

Summary of the National Consultation in Ethiopia for Transforming Education Summit 2022

On 23 June 2022, the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE) of Ethiopia in partnership with the United Nations in Ethiopia undertook the National Consultation to obtain ideas and opinions from different stakeholders using five Thematic Action Tracks: 1) Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools; 2) learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development; 3) teachers, teaching and the teaching profession; 4) digital learning and transformation; and 5) financing of education, to develop a shared vision of the futures of education in the country.



Background

Ethiopia is the second largest country in Africa with a population of approximately 103 million. The school-age population between 6 and 18 years old continues to grow, with the current number nearly 36 million (49.2% girls) and 4.3 million of them with disabilities. Currently, 25 million students are enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, and 700,000 teachers are deployed. Despite education colleges in universities, there is only one education university and 39 teacher education colleges dedicated to produce qualified teachers in Ethiopia. Presently, there are ongoing reforms under the MoE, including curriculum and teacher training framework reforms.

Looking at the digital landscape of the education sector in Ethiopia, recent statistics show that more than 78.7% of secondary schools have computer labs. The MoE has also developed a Digital Action Plan to leverage digital tools and solutions in teaching and learning. Furthermore, Ethiopia is the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to allocate 25% of its budget to education and has averaged 24.4% over the last four years.

Challenges

Ethiopia's education sector is severely affected by the multifaceted effects of the COVID-19 disruption, as well as the devastating impacts of conflicts and climate change. These challenges are:

- Limited institutional and individual capacities to ensure inclusive education. Gender disparities are still extant as data shows the illiteracy rates for women compared to men remains high (0.92 GDI). Most of the primary schools are below the expected minimum standard and ill-equipped with the necessary resources and technology to accommodate all types of learners. The conflict in different parts of the country particularly in the northern part has severely affected the education institution, i.e., 1393 schools fully damaged and 4882 schools and 3 universities partially damaged. To reconstruct and rehabilitate these schools close to 54 billion ETB or 1 billion USD is needed.
- A significant number of Out of School Children (OOSC) and a low enrolment rate in affected areas due to the natural and manmade shocks (conflicts, drought, pandemics, and Internally Displaced Persons)
- Weak Education Information Management System (EMIS) to get reliable and timely data for informed decision making in the development and emergency situations.
- Qualified teachers for the level/grades they are assigned are not in the expected competency level, which affects the quality of education. This is because pedagogical colleges' annual intake is below capacity and the licensing system of teachers is not well functioning.
- Impact of diverse shocks affecting the country has made it difficult to use already available education funds for development activities, and funds were catapulted to emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation programmes. In addition to this, due to the slowing of the economic growth of the country, the share of education funding has also been reduced proportionally. Furthermore, education is not considered as lifesaving and life sustaining service among key stakeholders in general and donors in particular; it is underfunded.

Interventions

The interventions directed to Ethiopia's education sector challenges are addressed in the form of infrastructural developments, policy formulation and implementation, improvement of educational resource availability and accessibility, human and financial resource mobilisation as well as research and innovation which includes:

- Implementation of a new Educational Reform (revised curriculum introduced) by the MoE to enable structural changes in the sector.
- Construction of new schools and/or renovation of damaged schools in conflict areas.
- Developing assessment criteria to be used in the performance evaluation of students and teachers.
- Provision of hands-on training on up-to-date skills and state-of-the-art technologies.
- Introducing incentive- or motivation-packages to teachers deployed in remote and hostile areas.
- Designing solutions 'with' the communities rather than 'for' the communities as a strategy towards changing community perception on teaching as a profession.
- Developing resource mobilisation mechanisms targeting various education partners and stakeholders in-kind and financial resources.

Opportunities

The opportunities available for operationalizing the above-proposed interventions include:



- There has been a strong commitment from the government as seen in a number of ongoing reforms, and there are good policies that must be implemented.
- Ethiopia has 337,211 O class and 28,898 KG teachers, 337,211 primary level teachers, 179,192 middle school and 129,033 secondary school teachers. This shows that there is a large number of human resources available in the sector that if trained appropriately can contribute to the achievement of planned interventions.
- Available ICT-related school infrastructure can provide a basis to achieve digital learning and transformation.
- In emergency-affected areas where schools have been damaged and destroyed, there is an opportunity to mobilise resources, implement innovative approaches and build back better.
- The need for resources in education sector projects should encourage the adoption of different resource mobilization strategies
- Conservation of natural capital will safeguard the livelihoods of the communities.

Commitment

In order to materialise an inclusive, networked and effective transformation of education, the MoE shall leverage the national and education sector development plans while ensuring a safe learning environment for the country's diverse learners and teachers, as well as making sure that the plan is fully budgeted and implemented to achieve results.

Stakeholders

In Ethiopia, various government, non-government, public and private entities as well as individuals have been keen on improving quality and inclusive education. Even if all government sector ministries, agencies and offices at all levels should contribute to the transformative agenda for the education sector, key stakeholders are the MoE, Ministry of Finance, teachers and teacher unions, parent, teacher and student associations, students, education specialists and researchers, universities, centres of excellence, donors, education development actors, civil society, regional governments, business communities, among others.