



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 AND REFUGEE EDUCATION

*“ We have a collective responsibility to ensure education plans take into account the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and youth in the world – refugees, internally displaced children, stateless children and children whose right to education has been compromised by war and insecurity. These children are the keys to a secure and sustainable future, and their education matters for us all.”*

*António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).*

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted a new development agenda, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, launching 17 globally endorsed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be met by 2030.

UNHCR has been actively engaged in the SDG 4 planning and roll out at the global level. Along with five other UN agencies and the World Bank, UNHCR was a co-convenor of the World Education Forum (WEF) in Incheon, Korea, May 2015 and participated in the drafting of the Education 2030: Framework for Action. As a co-convenor of the WEF, UNHCR is committed to working closely with government counterparts and partners to progress towards the SDG 4 goal and targets by 2030. As a result of UNHCR's influence at the global level, SDG 4 policy documents reflect a crisis-sensitive approach to education and make specific reference to refugees.

**The launch of SDG 4 for education for all by 2030 represents a critical window of opportunity to ensure that refugees and stateless children and youth are visible and accounted for in the next 15 years of education sector planning, development and monitoring at national and sub-national levels.** This brief provides a short introduction to SDG 4 and how it relates to education for refugees, as well as practical guidance on how to advocate for refugees in national education sector planning and management to achieve the education SDG 4.



This briefing note has been produced by the Education Unit, Division of International Protection, for field operations and partners as a quick reference note on key thematic education issues.

# WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) 4?

SDG 4 will **“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”** by 2030. SDG 4 builds on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 and the global Education for All (EFA) 2000-2015 commitments. While MDG2 and EFA placed a strong focus on achievement of universal primary education, SDG 4’s language and targets are more comprehensive. **Besides a strong focus on equity and inclusion of vulnerable groups, SDG 4 targets are geared towards completion of the full education cycle from early childhood to higher education, with emphasis on literacy and learning.**

## TARGETS

- 4.1** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes
- 4.2** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- 4.3** By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4** By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 4.5** By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- 4.6** By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- 4.7** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development

## MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.a** Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- 4.b** By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
- 4.c** By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states



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## HOW DOES SDG 4 RELATE TO REFUGEES AND UNHCR'S MANDATE?

Despite notable progress towards universal primary education, 121 million children remain out of school world-wide. 21 million children, around 36% of the world's primary age out of school population, live in conflict-affected contexts,<sup>1</sup> and two thirds of the countries with the highest numbers of children who have never been to school are fragile or conflict-affected.<sup>2</sup> Without special measures to reach the most marginalized children and youth in crisis contexts, including refugees, SDG 4 will be unattainable.

Providing accredited, quality education services for refugee, stateless and displaced children and youth remains a significant challenge across conflict-affected settings, particularly in the context of the unprecedented rate of forcible displacement in the last few years which has resulted in the highest numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons since World War II. UNHCR estimates that **only 1 in 2 refugee children are enrolled in primary school and only 1 in 4 are in secondary school; around 1% of refugee students are enrolled in tertiary education.** In some contexts, this gap is particularly acute. For example, an estimated 50% of Syrian refugee children are out of school; the loss of education impacts an entire generation.<sup>3</sup> In other contexts like the Somali or Central African Republic crises many refugee children and youth have never been to school or have had limited exposure to education.

Education for refugees and displaced persons is an important part of UNHCR's protection mandate – access to education is fundamentally protective for children and youth, and especially for girls, in displacement contexts, and also contributes towards solutions – providing children and youth with portable knowledge and skills to rebuild their lives and their communities.

The launch of SDG 4, and commitment to refugee education in SDG 4 policy documents, represents a critical window of opportunity to engage all partners in ensuring that refugee and stateless children and youth are accounted for in national education sector plans, with mainstreaming of refugee children and youth in the national education system, where possible, as UNHCR's goal. Mainstreaming refugees into national systems in close collaboration with national authorities and partners is consistent with UNHCR's Alternative to Camps policy, and is considered to be the most sustainable option for education service provision for refugees in protracted displacement settings.

## WHAT ASPECTS OF SDG 4 ARE RELEVANT TO REFUGEES?

There are two key policy documents associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4:

- **Incheon Declaration**, which is a policy/political commitment document for SDG 4
- **Education 2030: Framework for Action**, which provides guidance for implementing the Education 2030 agenda. The Framework provides an outline of guiding principles and approaches, as well as indicative strategies for each of the seven Targets and three Means of Implementation for Goal 4.

Key points of reference to education for refugees and displaced persons include:

- **Incheon Declaration:** Paragraph 11 specifically outlines commitment to education in crisis and for refugees.

*Paragraph 11. Furthermore, we note with serious concern that, today, a large proportion of the world's out-of-school population lives in conflict-affected areas, and that crises, violence and attacks on education institutions, natural disasters and pandemics continue to disrupt education and development globally. We commit to developing more inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of children, youth and adults in these contexts, including internally displaced persons and refugees.*

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (2015). *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges*. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2015). *Investment Case for Education and Equity*. NY: UNICEF.

<sup>3</sup> Save the Children (2014) *Futures under threat: The impact of the education crisis on Syria's children*.

- **Education 2030: Framework for Action:**

Addressing education in emergency situations is a Strategic Approach for the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda. All the SDG 4 targets are relevant to refugees, but in particular, Target 4.5 highlights the issue of equity and measures to ensure education for “vulnerable groups”. This target in particular can be used to advocate for refugee children and youth, and could be especially helpful in advocating for stateless children’s access to education.

*Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.*

Please see the “Quick Guide - References to Refugees and Education in Crisis in SDG 4 Policy Documents” for detailed review of all specific references to refugees and crisis contexts.

## WHAT SHOULD UNHCR DO TO ENGAGE IN SDG 4 PLANNING AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL?

UNHCR needs to be at the table with partners when country level education sector and SDG 4 planning is taking place to ensure that refugee and stateless children are accurately and effectively accounted for, and are integrated into national education plans. The extent to which this is possible varies from country to country depending on the existing policy environment; however, **SDG 4 planning presents a significant opportunity to advocate for the educational needs and rights of refugee children.**

**UNHCR country offices are advised to contact UNESCO, UNICEF and/or the Ministry of Education to request a place at the table for national SDG 4 dialogue and planning.**

Engagement of the Representative, Senior Protection and the Education staff is recommended, depending on different levels and stages of the process. Some basic information on the education planning process is outlined below.

## WHO WILL BE LEADING SDG 4 PLANNING AT NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS?

- Ministries of Education will lead in development of national education sector planning to reach the SDG 4 goal and targets.
- UNESCO will lead monitoring and coordination at the global level and will most likely play a critical supporting role to Ministries of Education at the national level. UNESCO at both local and global levels will also lead the monitoring of progress towards the targets, producing an annual, global report.
- UNICEF, with its close relationship with Ministries of Education, will be strongly involved with SDG 4 planning and implementation at national level.
- The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a partnership of governments, agencies and other education stakeholders. GPE supports Ministries of Education in development, implementation and financing of education sector plans and are likely to also be an important player in sector planning.

## WHAT IS AN EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN, AND WHAT MECHANISMS ARE USED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT IT?

National education sector plans, developed under the responsibility of the government, lay out the long-term vision, goals, strategies, results and financing for national education services over a period of time. In crisis situations countries may also develop transitional education sector plans which outline short-term measures and are adjusted to context and available capacities. In many countries, sub-national or district level plans are developed in line with the national plan. Sub-national sector plans and annual work plans at the district level are also a good entry point for inclusion of refugees, especially if the refugee population is smaller and/or restricted to certain districts.

In most countries, education sector plans are developed and reviewed by Local Education Groups or LEGs. A LEG is a collaborative forum of stakeholders who develop, implement, monitor and evaluate education sector plans at country-level. LEGs are led by the national education authorities and usually include: donors and development agencies, teachers’ organizations, civil society organizations, and private education providers.

The LEG is involved in:

- Policy dialogue and harmonization of donor support in the education sector
- Monitoring and promoting progress toward increased aid effectiveness
- Mobilizing financial support

**Traditionally, LEGs have included development partners to the exclusion of humanitarian partners; however, where protracted displacement is an issue or returnees are present, UNHCR's participation on the national LEG is critical to ensure that refugee children, otherwise invisible on the national planning radar, are accounted for.**

In some countries, the GPE supports the development, implementation and funding of education sector plans.

## WHAT MESSAGES CAN UNHCR PROMOTE?

Relevant messages and goals for education for refugees will have to be contextualized at the country level, in response to the local policy environment, refugee case load, protraction, and key challenges, and in line with the UNHCR Education Strategy developed locally. The following global messages may provide a useful guide:

1. UNHCR calls upon all governments to **include refugee and stateless children and youth in their national education systems** wherever possible. At the same time, UNHCR urges donors, development organisations and humanitarian agencies to support governments in meeting those responsibilities, through financial assistance and technical support.
2. In order to promote **the capacity of national education systems to absorb sometimes significant numbers of refugee children**, UNHCR encourages:
  - Development of specific, supportive policies on education for refugees at national level;
  - Planning for refugee education in national and sub-national sector plans, including risk/capacity assessment, inclusion of refugee children in education management information systems (EMIS), expansion of infrastructure/facilities, teacher recruitment and training, language classes, accelerated education, etc.;
  - Cooperation with national authorities to offer education services to refugees in camp or settlement settings, for example by including refugee children in national EMIS, MoE registration of camp and community-based schools, quality assurance and access to national textbooks and examinations;
  - Cross-border agreements on recognition of student and teacher certification;
  - Opening of more flexible pathways to deployment of qualified refugee teachers and teacher certification for refugee teachers (in light of the looming teacher shortage for EFA).
3. In countries where they are hosted, **government entities and organizations responsible for the protection of refugees should be afforded representation in national education planning and decision making platforms** in order to ensure the inclusion of these groups in national planning, programming and resource allocation.
4. UNHCR encourages governments and global education partners to consider **predictable, long-term financing for education services in emergencies and protracted displacement** and/or other types of fragile settings.

## BE PREPARED: CHECKLIST FOR SDG 4 PLANNING

- ✓ Contact the Ministry of Education, UNESCO and/or UNICEF to find out about the national SDG 4 planning process, timeline and key events – request invitation to participate in the process;
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the national education sector plan, national education priorities and key actors (UNESCO/UNICEF can assist); the GPE Website Library also contains guidelines on education sector planning;
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with SDG 4 and its targets, and references relevant to refugees and displaced persons;
- ✓ Prepare key information on refugees and stateless persons: Gather basic data on refugees and stateless persons and access to education for these groups for reference at meetings. Create a summary Education Fact Sheet for distribution;
- ✓ Prepare key messages: Consult the country-level Refugee Education Strategy and colleagues and partners across office and sub-offices to develop:
  - 2-3 key messages on refugee education;
  - Specific results/actions to address refugee education in SDG 4 and sector plans;
- ✓ Prepare to offer technical support, data and information and cost-sharing measures in support of proposed actions.

## RESOURCES

- ➔ Sustainable Development Goals available at: <http://goo.gl/jq62NL> and <http://www.globalgoals.org>
- ➔ Sustainable Development Goal 4 available at: <http://goo.gl/d7bQv0>
- ➔ Incheon Declaration Education 2030 available at: <http://goo.gl/lb6qSL>
- ➔ Education 2030 Framework for Action available at: <http://goo.gl/1wXuv4>
- ➔ GPE Website <http://www.globalpartnership.org>  
Check out the GPE Website Library for Education Sector Plan Guidelines and examples of sector plans
- ➔ UNESCO Safety, Resilience and Social Cohesion website and materials on crisis-sensitive sector planning: <http://education4resilience.iiep.unesco.org/en>