



The Framework for Global Education Transformation

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Away from Return to Normal: The Case for Education Transformation

The world today stands before several critical realities. The years between 2020 to 2022 saw 1.6 billion children and youth out of school and the loss of an estimated 2 trillion hours of instruction. Hundreds of millions of children have dropped out of school and their numbers will continue to rise especially among those in crisis settings, girls and children with disabilities (Theirworld). While the disruptions to global education caused by the pandemic remain monumental, it is important to acknowledge that the imminent threat to achieving the 2030 agenda cannot be solely attributed to the pandemic. Prior to the advent of COVID-19, the world was far from being on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 with 258 million children not in school and 617 million not learning and more than half of all young people not on track to have basic reading and math skills by 2030 (UNESCO UIS). This is in spite of the fact that the past decades saw an impressive amount of progress as a result of global efforts, yet, this progress was characterized by disparities and exclusions that prevented education from becoming the equalizer it can and should be.

Global responses to COVID-19 have focused on mitigating immediate impact on children and youth and charting a way back to pre-pandemic “normal”. However, in many ways the challenges brought about by the pandemic were not new, but were rather deeper, wider, and more severe reflections of the gaps in access, participation and outcomes resulting from conventional approaches to education in general and the ways in which education systems are constructed and supported. With the pandemic in its 3rd year and an accelerating learning crisis, it might appear that addressing the urgency of the present would require sacrificing ambitions to shape a new future, and with that, transforming education from a systems level characterizing characterized global calls to action in recent years appears to be a distant priority to be returned to once a return to normal is achieved. However, the two priorities are not diametrically opposed but are intertwined in an incredible opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and rewire the global education system to fulfill the priorities of the present while also accelerating progress towards ambitions of the future. The only way forward is not a return to normal but rather leveraging the disruption to chart a better, brighter, more promising tomorrow.

1. Transforming Education: Bringing Humanity Back to the Heart of Systems

In the pursuit of progress, there has been a prevailing assumption that doing more of what has already worked is sufficient. However, real transformation necessitates a reexamination of the core tenets of current systems and approaches; what should be transformed? Why? And for whom? **Today’s global learning crisis provides an opportunity for “critical education reforms that ensure all children receive the education and holistic support they need and deserve”** (World Bank, 2022).

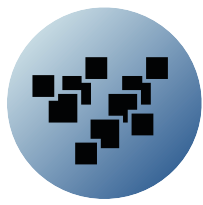
UNESCO’s Futures of Education Briefing Notes (2022) **emphasize that “education should empower learners with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to be resilient, adaptable and prepared for uncertain futures, while contributing to human and planetary well-being and sustainable development”.** **Learners should feel that “they can help shape a world where well-being and sustainability - for themselves, for others, and for the planet - is achievable”** (OECD, 2021). Current approaches have focused on education systems themselves often addressing challenges from within the confines of **education systems’** predefined dynamics and all that this brings in terms of opportunities and limitations. However, in order to turn the wheels of real transformation, it is essential that a reflection on education begins from a new

starting point. If the children and youth of today will have to make the very decisions that could alter the course of humanity, then what do they need in order to navigate the complexities of an unknown future? Rather than ask what needs to be done to education, the time has come to ask who is the human of the future?

2. An Ecosystem Approach to Education Transformation

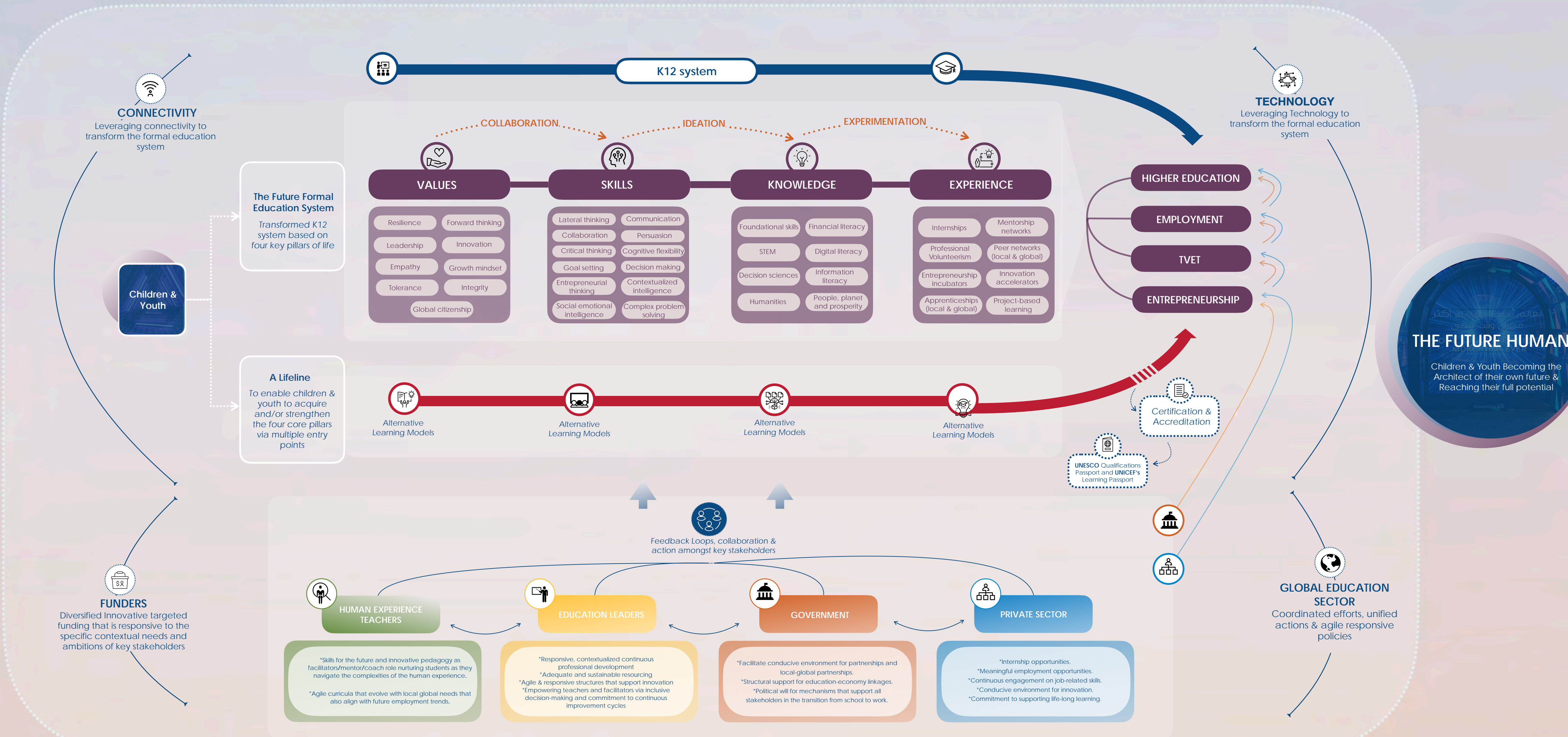
Globally, the current education system, is one whose core tenets have remained largely unchanged for over a century. **And while this system contributed to a seismic shift in humanity's** experience, today it is a broken system that is increasingly incapable of evolving to suit the fast pace with which change is overtaking lives and livelihoods and therefore renders it incapable of serving the current needs and future aspirations of countries. If education is to play the central role it can and should in propelling humanity forward then the time to rewire education is now.

The Framework for Global Education Transformation was born from the intersection of global education challenges, years of calls to action, and decades of evidence on what works on the ground, to act as a catalyzing framework to guide nations as they chart their way towards the transformation of education for their children and youth in ways that are aligned with their own unique aspirations for a prosperous and sustainable future. The below sections will highlight the core components of the framework and describe the mechanisms through which transformation of education can be facilitated through an ecosystem approach.



Framework for Global Education Transformation

Adaptable, Scalable & Flexible



3. The Human of the Future: The Four Core Pillars of Life

Taking a step back from the confines of current systems of traditional linear school systems, if the purpose of education is preparing children and youth for the future, then what are the fundamental pillars that will determine how they navigate the complexities of life?

The Framework for Global Education Transformation begins with a call to view learning as the fundamental way in which children and youth acquire the four essential pillars that will allow them to become adults capable of living a life of dignity brought about by the empowerment that comes from the ability to make choices about their paths in life in a way that enables them to fulfill their human potential. These pillars are:

- a) **Values:** children and youth need a foundation of values that make up the very lens that will shape the way they see the world, their place in it, and their role contributing in shaping the future. The values presented in the framework such as resilience, innovation, and global citizenship are derived from current evidence on what will be needed for the realities of future societies and jobs (see for example the **World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, 2020**). Values represent the very soul of our humanity and a return to the original purpose of teaching and learning; the acquisition of an understanding of the beauty and sanctity of all the elements of the human experience and a profound respect for fellow humans.
- b) **Skills:** With values serving as the foundational pillar, children and youth also need to acquire core skills and competencies. The skills presented in the framework such as critical thinking, goal setting, and social emotional intelligence represent a variety of physical, social, perceptual, and cognitive skills that will be essential not only for the jobs of the future but for navigating the realities of a human experience in which technology will gain an increasingly larger share. Collaborating across sectors, languages and time-zones will be the reality of future jobs and societies. Taken together the combination of values and skills sets the stage for children and youth to be able to truly leverage the promise and potential of collaboration. Perhaps, very few occasions have highlighted the importance of collaboration as the pandemic has, where the fate of millions depended on the ability to navigate the complexities of working together for a common goal and the greater good. The future of work and life will require adults for whom collaboration is a natural and desirable way of connecting, creating, and resolving challenges and addressing opportunities.
- c) **Knowledge:** Building on a foundation of values and skills, children and youth need to acquire key knowledge components without which navigating the future would be impossible. These knowledge components include foundational skills, digital literacy and financial literacy among others which taken together enable children and youth to gain a holistic repertoire of knowledge that allows them to navigate environmental challenges through an ecological understanding of humanity, counter the spread of misinformation through scientific, digital and humanistic literacies, and engage in active citizenship and democratic participation (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2022). The acquisition of knowledge, in combination with the foundation of values and skills enabling collaboration, sets the stage for children and youth to engage with ideation as the most natural way to reach into their minds and hearts and tap into an inner source of creativity and ingenuity that is an essential feature of the human spirit. The result of this are children and youth (and ultimately adults) for whom ideation

is the fundamental way to engage with themselves and the world around them in a constant process of discovery, learning and relearning extending throughout life.

- d) Experiences: None of the aforementioned pillars can truly be transformative if they are inculcated within the confines of traditional teaching and learning settings. For these pillars to truly become engrained into the very core of children and youth then it is essential that they are immersed in fundamental experiences. The experience pillar outlines core immersive and experiential paths to learning and living which evidence suggests are instrumental in enabling lasting impact on learners. These experiences, in combination with the past pillars and the collaboration and ideation they facilitate, enable children and youth to engage with and leverage experimentation. The outcome of this are children and youth for whom experimentation, with all that it entails of courage, creativity and comfort with failure (to name a few), is the essential tool with which they not only address the complexities of life and work but also the tool with which they attempt to contribute ideas and solutions for themselves, their families, their communities and their countries.

The Framework for Global Education Transformation therefore calls for a transformation of curriculum and pedagogy rooted in a prioritization of children and youth acquiring the four core pillars of life that will be essential in their journey towards becoming humans of the future as they come to learn about themselves, others, the world around them, their role in it and the tools they need to chart their way towards a future that will see them pursue a variety of paths including Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Employment or Entrepreneurship (whether they choose one or navigate their way through all across various stages of their lives). This, however, is the journey of some children and youth who have access to traditional learning opportunities (ie: school), but what about those who are on the outside looking in?

What about Out-of-School-Children & Youth? **Harnessing Humanity's Full Potential**

Today's global reality is one in which, in spite of best efforts, there will be millions of youth and ultimately adults who will never have access (whether due to circumstance or choice), or who will have interrupted access to formal schooling. Does this mean, however, that they are uniformly devoid of all and any values, skills, knowledge and experience and therefore unable to contribute to shaping their futures and that of their communities and countries? Absolutely not.

Currently, over 95% of the global population has attended school (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2022), and yet learning poverty remains an urgent issue with 750 million children and youth globally lacking age-appropriate literacy skills (Education Outcomes Fund, 2021). Furthermore, one in five youth globally are not in education, training, or employment (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2022). The path to transformation requires a reexamination of the fundamental assumptions of where and how learning can take place and a move away from the rigid assumption that learning only takes place within the confines of a classroom to expand to an acceptance that learning can and does take place in a variety of settings and experiences.

If learning is organized around the development of the human of the future as a central concern addressed through the four core pillars of life, traditional learning settings then are positioned with the flexibility to allow entry at multiple points. The Framework for Global Education Transformation calls for these entry points to be facilitated through alternative learning models

whose starting point is a search for and appreciation of what the child or youth *already possesses* and then building on those with the view of providing what is needed to enable them to be able to commence their formal learning journey side by side with their peers who have had a different (more privileged) starting point. The Framework calls for an expansion of the spaces where learning takes place with paying attention to the role of learning in homes and the role of parents, accelerated learning centers, community centers, and youth centers.

It also calls for using and building on existing evidence and examples of good practices in alternative and accelerated education, and certification and accreditation in order to support **children and youth's entry into formal learning, training, or employment**. In many ways this **requires governments reexamining their countries' standards** around job requirements through a mapping of the availability of skills against current and projected future needs so that there is a foundation for new accreditation and certification routes that can serve as a lifeline for youth to have multiple pathways for earning livelihoods for both those who would wish to pursue education as a pathway or not (the UNICEF & Generation Unlimited Learning Passport, UNESCO Qualifications Passport, and UNICEF & Generation Unlimited Passport to Earning are all promising examples of this).

From Stakeholder Engagement to True Partnership: Education is Everybody's Business

Shaping the human of the future requires a whole of society approach to education. The Framework for Global Education Transformation calls for a movement away from passive stakeholder engagement among education actors and towards a true spirit of partnership that will an alignment of thinking, acting and doing in the same direction and in the pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes for which education is both the fundamental vehicle and goal.

The first key stakeholder central to the transformation of education is the teacher. “The quality of an education system is only as good as the quality of its teachers. Across 45 countries, the **better the quality of the teachers, the higher the rate of pupils' achievements**, the less the rate of low achievement” (Theirworld). The Framework calls for the transformation of the role of teaching from a passive, one-directional interaction into a dynamic, multi-dimensional interaction in which teachers are not vessels for knowledge only but are rather coaches, mentors and facilitators. The Human Experience Teacher is one who nurtures students as they navigate the complexities of the human experience through agile curricula and innovative pedagogy that is aligned with the needs of the future.

Evidence points to the crucial role of a supportive environment for teachers to thrive. This includes the support of key stakeholders and decision-makers including principles and other members of education leadership teams. When education leaders are responsive, agile, empowering, and able to provide contextualized continuous professional development, adequate and sustainable resourcing and a commitment to continuous improvement, the teaching and learning process thrives in a way that sees tangible improvement in academic performance and education outcomes among students even in the lowest performing contexts. Thus, a true partnership between teachers and education leaders characterized by constant engagement via forward and backward feedback loops is at the heart of transformation of education.

However, for education leaders to be able to thrive they will need to be supported and empowered by Governments. In this framework, Government does not refer to Ministries of Education alone, but rather calls for a new approach in which the education conversation is one that is held among Ministries of Education, Ministries of Finance, Ministries of Labor, Ministries of Youth, Ministries of Planning, Ministries of Economy etc., such that the thinking

and doing is one that sees education as everybody's business. In this approach, the starting point of the conversation is not what needs to be done to education but rather a multi-partner, cross-sectoral imagining of a village, district, city or country's aspirations as a whole and the action needed of each "partner" to enable progress towards those aspirations including education as the driving force.

Central to this is a deep spirit of partnership and coordinated action among Governments and the Private Sector. **The strength of a country's economy in many ways is directly linked to the robustness of the private sector and its potential for sustainable growth which at its most basic will depend on its ability to continuously provide a unique offering of products or services.** Therefore, at its core, both the availability and nature of jobs in a country, will be impacted by the readiness of a workforce that is prepared for present needs and capable of evolving with future ones.

Engagement with the private sector has often centered around the provision of funding to education, the creation of jobs, or a mix of both, but never as a powerful voice shaping the thinking, planning, and acting around education. The result of this exclusion is, among other consequences, a widening gap between the skills that youth possess and those demanded by the labor market with 79% of young people reporting that they had to go outside formal schooling to get the skills necessary for their desired jobs (Deloitte & GBCE, 2018). The Framework for Global Education Transformation calls for the private sector to become a core partner shaping the future of education via an engagement on two fronts. First, the private sector's engagement with Government should be one built on enabling a conducive environment for the realization of a context's aspirations for growth and development. This can only take place within an engagement that sees the private sector and Government working side by side to facilitate a true leveraging of economic opportunity in which Government supports the private sector to not only create jobs but also opportunities for life-long learning among all groups of society. From this foundation then emerges the second form of engagement, in which the private sector and teachers also engage directly with one another in a dynamic interaction that sees an exchange of feedback and expertise as they jointly work together to prepare a future-ready generation. Taken together, this not only enables a conducive environment for narrowing the gap between the learning in classrooms and the needs of the outside world, but also ensures an *alignment between growth, prosperity and education* in a way that ensures the kind of long-term planning that will see an availability of jobs and opportunities in line with local needs and global goals with education seen as the vehicle for growth. This would support the positioning of education as **a central source of investment as opposed to a "luxury" that is forsaken** in the face of more pressing priorities as seen in the sudden and sharp decline in education funding from the onset of the pandemic.

While presently the relationship between education outcomes and broader human development goals have not been addressed directly, this ecosystem of partnerships among key actors also contributes to another critical component. Returning to the pathways awaiting youth outlined in the framework, the alignment of education with broader growth aspirations and the direct communication and collaboration among all actors especially Government & Private Sector and the latter with Teachers, enables the pathways of higher education & TVET to be relevant, globalized and contextualized both in terms of offering and pedagogy while also ensuring a diverse portfolio of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities that are planned, made available and sustained from a solid linkage between education and economy (and in turn broader human development goals).

Connectivity as a Transformative Tool: Leveraging Innovation & Technology

Can the tenets and calls to action of the Framework for Global Education Transformation be applicable and practical especially where children and youth have been left the farthest behind? Can long-term transformation truly be the agenda in the countries struggling the most given the urgency of pandemic recovery? The key to this lies in connectivity and technology as the tools for recovery that can facilitate the transformation of education systems.

The pandemic has made it clear that digital infrastructure and connectivity are key to supporting resilience in the face of large-**scale disruption. However, almost half of the world's** students face significant barriers to connectivity and access to digital learning. In the poorest countries, household access to the internet is extremely limited. In the least developed countries, only 12% of households have internet access at home with large gender and rural gaps in access to the internet (GEM, 2020). Furthermore, approximately two thirds of the **world's school-**aged children do not have internet connection in their homes (UNICEF, 2022).

The RewirEd Global Declaration on Connectivity with UNESCO and Dubai Cares spoke to the urgency of closing the digital divide separating 1.3 billion children aged 3-17 who remain without access to connectivity in their homes and who are therefore subject to learning inequality of the greatest proportions (Al Gurg, 2021). Fully aligned with both the 'UN Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation' and 'Our Common Agenda' report by the UN Secretary-General, the Declaration was endorsed by a number of multi-stakeholder groups. Connecting schools not only allows children to circumvent the barriers to gaining education and learning **opportunities but also enables schools to “become anchor points for surrounding communities; if you can connect the school, you can also connect local businesses and services) (GIGA, 2021).** Advancing connectivity goals will not only impact the lives of children, families, and communities but will also set the stage for the transformation of education by enabling existing innovation and technology. Collectively, and more than any time in its history humanity is at a point where it possesses the most advanced resources and knowledge. It is time for collective commitment to narrowing the digital divide and leveraging available digital technology to make **every child and youth's distant aspirations a concrete reality.**

The Global Education Sector: Stepping Up Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goal for education, international aid for education needs to increase dramatically, even more following the global Covid-19 pandemic. Only 47% of aid currently goes towards K-12 education in low and lower middle-income countries, and even less goes towards supporting the needs of displaced populations and children and youth living in crisis contexts (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2022). The transformation of education will require a move away from top-down approaches and towards solutions emerging from the ground up. The mobilization of political will, increased funding, and agile policy must be rooted in a global system committed to enabling every village, district, city and country to address some or all components highlighted in the Framework for Global Education Transformation each charting its own path to transformation, on its own terms, in its own time and in line with its own aspirations.

From Rhetoric to Action: Global Education Transformation in Action

Much of The Framework for Global Education Transformation appears both intuitive and familiar with all its components applied to varying degrees across multiple countries and contexts. In the pursuit of enabling decision-**makers to “leverage a reimagining of education to help recover** pandemic-related learning losses and revitalize efforts to achieve SDG4 between now and

2030”, the Framework brings together the fundamental tenets for **the creation of a “new social contract for education”** including a reimagining of when, where, and how learning can and should take place, the essential outcomes of education, leveraging the innovative potential of connectivity and digital technology as outlined in the RewirEd Global Declaration on Connectivity and the UN Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, and a repositioning of the key actors and their interaction one another as partners, and consequently **a reclaiming of education’s foundational role as a catalyst for broader social and economic goals**, all for the sake of enabling children and youth to become architects of a sustainable and prosperous future for all (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2022). The Framework furthermore calls for **“re-embracing global solidarity and finding new ways to work together for the common good”** in line with the **‘Our Common Agenda’ report by the UN Secretary-General**. The Framework for Global Education Transformation recognizes that successfully shaping the human of the future requires an approach centred on lifelong learning starting from early childhood, and with that in mind the Framework **builds on the ‘Dubai Declaration on Early Childhood Development’ which identifies the elements and approaches for** a holistic package of services for young children and their caregivers, and calls for these approaches to be backed by national policy, with regulations and incentives that can guide private sector investment alongside state prioritization of early childhood development. A whole of sector approach to early childhood creates the necessary circumstances for transition into an education system whereby children and youth are empowered to become architects of their own futures and for overall human capital growth. Ultimately, the Framework for Global Education Transformation aims to respond to the global call for action to rewire education for a prosperous and sustainable future that has emerged from the RewirEd Summit Outcomes Report. As the member states come to consult on their paths to rewire education, the Framework provides a guide to ask:

- **What is needed to transform the country’s education system in such a way that it truly centres the values, skills, knowledge and experiences that can shape the human of the future?**
- Which elements of the Framework for Global Education Transformation can form the basis for simultaneously navigating recovery efforts while putting the country on a path to transformation?
- How can the country align commitments, policies, interventions, tools and partnerships across sectors to enable a conducive environment whereby education becomes a vehicle **for meeting the country’s needs and aspirations in the immediate and long terms?**
- What does the country need from global education stakeholders to create a global education system that enables the country to use the Framework for Global Education Transformation in order to chart its own path to transformation, on its own term, in its own time and in line with its own aspirations?