

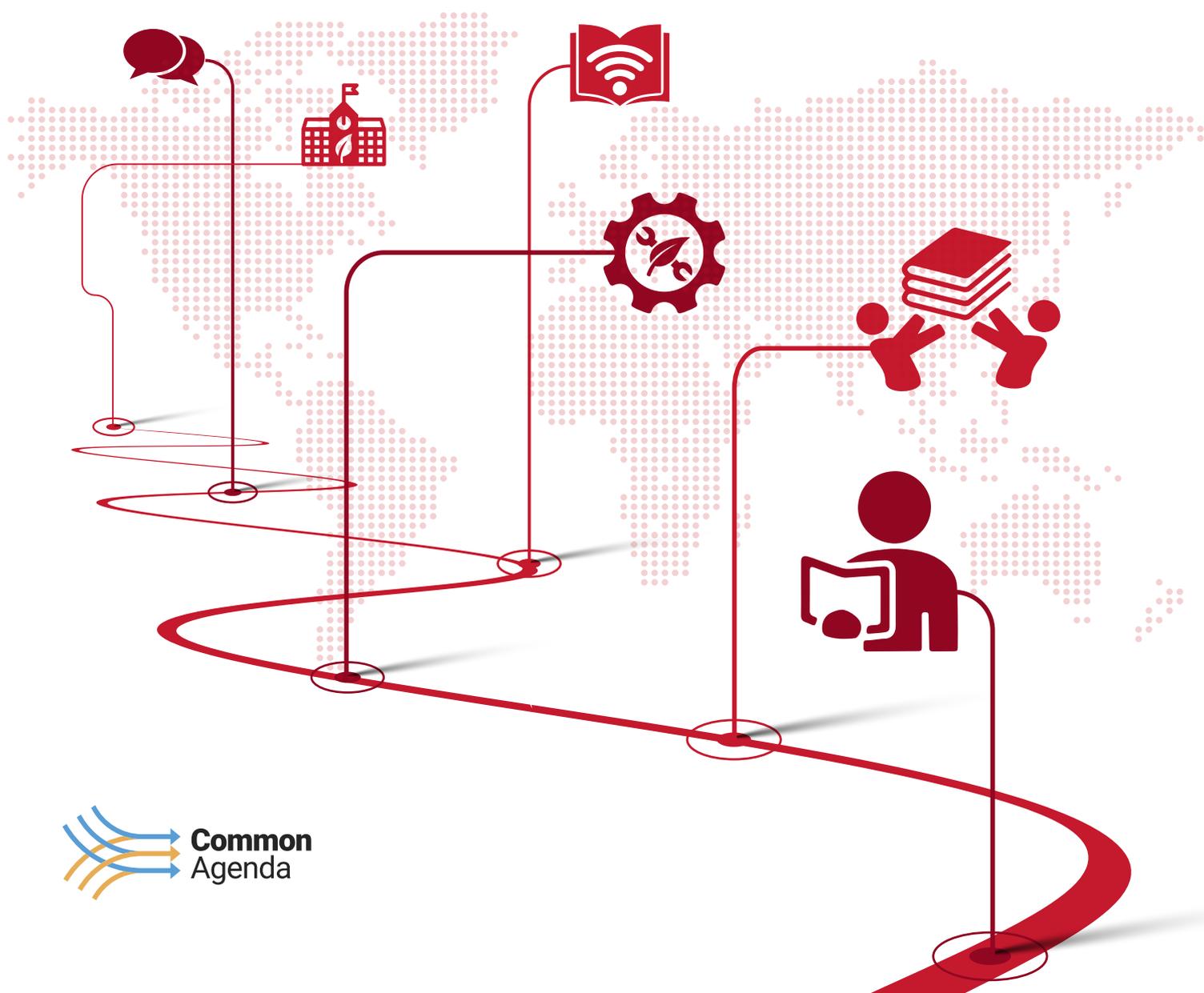


UNITED NATIONS  
TRANSFORMING  
EDUCATION  
SUMMIT 2022

Transforming Education Summit 2022

# Guidelines for National Consultations

April 2022



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# Background

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Recognizing that education is a human right and foundation for peace and sustainable development, the UN Secretary-General is convening a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022.

The Summit is being convened in the context of two dramatic and deeply interconnected challenges to ensuring quality education and lifelong learning for all. First, our world is experiencing a global learning crisis that, in a highly unequal dynamic, is depriving hundreds of millions of children and young people of their right to quality education, leaving many of the education-related targets of the SDGs well off track. Second, the learning crisis is part of a broader challenge relating to the ability of conventional education systems to deliver the knowledge, skills and outlooks needed for children, young people and adults to excel in today's world and contribute to equitable, sustainable, healthy and peaceful futures. The urgency of transforming education has become increasingly evident in the wake of the COVID-19 educational disruption, which is further exacerbating inequities in education.

The Summit seeks to renew global commitment to education as a pre-eminent public good. Instead of seeking to agree on a new global standard on education, it seeks to mobilize ambition, action, solutions and solidarity to deliver on existing commitments: to leverage a reimagining of education to help recover pandemic-related learning losses and revitalize efforts to achieve SDG 4 between now and 2030. These aims coincide with the call of the [International Commission on the Futures of Education to forge a new social contract for education](#) – one that can both deliver on unfulfilled promises of the past and transform the future.

Achieving these objectives requires inclusive dialogues and meaningful engagement across the full set of stakeholders, particularly of young people, students, and teachers. The process leading up to the Transforming Education Summit provides an opportunity to do so, and to put education at the center of the political debate.

These guidelines seek to support countries to convene inclusive national consultations in advance of the September 2022 Transforming Education Summit. They recognize that education systems in every country are unique and shaped by the local context. They recognize also that many countries have pre-existing strategic plans or ongoing education policy processes. Yet both the pandemic and the ongoing global learning crises demonstrate that, without a solid commitment to transform education, the goals established in every country and in the 2030 Agenda, will not be reached. Countries are therefore encouraged to view these guidelines as a support tool to promote a national consultation process that is both responsive to their own unique circumstances and capable of reimagining the futures of education.

## Aim

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National consultations aim to develop a shared vision of the futures of education and to strengthen political and public commitment, align priority innovative actions across constituencies, and mobilize collective capacity to deliver that vision between now and 2030.

Governments are encouraged to conduct national consultations between April and August 2022. The outcomes of this process should inform the Pre-Summit meeting in Paris in June 2022 and be presented at the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

## Key components

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Governments are encouraged to organize national consultations around the four components proposed below. The framing of each component will be informed by the scale and nature of the COVID-19 educational disruption and response as well as the timelines of national education policy cycles.

### A. Ensuring full recovery from COVID-19 educational disruption

Over the past two years, education systems have faced the most severe disruption in recent history which left some 1.6 billion students out of school at its high point, resulted in full school closures on average of over 20 weeks per country and the loss of an estimated 2 trillion hours of instruction. Research from UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank point to the risk of a generational catastrophe if determined efforts are not made now to get all children back into school and to support learners to recover ground lost.

Based on the available evidence of the multifaceted impact of the COVID-19 disruption, consultations are encouraged to take stock of and identify additional targeted actions needed to ensure full learning recovery.

- What has been the impact of the COVID-19 educational disruption on learning loss, student disengagement, dropout, and non-reenrollment?
- What has been the impact of the COVID-19 educational disruption on nutrition and health, the protection of girls, and the well-being of both learners and teachers?
- What steps have been taken to recover pandemic-related losses? What progress has been made to date?
- What additional measures are proposed to support further recovery in the short-term?

Additional guidance on learning recovery approaches is available in [Where are we in the Learning Recovery](#)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Where are we in the Learning Recovery, UNICEF 2022

## B. Identifying the main strategic transformations and levers for reimagining education for the 21st century and accelerating progress towards shared education goals

As noted above, even before the pandemic, governments were not on track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030 as they struggled to overcome a global learning crisis. What's more, as the pandemic demonstrated in myriad ways, the world of education is ripe for change and the [Futures of Education report](#) provides a framework to examine how education systems need to change to better serve learners and societies into the future.

Building on lessons and insights gained from educational responses during the pandemic and drawing on the thematic areas of focus of the Summit (see box on Thematic Action Tracks and Futures of Education Report), consultations could identify innovative approaches that can serve as levers for game-changing transformations of education policy and practice in the medium and longer-term.

- Was the country off-track with regard to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” before the pandemic?
- If yes, what are the main obstacles that have made it so difficult to move towards an adequate fulfillment of SDG 4?
- What possibilities for system change are apparent now that were not before?
- What features of education are most important to continue, strengthen and/or safeguard?
- What in current education policy and practice needs to be abandoned?
- What innovative transformations can be envisioned as desired features of education?
- What are the key levers of change within the national context?
- What coalitions and broad mobilizations can be activated?

### **Box. Reimagining our Futures together report and the Thematic Action Tracks of the Transforming Education Summit**

The questions associated with national consultations can draw on the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education, [Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education](#). They can also be considered across the five Thematic Action Tracks of the Transforming Education Summit:

1. Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools
2. Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development
3. Digital learning and transformation
4. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
5. Financing of education

The Action Tracks aim to place a spotlight on areas that require greater attention and action and that can accelerate progress on education and the 2030 Agenda and transform education. Action Tracks will identify evidence-based examples of successful policy interventions and mobilize new commitments to action, with equity, gender equality, and education in situations of emergency and crisis mainstreamed in doing so.

The complete report of the Futures of Education as well as a series of associated briefing notes aligned with the Summit's five thematic action tracks are available [here](#) and provide ideas, principles and proposals for national consideration.

Discussion papers will also be prepared for each Action Track and will be shared in due course.

## C. Ensuring strengthened and more sustainable public financing of education

Since 2015, UNESCO Member States agreed on a level of educational funding of 4 to 6% of GDP or 15 to 20% of public expenditure. To date, however, the majority of countries have not yet reached this threshold and in 2022, there was a US\$148 billion annual financing gap in low- and lower-middle-income countries to achieve SDG 4 from now until 2030. Moreover, it appears that low-income countries only allocate 1% of the amount of the post COVID-19 stimulus packages to education, while the richest countries only spend 2.9% of that package on education.

National consultations could therefore examine ways to strengthen public financing of education, including by examining proposals for potential innovative and multi-sectoral mechanisms that can ensure adequate and sustainable domestic financing of education.

- What is the current state of financing of education?
  - o What is the share of national resource allocation for education per learner, in national income and in the national budget compared to other services?
  - o What is the proportion of public and private education?
  - o What is the significance of external funding for education?
- How can public financing of education be strengthened?
  - o What is the trajectory for education investment over the medium to long term?
  - o What measures are envisaged to ensure more efficiency in use?
  - o How will greater equity in resource allocation be ensured?
  - o What additional innovative and multi-sectoral mechanisms can ensure adequate and sustainable domestic financing of education?

## D. Raising the ambition of national education targets and benchmarks

At the UNESCO Global Education Meeting in 2020, governments committed to submit national benchmarks values for 2025 and 2030 against seven indicators for achieving SDG 4. These values capture the national contribution to the common achievement of SDG 4 and seek to address the accountability deficit associated with longer-term and global targets. To date, two in three countries have set at least partial national SDG 4 benchmarks and more are expected to do so over the coming months.

A synthesis report from UNESCO-UIS<sup>2</sup> in 2021, however, shows that the current level of ambition as set out in national benchmarks is far from being sufficient to achieve SDG 4, even before accounting for the potential impact of COVID-19 on education systems. To maximize progress towards SDG 4, higher levels of ambition are urgently required, accompanied by effective accountability for progress at the highest level of government.

In this regard, national consultations could address the following questions:

- Has the national government set SDG 4 benchmarks to date, including for the seventh indicator on gender equity?

<sup>2</sup> National SDG 4 Benchmarks, Fulfilling our Neglected Commitment. UNESCO-UIS 2021

- Do national benchmark values reflect the maximum level of ambition possible, given the urgent need to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 commitments and the opportunities for progress that ?
- Can global benchmarks for other SDG 4 targets (e.g., skills development, youth and adult literacy, higher education, enrollment, vocational and tertiary education) be elaborated further at the national level? If so, how?
- How can political accountability for achieving national SDG 4 benchmarks be strengthened?

### SDG 4 benchmark indicators



## Approach to National Consultations

In convening national consultations, governments are encouraged to adhere to the following three principles:

### Adopt a whole-of-government approach

Given the interlinkages between education and broader development efforts, a whole-of-government approach is advisable. National consultations should ensure multi-sectoral representation beyond education, to include health, social protection, food and nutrition, labor, environment, and connectivity. Given the importance of financial resources

for education, the active participation of finance ministries in these national dialogues is also critical.

### **Include multiple constituencies**

National dialogues should seek to ensure meaningful engagement of the full set of education stakeholders beyond government. This includes the voices of students and youth organizations, teachers and teacher associations who are central protagonists in all processes of innovation and transformation. It could also include networks of adolescent girls and young women, feminist movements, civil society groups who often bring unique expertise, advocacy and mobilization capacity. Parliamentarians, the private sector, development partners, education advocates, community and religious leaders, academia, research institutions and university networks can also inform dialogues with data and evidence.

Depending on circumstances, stakeholders may also decide to organize their own parallel dialogues and submit their visions for a reimagined education to both national consultation process and the overall Summit process.

### **Focus on youth**

Transforming education starts with young people as agents of change. Adequate representation of children, youth and students in government-led consultations is essential.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

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National consultations will involve or draw on the following key actors, depending on the local circumstances.

- **National convenor:** Heads of State and Government are encouraged to appoint a national convenor to oversee the consultation process on their behalf. National Convenors will seek to ensure that consultations are intersectoral and multi-sectoral, inclusive and results-oriented.
- **National Commissions for UNESCO** can also help support government-led national consultations.
- **UN Country Teams** (UNCTs), where they exist, will be mobilized under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator to support this process, with UNICEF and UNESCO playing a key role in national consultations, depending on the local context.
- **Special Adviser of the Secretary-General:** The Special Adviser and the Summit secretariat will work to mobilize global and regional level networks and platforms, including those organized by and for civil society organizations and youth organizations, to support and facilitate national consultations within and beyond their constituencies.

## Outputs and expected follow-up

National consultations are expected to inform the development of National Statements of Commitment to Transform Education.

- Succinct (2-page) National Statements of Commitment will capture the key areas of national commitment to action that emerged from the national consultation process across the four key components identified above.
- Heads of State and Government will be encouraged to present their National Statement of Commitment at the Summit in September 2022.
- Governments are encouraged to submit their National Statements of Commitment as part of a broader report on national consultations to the Summit Secretariat by August 2022. A template for submissions will be provided in due course.
- Submissions will be made publicly available on the TES on-line platform.
- An overview of National Statements of Commitment to Transform Education received by August 2022 will be prepared for the Summit. This will inform the Summit Outcome Document.

Follow-up and accountability for implementing National statements will be undertaken through existing SDG 4 monitoring processes, including the SDG 4 High Level Steering Committee. In some countries, national consultations could also continue after the Summit to further deepen the national reflection on transforming education.

## Timeline

