development. Take physical education as an example. In United States, State and federal government may think slashing PE programs will save money. Perhaps this is true of short-term, narrow thinking. In the long term, however, decreased physical education in school means fewer healthy lifestyle choices in childhood and adulthood, meaning more sedentary lifestyles, meaning increased prevalence of heart disease and other weight-related health issues, meaning higher health care costs for America.

Educated Objects

Girls and boys suffering unequal treatment

Gender inequality is of particular concern. Despite improvement since 2000, significant gender disparities remain. In the case of lower secondary completion, while the most extreme injustices are still at the expense of females, the disparities can also move in the opposite direction.

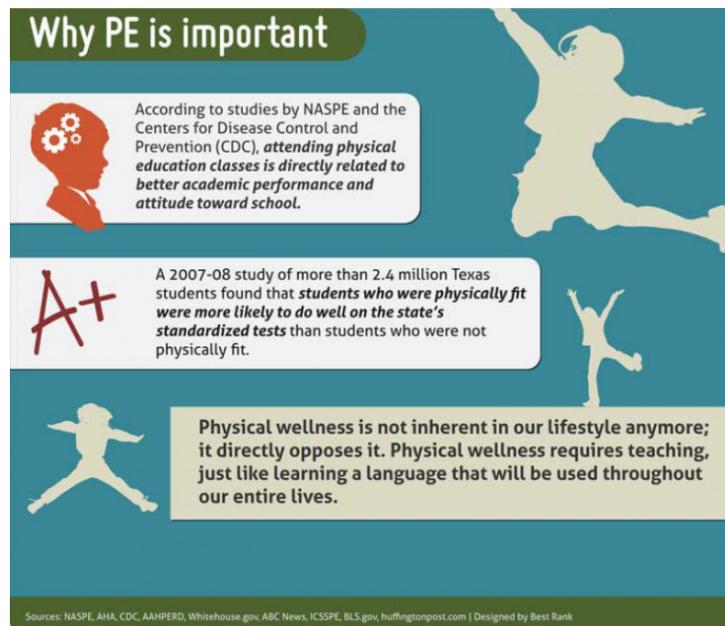


Figure 4: The Effect of Budget Cuts on Physical Education Presented by SPARK

In Afghanistan, only 33 females complete lower secondary school for every 100 males. By contrast, in Honduras, only 68 males complete lower secondary school for every 100 females.^[1]

Equality is a more ambitious goal: it means that all girls and boys, all women and men, have equal opportunity to enjoy education of high quality, achieve at equal levels and enjoy equal benefits from education. Adolescent girls and young women, who may be subject to gender-based violence, child marriage, early pregnancy and a heavy load of household chores, as well as those living in poor and remote rural areas, require special attention. Under the circumstance of COVID-19, particular concern has been expressed about girls' access to technologies. Reports indicate that "harmful gender norms and perceptions of risk to girls' safety or reputation make some parents reluctant to allow girls access to devices. In the poorest countries, women are 33 per cent less likely to use the internet than men."^[21]

There are also contexts in which boys are disadvantaged; for example, in some regions boys' enrolment in secondary and higher education is lagging behind that of girls.

Gender inequality in education often mirrors prevailing gender norms and discrimination in the broader society, so policies aimed at overcoming such inequality are more effective when they are part of an overall package that also promotes health, justice, good governance and freedom from child labour.

Marginalized Groups

Marginalized groups here include but are not limited to persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, the poor and LGBTI people. The enrolment rates of marginalized groups are lower. For example, in the United States, LGBTI students are 3 times more likely to stay home because they feel unsafe; refugees are 3 times more likely to be out of secondary school; children with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to never go to school.^[20]

The pandemic and the measures taken to combat it have had a disproportionately negative impact on the marginalized groups. For example, the situation of children with disabilities also demands greater attention. Many learners who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot access education and not all web platforms used for distance learning are accessible to learners who are blind.^[22]

Special emphasis should be placed on the equal importance of the right of marginalized or vulnerable children or learners to continued education.

3.1.3 Critical Documents

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly resolution 217 A) & Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20)

These two documents provide a background with regards to children's right to education. By referring to the articles on education, a better comprehension of the equal right and the significance of universal access to education is to be established.

Education Agenda 2030

The Education 2030 Agenda comprises SDG Four on education and the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The Incheon Declaration represents the firm commitment of states and the global education community to a single, renewed education agenda, based on SDG4.

Current situations, adopted measures and goals are concluded in the agenda. Besides, further implementations are anticipated and planned. By referring to this agenda, a more comprehensive perspective towards the topic is to be fostered and some inspiration on solutions may be gained.

3.2 Current Situation

3.2.1 Current Overall Situation^[1]

General Overview

Major progress has been made since 2000 in enrolling children in primary school. However, progress has stalled in recent years, and children from marginalized groups continue to face significant barriers to accessing, attending and completing primary school.

Target Completion

Figures 5 show the current completion on SDG 4 in education:

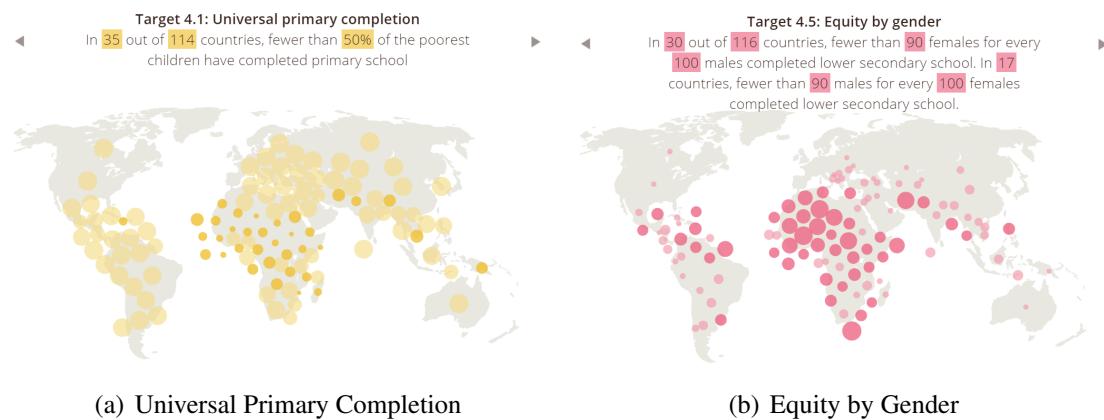


Figure 5: World Target Completion on SDG4 in Education

Primary School Education Completion

It is shown in Figure 6 below:

Current Situation in Specific Region

It can be reflected that despite the huge efforts made by UNESCO previously, gaps in completing primary education still exist. Following we choose Central and Southern Asia for instance and presents their completion percentage.

Specifically in Afghanistan, figure 7 and 8 show that:

1. Females are receiving less education than males;
 2. primary education in urban is more popularized than in rural;

TABLE 10.1:
Selected indicators on school participation 2018

	Primary		Lower secondary		Upper secondary	
	Out-of-school children (000)	(%)	Out-of-school adolescents (000)	(%)	Out-of-school youth (000)	(%)
World	59 141	8	61 478	16	137 796	35
Sub-Saharan Africa	32 214	19	28 251	37	37 026	58
Northern Africa and Western Asia	5 032	9	3 998	14	8 084	30
Central and Southern Asia	12 588	7	16 829	15	64 745	45
Eastern and South-eastern Asia	5 697	3	9 016	10	17 870	21
Latin America and the Caribbean	2 267	4	2 544	7	7 159	23
Oceania	210	5	109	5	408	25
Europe and Northern America	1 133	2	731	2	2 503	7
Low income	20 797	19	21 243	39	26 176	61
Lower middle income	30 444	9	30 706	17	87 730	44
Upper middle income	6 570	3	8 444	7	20 615	20
High income	1 330	2	1 085	3	3 275	8

Source: UIS database.

(a) Selected Indicators on School Participation 2018

TABLE 10.2:
Completion rate, by level, 2018

	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
World	85	73	49
Sub-Saharan Africa	65	40	28
Northern Africa and Western Asia	85	76	53
Central and Southern Asia	85	74	37
Eastern and South-eastern Asia	95	82	59
Latin America and the Caribbean	90	80	60
Oceania	...	83	48
Europe and Northern America	99	97	88
Low income	56	28	13
Lower middle income	84	71	42
Upper middle income	94	84	59
High income	99	97	88

Sources: UIS database and World Inequality Database on Education.

(b) Completion Rate by Level, 2018

Figure 6: Primary School Education Completion

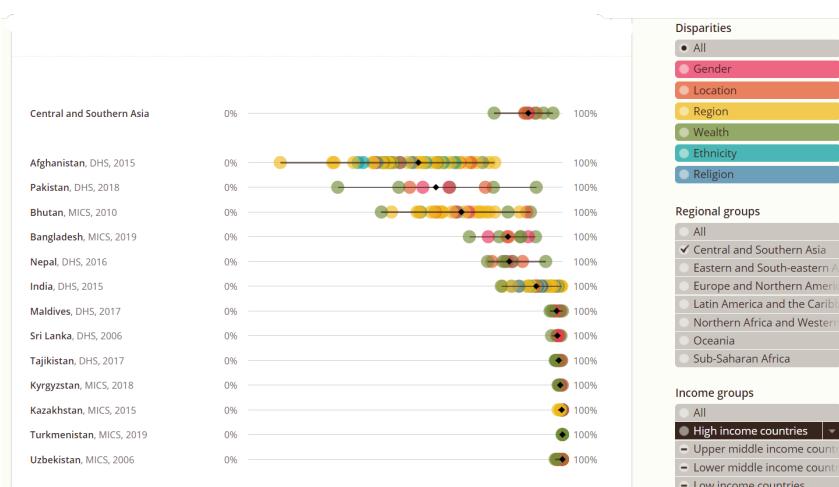


Figure 7: Current Situation in Specific Region

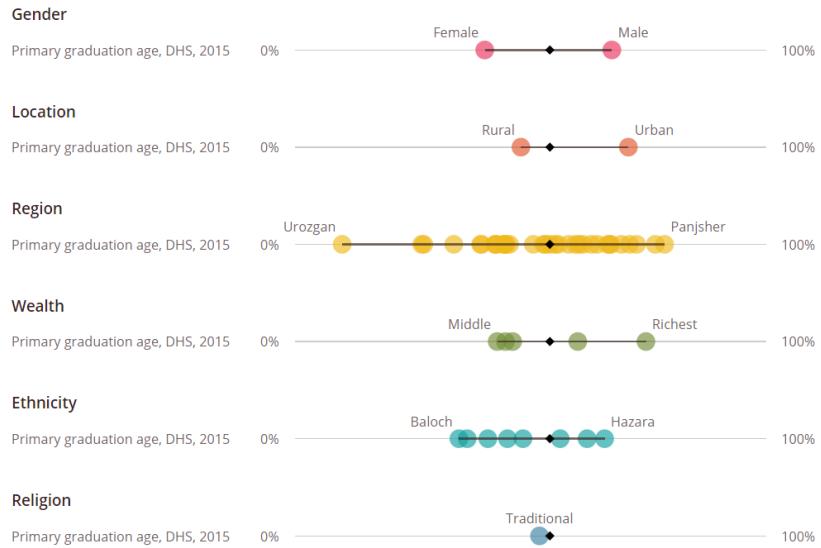


Figure 8: Current Situation in Different Parts in Afghanistan

3. education completion differs greatly in diverse regions in Afghanistan;
4. wealth, ethnicity and religion are other relative factors in affecting the completion of primary education.

Special Changes under COVID-19

"To rise to the challenges of our time, a move towards more inclusive education is imperative. Rethinking the future of education is all the more important following the Covid-19 pandemic, which further widened and put a spotlight on inequalities. Failure to act will hinder the progress of societies."

—Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay

Aid to education, which grew strongly in the first decade of the 21st century, has stagnated since 2010, partly because of the severe financial crisis in 2007 and 2008. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to be more severe than those of the previous crisis.

Confronted with COVID-19, 194 countries closed schools for the concerns of infection. Although some successful innovative initiatives have been launched for students, the crisis has widened the learning opportunities gap. Besides, the progress towards SDG 4 is possibly set

back, including the commitment to quality primary and secondary education by 2030. Arguably, aid to education is more important than ever to ensure that financial difficulties in the poorest countries do not hinder educational progress.

It is evidenced that 40% of poorest countries failed to support learners at risk during COVID-19 crisis and urges inclusion in education.^[23] Owing to the limited sources domestically, these countries have to make a choice among children's education, economic growth, citizen's health and other factors. Thus, this crisis is necessary for countries to reconsider the emergency response system in implementing the universal education access.

3.2.2 Achievements and Challenges

The United Nations "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" pledges that no one will be left behind. To this end, SDG 4 focuses on ensuring "inclusive and fair quality education" and promoting "all people have lifelong learning opportunities." This "Agenda" promises to create a "just, fair, tolerant, open, socially inclusive world where the needs of the most vulnerable groups are met.". Although UNESCO has made many outstanding contributions to achieve this goal, there are still many countries or regions with educational inequality^[24].

Poverty and inequality are the main constraints. As is shown in figure 9, progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty, particularly in Asia, but 10% of adults and 20% of children (50% in sub-Saharan Africa) are still affected by extreme poverty. The income gap in parts of the world is gradually widening, or even if the gap is narrowed, the level of inequality between different countries and within a country is still unacceptable. Important human development achievements are also unevenly distributed. In 30 low- and middle-income countries, the malnutrition rate of children under 5 in the poorest 20% of households is 41%, which is more than twice that of the richest 20% of households. This severely impairs these children's educational opportunities.

Tolerance for students with disabilities is not only a matter of placement. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes the need to allow disabled persons to enter schools. This not only breaks the traditional practice of excluding disabled children from the field of education or placing them in isolation in special schools, but also breaks the In most cases, the practice of dividing students with disabilities into classes. But to be tolerant, many changes need to be made in school support and culture. The Convention on the Rights of Per-

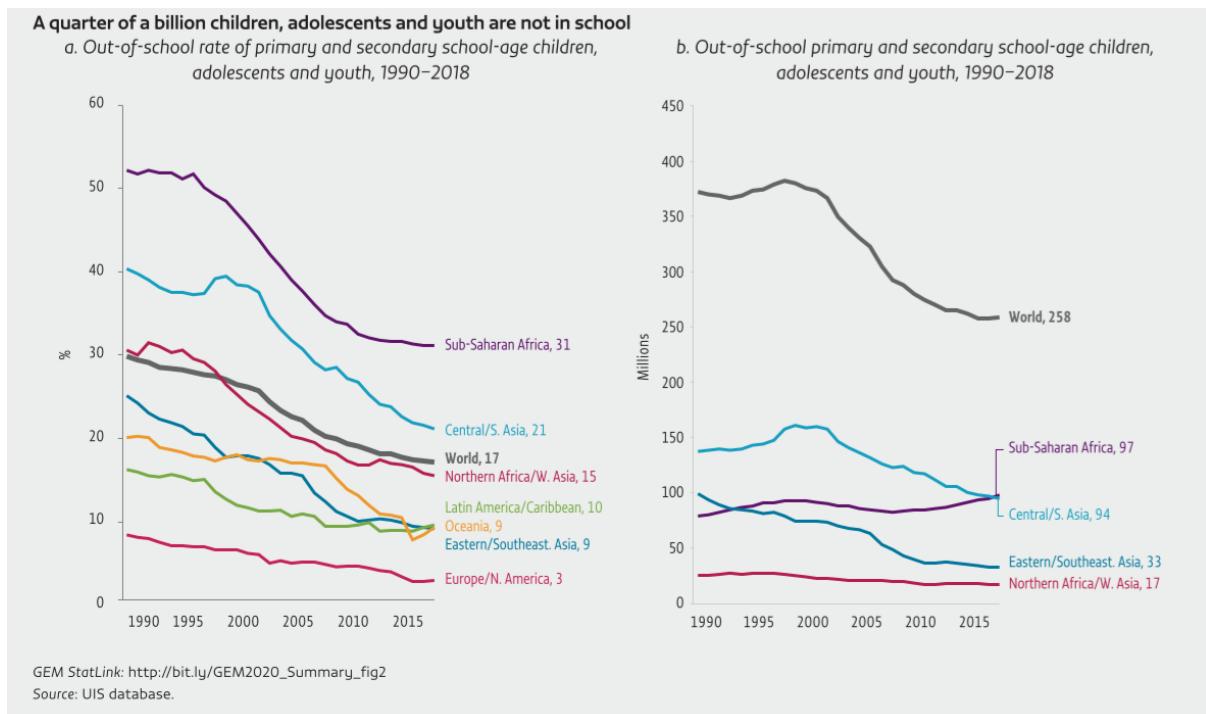


Figure 9: A quarter of a billion children, adolescents and youth are not in school

sons with Disabilities does not point out that special schools violate the convention, but recent reports by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are increasingly inclined to this view. The "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" proposes inclusive education and delegates the power to governments of all countries to deal with it on their own. In this way, the convention implicitly recognizes various obstacles to achieving full inclusiveness. The exclusionary practices adopted by many governments violated their commitments to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which should be exposed, but at the same time it should be recognized that mainstream schools and education systems have limited flexibility. Twenty-five percent of countries have laws stipulating that education for students with disabilities should be provided in a separate environment, and this proportion exceeds 40% in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. About 10% of countries provide for integrated education, 17% of countries provide for inclusive education, and the rest combine segregated education with mainstream education. Policies are becoming more and more inclusive: 5% of countries have policies that provide education for students with disabilities in a separate environment, 12% have chosen inclusive education, and 38% have chosen inclusive education. Laws and policies show good intentions, but the government often cannot ensure

that these laws and policies are implemented.

To prevent premature dropping out of school, a multifaceted policy is needed. The education system faces a dilemma. Repeated grades seem to increase the dropout rate, and automatic advancement requires a systematic approach to provide remedial support. Many countries have announced this approach, but have not implemented it. Laws and policies may not consistently support inclusive education. For example, in some countries, the minimum age for children to work or get married is low. Bangladesh is one of the few countries that has spent huge sums of money to implement the Second Chance Program, which is an essential part of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The COVID-19 crisis affects 1.6 billion learners, and the measures taken in response to the crisis have not paid enough attention to the inclusion of all learners. 55% of low-income countries choose to use distance online learning in primary and secondary education, but only 12% of households in least developed countries have Internet access. Even low-tech methods cannot ensure the continuity of learning. Among the poorest 20% of families in Ethiopia, only 7% have a radio, and no one has a TV. Overall, about 40% of low-income and lower-middle-income countries do not provide support for learners who may be excluded. Three weeks after the quarantine measures were implemented, up to 8% of French students lost contact with their teachers.

Full inclusion may also have disadvantages. In some cases, tolerance may unintentionally increase the pressure to conform. This may detract, endanger or obliterate ethnic identity, customs, language and beliefs, thereby weakening the sense of belonging. The right of ethnic groups to maintain their own culture and to achieve self-determination and self-representation is increasingly recognized. Resistance to tolerance may be due to prejudice, but it may also be due to the recognition that a certain minority can only maintain its identity and achieve empowerment if it becomes a majority within a certain range. In some cases, inclusive policies not only fail to achieve active social participation, but may intensify social exclusion. The encounter between the minority group and the majority group may deepen the mainstream prejudice and further deepen the disadvantaged situation of the minority group. Targeted assistance can also lead to stigmatization, labeling, or offensive forms of inclusion.

4 Case Study: Primary Education in Rwanda

When it comes to the state's ability to deliver services to the poor, politics matter. This section introduces a political settlements to examine primary education quality in Rwanda. Formal education features prominently into the post-genocide government's social and economic development project. We sought to investigate what the education sector has done in terms of improving quality of primary education in Rwanda.

4.1 Background

4.1.1 History of Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda is a landlocked country in the Great Rift Valley, where the African Great Lakes region and East Africa converge whose capital city is Kigali. The population is young and predominantly rural. Rwandans are drawn from just one cultural and linguistic group, the Banyarwanda.

Before 1884, the Kingdom of Rwanda dominated here with the Tutsi kings conquering others militarily, centralising power and later enacting anti-Hutu policies. Germany colonised Rwanda in 1884 as part of German East Africa, followed by Belgium, which invaded in 1916 during World War. Both European nations ruled through the kings and perpetuated a pro-Tutsi policy. The Hutu population revolted in 1959. They massacred numerous Tutsi and ultimately established an independent, Hutu-dominated republic in 1962. A 1973 military coup saw a change of leadership, but the pro-Hutu policy remained. The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front launched a civil war in 1990. The presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, both Hutus, were killed when their aircraft was shot down on 6 April 1994. Social tensions erupted in the 1994 genocide that followed, in which Hutu extremists killed an estimated 500,000–1,000,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu. The RPF ended the genocide with a military victory^[25].

4.1.2 Primary School in Historical Context

Rwanda is removed from a civil war and genocide that decimated the country two over decades ago. The post-genocide government has since charted an audacious social and economic development project, one which seeks to distance itself from the past by transforming from a

subsistence-based agricultural economy to a knowledge-based, market-oriented society^[26]. Formal education features prominently into its broader aims.

As the Rwandan administrative state grew in power during the colonial occupation (1898-1962), schooling went from being a Church-led activity to one in which the state played a more active role in the establishment of a national education system. Formal education was to become among the attributes necessary to secure business opportunities and employment during the latter half of the colonial era^[27]. Toward the end of the colonial era, a system of national examinations was established and the standardization of textbooks was introduced^[28]. But unequal opportunities under the colonial authorities contributed to a collective sense of institutionalized oppression on the part of the rural majority^[29]. Inequitable access to education was at the core of Hutu discontent and among the factors that fueled the revolutionary movement that preceded independence^[30].

Following independence in 1962, the new Hutu-led government enacted policies that reinforced their own grip on power. Census figures suggested Tutsis comprised about nine percent of the population, but they still occupied a higher proportion of key administrative positions^[30]. Discontent on the part of Hutus led to a coup in 1973. President Gregoire Kayibanda was replaced by Juvenal Habyarimana. Habyarimana's presidency was credited with initially bringing some stability and improvement to the country but at the price of restricting political freedom and deepening social control^[30].

During this time, the state took a prominent role in organizing schooling. Rwanda's first constitution mandated primary education to be both free and compulsory. Initially, the emphasis was on expanding educational opportunities as a necessary corrective to the social and economic inequalities of the past^[28]. The expansion of the primary education system resulted in an enrollment surge. To accommodate this expansion, double shifting was introduced whereby half of primary students would attend in the morning and the other half in the afternoon^[31]. During this time, primary schooling consisted of six years. The first three years of the primary cycle focused on literacy and was taught in Kinyarwanda. The latter three years of primary school emphasized general training and was taught in French^[28].

Under Habyarimana, education reforms focused more on national development. [31] explained that education during this time had become the "cornerstone of general development of Rwanda." The allocation of secondary school spots during this time consisted of a complicated

and opaque matrix involving ethnicity, regional identification, and academic performance^[32]. Scholars have generally concurred that ethnicity and regional identification served as trump cards for admission to secondary school that could override examination performance^[28, 33]

4.2 Measures and Shortcomings in Primary Education

4.2.1 Governance and Schooling under the RPF(1994-2015)

On the basis of a power sharing arrangement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front established the Government of National Unity in 1994. This interim government placed a strong emphasis on promoting stability while charting a strategy for development and peace. The new government consisted of representation from both groups, including Hutu president Pasteur Bizimungu and Tutsi then-vice president Paul Kagame. In the year 2000, Bizimungu resigned and Kagame assumed power. When the government passed a new constitution in 2003, Kagame won 95% of the popular vote to secure the first of what would become two consecutive seven-year terms, despite evidence of irregularities in both elections^[34].

Since taking power, the RPF-led government has introduced a series of reforms aimed at social and economic transformation. The government's approach is encapsulated in a strategic planning document called Vision 2020. The stated goal of Vision 2020 was to create a set of conditions for Rwanda to become a middle-income country by the year 2020. The aims were premised on distancing the country from a legacy marked by ethnic division, conflicts over scarce natural resources, social inequalities, and limited opportunities for social mobility. The importance of children's education is core to the aim of Vision 2020 to develop a skilled labor force, improve literacy, promote gender equality, and foster social cohesion among all Rwandans^[35].

Vision 2020 remains the central organizing document for the government. It lays out the general strategy that is used to guide all aspects of Rwanda's development efforts ranging from health to agriculture to education. As one former government official interviewed for this study put it, "Here in Rwanda, we really only have one policy," in reference to the centrality of Vision 2020 in informing government strategy.

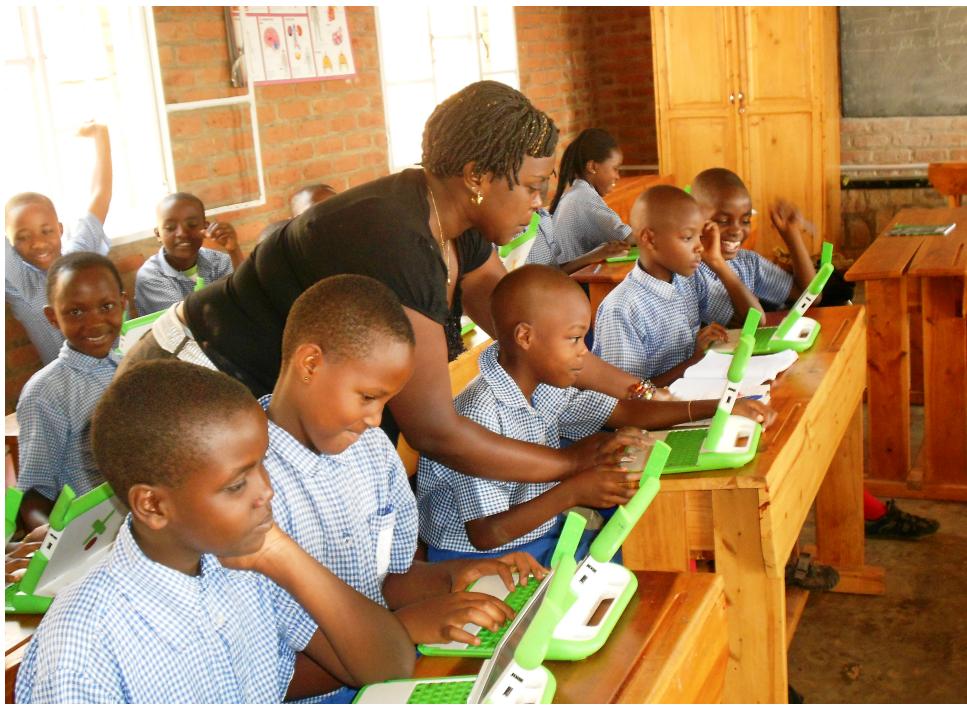


Figure 10: OLPC Classroom Teaching in Rwanda

4.2.2 Outcomes, Access and Quality

By 2012, the government's decentralized, fee-free, and community-based policies and approaches to delivering education removed many of the barriers that were once prohibitive. Rwanda was on pace to be one of the few developing countries to achieve near-universal access to primary education. In 2012, the Ministry of Education beat out 122 other entries worldwide to win the Commonwealth Award for its efforts to expand access to schooling as quickly and efficiently as it did. Thanks in part to a fee-free education policy, primary and secondary school enrollment in Rwanda have surged. Children from poor families now have access to more years with the public education system. At the same time, learning outcomes are low. In recent years, primary school dropout and repetition have risen while completion and transition rates have stagnated or declined^[36].

Around this time, an alternative and more critical interpretation about the quality of the education system also emerged. To be sure, the government's effort to ensure all children have access to primary education cannot be underestimated. Yet, it appears that the near-universal primary attendance rates previously reported may have been overestimated. The 2012 Census carried out by the country's National Institute of Statistics (NISR) is considered to offer the

most reliable data about primary school enrollment, because it aims to collect data from every household in the country. Census figures indicate that net primary enrollment stands at just over 88%. This figure is about 10 percentage points lower than a more recent figure, which indicates near universal (97%) enrollment based upon school-level reports.

One high-ranking member of MINEDUC mentioned that one of the most challenging dimensions of working in the education sector has been what he called the "doing well narrative." The dominant developmental political settlement would suggest that the viability of Rwanda's political elite depends on performance-based legitimacy^[37].

4.2.3 The Politics of Education Policy under the RPF

The government officials we interviewed ranged from current and former ministers to senators and district mayors to local education officials and teachers. As one may predict, all explained that their personal commitments are guided by national development plans rather than the prospect of individual gain. Officials suggested that they operated with a sense of collective urgency: that if the government moves "fast enough," it can bring about the changes needed to distance itself from the past while charting a sustainable and peaceful future for all Rwandans^[38]. But as we saw above, tangible, visible, and logistical outputs were prioritized over things that were more difficult to deliver, such as raising learning outcomes. Below we draw attention to three key reforms to children's education policy and to consider their effect on quality, including the introduction of post-primary basic education, the change in language of instruction, and the training of primary school teachers.

This extension stood to impact the quality of primary education in two key ways. First, expanding access to the education system arguably meant reducing the concentrated focus of improving primary education. A former member of MINEDUC recalled ongoing debates with development partners during that time. He said that development partners were concerned about the cost of extending access an additional three years when universal access to primary education had not yet been achieved and when quality was still low. But current members of government interviewed for this study characterized the decision to expand differently: that the move was indicative that the government aimed to deliver development, arguing that improvements in primary school access and quality must be pursued concurrently. Basic education was an entitlement, but there was also an element of social cohesion to its introduction. Post-

primary government schooling, once exclusive and prohibitively expensive, was now accessible to more young people, and that, in itself, respondents said, was an important aspect of social development—and one that was politically popular.

Expanded access, more students, and a change in the language of instruction necessitated the hiring of more teachers and the provision of training. During the period in which the fieldwork took place, teacher training could be best characterized as being in a period of transition. In 2007, the Ministry of Education introduced the Teacher Development and Management Policy^[35]. The policy outlined the core priorities for how teacher training was to be done. The Teacher Service Commission (TSC), an entity within MINEDUC at the time, was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the teacher training policy.

The key challenge to this teacher training policy was its timing. Published in 2007, the policy predated all the language change and basic education policy reforms described above. In other words, the policy did not reflect the educational context almost as soon as it was introduced. The policy was unable to account for the expansion of basic education, the renewed emphasis on double shifting, or the switch to English. During this time, as part of the decentralization strategy, the structure of the Ministry of Education also changed. The TSC was disbanded, and its mandate folded into the Teacher Development and Management (TDM) department within the newly formed REB. In 2015, the policy was still officially on the books, but most officials we interviewed suggested the policy was not used to guide current education strategy or priorities because it was outdated. By early 2017, a new teacher development and management policy was being finalized by MINEDUC but had yet to be approved.

Rwanda's national and sector-level decentralization policy meant that decision-making and administration shifted from the central government to the local level. Under this approach, PTCs at each school identify and respond to the needs facing their school and allocate resources accordingly^[34]. But the in-service training of teachers is an exception. Schools are given a capitation grant. Up until 2012, about 10 to 15% of this amount was earmarked for schools to send their teachers for training. However, starting in 2012, this allocation was withheld by REB. Put another way, the amount of money schools are given is about 10% lower than it used to be. According to government education officials interviewed for this study, REB recentralized these funds to help finance the school based mentorship training program. Schools technically have the discretion to use their other funds to finance the training of teachers. However, in

interviews with head teachers and PTC members, the provision of urgently needed material supplies such as paper, chalk, or desks, took priority over teacher training. In interviews, local government officials, education officers, and school officials said their teachers receive training. But when probed, it appears this training occurs almost exclusively through the school based mentor program, which, as we noted earlier, focused almost exclusively on English.

4.3 Discussion

Rwanda's political elite have staked their claim in a longer term investment in the development of the country, one which is relatively free from the problems of rent-seeking common to other types of political settlements. Rwanda's developmental and dominant leader framework plays a central role in establishing its focus on governance and accountability. Yet our investigation into education quality has also identified some potential downsides to top-down, executive-led policymaking. Education priorities were often as much political as they were technical or developmental, with decisions less grounded in the realities of the local context or even strategic planning processes, resulting in a policy-implementation gap. That education quality was so low may come as a surprise. After all, a dominant developmentalist framework suggests a harmonization of priorities to achieve inclusive development and desire to maintain power.

Rwanda's development must also be located in historical context. By all accounts, primary education was in shambles after the genocide. The post-genocide government's rebuilding efforts aimed to first get children back into school and to quickly expand infrastructure, while making incremental improvements to quality. In other words, the low quality of education in Rwanda can be explained by its extremely low starting point as it emerged from conflict. Yet, this way of explaining the trajectory of the primary education system is incomplete, for it assumes that the development of an education system follows an apolitical template for how a postconflict state should go about developing primary education. Politics and priorities were at the heart of the Rwanda's development project. The political settlement must therefore be central when we attempt to account for how to understand incentives for expanding access of making improvements in quality.

5 Prospects

5.1 Principles

"Every Learner Matters and Matters Equally".

5.2 Suggested Measures & Further Prospects

Several aspects of suggestions for current challenges are provided and are anticipated to be more specific and feasible.

UNESCO's Central Status

Under the threat of COVID-19, UNESCO is expected to play its central role in coordinating and monitoring. Elements include but are not limited to the implementation criteria, the institution function, the suggested national policy and the scope of primary education needs ascertaining under the framework of UNESCO.

Fund

One significant problem concerns the sustainability of the fund. Expanding the funding source, increasing the utility, tracking the use of the fund are possible thoughts in advancing the sustainability of the fund.

Digital Assistance

In response to COVID-19, a comprehensive distance learning system is adopted by UNESCO. A flexible application of this technical assistance into the project on universal access to education is recommendable.

Monitoring System

Realizing the right to education depends on effective implementation. To achieve this, State obligations and political commitments under international instruments must be reflected in constitutions and national legislation and translated into policies and programs.^[39]

A monitoring system concerning the implementation of the standard with the support of Member States as prime movers, international organizations, decision-makers, teachers, the

intellectual community and all civil society stakeholders is worth consideration.

Emergency Reflection

Threats under COVID-19 bring us to reflect on the current emergency system in the current UNESCO framework, especially in implementing universal primary education. A coherent and comprehensive emergency response system is highly suggested. Diverse measures adopted lie in the classification of the emergency. It is of great urgency to reflect on the COVID-19 and perfect the emergency system.

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