



## **From commitment to action:**

A guidance note for translating national commitments into action in follow-up to the Transforming Education Summit

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## 1. Context

The Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022 concluded with the UN Secretary-General's Vision Statement on Transforming Education, calling on Member States and the global public to join efforts to transform education and elevate it to the top of political agendas at global, national and local levels. The TES mobilized ambition, solidarity, solutions and actions to recover pandemic-related learning losses and to reignite progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), by fundamentally rethinking the purpose, content and delivery of education.

Leading up to the Summit, 163 Member States convened national consultations, bringing together government leaders, teachers, students, civil society, academia, and other stakeholders and partners. As of November 2022, 133 Member States submitted national statements of commitment and 65 Heads of State and Government delivered their statements during the Summit.

Through these consultations and their participation in the Summit processes, Member States committed to take action to transform their education systems, and to increase financing of education to achieve this transformation. The Summit follow-up requires continuous and collective efforts that need to spur “tangible actions where it matters most: on the ground, in the classroom, and in the experience of teachers and learners alike”.<sup>1</sup> Acting *now* on this transformation agenda is critical to sustain the momentum, and deliver the education goals of the 2030 Agenda.

## 2. Purpose of the guidance note

In this context, the SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee, responsible for leading the TES follow-up and coordinating global efforts to achieve SDG 4, has prepared this note to guide Member States in their follow-up to the Summit, and in the transformation of their education systems.

The note provides Member States and partners with guiding principles (Section 3) and suggests four inter-connected paths for action (Section 4). On each of these paths, the guidance note offers some strategic advice and suggestions on what governments and partners may wish to do. The note also offers some of the global and regional support mechanisms that are available to Member States (Section 5).

Member States may decide to design a roadmap to organize their TES follow-up actions. Annex 1 suggests some of the key questions to ask when integrating countries' commitments into an existing education sector plan. Annex 2 contains a suggested outline for a roadmap. Some of the key global and regional events and milestones, to which countries may wish to align their key milestones, are presented in Annex 3.

## 3. Strategic Principles

The following principles underlie the guidelines for the pre-Summit national consultations and the UN Secretary-General's Vision Statement on Transforming Education, and they remain relevant to the follow-up:

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<sup>1</sup> Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education: An urgent political imperative for our collective future. <https://www.un.org/en/delegate-delegate/vision-statement-secretary-general-transforming-education>.

**a) Galvanize a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach**

The transformation of education engages not only the actors directly responsible for the organization and delivery of education, such as the ministry of education, schools, universities, technical and vocational colleges, and community learning centres. It requires commitment of students, families, communities, industries and various government sectors beyond education. Education also needs to adapt to the evolving social and economic realities and the transition to green, digital and care economies. The follow-up process, therefore, needs to be guided by a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, through systematic inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration.

**b) Focus on addressing inequalities and disparities**

The inequalities of educational opportunities according to income, location, gender and race, are still flagrant, including in developed countries, reinforcing privilege and further entrenching exclusion and poverty. Leaving no one behind is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals.

**c) Link the global, the national and the local**

The TES brought together global and national actors. The follow-up needs to involve and empower local-level actors, such as local authorities, education personnel, students, and their families and communities, including representatives from marginalized and vulnerable populations. The follow-up should ensure the full engagement and ownership of teachers and educators as key change agents.

**d) Engage in genuine participation with youth at the centre of transformation**

The richness of debates at the TES is due in part to active and open consultations, that preceded the Summit. Through this inclusive approach, many education stakeholders contributed to the discussion and informed the Summit's agenda. The engagement of youth organizations allowed their voice to be heard prominently in the reshaping of education. The follow-up to the Summit should build on the experiences of the national consultations and continue to involve and engage youth as active agents for change.

**e) Strengthen and transform existing mechanisms and structures, do not build parallel ones**

The follow-up can rely on existing mechanisms and structures, while adapting and aligning where and when necessary to make these mechanisms and structures fit for transformational purposes. This is particularly the case for any structure responsible for the implementation and monitoring of SDG 4. *Member States are reminded that they are not expected to develop specific plans for transformation but rather that they transform existing plans at opportune moments and where needed.*

**f) Use evidence to inform policy and practice**

There is much global evidence on the education crisis and much research done on promising initiatives and successful and failed reforms. However, this research tends to be limited to project-level experience and not easily scalable at the systemic level. Furthermore, globally-produced evidence may not be relevant to many national and local contexts, which, together with capacity constraints, limits its uptake and use by national and local actors to formulate policies and transform action. Different strategies help overcome this, for instance: the promotion of research by national researchers, local stakeholders and school personnel; making locally relevant research more accessible; summarizing global evidence into syntheses adapted to the national and local contexts; and listening to the voices of local actors.

## 4. Paths to transformation

The follow-up to the Summit is a long-term engagement involving many stakeholders with different perspectives. Based on a simplified theory of change, transformation will have greater chances of success if:

- ✓ there is a shared vision among the many stakeholders that transformation is needed and possible, and shared ownership;
- ✓ policies and implementation strategies are in alignment with the conclusions of the TES;
- ✓ local actors, crucial to implementing these policies, are empowered to play an active part in the national transformation agenda;
- ✓ an effective governance structure exists, which holds different actors accountable for and committed to playing their part in the follow-up to the TES.

This section describes these four inter-connected paths and indicates strategies and initiatives that governments could undertake.

Each country can identify domains which may demand specific attention. This may include work on strengthening the teaching profession, exploring the opportunities of digital learning, or integrating gender equality in the curriculum. In each domain, the global initiatives that are being launched in the wake of the Summit (see the section on “Support”) may provide useful advice. Member States may also refer to the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education<sup>2</sup> as a foundation for post-TES consultation and action. The report proposes a number of levers of transformation relative to pedagogy, curriculum, the teaching profession, schools, digital learning, greening, role of universities, as well as research and innovation.

Evidently, the success of the follow-up also depends on the available finances. This is not highlighted here as a separate path. It is expected that a global initiative aimed at “Transforming the financing of education by investing more, more equitably, more efficiently, more innovatively” may provide guidance, building on the Call to Action on educational investment launched at the TES.

### Creating wider and deeper ownership of the commitment to transformation

At present, the transformation agenda is owned mainly by education policy-makers and their development and humanitarian partners. Ownership may be further expanded in two ways. First, by making ministries and agencies outside of education aware of the global message and the national commitments and how their contribution and collaboration are essential to transforming education. Second, by reaching out to the local and school actors to ensure their support to transformation.

#### Indicative strategies and initiatives

- Identify key moments and forums at national and global levels, within and beyond the education landscape, where the transformation agenda could be at the centre of the policy and financing discussion as a foundation for sustainable development.
- Strengthen the whole-of-government and inter-ministerial dialogue on the role of education in economic and social transformation, including preparing a national investment case for education, building on the evidence that quality education contributes to economic and social development.

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<sup>2</sup> International Commission on the Futures of Education. 2021. *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*. Paris: UNESCO.

- Map the wider stakeholder network.
- Conduct a post-TES consultation with stakeholders, including ministries/agencies (e.g. ministries of finance, economic development, planning, labour and environment), sub-national entities, youth and civil society organizations, to present the outcomes of the TES, clarify the roles of the stakeholders and build co-ownership.
- Integrate the TES messages and commitments into existing programs/initiatives/campaigns and/or launch post-TES national advocacy and communication strategies.
- Translate the national commitments by the Head of State/Government into simple language and actionable ideas, using examples of successful in-country initiatives.
- Create a website or a platform where all information in relation to the transformation process is published, periodically kept up-to-date and accessible to all.
- Provide the public and the media with case studies, narratives, rapid evidence and/or reviews on the education crisis within the country, the need for transformation and successful initiatives.
- Involve youth groups, influencers, advocates and celebrities to emphasize the importance of education and advocate for it to remain on top of the high-level political debate.
- Create and share narratives that are relevant to teachers and other educational personnel, that illustrate the education crisis and how the teaching profession can participate in educational transformation.
- Deepen the insights of relevant education ministry staff into education cost and financing, to strengthen their skills, knowledge and position in the dialogue with their counterparts from the Ministry of Finance and/or with international development partners.

## From commitment to policy and plan

The political will and momentum created by the Summit offer the appropriate context to integrate the transformation agenda into existing national policies and plans. This may imply aligning across socio-economic development plans, education sector plans, refugee and humanitarian response plans, education reform programmes, curricula and assessment systems. The purpose is neither to develop a specific “transformation plan” nor to create a separate programme, but to transform existing instruments.

### Indicative strategies and initiatives

- Consult with key stakeholders to revisit the conclusions from pre-Summit national consultations and the national statement of commitment (if they exist), further unpack key elements for transformation, and identify what may still be missing. Include marginalized populations and ensure that their voices are taken into account.
- Review the national socio-economic development plan and discuss how to integrate education transformation through inter-ministerial collaboration.
- Use inter-ministerial meetings to create commitment to the transformation agenda and to develop the capacity to design strategies to transform the education system.
- Conduct annual review sessions (or use other planned reviews) to examine if and how policies and plans pay attention to the transformation agenda.
- Where countries are preparing new plans, ensure that the conclusions from the pre-Summit national consultations, the TES or the statements of commitment are a central source of inspiration.
- Promote a participatory approach to the revision/adaptation/preparation of plans by bringing in different stakeholders, including youth groups.
- Bring together national and international partners, for instance during meetings of the Local Education Group, to discuss how their support to the education sector can be guided by the conclusions of the TES.

- Integrate the national commitments into programming documents such as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the GPE Partnership Compact.

## From policy and plan to action

The existence of policies and plans that reflect the political will to transform education is essential but insufficient for transformation. Implementation of policies and plans needs to follow. Each country will encounter challenges and bottlenecks during implementation of the transformation agenda. These differ between countries, but what often impedes implementation is insufficient alignment among stakeholders in terms of policy priorities and strategies, and ineffective support for local-level implementers, in particular schools and teachers.

### Indicative strategies and initiatives

- Use regular meetings to share with administration and school staff the transformation agenda, discuss what actions they can undertake, and identify the support they may need.
- Identify with stakeholders, including teachers and youth groups, major bottlenecks to the implementation of education policies and plans, and discuss strategies to address them.
- Engage teachers in policy dialogues on education and other sectors that have implications on education, for instance, health, labor, social protection and welfare.
- Guide and strengthen school supervisors and local administrators so that they can provide consistent support to the school, for instance, through workshops with school staff to design school improvement plans, which are inspired by the agenda of the TES and its follow-up.
- Promote the collaboration between teachers' and parents' associations, youth groups, and schools and other learning institutions.
- Recognize and support principals, teachers and educators as "action researchers" whose insights into the local education systems can contribute to designing innovative transformation strategies.
- Explore the potential of successful local initiatives to become system-wide reform strategies by carefully reflecting on the conditions that have enabled these initiatives and how these conditions can become an integral part of the education system.

## Accounting for commitments, action and results

With genuine commitment to the transformation agenda comes accountability. This accountability will, in part, take shape through the reporting by Member States on the global stage on their progress towards SDG 4 and the follow-up to the TES. For example, 9 in 10 countries have set benchmarks for seven SDG 4 indicators for 2025 and 2030, and the SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee decided to add benchmarking indicators for greening education, digital transformation and youth/student engagement. An equally, if not more powerful, accountability relationship is that which exists within a country, whereby different actors responsible for their part in the SDG 4 and TES follow-up, from national policy-makers to local-level staff, are empowered to be accountable.

### Indicative strategies and initiatives

- Develop a monitoring matrix which identifies responsibility for follow-up action and resources/competencies/assets needed for the successful implementation of this action.
- Use existing mechanisms at national and sub-national levels (for instance, joint sector reviews; mid-term and final evaluations of plans; annual humanitarian assessments and household surveys; the SDG4 monitoring process) for monitoring the commitments.

- Review and adapt existing EMIS and monitoring and evaluation frameworks (in particular, the SDG 4 monitoring framework and national plan indicators) to integrate the specific indicators on the follow-up to the TES.
- Promote the use of qualitative studies by country-level researchers that provide insights into the performance of different actors and the context within which they work.
- Work with youth to identify and adapt data collection instruments that provide youth organizations, students and teachers with venues for feedback on national initiatives.
- Discuss and disseminate the monitoring and evaluation findings through social media and working sessions which bring together relevant stakeholders to deepen understanding of outcomes and identify useful follow-up actions.
- Balance the request for accountability with the provision of relevant support so that actors have the capacity to improve.
- At the global level, Member States could make use of existing mechanisms, such as the Voluntary National Reports (VNR) to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), periodic review of normative instruments, and the Global Education Meeting (GEM) convened by UNESCO, as milestones/modalities to share their progress/achievements against their commitments to SDG 4 and transforming education.

## 5. Support

Education transformation is an effort that requires "the collective commitment and action of visionary political leaders at all levels, parents, students, teachers, and the public at large"<sup>3</sup>. While the national government leads this transformation process, the international community will accompany and support it. The following are examples of international support specific to the TES follow-up to accompany Member States where relevant.

### UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams

National consultations were supported and facilitated by the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team, with UNESCO and UNICEF co-leading the provision of technical support. Countries/governments should approach and engage the UN system in their countries, especially UNESCO and UNICEF, for continued support for coordination, technical support, and mobilization of development and humanitarian partners beyond education.

UNCTs, as well as country education sector partner groups (e.g. Local Education Groups, Education Clusters), can be called to review their programming documents, such as the UN Cooperation Frameworks, GPE Partnership Compacts and Refugee and Emergency Response Plans, and to support the implementation of the transformation agenda. A funding window for the Summit's follow-up will be opened in the Joint SDG Fund to incentivize follow-up support by UNCTs to national governments on TES commitments.

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<sup>3</sup> Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education: An urgent political imperative for our collective future



## Leveraging the TES Global Initiatives

The Summit saw the launching of five global multi-stakeholder initiatives that can leverage greater financial, technical and political support for country-level implementation. These initiatives respond to the respective Calls to Action to mobilize support for critical priorities for education transformation:

- **Greening Education Partnership** aims to prepare every learner to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to tackle climate change and to promote sustainable development and skills development in the transition to the green economy.
- **Gateways to Public Digital Learning** aims to establish and support an international movement to ensure that every learner, teacher, and family can easily access, find, and use high-quality and curriculum-aligned digital education content.
- **Education in Crisis Situations: Partnership for Transformative Actions** aims to advocate for and implement Triple Nexus actions (humanitarian, development and peacebuilding), to secure increased and better-utilized financing and coordinated planning for refugees, internally displaced populations and other crisis-affected learners.
- **Coalition for Foundational Learning** commits to halving the global share of 10-year-old children unable to read and understand a simple text by 2030 by enrolling all children and keeping them in school, increasing access to remedial and catch-up learning, supporting teachers, and supporting children's and teachers' health, nutrition and psycho-social well-being.
- **Global Platform for Gender Equality and Girls' and Women's Empowerment in and through Education** will monitor progress towards relevant commitments made at the Transforming Education Summit and elsewhere, highlight gaps in progress at the country level, and encourage transformative action.

## Regional support

Where there are regional agendas or cooperation frameworks of which the country is part, governments may wish to align the content and timeframe of their monitoring framework with the regional framework, and adopt regionally agreed indicators to monitor transformation progress.

Regional cooperation, peer-learning and capacity support will be also organized through the **regional SDG 4 coordination mechanisms**, supported by the HLSC members representing the respective regions and the regional offices of UN agencies, notably UNESCO and UNICEF.

## SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC)

*Looking ahead, the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee co-chaired by UNESCO and Sierra Leone will play a key role in ensuring the effective follow-up of the Summit – strengthening global, regional, and national level cooperation, the alignment of action between education partners and the provision of support across its three functional areas. UNESCO and partners can also identify ways to strengthen political accountability for transforming and financing education, taking current arrangements for monitoring SDG4 implementation including the Global Education Meetings and the national SDG4 benchmarking process, to the next level.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education: An urgent political imperative for our collective future.

As the apex body for global SDG 4 coordination and monitoring, the HLSC will lead the global TES follow-up through its broad network of Member States and organizations, representing their respective regions and constituencies<sup>5</sup>.

The HLSC promotes and carries out joint actions in its three functional areas – evidence and policy, data and monitoring, and education financing– in fulfilling its mandate to provide strategic guidance, make recommendations on priorities and actions, monitor and advocate for adequate financing, and encourage harmonisation and coordination of partner activities.

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<sup>5</sup> The SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee is composed of 28 members of which 18 represent the 6 regions of the world, with two countries and one inter-governmental regional organization per region, and representatives of civil society organizations, teacher organizations, youth/students, foundations and the private sector, multilateral organisations/banks/funds, and development cooperation (donors).

## Annex 1. Key questions when integrating the national statement of commitment into an existing education sector plan (or an equivalent document)

- Does the **analysis** of the education sector pay attention to the crisis of education? Does it discuss the causes of the crisis? Is the analysis still relevant or does it need to be updated?
- Do the **policy priorities** include the commitments made at the TES? If not, can these commitments easily be integrated within the existing priorities, or would this lead to a significant shift? Is there a risk of contradiction between the plan priorities and the commitments?
- Can the **plan outcomes and targets** be adapted, broadened, or rewritten so that they include the commitments? Are there any outcomes or targets that are no longer relevant or that need to be completely rethought to ensure coherence with the commitments following the TES?
- Do the **priority programmes** in the plan pay sufficient attention to the transformational changes that the TES has highlighted and that are present in the national statement of commitment (e.g. digital learning and transformation; Resilience to future shocks; Addressing educational exclusions; Transforming the teaching profession)? If not, can these changes be integrated into existing programmes? Do new programmes need to be designed?
- Does the **monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework** allow us to assess the achievement of the commitments? If not, can new indicators be identified and added without overloading the framework? Are some indicators no longer relevant? Will new sources of data and new data collection methods be designed? Will the reporting mechanisms be able to cover the commitments in the national statement?
- Will the **implementation arrangement** need to change? Do they offer a sufficiently important role to “non-traditional” actors, such as youth groups?
- Does the **cost and financing framework** remain adequate and relevant? Are there significant cost factors that are not included and should be? May the availability of some innovative solutions (e.g. the use of digital education) bring down the unit costs of some items?

## **Annex 2. Suggested outline for a roadmap**

### **1. The country's vision of "transformation": a statement of what the education system should look like in 2030**

This may be inspired by the conclusions of the TES, the UN Secretary-General's Vision Statement, the country's National Statement of Commitment, as well as the existing national socio-economic and education plans.

It may indicate not only what the education system will look like in 2030 but also how it will relate to and contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation.

### **2. Recalling or identifying some major commitments**

Member States who have already written a statement of commitment can single out those commitments that they consider to be the priority or may organize all commitments in different priority phases.

Member States that have not yet prepared such a statement can use the preparation of this Roadmap as an opportunity to identify major commitments.

It will be useful in this section to see if and how these commitments link up with the priorities of the existing education and socio-economic development plans.

### **3. Actions to be undertaken over the next 18-24 months**

This section may be organized in two ways (or a combination of both):

- With reference to the global and regional events that are planned until the Summit of the Future in September 2024: indicate national actions that may feed into, accompany, or result from these events.
- By the four "paths to transformation" in the guidance note: indicate the main strategies/activities that may be undertaken under each of these headings until September 2024.

### **4. Milestones**

Select a few activities that are the most important and identify for each a responsible actor, a deadline, required preliminary actions or resources, and an indicator of achievement.

### Annex 3. Key global and regional moments and milestones for education / SDG 4

	2022	2023									2024			
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jul	Sep	Nov	Dec	Jan	Apr	July	Sep
<b>Global events</b>		International Day of Education		OECD Meeting of ED Ministers HLSC meeting	World Economic Forum	G7 Education Ministers Conference and G7 Summit	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Y20 Summit	<b>SDG Summit</b> G20 Summit International Day to Protect Education from Attack	COP28 Global Education Meeting HLSC meeting	Global Refugee Forum (GRF)	International Day of Education	IMF-World Bank Spring meeting	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development	<b>Summit of the Future</b>
<b>Regional meetings</b>	AFR: meetings with stakeholders on the way forward from national statements	AFR: AU and UNICEF to discuss follow-up of TES LAC: Regional Steering Committee Meeting; LLECE meeting	AFR: AU Summit	AFR: follow-up meeting on AU summit	Regional Sustainable Development Forums LAC: Launch of TES national consultations analysis	LAC: Ad-hoc ministerial meeting on TES commitments	APA: Policy dialogue on the Regional Guidelines on Priority Area for the transformation of Education systems and acceleration of SDG4 (title and time TBC)	APA: Regional Seminar on the progress of SDG 4 (title TBC)		APA: SDG4 mid-term review finalized (Q4 2023)		Regional Sustainable Development Forums		