UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICE
Evaluation Office

# EVALUATION OF THE FUTURE OF UNESCO'S EDUCATION SECTOR:

**The normative vs operational role in the context of Agenda 2030**

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February 2019 – December 2019

**Geographic scope and field missions:**

The Evaluation covers the work of the UNESCO Education Sector in both Headquarters and the field. Field missions were conducted in the period May-August 2019, to the UNESCO Office in Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education, the UNESCO Office in Santiago and Regional Bureau for Education, the UNESCO Office in Beirut and Regional Bureau for Education and the UNESCO Office in Dakar and Regional Bureau for Education. The evaluation team also conducted two mission to Headquarters in Paris.

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1  MartinJenkins advises clients in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

# Abstract & Acknowledgements

## ABSTRACT

Education is at the heart of UNESCO's mission to build peace in the minds of men and women. The role of UNESCO in education is to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, and to ensure that these principles are inherent in all its programmes and operations. UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all aspects and levels of education. UNESCO, through its Education Sector has three interrelated strategic objectives: to support Member States in developing quality and inclusive education systems; to promote learning for responsible citizenship, putting an accent on rights, equity and inclusion; and leading and coordinating the 2030 Education Agenda. To achieve this UNESCO plays an intellectual and normative role with a global reach and a technical and operational role at country level. This evaluation examines whether UNESCO has achieved an effective strategic positioning and sustainable balance between its global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard-setting roles, on the one hand, and its country-level operational roles on the other. In doing so, it considers the interrelationship between these roles, and opportunities for strengthening the overall functioning of the Education Sector. The evaluation revealed that the foundations of UNESCO's comparative advantage are strong, however a rapidly evolving global education architecture, compounded by a period of significant and sustained financial and capacity constraint have affected the Sector's capacity to ensure its continued relevance. Moreover, UNESCO played a leading role in shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda but momentum has slowed in the post-2015 implementation period. This points to a need to rebalance the Education Sector's global, regional and operational roles, with a particular need to strengthen global and regional coordination of SDG4. The evaluation includes six interlinked recommendations for how to strengthen the operation of the Education Sector to ensure it remains fit for the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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| | |
|---|---|
| **CapED** | Capacity Development for Education Programme |
| **CSO** | Civil Society Organization |
| **DFID** | Department for International Development |
| **ECW** | Education Cannot Wait |
| **EFA** | Education for All initiative |
| **EOF** | Education Outcomes Fund |
| **GEM** | Global Education Monitoring |
| **GPE** | Global Partnership for Education |
| **HQ** | UNESCO headquarters |
| **ICT** | Information and Communications Technologies |
| **IFFE** | International Finance Facility for Education |
| **ILO** | International Labour Organisation |
| **LDC** | Least Developed Countries |
| **LLECE** | Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education |
| **IFFEd** | The International Finance Facility for Education |
| **MDGs** | Millennium Development Goals |
| **NATCOM** | National Commission for UNESCO |
| **NGO** | Non-governmental organisation |
| **NORAD** | Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation |
| **SDG4** | Sustainable Development Goal 4 |
| **SDGs** | Sustainable Development Goals |
| **SRHR** | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights |
| **TVET** | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| **UIS** | UNESCO Institute for Statistics |
| **UN** | United Nations Organisation |
| **UNCT** | United Nations Country Team |
| **UNESCO** | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| **UNHCR** | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations Children's Fund |

# Executive summary

## Purpose and scope of evaluation

1. This evaluation examines whether UNESCO has achieved an effective strategic positioning and sustainable balance between its global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard-setting roles, on the one hand, and its country-level operational roles on the other. In doing so, it considers the interrelationship between these roles, and opportunities for strengthening the overall functioning of the Education Sector.

2. The areas of focus for the evaluation include:

   • UNESCO's comparative advantage in the field of education

   • UNESCO's global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard setting roles, including leadership of SDG 4 – Education 2030

   • UNESCO's country-level operational roles (e.g., provision of technical advice and capacity building to Member States)

   The interrelationship between its global, regional and operational roles, including gaps, overlaps and the overall balance between them

   UNESCO's structures, management processes and resources.

3. The findings and recommendations from this evaluation are intended to inform decisions about how to strengthen UNESCO's Education Sector, to ensure it remains fit for the future.

## Main findings

### UNESCO's Comparative Advantage

4. UNESCO's comparative advantage in the field of education is underpinned by a combination of interrelated factors:

   • Its unique status as the only UN agency with a mandate to focus on education, and the normative powers that come with this role.

   • The universal relevance of UNESCO's mandate, covering all aspects of education, and its key responsibility as the UN agency entrusted to lead and coordinate the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda.

   • UNESCO's strong convening power and credibility with Member States, who view UNESCO as an independent, impartial and trusted advisor.

   • Its global scope and reach, including its extensive field presence.

   • Its accumulated technical expertise in many aspects of education, and inclusive approach to policy dialogue involving a broad range of actors.

5. While the foundations of UNESCO's comparative advantage are strong, some of the above factors have become eroded in the context of a rapidly evolving global education architecture, compounded by a period of significant and sustained financial and capacity constraint within UNESCO.

# Global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard setting

## Operationalizing the Education 2030 Agenda

6. UNESCO played a leading role in shaping the global goal on education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including ensuring there was a dedicated goal for education (SDG4) and by orchestrating a significant global and regional engagement process that underpinned the development of the Education 2030 Agenda.

7. UNESCO's shaping of the global education priorities and the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda is evident through a wide range of activities including: convening global and regional meetings and dialogues; preparation of background papers and think pieces; facilitating debate and consultation amongst member states; advising on the formulation of the target; leading development of the monitoring framework; producing guidance on unpacking SDG4 to support implementation by Member States; and advising on the global coordination mechanisms/architecture needed to support implementation.

8. Based on our review of a sample of UNESCO's knowledge products, it is clear that UNESCO's intellectual work and advocacy made a significant contribution to shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda and ensuring the universality of the agenda with a clear focus on access, equity and inclusion, quality and lifelong learning. [2]

9. Despite the good work in shaping SDG4 and developing the Education 2030 Framework for Action, most interviewees agreed that momentum had not been maintained in the post-2015 implementation phase.  A commonly expressed view was that UNESCO had not sufficiently planned for the transition from agenda-setting to coordinating implementation and monitoring progress.

10. While primary responsibility for SDG implementation rests with Member States, the global education community is looking to UNESCO to show leadership in supporting Member States to translate the high-level goal and targets into concrete policies and initiatives, and to support the development of robust monitoring frameworks and mechanisms.

11. Key external stakeholders consider that the global and regional architecture for supporting implementation of SDG4-Education 2030 is not functioning effectively. Some stakeholders see this situation as a major risk for the achievement of progress against SDG4, and something that needs to be addressed with some urgency.

## Intellectual leadership

12. The Education Sector plays an important role in building connections between education research, policy and practice, which it achieves by stimulating and sharing research and knowledge products in various forms (e.g., foresight studies, working papers, books, policy guidelines). Through this activity, UNESCO has highlighted important issues in the field of education, informed the setting of priorities for the international education agenda, and added to the evidence base for technical assistance and policy dialogue.

13. The Global Education Monitoring Report is UNESCO's flagship product and has played an important role in monitoring progress towards the SDG4 targets, helping to draw attention to significant emerging issues in global education.[3] Through its research network, including the Category 1 Institutes, UNESCO has produced a high volume and variety of knowledge products of relevance to Member States. UNESCO's global intellectual leadership in the field of education is a key aspect of its comparative advantage, however a common theme highlighted throughout this evaluation is the widespread concern, held by both external and internal stakeholders, that its standing and capacity as a global thought leader has eroded. It is therefore timely that the Sector has moved to strengthen its education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions by initiating a sector-wide research strategy and launching the Futures of Education global initiative. An independent international commission of thought-leaders from diverse fields and regions will lead this initiative with the goal of catalysing a global consultation on how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet, resulting in a landmark report in 2021.

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2 A detailed analysis of UNESCO's contribution to shaping SDG4 and the Education 2030 Agenda can be found in the accompanying Literature Review, Annex 3.

3  The primary source of data for the GEM report is sourced from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), which provides a wide range of education related data, including on students, teachers, school progression, adult literacy and education expenditure.

## Standard setting

14. Many stakeholders commented that UNESCO has been passive in its standard setting role in education for a considerable period, with few new education-focused global conventions since 1989. In this context, the development of the General Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, the final text of which will be presented at the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2019, is a significant milestone.

15. Throughout the evaluation period, UNESCO has also undertaken work aimed at monitoring observance with education norms and standards, bringing much needed transparency to important issues of equity and inclusion, while simultaneously supporting Member States to improve their national legislation and policies in compliance with international norms.

## Country-level operational roles and activities

16. UNESCO is strongly driven by the needs of Member States and has effective mechanisms in place to ensure that its in-country activities align with countries' needs.

17. UNESCO is a strong advocate for a humanistic and holistic vision of education, and for initiatives that strengthen education systems and build capacities of Member States to develop evidence-based policies. It is a trusted advisor to Member States and works with them to support alignment with global priorities and commitment to international standards and norms.

18. UNESCO's policy advice and technical expertise are highly valued by Member States, and there is significant demand for support, especially in relation to the implementation of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda, data collection and statistical capacity building, as well as education system and policy reform.

19. We found many good examples of UNESCO having a positive impact on education reform and developing national capacity. However, the limited capacity of UNESCO's field network means it is impossible for UNESCO to meet all demands for technical advice and support from Member States. Further, stakeholders are concerned that UNESCO's country-level operational work is increasingly driven by the need to raise extra-budgetary funding to deliver small-scale projects.

20. UNESCO is most effective at country-level when it collaborates closely with other partners, and when mechanisms such as UN country teams are used to agree on priorities and coordinate support. There is significant variation from office to office in the quality of UNESCO's partnerships, with UNESCO's stringent procurement rules and processes commonly cited as a barrier to collaboration. UNESCO has also been slow to embrace working towards One UN in the field.

## Interrelationship between global, regional and operational roles

### Complementarities, gaps and overlaps

21. UNESCO's work in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education is one area where UNESCO's global, regional and operational roles are well integrated and effective. This area of work is characterised by effective global leadership, a geographically distributed 'virtual team' of dedicated professionals, dedicated resource to support coordination of work across regions, effective communication and demonstration of results, strong collaboration with partners, and flexible funding. This potentially represents a modus operandi for other programmatic areas to follow.

22. Despite several examples such as this, UNESCO is widely viewed by both internal and external stakeholders and not being cohesive, lacking common goals, having a fragmented structure, with poor communication and coordination between headquarters, regional offices, cluster and national field offices, and institutes. External stakeholders in particular expressed confusion about the relative roles of headquarters, field offices and institutes.

23. The evaluation found significant evidence of gaps and overlaps across UNESCO's global, regional and country-level activities. Commonly cited examples included overlapping research activities; competition for donor funding; multiple repositories of knowledge products; and a lack of standardised information about countries' education systems and policies.

## Rebalancing global, regional and operational roles

24. This evaluation has concluded there is a need to rebalance the Education Sector's global, regional and operational roles through a combination of:

    • Strengthening the Education Sector's global leadership and coordination roles, in particular its coordination of SDG4-Education 2030 at global level and continuing to further develop its education foresight and research functions. Clarifying regional leadership of SDG4-Education 2030 in Africa is a critical priority.

    • Strengthening regional offices by bolstering their capability and capacity, including addressing the unevenness that exists across regions, particularly the relatively weak capacity in Africa. Strong regional offices are important for ensuring there are effective regional processes to support implementation and monitoring of SDG4-Education 2030, and to provide technical assistance and backstopping for country-level activities.

    • UNESCO's country-level 'operational' activities need to be refocused on upstream policy support (e.g., support for reform of education systems) and away from the delivery of large numbers of small extra-budgetary projects. This will require realignment of UNESCO's field capability to better match the demands of this role.

25. Rebalancing the sector will likely require some consolidation of UNESCO's cluster and national office network, including by taking opportunities afforded by the UN Reforms to co-locate education specialists with UN Country Teams. Many internal and external stakeholders also consider there is a need to consolidate UNESCO institutes, and a particular need to strengthen UIS given its critical role in supporting SDG4 monitoring.

26. Consolidating the network of field offices and institutes could potentially be achieved at the same time as enhancing UNESCO's effectiveness at country-level, provided there is strong coordination between regional offices and the network of education specialists operating at country-level, and more effective mechanisms for countries to access expertise and capability across the whole of the Education Sector.

## Structure, management processes and resources

27. This evaluation has identified a range of systemic internal issues affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of the Sector's work. These include a lack of strategic focus and prioritisation; a lack of role clarity and coordination between headquarters, regional bureaux, national offices and UNESCO institutes and centres; sub-optimal allocation of staff and financial resources; inefficient administrative processes and under-developed capabilities in relation to results-based management, strategic communication and fundraising.

28. UNESCO is part way through a strategic transformation to become more efficient and agile, including through simplified procedures, strengthened management culture, better internal and external communication, and optimisation of the field office network. Many of the organisational and resourcing issues identified by stakeholders in this evaluation are aligned to the priorities and proposed improvements through the strategic transformation process. The findings and recommendations from this evaluation lend further support to the direction and priority of these reforms.

29. Strengthened capabilities in relation to strategic communication, fundraising and results-based management would enable the Sector to better demonstrate impact, communicate more effectively, and build stronger relationships with donors and other partners.

# Recommendations

## Recommendations for how to strengthen the operation of the Education Sector to ensure it remains fit for the future

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | Sharpen programmatic focus in areas of comparative advantage |
| | 2 | Rebalance global, regional and operational roles |
| | 3 | Strengthen global SDG4 leadership and coordination |
| | 4 | Further develop education foresight and research functions |
| | 5 | Focus country-level support implementation and monitoring of the Education 2030 Agenda |
| | 6 | Build leadership, culture and supporting capabilities to operate as one Sector |

# Management Response

## Overall Management Response

The Education Sector welcomes the recommendations of this important evaluation, which reinforces many of the strategic directions that the Education Sector leadership have already embarked on during the last year. This relates to UNESCO's efforts to assert its mandated leadership role in SDG4 as a means to strengthen progress towards SDG4 at country level through increased coordinated action among key global and regional partners, strengthen its intellectual leadership role, sharpen programmatic focus through selected initiatives, and internal coordination to deliver the education programme as one unified UNESCO that draws on the expertise of category I education institutes and balances global, regional and national roles, fully aligned to UNESCO's strategic transformation and the on-going UN reform.

| Recommendations | Management response |
|---|---|
| **Recommendation 1:** <br> **Sharpen programmatic focus in areas of comparative advantage** <br><br> To ensure its continued relevance, UNESCO will need to maintain and enhance its comparative advantage and ensure this forms the foundation for its next medium-term education strategy. The Education Sector should focus its scarce resources on fewer, more tightly defined priorities and expected result areas, informed by an assessment of where it has a comparative advantage and where it can have the largest impacts. <br><br> To bring greater focus to its country-level programmatic activities, UNESCO should explore how it make more effective use of centralised funding mechanisms, such as CapED, to better target support towards implementation of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda. <br><br> Given the central role of data in monitoring progress towards SDG4, UNESCO should prioritise its work to bring the Global Coalition for Education Data to life, including ensuring this is supported by an international programme of statistical capacity building. <br><br> Addressed to: <br> Education Sector | **Accepted** <br><br> The Education Sector fully agrees on the importance of UNESCO to continue to enhance its comparative advantage and relevance and that this should form the basis of the Sector's proposal in the next medium term strategy, for decision by UNESCO's Member States at the 41th General Conference in 2021. <br><br> UNESCO's comparative advantage is linked to the fact that it has a broad education mandate promoting a holistic approach, covering all education sub-sectors and all forms of education provision, which should be taken into account during a prioritization process. The Sector has already started this by scaling-up its programmatic focus around three new initiat   ives in 2019. <br><br> The Sector is already working on how to more effectively use funding mechanisms such as the CapED programme and has created an Education Sector special account for greater scale interventions. The success of this approach depends on donors' acceptance to support such funding mechanisms. <br><br> The Global Coalition for Education Data has already been accepted by the Members of the Multilateral Education Partners' Platform and UIS is currently working towards its operationalization. |

## Recommendation 2:
## Rebalance global, regional and operational roles

UNESCO should explore how it can rebalance its global, regional and operational roles through a combination of:

- Strengthening its coordination of SDG4-Education 2030 at global and regional levels

- Further developing its education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions

- Strengthening the capacity of regional offices, including addressing the unevenness in capacity and capability that exists across regions

In the context of UNESCO's strategic transformation programme, UNESCO should examine opportunities for possible improvements in effectiveness and efficiency through:

- Consolidating its field network into stronger, better resourced regional and sub-regional offices

- Implementing a country-level delivery model that makes greater use of in-country partners (e.g., NATCOMS), and takes advantage of opportunities afforded by UN reforms to co-locate staff within UN Country Teams and offices

- Considering consolidation of UNESCO institutes, and strengthening UIS as a matter of priority.

Addressed to:
Senior management, Strategic transformation team and Education Sector

## Accepted

The Education Sector has already started to re-examining and asserting its mandated lead and coordination role at global and regional levels (illustrated further under management response to recommendation 3 here below).

It has substantially strengthened its foresight and intellectual leadership functions by the launching of the "Futures of Education" initiative and the establishment of a separate team for this within the Education Sector.

The Sector will continue to strive to strengthen its regional offices, addressing capacity gaps, within the limits of available human and financial resources. Working with in-country partners, including through local education groups will be key. Decisions regarding the field network are taken within the framework of the strategic transformation process and the UN reform.

The Sector supports the strengthening of all UNESCO institutes and UIS in particular. UIS is now managed under the ADG of Education, which facilitates funds mobilization, support and coordination.

## Recommendation 3:
## Strengthening global SDG4 leadership and coordination

Building on progress made through the Multilateral Education Platform, strengthen partnerships between UNESCO and key actors in the global education architecture (e.g., funding platforms such as GPE and ECW; and implementation partners such as UNICEF and the World Bank).

Re-energise the work of the SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee, including through increased resources for the Secretariat and through more dedicated support for global and regional coordination and monitoring processes.

Clarify responsibilities for regional leadership of SDG4-Education 2030 in Africa.

Addressed to:

Senior management and Education Sector

### Accepted

SDG4 leadership and coordination is critical. UNESCO will continue to strengthen its SDG4 leadership and coordination function, including through mechanisms such as the Multilateral Education Platform (MEP) and the Global Education Forum. UNESCO will strive to improve the strategic focus of the SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee and bureau meetings and strengthen its linkages with regional offices. It will seek to raise the profile and visibility of the Steering Committee as a global political platform.

At the regional level, through its regional bureaux and together with the SDG-Education 2030 co-conveners, UNESCO will continue to promote regional cooperation and strengthening of linkages between global and regional levels.

Representatives from all the offices in Africa met in Addis in December 2019 to agree on stronger regional coordination and collaboration. In September 2019, a memorandum of understanding was signed by UIS and the AUC on the development of a joint mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of SDG4-CESA. In December 2019 senior officials from 27 countries agreed on the creation by AUC and UNESCO of a Multi-Partner platform to support the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on SDG 4 and CESA.

## Recommendation 4:
## Further develop education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions

Prioritize its roles as knowledge broker, and as an aggregator and disseminator of research, evidence and policy guidance, and better harness its role as a knowledge producer.

Continue to develop UNESCO's education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions, including by:

- Ensuring adequate resourcing of the Futures of Education global initiative, and using this process to inform the next UNESCO medium-term education strategy.

- Completing and implementing a Sector-wide research and knowledge production strategy.

- Strengthening partnerships with UNESCO Chairs and universities to better harness the research capacity of the global academic community.

- Consolidating and harmonising repositories of research and data, and work to make these easier to access and navigate.

Addressed to:

Senior management and Education Sector

### Accepted

The Futures of Education Initiative will be the converging point of UNESCO's work on research and foresight. In this regard, the new dedicated 'Future of Learning and Innovation Team' will provide a unified support and coordination structure.  It will work closely with the team on higher education and the UNESCO chairs and university networks. UNESCO chairs have already contributed to Futures of education initiative and their research capacity will continue to be harnessed in this process.

UNESCO will develop an Education Research Strategy to strengthen the quality, relevance and impact of UNESCO's rich knowledge production for the benefit of education policy analysts, researchers, policy-makers, decision-makers, and practitioners.

## Recommendation 5:
## Focus country-level support on implementation and monitoring of the Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO's country-level activities should be, where necessary, refocused towards meeting Member States' demand for support for implementation and monitoring of SDG4-Education 2030, taking full advantage of opportunities for regional cooperation.

Through a combination of guidance, training and addressing underlying incentives to raise extra-budgetary funding, the Sector should seek to reduce the proportion of small scale EXB-funded projects it manages and delivers.

Addressed to:
Senior management and Education Sector

## Recommendation 6:
## Build leadership and support capabilities to operate as One Sector

Continue progress towards operating as One Sector, including by building a collective leadership model that is more inclusive of education staff in regional offices and institutes. This may require reconsideration of reporting lines for Directors of regional bureaux, and for education specialists in cluster and national offices.

Continue to promote innovative, high impact ways of working, including through increased staff mobility, agile work practices, and the use of global 'virtual teams' and communities of practice.

Invest in the Sector's strategic communications, fund-raising and results-based management capabilities, which will support the sector to better demonstrate impact and build stronger partnerships with donors and multilateral organisations.

Addressed to:
Education Sector

### Accepted

UNESCO's Education Programme is fully aligned to the SDG4 targets, as clearly reflected in the C/5 expected results. While the formulation of the recommendation may therefore be a bit misleading, the Sector agrees with the importance to continue to focus country level support on making progress towards SDG4.

The Sector agrees to seek to reduce the number of small-scale extrabudgetary funded projects, for the benefit of larger scale programmes, with a view to reduce the high transaction costs linked to small-scale projects. As such, it for example opposes the creation of funds-in-trusts projects below a threshold. The Sector has increased the number of larger scale country or sub regional programmes and will continue to seek to mobilize similar funding. A number of established donors cannot however provide less earmarked or large scale funding.

### Accepted

The Sector welcomes this recommendation as it is in line with recent efforts made by the Education sector leadership team, which includes Category 1 Institutes, to map out areas of convergence within education sector entities, with a view to strengthen synergies, joint planning and increase impact. The Sector is open to reconsider the accountability framework and reporting lines of regional bureaux and programme specialists in field offices. The accountability matrix for the field office network goes however beyond the responsibility of the Education Sector and should be addressed in cooperation with all concerned UNESCO entities.

In an effort to mitigate limited human resources, the agile approach has been piloted and is starting to yield results, pooling expertise from Headquarters, field offices and Category 1 institutes around urgent and prioritized objectives.

The Sector is also giving increased attention to more strategic external communication and partnership building with key multilateral organizations.

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose, scope and intended use of the evaluation

1.  This evaluation examines whether UNESCO has achieved an effective strategic positioning and sustainable balance between its global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard-setting roles, on the one hand, and its country-level operational roles on the other. In doing so, it considers the interrelationship between these roles, and opportunities for strengthening the overall functioning of the Education Sector.

2.  The areas of focus for the evaluation include:

    • UNESCO's **global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard-setting roles**, including its leadership and coordination of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda.

    • UNESCO's **country-level operational roles and activities**, in particular the provision of in-country policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building activities through its network of field offices and institutes/centres.

    • The **interactions, complementarities and interdependencies** between the global leadership, intellectual and standard setting roles and its country-level operational roles.

    • UNESCO's **structures, management processes and resources,** and how they have helped or hindered the performance of its global and operational roles in the field of education, and the opportunities for strengthening the effective and efficient functioning of the ED Sector.[4]

3.  The terms of reference (including the evaluation questions), methodology, and survey results are included in an Annex to this report. An accompanying Literature Review also forms part of the evaluation.

4.  The evaluation period spans the last decade from 2010 onwards, including the lead up to and period immediately following the introduction of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[5].

5.  The findings and recommendations from this evaluation are intended to inform decisions about how to strengthen UNESCO's Education Sector, to ensure it remains fit for the future.

## Background

6.  This evaluation examines whether UNESCO has achieved an effective strategic positioning and sustainable balance between its global and regional coordination, intellectual leadership and standard-setting roles, on the one hand, and its country-level operational roles on the other. In doing so, it considers the interrelationship between these roles, and opportunities for strengthening the overall functioning of the Education Sector.[6]

7.  The work of the Education Sector is guided by several strategies including UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (37 C/4) and the UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021. The Education Strategy has three strategic objectives:

    • Supporting Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all

    • Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens

    • Leading and coordinating the education 2030 agenda through partnerships, monitoring and research.

8.  In 2015, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG4 aims to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and constitutes the core of a renewed education agenda: SDG4-Education 2030. The Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action document the global commitment to this Agenda, set out a roadmap for its implementation, and mandate UNESCO to lead and coordinate the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda.[7]

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4 UNESCO implements its mandate through five specialised Programme Sectors: Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information. This evaluation focuses on the work of the Education Sector.

5 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global agenda. It consists of 17 interlinked goals, of which education is one. For details see: https://en.unesco.org/themes/education2030-sdg4 .

6 The Constitution of UNESCO signed on 16 November 1945.

7 Incheon Declaration, World Economic Forum, 2015.

9.  The Education Sector is the largest sector within UNESCO, comprising approximately 400 staff distributed between UNESCO's Paris-based headquarters and its global network of 53 field offices[8], specialised institutes and centres[9].

10. The Sector's global leadership, normative and standard setting functions are primarily carried out by headquarters, the regional bureaux for education, and the specialised institutes and centres. Key activities include global and regional coordination of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda, education research and foresight activities, and standard setting activities within the framework of UNESCO conventions, recommendations and declarations.

11. Country-level operational support includes policy advocacy, technical assistance and capacity building, with the aim of improving education systems and outcomes in Member States. This support is coordinated by cluster and national offices, with regional bureaux, specialised institutes and centres, and headquarters playing a supporting role.

12. Many Member States place a high priority on country-level support, which UNESCO prioritises toward countries and population groups most in need, such as those recovering from armed conflicts, political crises or natural disasters, and those lagging behind in progress towards internationally agreed development goals. Gender equality and Africa are stated global priority areas.[10]

## Operating environment

## The global education architecture has become more complex and fragmented, creating challenges for UNESCO's global leadership and coordination roles

13. The global education architecture has evolved in recent years to become more complex with an increasing number of institutional actors involved at global, regional and national levels (see Table 1 for a sample of international actors). In response to new challenges in education, UN agencies, intergovernmental bodies, and donors have adjusted their priorities and strategies and several new actors are engaged in activities traditionally undertaken by UNESCO.

14. UNESCO is designated to lead the coordination of SDG4 and as such is the secretariat to the multi stakeholder SDG4 Steering Committee. However, several other organisations are also active at a global level in convening policy dialogues and international fora (e.g., the World Bank, OECD, the Education Commission, UNICEF and UNHCR).

15. At a country-level, several multilateral agencies (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank) are actively involved in providing technical assistance and capacity development support to countries, sometimes in competition with each other.

16. There has been a proliferation of multilateral education-focused financing mechanisms in recent years, each with different but overlapping areas of focus. For example, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) targets mostly low-income countries and focuses on strengthening national education systems in countries with well-developed education-sector plans. Education Cannot Wait (ECW) targets children and young people affected by crises, and aims to coordinate humanitarian and development partners. The International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) targets lower-middle income countries by providing affordable loans for education via the multi-lateral development banks; and Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) focuses on African and Middle East countries aiming to mobilise funding from public funds, donors, philanthropy and corporations.

17. As a result of these developments, the global education architecture has becoming an increasingly contested space. Many global, regional and national actors are offering similar services and expertise to governments. At a global level, the institutional governance and accountability arrangements have been assessed as "unfit for purpose" in several recent critical appraisals of the global education architecture.[11]

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8   See the list of offices at: https://en.unesco.org/countries/field-offices .
9   UNESCO Education Sector includes a network of specialised institutes and centres.
10  UNESCO (2014). Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (document 37 C/4), p. 18; UNESCO (2018). Programme and Budget 2018-2019 (document 39 C/5), p. 43.

11  See, for example, European Commission (2019) A Perspective on Global Aid Architecture for Education; and Schäferhoff, M. and Burnett, N.(2016) Rethinking the Financing and Architecture of Global Education, paper prepared for the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity.

**Table 1:** *Some examples of international actors in education*

| Organisation | Geographic scope | Thematic focus | Type of activities | Education budget (year) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UN organisations** | | | | |
| **UNESCO** | **Global** | **Universal education** | **Policy support** | **$139 million (2018)** |
| UNICEF | Global | Child education | Funding, projects | $1.192 billion (2018) |
| **Regional organisations** | | | | |
| OECD | OECD countries | Universal education | Policy support | $9.9 million (2017) |
| **Multilateral financing mechanisms and institutions** | | | | |
| Education Cannot Wait | Global | Emergencies | Funding | $344 million (overall) |
| Global Partnership for Education | Global | Universal education | Funding | $637.6 million (2018) |
| IFFEd | Global | Universal education | Funding | $10 billion (overall) |
| World Bank | Global | Universal education | Funding, projects | $4.5 billion (2018) |
| **Foundations** | | | | |
| Gates Foundation | Global | Universal education | Funding | $68 million |
| | USA | | Funding | $450 million |
| Al Ghurair Foundation | Arab countries | Universal education | Youth grants | $1.14 billion (overall) |
| Malala Fund | Global | Girls' education | Funding | $2.9 billion (since 2018) |

*\* Sources are detailed in the Addendum to this report.*

18. Against this backdrop, aspects of UNESCO's mandate and roles in the field of education have come under challenge by other actors, including other UN agencies, who are playing an increasing role in the field of education at global, regional and country levels.

## UNESCO underwent a financial crisis and faces significant financial constraints

19. UNESCO faced a financial crisis following the decision by the United States to halt core contributions to UNESCO. Immediately prior to this, the US was UNESCO's largest donor, contributing approximately 22% of the core budget.[12] As a result, UNESCO faced an immediate challenge of maintaining its work with significantly reduced funding, which it managed through a staged process of permanent staff reductions from 2011 to 2014, and the introduction of a larger number of extra-budgetary posts.[13]

20. UNESCO has a total budget of $1.2 billion for 2018 and 2019, comprising $595.2 million in membership fees with the balance made up of voluntary contributions. Japan, China and Germany are the largest contributors through membership fees, while several other countries, intergovernmental and multilateral organisations also make significant voluntary contributions.[14] Since 2012, UNESCO's proportion of voluntary earmarked contributions has increased significantly, leading to an imbalance between core and non-core funding. This imbalance varies from sector to sector.

21. The resources available to the Education Sector for the 2018-19 biennium totalled $412.7 million (around 35% of UNESCO's total budget). As shown in Table 2, the balance of funding has changed over time, with regular programme contributions declining from $118.5 million in 2010-11 to $92.0 million for 2018-19. This has been offset by increasing levels of extra-budgetary funding, which have risen from $108.1 million in 2010-11 to $320.7 million.

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12 For detailed description, see Klaus Hüfner. The Financial Crisis of UNESCO after 2011: Political Reactions and Organizational Consequences. In: Global Policy 8:55, pp. 96-101.

13 This reduction in permanent staff were not felt immediately as many of the posts were vacant, however it did affect the potential of the Education sector to strengthen its human resource capacity.

14 In the year to 31 December 2018, the largest donors to the ED Sector included Sweden, Republic of Korea, World Bank, European Union, Norway, UNAIDS, UNICEF, Australia and Finland.

**Table 2:** *Budgets of the UNESCO Education Sector, 2010-2019*

| Biennium | Regular programme | Extra-budgetary resources | Total ED resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 | $118.5 million | $108.1 million | $226.6 million |
| 2012-13 | $115.4 million | $174.8 million | $290.2 million |
| 2014-15 | $90.0 million | $209.6 million | $299.6 million |
| 2016-17 | $88.7 million | $200.5 million | $289.2 million |
| 2018-19[15] | $92.0 million | $320.7 million | $412.7 million |

*Source:* UNESCO.

22. Within the Sector, certain lines of expenditure have traditionally been financed exclusively from the regular programme funding, including the salaries of all UNESCO permanent staff and contributions to Category I institutes.[16] Non-earmarked voluntary contributions are typically used to meet operational costs. The inclusion of anticipated voluntary contributions in the Integrated Budget Framework (IBF) potentially represents a funding risk for the Sector, which had a funding gap of more than 50% at the time the 2018/19 Budget was set. However, this funding gap had largely closed by the time of this evaluation.

23. While still significant in absolute terms, the Education Sector was less affected than other sectors by staff cuts following the financial crisis. The number of ED staff funded from the regular programme reduced from 257 posts in 2010-2011 to 200 posts in 2018-2019, with the headquarters more affected than field offices (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** *UNESCO Education Sector staff, 2010-2019*

|  | 2010-2011 | 2012-2013 | 2014-2015 | 2016-2017 | 2018-2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total staff (RB) | 257 | 254 | 237 | 196 | 200 |
| HQ | 131 | 127 | 116 | 85 | 88 |
| Field | 126 | 127 | 121 | 111 | 112 |
| Total staff (EP) |  | 200 | 190 | 196 | 200 |

*Source*: UNESCO Documents 35C/5, 37C/5, 38C/5 and 39C/5.

**Figure 1:** *Distribution of resources across UNESCO's offices and institutes*
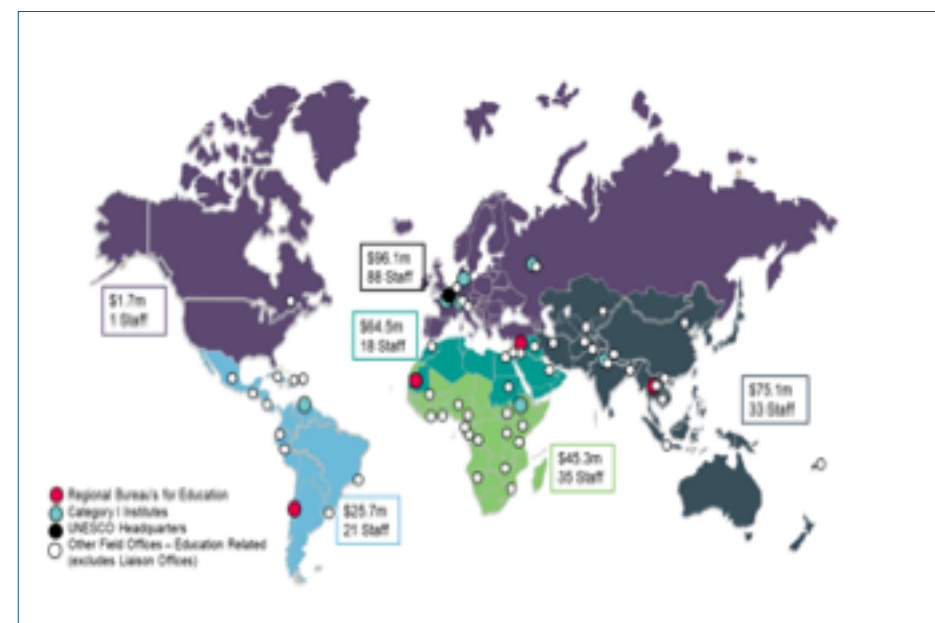


*Source*: Staff numbers and budgets taken from 'UNESCO 39 C/5 Approved Programme and Budget 2018-2019' under 'Major Programme I Education'. NB, this map excludes appropriations and staffing for institutes.

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15 Since 2018, the IBF approach has been adopted, which complicates the comparisons over the years. It incorporates into one budget the regular programme funding, extra budgetary contributions at hand, and also includes a funding target to be mobilized for the biennium. For the Education sector, it also includes the 7 institutes' integrated budgets, which were excluded from earlier biennial budgets. It excludes funding for UIS.

16 UNESCO institutes also raise significant amounts of extra-budgetary funding directly from donors.

## The Education Sector operates within a highly dispersed operating model

24. The Education Sector has an operating model that is functionally and geographically dispersed. Figure 1 illustrates how UNESCO's Education Sector staff are distributed across a very broad geographic footprint. The majority of staff are located within headquarters and regional offices. In addition to the geographic distribution, staff are also functionally distributed across several different parts of the Organisation:

- Headquarters has overall responsibility for the development of global strategies and policies, harmonization of sector programmes, plans and budgets, standard-setting, global leadership and coordination of SDG4-Education 2030, engagement with UNESCO governing bodies and technical backstopping of field offices.

- Regional bureaux for education (and education staff in multi-sectoral regional offices) articulate regional priorities and agendas in the global context, act as convenors of regional policy dialogues and consultation processes, facilitate regional SDG4-Education 2030 implementation and monitoring processes, and act as technical backstops to cluster and national offices. These regional offices serve as 'country' offices for countries with no field presence – i.e. they cover these countries from the regional hub.

- Cluster and National offices are the main delivery platform for UNESCO's national-level activities. These offices plan and execute national-level programming, coordinate UNESCO actions with local partners, identify and negotiate with country-level donors to fund projects, and respond to requests for advice and assistance from Member States.

- Seven specialised Category I Institutes form an integral part of the Sector and function as centres of research excellence, training institutions and providers of technical support in their areas of specialization. These Institutes provide support directly to Member States as well as indirectly to regional bureaux, cluster and field offices.

- Category 2 Institutes and centres, which are established and funded by Member States to contribute to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives. Category 2 Institutes and centres are not legally part of UNESCO.

*Table 4: **Education Category 1 Institutes***

| Institute | Year Est. | Location | Specialisation | Scope |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| International Bureau of Education (IBE) | 1925[17] | Geneva, Switzerland | Curriculum development; teaching, learning and assessment | Global |
| International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) | 1963 | Paris, France | Educational policy, planning and management | Global |
| Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) | 1952 | Hamburg, Germany | Lifelong learning (incl. adult learning, literacy and non-formal basic education) | Global |
| UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE) | 1997 | Moscow, Russian Federation | ICT in education | Global |
| International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) | 1997 | Caracas, Venezuela | Higher education | Latin America & Caribbean region |
| Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA | 1999 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | Teacher education and development | Africa |
| Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) | 2012 | New Delhi, India | Education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship | Asia-Pacific region |

*Source*: UNESCO Documents 35C/5, 37C/5, 38C/5 and 39C/5.

17 Integrated into UNESCO in 1969.

25.    In addition, the cross-sectoral UNESCO Institute for Statistics forms an important part of the sector due to its role as the United Nations repository for comparative statistics in education, and its role in supporting the development and implementation of the monitoring framework for SDG4-Education 2030 agenda.

# Significant reform processes are underway within UNESCO and across UN agencies

## UNESCO's Strategic Transformation

26.    UNESCO as a whole is currently undergoing a significant strategic transformation with the overall aims of: ensuring UNESCO is a global leader in its areas of competence; regaining its prominence as an influential global thought leader; enhancing collaboration to increase accessibility, partner for greater impact and increase resource mobilisation; and modernise its ways of working.

27.    Specific areas of focus for the transformation programme include[18]:

- Strengthening the core work of UNESCO – the delivery of its programmes – by refocusing activities on the core priorities identified in the Medium-Term Strategy

- Strengthening its key role as a laboratory of ideas and as a standard setter in relation to contemporary issues linked to UNESCO's mandate

- Opening UNESCO up further to civil society, NGOs, universities, young people and the private sector, and through strategic partnerships scale up extra-budgetary fundraising

- Transform the structure and ways of working to be more efficient and agile, including through simplified procedures, strengthened management culture, better internal and external communication, and optimisation of the field office network.

28.    Given the transformation process that is underway, it is important that the findings and recommendations from this evaluation reflect this context and reinforce the general 'direction of travel' for the Organisation.

## UN Reform

29.    The United Nations is reforming itself to provide a better response to the needs of its Member States, in support of national development goals and internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through efforts to foster coherence, efficiency and enhanced high-quality delivery. The reform aims to make the UN more transparent and accountable, more flexible, decentralised and effective, and less bureaucratic.

30.    UN Reform is both a challenge and an opportunity for UNESCO and is having a significant impact on the Organisation at the global, regional and country levels. At the global level, UNESCO participates in the Chief Executive Board[19] to coordinate with other UN member organisations, and in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) to coordinate on the SDGs. At the regional level, it participates in relevant Regional UN Development Group Teams and the Regional Coordination Mechanisms. In recent years, UNESCO has become better integrated into UN Country Teams (UNCTs), however UNESCO's involvement at this level is challenged by its relatively weak country presence (limited number of staff) and limited funding for focal points[20] in countries without a UNESCO presence.

31.    As with the UNESCO Strategic Transformation process, there is an expectation that the findings and recommendations of this evaluation will be consistent with the broader UN Reform process.

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18 UNESCO's Strategic Transformation, 40 C/55.

19 The UN System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) serves to coordinate actions and policies between 31 UN agencies. It is composed of Executive Heads of UN agencies and chaired by the UN Secretary General. For more information see: https://www.unsystem.org/content/ceb .

20 For countries that have no permanent UNESCO office, the regional office will nominate a focal point that acts as a prime liaison between the country and UNESCO.

## Challenges to traditional education systems and structures are impacting UNESCO's Education Sector

32.    A wide range of other factors impacting on the operating environment for the Education Sector include: demographic change, rising economic and social inequality, rapidly developing ICTs including artificial intelligence, and major global challenges such as climate change which is increasing the frequency of natural disasters (e.g., floods), contributing to large scale population displacement, and increasing potential for global conflict. These developments are challenging traditional education systems and structures, creating demands for new knowledge and skills, and new modalities for delivering education. It is important that UNESCO keeps pace with these developments if it is to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world.

33.    Tension also exists between the competing demands for UNESCO to:

I.  focus on strengthening national education systems in low- and middle-income countries and conflict affected countries through technical assistance, policy advice and capacity development, and

II.  produce knowledge and inform the global education policy debate on emerging issues (e.g., digital literacy, citizenship education, social and emotional literacy, implications of neuroscience for teaching/learning, AI and education, future of work etc).

# 2. UNESCO's comparative advantage

**To ensure its continued relevance, UNESCO must maintain and enhance its unique comparative advantage, and ensure this forms the foundation for its next medium-term education strategy.**

34. Stakeholders and survey respondents expressed a wide range of views about UNESCO's comparative advantage. While different stakeholders emphasised different aspects of this, there was a high degree of consistency of views across the various stakeholder groups (multilateral and intergovernmental organisations, Member State representatives, donors, NGOs/CSOs and academia). Strong themes emerged regarding the dimensions of UNESCO's comparative advantage:

   • UNESCO's unique status as the only UN agency with a mandate to focus on education. This included UNESCO's unique normative powers, being the only organisation that can prepare international conventions and set global standards on contemporary educational issues.[21] That said, many stakeholders observed that an increasing number of institutional actors are active in education at global, regional and country levels, leading to greater contestability over aspects of UNESCO's education mandate. Several multilateral partners and major donors commented that UNESCO's comparative advantage at a global level had been weakened due to a diminished intellectual leadership role, with other players (e.g., OECD, World Bank) viewed by some as being better resourced and more influential.

   • UNESCO is recognised internationally as unwavering in its commitment to a human rights-based and humanistic approach to education. Representatives of Member States particularly emphasised the moral authority of UNESCO, and contrasted this with the more functional, human capital-based approach of some other institutions. UNESCO is also seen as more inclusive in its approach than other international agencies, and is widely recognised as bringing together a wide range of actors from civil society, NGOs, academia and the private sector.

*"It has a moral authority that is missing in [other organisations]. Integration in UN Structure. Regional structures and representation."[22]*

   • UNESCO has significant convening power and credibility with Member State governments. As a Member State-driven organisation, UNESCO has direct access to governments, both through the National Commissions for UNESCO (NATCOMs),[23] Permanent Delegations to UNESCO[24] and Ministries of Education. Member State representatives observed that this close relationship is unique amongst UN agencies.

   • While not an intrinsic comparative advantage, most stakeholders commented that UNESCO has been entrusted by the international education community with the unique role of leading and coordinating the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda. This is viewed by stakeholders as a weighty responsibility, with many arguing this should be the Education Sector's principal focus for the next decade.

   • The universal relevance of UNESCO's mandate, covering all aspects of education from early childhood through to lifelong learning, and covering both formal and non-formal educational settings. Many stakeholders argued that UNESCO's universal relevance has been further reinforced through the adoption of the SDGs, given the cross-cutting role that education plays in supporting all goals.

   • UNESCO's global scope and reach, including its field presence, is also seen as an advantage. Where UNESCO has on the ground presence, Member States strongly value UNESCO's strong relationships with governments, who see it as an independent, impartial and a trusted advisor. However, UNESCO's relatively limited field office network scale is a constraint, with Member State representatives and NGOs/CSOs noting that other agencies (e.g., UNICEF) have greater field capacity and reach.

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21 UNESCO's Constitution entrusts the organisation with building collaboration among nations by inter alia, recommending international agreements and adopting other instruments, such as declarations and guidelines. While some of these instruments are not legally binding, they have a moral authority and reflect the political commitments of countries.

22 External stakeholders, answer to the question what is UNESCO's comparative advantage.

23 UNESCO is the only UN agency that has a global network of national cooperating bodies (i.e. NATCOMs). NATCOMs are part of UNESCO's architecture. For more information see: https://en.unesco.org/countries/national-commissions .

24 The Permanent Delegations to UNESCO ensure liaison between Member States' Governments and the Organization's Secretariat. At present, 186 Member States have established Permanent Delegations to UNESCO. In addition, there are 2 Permanent Observers and 10 intergovernmental organizations with Permanent Observer Missions to UNESCO. For details see: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/member-states-information/directory-of-permanent-delegations/ .

- UNESCO has accumulated technical expertise in many aspects of education.[25] It is widely viewed as having played a significant role in setting the international education agenda for decades, producing influential forward-looking intellectual work. However, most interviewees considered that UNESCO's intellectual functions had been weakened over time, noting the small size of UNESCO and weakened capability as a result of the financial crisis.

35. Most stakeholders consider UNESCO's comparative advantage is stronger at a global level compared with its country-level roles (see Figure 2). Specifically, 70% of survey respondents believe UNESCO has a comparative advantage in relation to its global functions (i.e., global coordination of SDG4-Education 2030, intellectual leadership, standard setting) compared to 52% at the country level (i.e., provision of technical assistance, capacity building).

**Figure 2: *Stakeholders consider UNESCO's comparative advantage is stronger at a global-level than at country-level***

**Does UNESCO have a comparative advantage?**
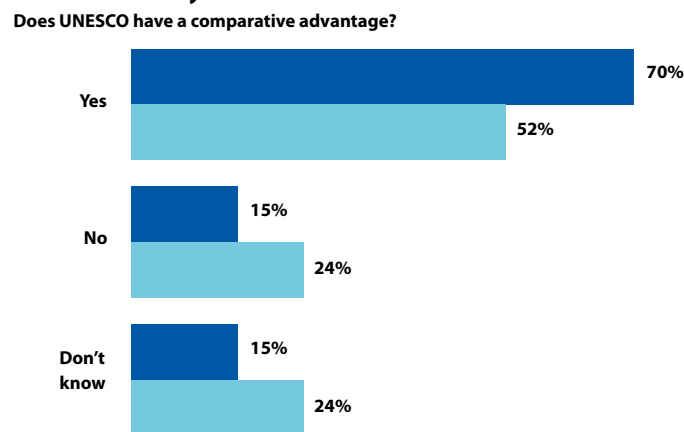


*Source*: Surveys of UNESCO's internal and external stakeholders, combined results. N=520 for global level, N=470 for country level

36. When commenting on UNESCO's comparative advantage at country-level, most interviewees viewed UNESCO's primary role as upstream in nature. That is, UNESCO's principal roles at country-level include policy advocacy and advice, technical assistance and capacity building support, with the overall aim of strengthening national education policies and systems. However, many stakeholders observed that UNESCO's focus at country-level is increasingly being drawn into small-scale, less impactful projects and activities due to its increased dependence on extra-budgetary funding for operational activities. Education specialists in the field frequently commented that they spend a large part of their time initiating, managing and reporting on small-scale donor-funded projects, which limits their capacity to engage more strategically with governments and partners.

37. While many aspects of UNESCO's comparative advantage remain strong, this evaluation has found that key planks have become eroded over time (e.g., diminished intellectual standing) during a period of sustained financial and capability constraint, and against the backdrop a rapidly evolving global education architecture.

*"UNESCO's mandate is being eroded by other UN agencies and organisations working in the field of education, who are more proactive and courageous in their vision, more effective at implementing their programmes and projects, quicker to respond to opportunities, and more supportive of their field staff."[26]*

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25 Commonly mentioned areas of expertise included: educational policy and sector-wide planning; education statistics and EMIS, teacher education, curriculum, literacy, rights-based approaches including girls education, technical and vocational education, sexual and reproductive health education, education for sustainable development, global citizenship and adult/lifelong learning.

26 Internal stakeholder, answer to the question whether UNESCO has a global comparative advantage.

# 3. Global coordination, intellectual leadership and standard setting

## Global leadership and coordination. Shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda

38.  UNESCO's contribution to shaping the global education priorities and the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda in the lead up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (pre-2015) is evident through a wide range of activities. These included: convening global and regional meetings and dialogues; preparation of background papers and think pieces; facilitating debate and consultation amongst member states; advising on the formulation of the target; leading development of the monitoring framework; producing guidance on unpacking the SDG4 to support implementation; and advising on the global coordination mechanisms/architecture needed to support implementation. Two thirds of survey respondents agreed that UNESCO played a significant role in shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda (see Figure 3).

39.  UNESCO conducted global consultations with a wide range of stakeholders in Dakar leading up to the Muscat agreement[27], and UNESCO also convened regional stakeholders and drew on insights from its regional offices to inform the SDGs. UNESCO, supported by UNICEF and others, brought Member States together to adopt the Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action in 2015, both of which gave shape to and informed SDG4.

40.  Based on our review of a sample of UNESCO's knowledge products, it is clear that UNESCO's intellectual work and advocacy made a significant contribution to shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda, including securing a standalone goal for education, and ensuring the universality of the agenda with a clear focus on equity
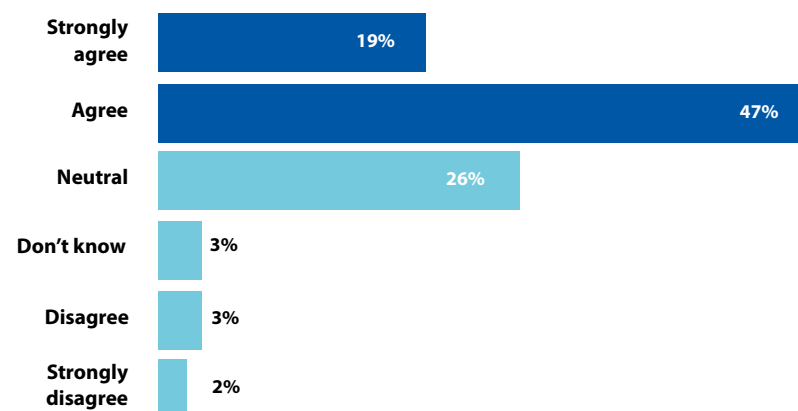
and inclusion, quality of education, lifelong learning and global citizenship. Further analysis of UNESCO's contribution to shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda can be found in the Literature Review accompanying this evaluation report.

41.  A wide range of interviewees, including representative of multilateral organisations, Member States, donors, NGOs and CSOs, commented positively about the comprehensive and inclusive global and regional consultation processes in the lead up to the Incheon Declaration and publication of the Education 2030 Framework for Action in 2015. These processes demonstrated the unparalleled convening power of UNESCO in the field of education.

42.  UNESCO is viewed as having played a key role as an honest broker, working to accommodate various stakeholder positions by synthesising and distilling stakeholder views and enriching them with its own perspectives. Its strong advocacy is viewed by stakeholders as having been critical to building support for stand-alone, holistic education goal, and for ensuring that SDG4 and the Education 2030 Agenda was underpinned by a holistic, humanistic and rights-based approach.

*Figure 3:* **Two-thirds of survey respondents agree UNESCO shaped the Education 2030 Agenda**

**UNESCO shaped Education 2030 Agenda through its intellectual and normative work?**



| | |
|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 19% |
| Agree | 47% |
| Neutral | 26% |
| Don't know | 3% |
| Disagree | 3% |
| Strongly disagree | 2% |

*Source*: Surveys of UNESCO's internal and external stakeholders, combined results. N=519.

27 The Muscat Agreement of 2014 was adopted by the Global Meeting on EFA. It proposed the vision, principles and scope of the post-EFA education agenda and formulated overarching goals and global targets. It formed the basis for development of the Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 framework for Action: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000228122 ..

## Operationalising the Education 2030 Agenda

*Since 2015, momentum has been lost in operationalising the Education 2030 agenda and represents a risk to achievement of SDG4 targets.*

43.    The Education 2030 Agenda aims to mobilise all countries and partners around SDG4 and its targets and provides guidance on translating the commitments made into practice at the global, regional and country levels. This includes proposed ways of implementing, coordinating, financing and monitoring SDG-Education 2030 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

44.    While primary responsibility for working towards the SDGs rests with Member States, the international community looks to UNESCO, as the global custodian for SDG4, to help countries translate the high-level goal and targets into concrete policies and initiatives that can be implemented at national level.

45.    This is extremely challenging because SDG4 – Education 2030 is broad and ambitious in scope, and some of the targets[28] are very challenging to implement and lack quantitative indicators (e.g., target 4.7 on global citizenship education). Member States' starting points – and their priorities and needs – vary widely according to their stage of development, with some still working to reach EFA goals of relating to participation in basic education. In Africa in particular, access to education continues to be major challenge, and remains the most urgent priority.

*"UNESCO did a good job leading up to the formulation and agreement on SDG 4, but it has been much less convincing since. It has not been good at working together with major UN agencies and other agencies supporting SDG 4 since."[29]*

28 SDG4 comprises seven targets. For more see https://sdg-tracker.org/quality-education .
29 Internal stakeholder, answer to the question in what ways UNESCO shaped SDG4 / Education 2030 Agenda.

46.    Despite the good work of UNESCO in the lead up to the Incheon Declaration, most interviewees agreed that momentum had not been maintained in the post-2015 implementation phase. This view was expressed most strongly by representatives of multilateral and intergovernmental organisations and some Member States, however many staff in the Education Sector also shared this view. A commonly held view was that UNESCO (and other multilateral organisations) had not sufficiently planned for the transition from agenda-setting to coordinating implementation and monitoring progress.

47.    Several themes came through in our interviews about aspects of global coordination that require clarification or strengthening: roles and responsibilities of institutions within the global education architecture; the role and functioning of SDG4 Steering Committee; uneven regional coordination processes; insufficient resources for supporting regional and national monitoring of progress; and a lack of effective global partnerships.

### Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of key institutions and coordination mechanisms

48.    Many stakeholders acknowledged that the global education architecture has become more complex with the emergence of new institutional actors with a variety of mandates and programmatic activities. Many stakeholders from multilateral organisations, Member States and donors commented on the lack of clarity regarding the roles and relationships of different institutions and the multiplicity of coordinating mechanisms.

49.    As noted earlier, several new funding mechanisms has emerged (e.g., GPE and ECW) and several new mechanisms are on the horizon (e.g., IFFEd, Education Outcomes Fund). In addition, the mandate and operational scope of global education institutions continues to evolve, with several multilateral agencies (including the World Bank, UNICEF and UNHCR) extending their roles and activities in education. This situation has contributed to a lack of clarity regarding the relationship of these evolving institutions to existing global structures and coordination mechanisms, such as the SDG4 Steering Committee

50.    Representatives of Member States and major donors commented that the lack of role clarity and cooperation between UN agencies and other multilateral and intergovernmental organisations is hindering progress towards SDG4. These stakeholders share a concern that the major global education institutions, including UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, GPE and other education financing mechanisms, are not well coordinated in their support for implementation of SDG4-Education 2030.

51. This situation is recognised by UNESCO, which has been playing a leading role in convening high-level fora to clarify the global education architecture. For example, in July 2019 it convened a Meeting of Principals of Global Multilateral Education Partners in Paris, at which it was agreed to establish a Multilateral Education Platform that would bring together the heads of multilateral organisations, funds and agencies working on education globally. These discussions are a positive step towards gaining greater clarity about the relative roles and responsibilities of participating agencies, and provides an additional forum for advocacy and cooperation in support of the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda.

*"UNESCO should put in place frameworks for creating more effective partnerships and synergies for SDG4. There is little effective communication around its leadership role, [which is] little known to other actors."[30]*

## SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee has not functioned as well as it could

52. A wide range of stakeholders, including representatives of Member States, multilateral agencies, and major donors commented that the SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee[31] has not functioned as well as it could. Several multilateral partners and major donors commented that the representative membership structures and processes of the SDG4 Steering Committee contribute to a perception that it is bureaucratic and ineffective. In contrast, many global-level stakeholders also commented that there has been a weak commitment to the SDG4 Steering Committee from several key multilateral and intergovernmental partners, which has undermined its policy/financing advocacy role.

53. A further contributory factor identified by stakeholders is that global education financing mechanisms are geared towards providing country-level support, and there is a lack of funding available for global public goods such as coordination and leadership of Education 2030 and the development of effective global and regional

monitoring mechanisms. Global and regional coordination of SDG4-Education 2030 is resource-intensive and has inevitably suffered due to UNESCO's constrained financial resources and the lack of priority and dedicated extra-budgetary funding for this critical global function.

54. A wide range of interviewees commented on the relationship between global and regional processes for supporting implementation and monitoring of SDG4-Education 2030. In particular, Member State representatives commented on the lack of visibility of SDG4 global coordination processes and that regional representatives on the SDG4 Steering Committee did not adequately represent the interests of their region. Regional representation on the Committee was criticised as not being underpinned by formal consultative processes within each region.

## Uneven regional coordination processes

55. While regional coordination processes are in place in all regions, there is significant variation in the progress that has been made.[32] Generally, regional processes have included the development of a regional strategy and roadmap, the creation of Regional Thematic Working Groups on SDG4-Education 2030, the organisation and management of regional network of national coordinators or focal points for SDG4, and the organisation of thematic regional meetings and technical workshops. While these processes have built on the structures and experience of EFA, education staff in regional offices reported that the significant momentum built up under EFA had been lost. Staff in regional bureaux expressed frustration at the lack of guidance and support from headquarters.

56. Regional leadership in Africa is of particular concern to many stakeholders, particularly headquarters staff, representatives of African Member States, and donors. While regional coordination processes are well underway in parts of Africa, there is no pan-African strategy or coordination group and a lack of clarity exists regarding which multi-sectoral office should take the overall lead.

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30 Internal stakeholder, answer to the question whether the coordination with other partners works well.
31 SDG4 Steering Group was created as a part of the global coordination mechanism for the implementation of SDG4. It is convened by UNESCO and consists of Member States representing all six UNESCO regions, E9 initiative, civil society, SDG4-Education 2030 convening agencies and partners as well as associated members (e.g., private sector).

32 Regional coordination processes are most advanced in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Middle East regions.

## Insufficient resources for supporting regional and national monitoring of progress

57.  Monitoring is arguably the centrepiece of UNESCO's role in leading and coordinating SDG4. Many interviewees and survey respondents acknowledged the excellent work of UIS and the GEM Report team at the global levels, including the work UIS has done to develop the SDG4 monitoring framework.

58.  However, many stakeholders expressed significant concerns about slow progress in operationalising monitoring of SDG4 at regional and national levels. Specific concerns relate to: a lack of clear priorities regarding where to concentrate data collection efforts (given the broad array of indicators required for monitoring progress towards SDG4); and the lack of statistical capacity building support available at regional and national levels.

59.  While UIS is highly regarded for its international cooperation, several stakeholders noted it faces significant resource constraints and has recently reduced its regional presence, through which it provided statistical capacity building support to Member States. This is consistent with the findings of a recent evaluation which concluded that UIS faces significant financial sustainability challenges.[33] This has the potential to weaken global monitoring of progress towards SDG4, including the evidence base available to support the Global Education Monitoring Report. [34]

60.  A positive development in this regard is the commitment, at the recent Meeting of the Multilateral Education Platform in September 2019, to support a proposal led by UIS to create a Global Coalition for Education Data. This coalition aims to bring together countries, multilateral organisations and donors with the goal of aligning financial and technical resources devoted to improving education data at country and international levels, resulting in a more coordinated approach to meeting the SDG4 data challenge. A key first step will be the development of a 2020-30 roadmap to improve education measurement through aligned investments in priority areas.

61.  Another positive example of SDG4 monitoring is the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE, or 'Laboratorio'), which has increased the number of countries with comparable data for Indicator 4.1.1 (Rosetta Stone project).
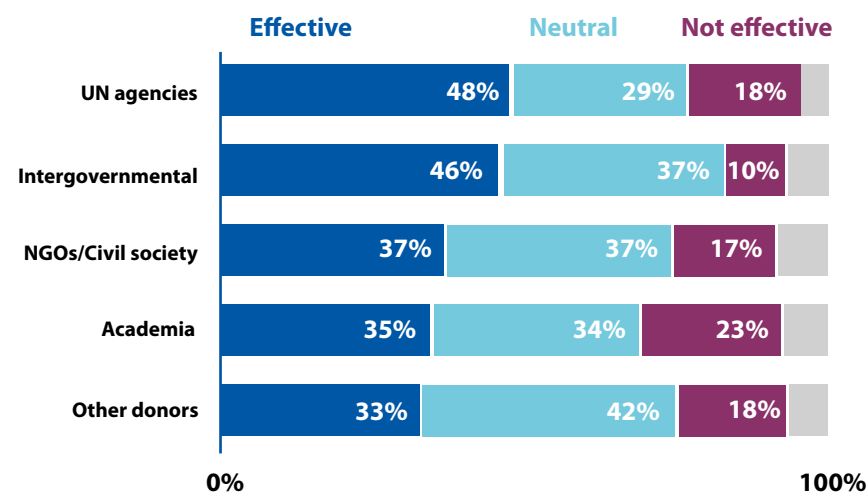
33 Evaluation of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), IOS Evaluation Office, November 2018.

34 GEM is an independent monitoring team hosted by UNESCO. GEM is tasked with monitoring progress towards SDG4 / Education 2030 Agenda and with reviewing the global coordination mechanism. For more information see: https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/ .

## Lack of effective global partnerships in support of operationalising SDG4-Education 2030

62.  Multilateral organisations, major donors and some Member State representatives perceive UNESCO as somewhat protective of its mandate, and internal interviewees frequently mentioned that UNESCO is in a "competition for territory". This attitude of defensiveness appears to be motivated by concerns that other organisations are better resourced, more agile and – as funding platforms and implementation agencies – more relevant to countries. In contrast, interviewees from multilateral organisations see UNESCO as a critical part of the global education architecture, and seek a closer, more collaborative relationship. UNESCO Survey respondents also consider there is room for improvement in UNESCO's partnerships in support of SDG4-Education 2030 (see Figure 4).

63.  There is much to be gained by UNESCO from operating in closer partnership with others, particularly given its relatively small scale and constrained financial resources. Indeed, UNESCO could have a much greater impact on global educational outcomes by better influencing and leveraging the resources of other institutions, including funding platforms such as GPE and ECW, and implementation partners such as UNICEF and the World Bank.

**Figure 4:** *How well does UNESCO partner to promote the 2030 Agenda?*



| | Effective | Neutral | Not effective |
|---|---|---|---|
| UN agencies | 48% | 29% | 18% |
| Intergovernmental | 46% | 37% | 10% |
| NGOs/Civil society | 37% | 37% | 17% |
| Academia | 35% | 34% | 23% |
| Other donors | 33% | 42% | 18% |

*Source*: Survey of UNESCO's internal stakeholders. N=134.

## Intellectual leadership

*Intellectual leadership in the field of education is a key part of UNESCO's comparative advantage, but its international standing and capacity as a global thought leader has eroded over time.*

64.  The Education Sector plays an important role in building connections between education research, policy and practice, which it achieves by stimulating and sharing research and knowledge products in various forms (e.g., foresight studies, working papers, books, policy guidelines). Through this activity, UNESCO helps to shine the light on important issues in the field of education, informs the setting of priorities for the international education agenda, and builds the evidence base for technical assistance, policy advice and policy dialogue. UNESCO does this by leveraging the resources within its research network, which is comprised of headquarters, specialised institutes, regional bureaus and UNESCO Chairs.

65.  UNESCO's knowledge products span a wide range of topics at the global, regional and sub-regional level including teaching and learning, curriculum, education environments across formal and non-formal settings, assessment of learning outcomes, ICTs and digital learning, multicultural and citizenship education, vocational skills development and higher education. More recently, UNESCO has engaged in new research areas related to education for sustainable development, migration and displacement and implications for education systems, education in emergencies, and youth and violent extremism.

66.  A flagship product is the Global Education Monitoring Report (the GEM Report), which is an editorially independent, authoritative and evidence-based annual report, whose mandate is to monitor progress towards the education targets in the new SDGs framework. This Report has a global reputation for excellence and has undertaken in-depth examination of a wide range of themes (e.g., inequality, gender, teaching, conflict, and accountability).

67.  UNESCO Category 1 institutes contribute substantially toward UNESCO's production of knowledge products and advancing the frontiers of knowledge across a wide range of education domains. Stakeholders particularly highlighted the high-quality research output produced by IIEP on a wide range of issues including ethics, transparency and open data in education, quality assurance, governance and financing of education. A significant number of stakeholders were commented on the innovative contributions from MGIEP on social and emotional learning, implications of neuroscience for teaching and learning, and prevention of violent extremism. Several institutes maintain online platforms and portals for sharing data, information and research[35] and provide editorial and publishing support for working papers series, policy briefs and international education journals.

68.  As noted earlier in this report, key stakeholders consider UNESCO's global intellectual leadership in the field of education to be a key part of its comparative advantage, however many are concerned about an erosion of its capability and reputation in this area. Many stakeholders put this in a long-term historical context, citing the Faure report (1972) and Delors report (1996) as having influential and long lasting impacts on global education discourse (e.g., by establishing lifelong learning as a global educational paradigm), while observing that UNESCO had not had the same impact on global education discourse since then.

69.  This observation stands in contrast to our own literature review, which concluded that UNESCO, through its various knowledge products, made a significant contribution towards shaping global educational priorities and the SDG4-Education 2030. It also concluded that UNESCO's intellectual leadership had contributed to furthering understanding in several areas of concern for the post-2015 education agenda (i.e., access, equity and inclusion, quality and lifelong learning).

70.  Despite this good work, stakeholders expressed several concerns about UNESCO's intellectual leadership role and activities:

   • While UNESCO produces a high volume of knowledge products, these are widely viewed as being uneven in quality and lacking coherence. Several stakeholders commented on the lack of clear differentiation between types of knowledge products (e.g., policy briefs, working and occasional papers, technical guides, and official (normative) policy statements) and inconsistent application of editorial standards and quality controls.

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35 Examples include: ETICO (a global hub for transparency and integrity in education); Planipolis (a portal containing national education policies and plans); SITEAL (a regional platform for Latin America containing country profiles, policy documents and data); and Refop (a platform for information exchange on vocational training in Africa).

- The development of normative products (e.g., policy guidelines), research and education foresight activities are undertaken across many parts of UNESCO. Stakeholders observed there is significant overlapping research activity occurring across headquarters, institutes and regional bureaux, with no overarching strategy in place to guide this work. Related to this, UNESCO has multiple repositories for its knowledge products, many of which have low visibility and awareness, and are difficult for stakeholders to navigate.

- Member State representatives and donors commented that UNESCO's efforts to "think big" about the future of education have been infrequent, and that the most recent major report - Rethinking Education: Towards a Common Goal? – did not have the same impact as the previous Faure and Delors reports. Some felt this was partly due to a lack of editorial independence, while others commented that the report could have been more effectively communicated and disseminated.

- A wide range of stakeholders observed that other international organisations (e.g., OECD, World Bank) are now playing a more prominent role in research and knowledge production, contributing to the view that UNESCO's standing as an intellectual leader in the field of education is eroding. However, our literature review identified that UNESCO's knowledge products contribute a unique perspective from those of other agencies in several key respects, including by promoting a rights-based view of education that is aspirational and transformational in nature, and by focusing on issues of access, equity and the protection of the rights of children and youth.

- Many stakeholders commented that the production of high-quality research is resource intensive and observed that the Education Sector has low budgets for undertaking research, knowledge engagement or other foresight activities compared with other institutions including universities and the academic community. Related to this, many external stakeholders commented that UNESCO should focus less on producing knowledge products itself and instead build partnerships to leverage the knowledge and expertise within international and national think-tanks, universities (including its own network of UNESCO Chairs) and research centres, who are often better positioned and resourced to undertake this activity. This is consistent with UNESCO's role as a knowledge broker and laboratory of ideas.

*"UNESCO does not have adequate funds to research and present in-depth studies on critical issues, or to sustain advocacy in the long-term."[36]*

71. Considering its significant resource limitations, many stakeholders considered that the Education Sector should prioritise education foresight activities with a view to anticipating future challenges and opportunities for education systems, and on the production of evidence-based policy guidance of relevance to implementation of SDG4 – Education 2030. In addition, stakeholders considered UNESCO has a critical role to play as a knowledge broker, repository and disseminator of research and evidence of relevance to Member States.

72. We note that senior leaders within the Education Sector have already identified a number of the issues noted above and have taken steps to scale up its functions of education foresight and as a laboratory of ideas. For example, through its Education Research and Foresight Team, the Sector is developing a UNESCO-wide education research strategy to bring more coherence and consistent quality to its research and knowledge mobilisation work. In addition, the Sector recently launched the Futures of Education global initiative, which will be led by an independent International Commission of thought-leaders from diverse fields and regions, catalyse a global consultation on how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet, and will result in a landmark report in 2021.[37]

## Standard setting

73. UNESCO has a key role to develop, promote and monitor education norms and standards that guarantee the right to education at country-level and advance the aims of the Education 2030 Agenda. This includes working to ensure Member States' legal obligations are reflected in national legal frameworks and translated into country policies.

74. Many stakeholders commented that UNESCO has been somewhat passive in its standard setting role in education for a long time, with no new global UNESCO conventions focused on education since 1989.

36 External stakeholder, answer to the question about UNESCO's global comparative advantage.
37 https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/

75.    However, since 2012 UNESCO has been working on a project to draft a new General Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. Following extensive consultations with Member States, this is now at an advanced stage and the final text is expected to be ready for consideration at the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2019, following which it would be ready for ratification by Member States.

76.    This new Global Convention is intended to encompass all countries and support implementation of SDG4, especially as it concerns the quality enhancement of higher education. It will enable greater student and labour mobility, recognise academic credentials as a global right, and bring about increased consistency in procedures for recognising qualifications.

77.    UNESCO also maintains a global Edurights, a global observatory on the right to education38 and has undertaken many global and regional studies and consultations to monitor countries' observance of various education norms and standards. For example, with funding from the Capacity Development for Education Programme (CapED), UNESCO reviewed national legal frameworks relating to the right to education in 11 LDCs, suggesting lessons for policy-making and future normative work.39 These types of studies are a good illustration of how UNESCO can protect individuals' rights to education by bringing greater transparency to areas of concern, reinforcing countries' accountability while simultaneously supporting them to improve their policies. UNESCO is uniquely placed to carry out such work because of its independence, technical expertise, and strong relationships with Member States.

38 http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/
39 UNESCO, Operationalizing Sustainable Development Goal 4: A review of national legislations on the right to education, ED/EO/DEE/2017/02REV.

# 4. Country-level operational roles and activities

## Relevance to Member States

*UNESCO is responsive the needs of Member States and has effective mechanisms in place to ensure that UNESCO's in-country activities align with countries' needs.*

78. UNESCO's country-level operational roles and activities comprise the provision of policy advocacy, technical assistance (i.e., in support of evidence-based education system reforms and policy development), and capacity building support. These activities are delivered primarily through UNESCO's extensive network of cluster and national offices, although direct support to countries is also variously provided by regional bureau, institutes and centres, and headquarters staff.

79. With some exceptions (e.g., large programmes responding to emergencies and crises), the delivery of this operational support is largely organised at country-level, although programmes such as CapED operate at a global-level to provide targeted assistance to reinforce national capacities for undertaking evidence-based national education reforms in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and those furthest away from achieving SDG4 targets.

80. Country-level activities are driven by the needs of Member States and UNESCO has effective mechanisms in place to ensure that its in-country activities align with countries' needs. UNESCO implements activities upon a request from the government (usually via the Ministry of Education) and works closely with government agencies, NATCOMs and local partners to agree on the nature and scope of assistance required.

81. UNESCO advocates for projects and initiatives at a country-level that it considers are important. While challenges can sometimes arise with work on sensitive topics (e.g., comprehensive sexuality education, education in minority languages, compliance with

education standards and norms), UNESCO is a consistent advocate for this work, and cooperates with governments to find constructive ways forward.

82. This approach allows UNESCO to maintain working relationships with Member States to support alignment with global priorities and international standards and norms. Many stakeholders commented that, as a trusted advisor, UNESCO constructively discusses challenging issues with governments that other organisations find it difficult to address. Through this work, UNESCO supports the reflection of universal values, such as those relating to the right to education, in national laws and policies.

83. UNESCO's policy advice and technical expertise are highly valued by Member States, and there is significant demand for support. Indeed, the expectations of governments for advice and support from UNESCO far out-strip the Education Sector's capacity to deliver. Our interviews with Member State representatives, UNESCO field staff and country-level partners indicate there is particularly high-demand for practical guidance on the implementation of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda, data collection and monitoring, as well as specific technical expertise to address education system and policy reforms.

84. Country-level partners we interviewed (i.e., representatives of government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs/CSOs) value UNESCO's global perspective and ability to bring in international expertise, share knowledge and best practices. They consider it an advantage that UNESCO is not a major funding or implementation agency, as it is less influenced by donor-driven priorities and does not bring strong expectations of accountability.[40]

*"UNESCO has a tradition of consulting with Member States - and crafts its programmes in response to stated interests of its members. The financial cuts […] may have limited its capacity to adequately respond - and may find it in a position of being unable to pursue with greater emphasis, the programme areas which can attract better project funding - not necessarily those its member states identify as priority."[41]*

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40 We note elsewhere in this report that UNESCO country offices have been encouraged to raise extra-budgetary funding, and so are influenced by donor priorities and interests.

41 External stakeholder, answer to the question whether UNESCO's in-country activities are aligned with country's priorities.

## Alignment to SDG 4 – Education 2030

*UNESCO's country-level operational activities are highly aligned with SDG4-Education 2030, however the breadth of the agenda and scarcity of resources means country-level needs have to be prioritised.*

85.    The majority of interviewees and survey respondents consider that UNESCO's country-level operational activities are highly aligned with global education priorities, as reflected in the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda (see Figure 5). However, stakeholders commented that this alignment is almost axiomatic, since the SDG 4 – Education 2030 Agenda is very broad and covers every aspect of education.

86.    Multilateral organisations and Member State representatives indicated that countries are challenged by the very broad focus of SDG4, and that awareness of the Education 2030 Agenda at national and sub-national levels is highly variable across countries. Country-level stakeholders (i.e., Member State representatives and UNESCO field staff) commented that the targets are broad in nature, and in some areas it is challenging to know how to interpret these for the purposes of policy development. For example, in relation to target 4.7, it was noted that the concept of sustainable development has widely varying interpretations across different countries, population groups and learning contexts.

*Figure 5: More than half of respondents believe UNESCO activities are aligned with Education 2030 Agenda, but a large proportion don't know*
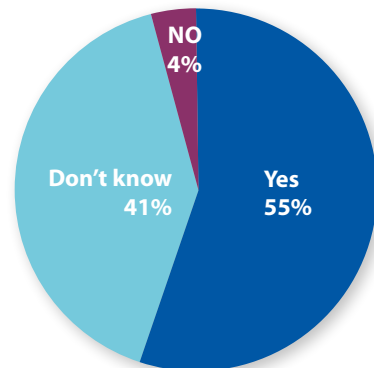


*Source*: Surveys of UNESCO's internal and external stakeholders, combined results. N=469.

87.    Representatives of Member States indicated that governments are looking to UNESCO to provide stronger advocacy and practical guidance at a national level to support implementation and monitoring of SDG 4 – Education 2030. Many country-level representatives commented there is a lack of visibility and clear processes for supporting implementation and monitoring progress of SDG4 at country-level, despite efforts by UNESCO to establish SDG4 coordination processes in each region.

88.    A significant number of country-level stakeholders commented that UNESCO's limited resources to support the development of national capacities in education sector planning and education statistics is a barrier to achieving progress on implementation and monitoring of the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda. In particular, the reduction in UNESCO-UIS field staff in recent years, notably in Africa, is viewed as a risk to UNESCO's ability to fulfil its mandate to lead and coordinate the SDG4 and Education 2030 Agenda.

89.    There is an ongoing need, as with EFA, to provide capacity building to countries for the collection of data and monitoring of progress towards the SDGs. Quality education data is essential to inform decisions about development priorities. Representatives of multilateral agencies, Member States, donors, and UNESCO staff in the field called for UNESCO to strengthen its work in the provision of quality education data, including support for the development of education management information systems, indicator frameworks and tools to enable the tracking of progress towards the attainment of the SDG4 targets.

## Impact on education reform and developing national capacity

*UNESCO has made a positive impact on national education policies and systems, and national education capacities in many countries, but has had little impact in others. Its impact at country-level is constrained by its limited field capacity, and high dependence on extra-budgetary funds.*

90. There are many good examples of UNESCO having a positive impact on education reform and developing national capacity across all UNESCO regions, from low- to middle-income countries. In less developed countries, UNESCO's support for policy development and capacity building is viewed very favourably by Member States and local partners.

91. In Yemen, UNESCO is playing a crucial role in ensuring that the conflict-affected country has one transitional education plan. UNESCO led the local coordination group to set up the education plan, bringing together all education stakeholders in the country, including both the Yemeni government and the rebels. GPE and IIEP are developing the strategy based on UNESCO's manual for transitional education planning.

92. In the Philippines and Cambodia, the joint efforts of UNESCO and NGOs have brought about improvements in native language education. The process in Cambodia began in 2005 with a pilot project of home education in native languages, which was later extended to school education. UNESCO and NGOs conducted joint seminars and other advocacy activities for Ministry of Education staff about benefits and necessity of education in mother tongue. The success of the pilot projects, and UNESCO's advocacy, contributed to the introduction, in 2013, of a policy on native language education – first with five languages and then expanding to 19. Similar processes in the Philippines led to the introduction of education in approximately 100 native languages. Currently, UNESCO and NGO partners are working with Thailand and Myanmar on minority languages in education.

93. The Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE, or 'Laboratorio')) has developed a significant regional student assessment and quality assessment initiative (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo, or ERCE) that spans 19 countries, from low-medium to upper-medium income level. It has been coordinating these assessments for the past 25 years. LLECE complements PISA (OECD) in the Latin American region, and provides a unique opportunity for countries who cannot participate in PISA to evaluate and measure their own educational performance. This validated regional assessment provides a strong evidence base for national decision-making in education policy and planning. LLECE was developed by the Regional Bureau for Education in Santiago, with cooperation from UIS and academia, and with funding support from UNICEF.

94. Through the SDG4 Pilot of the CapED programme, UNESCO supported the development of new education sector plans in Haiti, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Senegal, thus ensuring stronger linkages with SDG4 commitments. In 2016, CapED supported the development of technical guidelines to enable national authorities to operationalise the SDG4 agenda. IIEP-Pôle de Dakar provides technical assistance to African Member States to strengthen their capacity to plan and manage their education systems, and to align national education plans with SDG4 commitments.

95. UIS prepared the development of a CapED training package for on-the-job training of national statistical teams, which will enable countries to do a self-assessment of data sources, data quality and to identify their capacity development needs for statistical data production and analysis.

96. These and other examples of UNESCO's work show the positive impacts of UNESCO's country-level activity on national education systems and on the development of national and regional capacities. This positive impact was also confirmed through the stakeholder survey, with the majority of stakeholders considering UNESCO has had a positive impact on development of national education capacities, education policies and reform of national education systems (see Figure 6).

97. Notwithstanding these good examples, stakeholders frequently commented that UNESCO's country-level operational work has become increasingly dependent on the need to raise extra-budgetary funding for projects. Education specialists in cluster and country offices frequently find themselves spending a large part of their time managing portfolios of projects, which are often small in size and scope. Figure 7 illustrates that one quarter of UNESCO's country-level projects involve contracts less than $50,000 in value. While these projects typically relate to priorities within the broad SDG4-Education 2030 agenda, and align to Member States' needs, their small scale means they often have relatively limited impacts.

**Figure 6: *Respondents consider UNESCO has made the most impact on national educational policies***
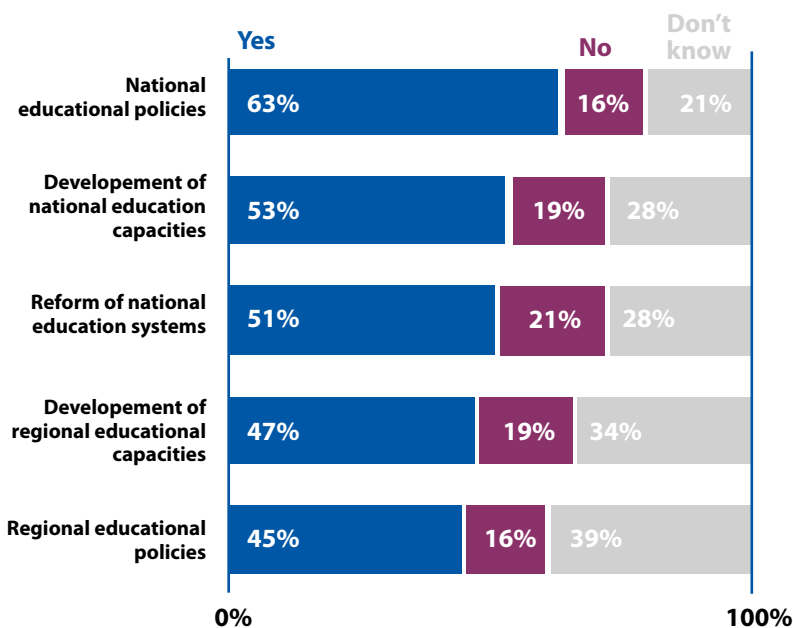


*Source*: surveys of UNESCO's internal and external stakeholders, combined results. N=460.

**Figure 7: *One quarter of UNESCO's country-level projects cost less than US$50,000***
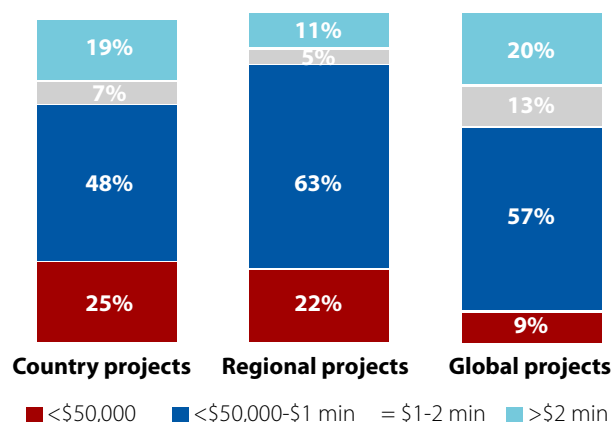


*Source*: Calculations based on data by UNESCO Transparency Portal.

98. Member State representatives and country-level partners commented that its limited field capacity means it can sometimes be difficult for UNESCO to meet demands for specific technical advice and expertise. A key role of education specialists in cluster and national offices relates to the mobilisation of expertise and technical support from across UNESCO's network – including expertise in regional bureaux for education, institutes and headquarters. While many education specialists are highly effective at resource mobilisation, the systems and processes that support access to knowledge and expertise across the UNESCO network are not well developed, meaning that education specialists frequently rely on their own personal connections and networks.

## Cooperation at country-level

*UNESCO is most effective at country-level when it collaborates closely with partners. However, UNESCO has been slow to work towards One UN in the field and is missing opportunities for stronger partnerships with other UN agencies.*

99. UNESCO is perceived to be an open and outward-facing partner at the country-level. Member State representatives and country-level partners commented that UNESCO field staff are typically inclusive in their approach and engage with a wide range of stakeholders.

100. Country-level partners consider UNESCO's main strengths to be the technical knowledge and expertise of its staff (in particular its expertise in relation to policy advocacy, policy development and planning, and capacity development), its trusted advisor status with government ministers and officials, and its convening power and inclusive engagement approach (e.g., involving civil society, young people, academia). Partners and Member States value these qualities more than UNESCO's project implementation capability.

101. Stakeholders frequently commented that UNESCO is most effective at country-level when it collaborates closely with partners, and when mechanisms such as country teams are used to agree priorities and coordinate support. Given the scale of demand, and UNESCO's limited resources, partnering is a smart strategy for leveraging UNESCO's strong relationships with Member States and its scarce technical expertise.

Partnering helps to overcome the criticism that UNESCO lacks financial resources to support projects, by enabling UNESCO to leverage the funding and implementation capabilities of partner organisations.

102. Throughout this evaluation we heard that the quality of UNESCO's partnerships in countries is uneven and varies from office to office depending on resourcing and attitudes of the staff. Some stakeholders are highly satisfied with working with UNESCO, while others perceive UNESCO as a difficult and non-cooperative counterparty. Many stakeholders commented on the challenges of cooperating with UNESCO that result from stringent rules and processes around procurement and contracting.

*"As a partner of UNESCO, this strengthens the sharing of information and best practices between organisations and Member States. We are stronger when we form partnerships and our actions become complementary."[42]*

103. Field presence is critical for being able to provide effective operational support to Member States. In countries where UNESCO does not have a country office, multilateral agencies and Member States representatives commented that its profile is low, that UNESCO is harder to engage, and that activity levels are much lower. In countries with a physical presence, UNESCO plays a more proactive role as coordinator or facilitator of cooperation, and staff have more extensive networks across the education community. This leads to inequities in coverage and access to support across Member States.

104. UNESCO's limited staff capacity in the field is perceived by partners as a significant barrier to effective cooperation. Several partners commented that UNESCO sometimes has little to bring to the table due to its lack of financial resources and lack of specialist staff in the field. Many country offices have only one education specialist, with field staff frequently feeling overloaded with fundraising, project coordination and management responsibilities. As a result, UNESCO is not always responsive to requests from partners

105. Representatives of other UN agencies commented that UNESCO has been slow to work towards One UN in the field. The variable involvement in UN Country Teams has meant that UNESCO is missing opportunities to leverage stronger partnerships with other UN agencies.

106. UNESCO's country-level 'operational' activities need to be refocused on reform of education systems and upstream policy support (and away from the delivery of large numbers of small extra-budgetary projects). Indeed, given UNESCO's mandate, functions and comparative advantage, describing UNESCO's country-level activities as 'operational' is misleading and helps to reinforce misunderstandings about UNESCO's primary roles at country-level (i.e., providing policy advocacy, technical advice and assistance to develop the national education capacities of Member States). By their nature, UNESCO's country-level roles are 'strategic' rather than 'operational' in nature, and need to be undertaken by highly skilled, experienced policy experts and practitioners.

107. UNESCO's field capability is not well matched to the demands of the role. The current field office network is widely viewed by both internal and external stakeholders as unsustainable given the current financial resources of the Organisation. With the exception of some Member State representatives, most external stakeholders consider UNESCO should consolidate its cluster and national office network, with representatives of multi-lateral organisations frequently commenting that UNESCO should more fully embrace the UN Reform, including by co-locating UNESCO Education Specialists with UN Country Teams.

108. Consolidation of cluster and national offices is viewed as a way of freeing up resources to strengthen UNESCO's global and regional functions. Many felt this could be achieved at the same time as enhancing UNESCO's effectiveness at country-level, provided there is strong coordination between regional offices and the network of education specialists operating at country-level, and effective mechanisms for countries to access expertise and capability across the whole of the Sector.

109. Many stakeholders also considered that UNESCO institutes could be consolidated. There was particularly strong support from multilateral organisations and Member State representatives for the need to strengthen UIS given its critical role in supporting the establishment of effective frameworks, systems and capabilities for monitoring progress towards SDG4 targets. In addition, it was felt that much greater coordination and integration is needed between UNESCO Education institutes and other parts of the Sector, with a more collaborative and less competitive dynamic required.

42 External stakeholder, answer to the question why UNESCO is a preferred partner for its organisation.

# 5. Interrelationship between global, regional and operational roles

## Synergies and complementarities

*There are significant potential synergies and complementarities between UNESCO's global, regional and operational roles, however it is rare to find instances where that potential is fully realised.*

110.   Most internal and external stakeholders consider there are significant potential synergies between UNESCO's global, regional and operational roles. Indeed, the majority of stakeholders view these roles as mutually reinforcing and consider that UNESCO would be ineffective in carrying out its global coordination and intellectual leadership functions if it did not have a strong understanding of national-level education systems and policy issues. Similarly, all stakeholder categories believe that UNESCO's credibility with Member States, and its capability to provide effective technical support to countries, would be significantly weakened in the absence of strong global and regional support.

111.   Stakeholders gave many examples in our interviews of complementarities between global, regional and operational roles, including:

- The development of global education conventions, standards and norms provides the backbone for supporting countries to understand, interpret and apply these, with regional bureaux and national and country offices playing a key role in monitoring national compliance and in providing support to translate global norms to regional and local contexts.

- Global-level programmes and fundraising mechanisms, such as the CapED programme, provide effective means for achieving coordination and scale in the delivery of capacity development support to LDCs and those countries considered furthest from achieving SDG4 targets.

- Global-level intellectual leadership, underpinned by robust country-level studies, data and evidence, help to shine the spotlight on issues of global and regional importance, and help to raise the awareness and understanding of these policy issues and challenges faced by Member States. A good example is the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report's focus on migration and displacement and the implications for national education systems.

### Good practice example: SRHR Education

112.   UNESCO's work in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education provides a good example of effective integration of UNESCO's global, regional and operational roles. This area of work is characterised by:

- **Effective global leadership** including strong and inclusive leadership by headquarters staff, and a concerted effort to build a **geographically distributed, virtual team** of dedicated professionals.

- **Dedicated resource to support coordination:** The SRHR education team has a dedicated Liaison Officer at the headquarters level, who coordinates SRHR education work across all regions. This ensures regionally based technical expertise is well supported and facilitates connections across and between regions.

- **Effective communication:** The SRHR Education team works collaboratively across global, regional and country levels to develop common messaging and to support effective communication.

- **Demonstrating results:** The project has used monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate progress and impact to donors[43], which in turn supports future resource mobilisation efforts.

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43 See, for example, the End-Term Evaluation Report 2013-15, Strengthening sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention among children and young people through promoting comprehensive sexuality education in Eastern and Southern Africa, prepared by KPMG.

- **Effective collaboration with partners:** The programme has collaborated effectively with partners at global, regional and country levels. At a global level, UNESCO operates in partnership with UNAIDS, and it partners with civil society, NGOs and government agencies across the education and health sectors to support programme delivery at regional and country levels.

- The programme has been successful at raising **dedicated funding**, which has given it considerable **financial flexibility.** This includes dedicated funding from UNAIDS to support UNESCO's lead role in supporting countries to scale up the education sector response to HIV.

113.  The way the programme has evolved to effectively integrate work across global, regional and operational levels, with significant results for beneficiaries, makes it a good example to learn from and potentially apply more widely across UNESCO's Education programme.

## *Despite the significant potential for synergies between its global, regional and operational levels, stakeholders are generally of the view that there is significant room for improvement.*

114.  External stakeholders observed that that different parts of UNESCO do not always pull in the same direction across its global, regional and operational offices, citing examples of inconsistent communication and contrary positions on issues. These stakeholders expressed confusion about the relative roles of headquarters, regional bureaux, cluster- and national offices, and institutes. In addition, almost half of internal survey responses rated coordination between headquarters, field offices and institutes as poor (see Figure 8).

115.  External stakeholders (e.g., multilateral agencies, NGOs/CSOs) are also confused by the multiple types and constellation of regional office structures. For example, some regions have multi-sectoral regional offices, others have regional bureaux for education, while Africa has five multi-sectoral regional offices.

*Figure 8: Almost half of respondents rated coordination between HQ, institutes and field offices as poor*
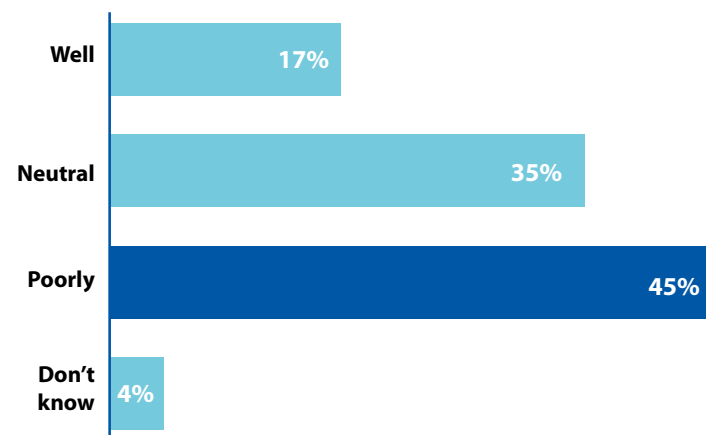


*Source*: Survey of UNESCO's internal stakeholders. N=114.

116.  From interviews, many external stakeholders, in particular Member State representatives and multilateral agencies, considered that the Category 1 institutes operate quite independently from the rest of UNESCO. Most considered the Education Sector is not fully realising the potential of the technical expertise distributed across different parts of the Organisation.

117.  Some senior UNESCO staff commented that the interrelationship between its global, regional and operational roles is exacerbated by a lack of clear lines of communication. A common feeling among Education Sector field staff is that they are not always viewed by headquarters as integral members of the Education Sector team. Several senior staff commented on the lack of a direct reporting relationship between regional bureau directors and the ADG Education. Several senior field staff commented positively about recent attempts by the ADG to bring leaders together from across the Education Sector, but emphasised that more effort was needed to build a cohesive culture of collective leadership across the Sector.

## Gaps and overlaps

*The evaluation found a range of examples of gaps and overlapping activities across the Sector, including overlapping research activities, multiple repositories of data and research, and a lack of standardised information about countries' education systems.*

118. Two-thirds of Education Sector staff who participated in the survey for this evaluation considered there are gaps, overlaps, duplications or imbalances across the functions and activities of UNESCO's global, regional and country level work (see Figure 9). Commonly cited gaps and overlaps included:

   • The lack of effective coordination of research activities resulting in significant duplication and overlapping effort. Related to this, internal stakeholders frequently highlighted the lack of an overarching research strategy and coordinated research programmes for the Education Sector as a gap.[44]

   • Competition occurs between regional bureau of education and UNESCO institutes over donor funding, with several stakeholders commenting that overlapping mandates and a lack of effective coordination giving rise to duplication of activities.

*Figure 9: More than two-thirds of staff agree that there are gaps, overlaps or duplications across activities at the global, regional and country levels*
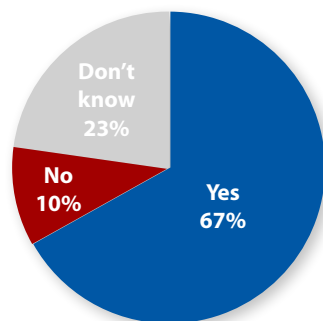


*Source*: survey of UNESCO's internal stakeholders, answer to the question "Are there any gaps, overlaps, duplications or imbalances across the functions and activities at the global and regional/country levels?" N=113.

44  Since the commencement of this evaluation, steps have been taken to address this issue.

   • UNESCO has multiple repositories of information housing research on education systems and policies. There are different knowledge hubs for different institutes, regions and themes (e.g., TVET, higher education) with little interconnection between them.

   • Related to the above point, there is a lack of standardised information about countries' education systems and policies. Many stakeholders consider that UNESCO is uniquely placed to lead the development of an international comparative education dataset. Similarly, some stakeholders felt UNESCO should be doing more to reduce barriers for countries to participate in cross-national learning assessment processes, to better enable the international community to benchmark progress towards the learning outcome indicators in SDG 4.

## Balance between global, regional and operational functions

*There is a need to rebalance the Education Sector's global, regional and operational roles, with a particular need to strengthen global and regional coordination of SDG4-Education 2030.*

119. Most stakeholders (from all categories) consider that the Education Sector's global coordination and intellectual leadership functions need significant strengthening. As noted earlier in this report, key stakeholders including representatives of Member States, consider UNESCO's intellectual leadership in the field of education has been eroding for some time, exacerbated by the financial crisis. They also consider that the global architecture for supporting implementation of SDG4 – Education 2030 is not fit for purpose. This situation must be addressed with urgency to ensure UNESCO maintains its comparative advantage.

120. Another widely held view is the need to strengthen the capacity of the regional bureaux for education (and education teams within multi-sectoral regional offices). Regional offices play a 'linchpin' role within the UNESCO system by supporting global SDG4-Education 2030 leadership and coordination processes, facilitating regional exchanges of knowledge, expertise and experience, and providing technical backstopping for cluster and national offices. Regional offices also have a critical role to play in supporting global monitoring of progress towards SDG4 targets.

121. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of strong regional offices for providing effective backstopping and technical assistance for country-level activities, in close cooperation with headquarters, institutes and centres. Regional offices have the potential to combine the advantages of geographic proximity to the countries they serve, while also achieving a critical mass of capability. In practice, however, the capacity and capability of regional offices is very uneven across regions. The lack of effective leadership and coordination of the work of the Education sector in Africa needs urgent attention, as this represents a significant risk to progress against SDG 4 – Education 2030 in this priority region.

# 6. Structure, management processes and resources

*UNESCO is part way through a strategic transformation to become more efficient and agile, through simplified procedures, strengthened management culture, better communication, and field network optimisation. This evaluation identified a range of issues affecting the Sector's effectiveness and efficiency, lending support to the priority and direction of this transformation.*

122. This evaluation, like previous education sector evaluations45, has identified a range of systemic internal issues impacting on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Sector's work. These include a lack of strategic focus and prioritisation; a lack of role clarity and coordination between headquarters, regional bureaux, national offices and UNESCO institutes; sub-optimal allocation of staff and financial resources; inefficient administrative processes; and under-developed capabilities in relation to results-based management, strategic communication and fundraising.

123. UNESCO is part way through a strategic transformation to become more efficient and agile, including through simplified procedures, strengthened management culture, better internal and external communication, and optimisation of the field office network. Many of the organisational and resourcing issues identified by stakeholders in this evaluation are aligned to the priorities and proposed improvements through the strategic transformation process. The findings from this evaluation lend support to the priority and direction of this strategic transformation programme.

## Strategic focus and prioritisation

124. While the majority of survey respondents are confident that UNESCO is focused on the right policy priorities (see Figure 10), there remains a concern that UNESCO is trying to cover too much ground given available resources. Many internal and external stakeholders are concerned that UNESCO has not focussed enough on leading and coordinating the implementation of the SDG4 – Education 2030 Agenda, and that there is insufficient priority and resources dedicated to global and regional coordination processes.

*Figure 10: **The majority of stakeholders agree that UNESCO is focusing on the right policy issues within education***
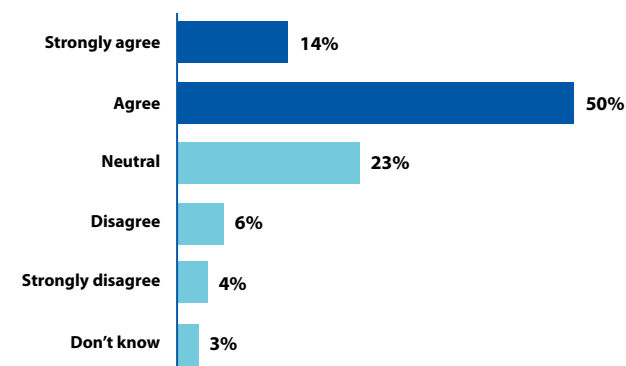


*Source*: Surveys of UNESCO's internal and external stakeholders, combined results. N=467

125. Most internal and external stakeholders consider the Education Sector needs to sharpen its strategic focus around fewer, more tightly defined priorities to ensure efficient use of its scarce resources. Many also felt that it would be desirable for UNESCO to make greater use of centralised funding mechanisms, such as CapED, to better target country-level support toward the implementation of the SDG4 – Education 2030 Agenda and to increase the scale and impact of country-level activities.

45 IOS 2017. UNESCO's education evaluations in 2016: a review

## Africa as a priority

*Despite being a priority region, stakeholders consider that Africa is less well-resourced than other regions. African field offices report being understaffed and lack education specialists and highly qualified international staff.*

126. Stakeholders expressed concern that some topical issues of particular relevance for Africa do not receive sufficient attention from UNESCO in terms of its policy advocacy work. Examples included teacher training and education for people in conflict zones. Like in other regions, African countries have high expectations of greater guidance and support from UNESCO on implementation and monitoring of SDG4 – Education 2030.

127. A pan-African SDG4 implementation framework and coordination mechanism is lacking, although coordination processes within Western and Central Africa are more advanced and working well. The restructure of regional offices in Africa, and the shift away from having specialist regional offices to multi-sector offices, has confused roles and responsibilities in relation to regional leadership and coordination of the Education 2030 Agenda.

128. Stakeholders consider that the five regional offices vary significantly in their effectiveness and do not coordinate well with each other. The fragmentation in the region is exacerbated by lack of coordination and cooperation with the African Union, which has its own Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025.

## Operating as one Sector

*While there have been recent attempts to bring leaders together from across the sector more frequently, a more concerted effort is needed to build collective leadership of the Sector.*

129. Several senior Education Sector staff commented that a key barrier to achieving greater impact and synergies across it's global, regional and country-level roles is the lack of a strong global leadership team within the Education Sector. In particular, several Regional Directors indicated they feel out of touch with developments at headquarters, and do not feel like integral members of the Sector Leadership team despite being the most senior education staff in their regions.

130. While there have been recent attempts to bring leaders together from across the sector more frequently, a more concerted effort is needed to build collective leadership of the Sector. This may also require reconsideration of reporting lines for Directors of regional bureaux for education, and for the most senior education staff in multisectoral regional offices.

131. A common theme observed throughout our visits to regional bureaux was that education specialists within a region do not operate as a unified team. Directors of regional bureaux lack influence over the work of education specialists in cluster and national offices. Education specialists in cluster and national offices reported that they do not operate within a common framework of global, regional and national priorities. This is viewed by both internal and external stakeholders as a handbrake on UNESCO's effectiveness in the field.

132. Many field staff consider that the limited pool of education specialists operating within a region could achieve a greater collective impact if they functioned more as a 'virtual team'. This would also strengthen and enhance the coordination of field support provided by headquarters and institutes. Operating as one Sector may also require addressing underlying incentive structures (e.g., decentralised extra-budgetary fundraising) that can drive competitive rather than collaborative behaviour.

# Use of human resources

*Most stakeholders consider the distribution of staff between headquarters, regional bureaux and cluster/national offices to be sub-optimal.*

## Distribution of Education Sector personnel

133.  Relative to the breadth of the SDG4 – Education 2030 Agenda and the global geographic coverage of UNESCO, the size of the Education Sector is small and stretched thinly across its programmes. A shortage of capacity is felt at all levels and across all parts of the Organisation, with a majority of staff considering the distribution of human resources between headquarters, regional bureaux and cluster/national offices to be sub-optimal (see Figure 11). Most expressed concern about the inadequate level of staff resources in the field relative to headquarters.

134.  It is understandable that many internal stakeholders perceive there is insufficient staff resource in the field given that demand for support from Member States far outstrips UNESCO's capacity to respond. Throughout the financial crisis, UNESCO management sought to preserve field capacity as much as possible. For example, the reduction in Education Sector permanent staff between 2010 and 2019 disproportionately impacted headquarters - where employee numbers reduced by one third - compared with the field, where the decline was 11%.

*Figure 11: Almost two-thirds of staff do not think human resources are well distributed between HQ, Institutes and field offices*
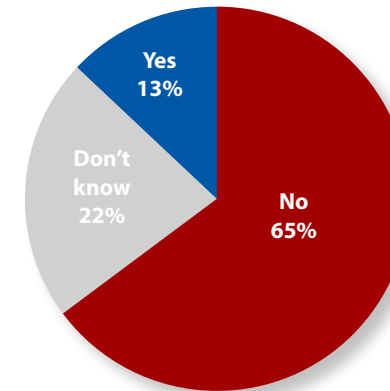


*Source*: survey of UNESCO's internal stakeholders, response to the question "Is UNESCOs staff structure well distributed between the HQ, Institutes and Regional/Field Offices?". N=112.

## Optimising field capacity and capability

135.  Limited resources in regional and national offices is identified by both internal and external stakeholders as constraining UNESCO's impact. There are several factors contributing to this.

  • Technical experts in different domains are spread thinly across the field network and mechanisms to share information, research and frameworks across the network are underdeveloped.

  • There is a heavy focus at national-level on mobilising extra-budgetary funding, with the high volume of small-scale projects creating significant administrative demands for field officers, limiting their ability to operate as education specialists.

  • There are high numbers of staff on short-term contracts and significant numbers of vacancies in some regions. This is partly due to the mobility initiative being led by UNESCO as part of the strategic transformation which has limited the ability of regions and national offices to recruit for some positions.

136. Stakeholders noted that UNESCO's ability to effectively support and influence education system reform and policy development at country-level is greatest in countries where UNESCO has a physical presence. However, stakeholders also consider the distribution of national offices is uneven and no longer aligns with areas of greatest need.

137. As noted earlier, several stakeholders called for UNESCO to consolidate its field network into stronger, better resourced regional and sub-regional offices, and to implement a partnership model that makes greater use of in-country partners and NATCOMs. This will require a review and reinvigoration of the NATCOM model to achieve greater consistency across Member States.

138. Some stakeholders observed that the calibre of field staff varies considerably, and that there is limited support for education specialists who have less experience.

## Encouraging greater staff mobility and agile ways of working

*UNESCO is seeing early signs of success of initiatives to support greater staff mobility and introduce more innovative, agile ways of working.*

139. Many stakeholders commented on the lack of mobility amongst UNESCO staff, particularly in terms of movements from headquarters to the field. Both external and internal stakeholders observed that staff and other resources do not appear to move within the Sector as priorities and needs change, and there is a need for the Organisation to embrace more agile ways of working.

140. Overall, most stakeholders see staff mobility as key to helping the Education Sector function as one, and for staff within the Organisation to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for how different parts fit together. As noted in this evaluation, the structure of the Sector, and the geographic distribution of staff across different management units, gives rise to a risk of operating in "silos" and competition for resources and visibility. Encouragement of greater mobility, including through the Managed Mobility Programme, is key to creating a more unified and collaborative culture, although we note it was also identified as a source of tension by some staff, particularly those with highly specialised expertise.

141. The Education Sector is currently piloting more agile ways of working, and has chosen three areas in which to apply agile methodologies in order to fast-track results. The three areas include: (i.e., girls and women's education, education for migrants, refugees and displaced persons, and laboratory of ideas and education foresight including launching the new Futures of Education Initiative). Following an Expressions of Interest process, staff have been recruited to agile teams (a process that itself contributes to greater staff mobility) and given training in agile methods.

142. An early sign of the success with these new ways of working can be seen through the work on girls and women's education. Over a short period, UNESCO organised a joint G7-UNESCO conference on innovation for the empowerment of girls and women through education, launched a new initiative Her education, our future to accelerate action for girls' and women's education based on three pillars: better data, better policies, better teaching and learning practices, and published a new interactive Atlas on girls' and women's education.[46]

143. The G7 countries subsequently announced a global commitment in 2018 of US$2.9 billion for girls' education in crises and endorsed a Declaration supporting the importance of investing in children's education in crises, with a special focus on girls who face additional barriers because of their gender. Results such as this demonstrate how much can be achieved in a short time by harnessing mobility and innovative, agile ways of working.

## Use of financial resources

*UNESCO has done well to limit staff cuts and maintain extra-budgetary funding through a period of significant financial constraint. However, increased dependence on extra-budgetary funding has driven some counterproductive outcomes, including internal competition for scarce resources, insufficient funding for global public goods, and a high proportion of small-scale operational activities at country-level.*

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46 This initiative corresponded with the launch of the 2019 GEM Gender Report: Building bridges for gender equality. Development and Education Ministerial Meeting and the G7-UNESCO International conference taking place at the Organization's Headquarters

144. As noted earlier in this report, the period for this evaluation is characterised by a sustained period of significant financial strain on the Organisation, precipitated by the financial crisis that followed the United States halting its contributions. This had a significant impact on the Organisation, although UNESCO did well to limit staff cuts and to maintain a healthy level of extra-budgetary funding.

145. Aside from the consequences of reduced human resources, and the adverse impact this had on staff morale, one of the most significant implications has been a reduction in financial flexibility to fund programme activity. A less visible but very significant impact has been the increased pressure it has placed on field offices and institutes, through the significant limitations on funding available from UNESCO's regional budget. It also further strengthens the need to carefully prioritise how it allocates its scarce resources across its programme activities at global, regional and operational level. In particular, it has been difficult to raise external funding for global public goods, such as SDG4-Education 2030 coordination and to invest in key supporting institutions such as UIS.

146. Both internal and external stakeholders observed that the financial constraints had strengthened incentives on staff, especially in the field, to raise extra-budgetary funding to cover temporary staff and project activities. A large number of interviewees commented that this was encouraging field staff to direct significant time and effort toward raising relatively small amounts of funding for local projects, in some cases leading to unhelpful competition between different parts of UNESCO (e.g., between regional bureaux and institutes). External stakeholders and some major donors commented that they would prefer to see a more coordinated approach to fundraising globally and regionally, and greater use of mechanisms such as CapED to facilitate disbursement of funds in ways that are better targeted and enable large scale, more impactful interventions.

# Organisational support capabilities

*Many stakeholders expressed frustration with core administrative processes, and capabilities in relation to strategic communication, fund-raising and results-based management that are under-developed. Investing in these capabilities would enable the Sector to better demonstrate impact, communicate more effectively, and build stronger partnerships with donors.*

## Administrative systems and processes

147. Many internal stakeholders expressed frustration with cumbersome and inefficient administrative processes and systems. In particular, these concerns related to human resources, financial management, procurement and contracting.

148. Delivery at a regional and national level is impacted by slow recruitment processes, which has been compounded by the new policy on functional and geographic mobility (i.e., when key staff transfer from the field to headquarters). Given the small number of personnel in each region, even a small number of vacancies can have a significant impact on the performance of local offices.

149. Institutes and regional bureaux also expressed frustration at the lack of clarity around contracting arrangements for extra-budgetary projects. Often this is managed locally but at times headquarters will take a lead role. In these instances, the time taken to release funds due to lengthy validation processes frequently impacts on project implementation and delivery.

150. External stakeholders also expressed frustration with UNESCO's contracting processes, commenting that these are frequently the cause of delays and inefficiencies in partnering with UNESCO. Partner organisations were also critical of UNESCO's contracting processes, with some indicating that they avoided working with UNESCO for this reason.

# Knowledge management

151.  A common theme among internal stakeholders was the potential to improve knowledge sharing internally between headquarters, field offices and institutes. As education specialists are geographically spread across an extensive network of offices, a more systematic approach to sharing frameworks, research and lessons learned from project evaluations would be beneficial. Knowledge hubs, communities of interest and virtual teams were all mentioned as possible solutions.

# Results-based management

152.  Results-based management is underdeveloped across UNESCO. This limits internal transparency and the organisation's ability to demonstrate the impact of its activities. It is important that UNESCO is able to demonstrate the value of its work in lifting capacity and influencing policy agendas through advocacy and technical support. The ability of UNESCO to demonstrate progress in implementing the SDG4–Education 2030 will be also essential for retaining the confidence of the international education community. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation is a key means of achieving this.

# Strategic communication

153.  The Education Sector's capacity in strategic communication is viewed as weak by both internal and external stakeholders. In most offices there are no communication specialists. The Education Sector has to rely on the shared communication capacities in UNESCO that are not geared towards the education sector. This weakens the Sector's capacity to speak with one voice, deliver messages across the globe, influence and lead its networks and partnerships. Stakeholders commented that misconceptions about UNESCO's achievements proliferate because of a lack of proactive, strategic communications. It is also seen as impacting on UNESCO's ability to develop stronger partnerships with global-scale donors.

# 7. Conclusions

154.   While many aspects of UNESCO's comparative advantage remain strong, this evaluation has found that key planks have become eroded over time (e.g., diminished intellectual standing) during a period of sustained financial and capability constraint, and against the backdrop a rapidly evolving global education architecture.

155.   UNESCO played a leading role in shaping the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda. However, momentum has been lost in the post-2015 implementation period, and represents a risk to progress towards SDG4 targets.

156.   Intellectual leadership in the field of education is a key part of UNESCO's comparative advantage, but its international standing and capacity as a global thought leader has eroded over time.

157.   UNESCO has become more active in its standard setting role in recent years, with the development of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications representing a significant achievement.

158.   UNESCO has made a positive impact on national education policies and systems, and national education capacities in many countries, but has had little impact in others. Its impact at country-level is constrained by its limited field capacity, and high dependence on extra-budgetary funds.

159.   There are significant potential synergies and complementarities between UNESCO's global, regional and operational roles, however it is rare to find instances where that potential is fully realised. The evaluation found many examples of gaps and overlapping activities across the sector

160.   There is a need to rebalance the Education Sector's global, regional and operational roles, with a particular need to strengthen global and regional coordination of SDG4-Education 2030 and to better link global and regional coordination with country-level support.

161.   UNESCO is part way through a strategic transformation to become more efficient and agile, through simplified procedures, strengthened management culture, better communication, and field network optimisation. This evaluation identified a range of issues affecting the Sector's effectiveness and efficiency, lending support to the priority and direction of this transformation.

# 8. Recommendations

Building on the findings the evaluation presents six interlinked high-level recommendations to strengthen the operation of the Education Sector, to ensure it remains fit for the future.

## 1. Sharpen programmatic focus in areas of comparative advantage

A. To ensure its continued relevance, UNESCO will need to maintain and enhance its comparative advantage and ensure this forms the foundation for its next medium-term education strategy. The Education Sector should focus its scarce resources on fewer, more tightly defined priorities and expected result areas, informed by an assessment of where it has a comparative advantage and where it can have the largest impacts.

B. To bring greater focus to its country-level programmatic activities, UNESCO should explore how it make more effective use of centralised funding mechanisms, such as CapED, to better target support towards implementation of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda.

C. Given the central role of data in monitoring progress towards SDG4, UNESCO should prioritise its work to bring the Global Coalition for Education Data to life, including ensuring this is supported by an international programme of statistical capacity building.

## 2. Rebalancing global, regional and operational roles

D. UNESCO should explore how it can rebalance its global, regional and operational roles through a combination of:

» Strengthening its coordination of SDG4-Education 2030 at global and regional levels

» Further developing its education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions

» Strengthening the capacity of regional offices, including addressing the unevenness in capacity and capability that exists across regions

E. In the context of UNESCO's strategic transformation programme, UNESCO should examine opportunities for possible improvements in effectiveness and efficiency through:

» Consolidating its field network into stronger, better resourced regional and sub-regional offices

» Implementing a country-level delivery model that makes greater use of in-country partners (e.g., NATComs), and takes advantage of opportunities afforded by UN reforms to co-locate staff within UN Country Teams and offices

» Considering consolidation of UNESCO institutes, and strengthening UIS as a matter of priority.

## 3. Strengthening global SDG4 leadership and coordination

F. Building on progress made through the Multilateral Education Platform, strengthen partnerships between UNESCO and key actors in the global education architecture (e.g., funding platforms such as GPE and ECW; and implementation partners such as UNICEF and the World Bank).

G. Re-energise the work of the SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee, including through increased resources for the Secretariat and through more dedicated support for global and regional coordination and monitoring processes.

H. Clarify responsibilities for regional leadership of SDG4-Education 2030 in Africa.

## 4. Further develop education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions

I.   Prioritise its roles as knowledge broker, and as an aggregator and disseminator of research, evidence and policy guidance, and better harness its role as a knowledge producer.

J.   Continue to develop UNESCO's education foresight and laboratory of ideas functions, including by:

» Ensuring adequate resourcing of the Futures of Education global initiative, and using this process to inform the next UNESCO medium-term education strategy.

» Completing and implementing a Sector-wide knowledge production and dissemination strategy.

» Strengthening partnerships with UNESCO Chairs and universities to better harness the research capacity of the global academic community.

» Consolidating and harmonising repositories of research and data, and work to make these easier to access and navigate.

## 5. Focus country-level support on implementation and monitoring of the Education 2030 Agenda

K.   UNESCO's country-level activities should be focused towards meeting Member States' demand for support for implementation and monitoring of SDG4-Education 2030, taking full advantage of opportunities for regional cooperation.

L.   Through a combination of guidance, training and addressing underlying incentives to raise extra-budgetary funding, the Sector should seek to reduce the proportion of isolated small scale EXB-funded projects it manages and delivers unless these are part of a broader implementation strategy.

## 6. Building leadership and support capabilities to operate as One Sector

M.   Continue progress towards operating as One Sector, including by building a collective leadership model that is more inclusive of education staff in regional offices and institutes. This may require reconsideration of reporting lines for Directors of regional bureaux, and for education specialists in cluster and national offices.

N.   Continue to promote innovative, high impact ways of working, including through increased staff mobility, agile work practices, and the use of global 'virtual teams' and communities of practice.

O.   Invest in the Sector's strategic communications, fund-raising and results-based management capabilities, which will support the sector to better demonstrate impact and build stronger partnerships with donors and multilateral organisations.

# ANNEXES

# A. Terms of Reference

The Future of UNESCO Education Sector

**The strengthening, balancing and positioning of UNESCO's global intellectual role and its technical country support role within the context of Agenda 2030**

## Background

1. Education is at the heart of UNESCO's mission to build peace in the minds of men and women. The role of UNESCO in education is to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, and to ensure that these principles are inherent in all its programmes and operations. UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all aspects and levels of education.

2. In May 2015, the Republic of Korea held the World Education Forum It was convened by UNESCO jointly with UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and the World Bank. The gathering was an opportunity for the global educational community to define the ambition and scope for the post-2015 educational agenda. This agenda is outlined in the Incheon Declaration 'Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.' It expresses the commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In September 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The participants entrusted UNESCO to lead and coordinate the SDG4-Education and develop a global coordination mechanism. In November 2015, 184 Member States and the global education community adopted the Education 2030 Framework for Action providing guidance for the implementation of SDG4-Education.

3. The current UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (37 C/4), and the UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021 establish three strategic objectives (SOs) for UNESCO in education. The first one is to support Member States in developing quality and inclusive education systems. The second is to promote learning for responsible citizenship, putting an accent on rights, equity and inclusion[47]. The third objective

concerns the role of UNESCO in shaping the future education agenda and its normative coordinating role in global education crusades. From 2000 to 2015, UNESCO was the coordinating agency for Education for All. After 2015, and with the advent of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, UNESCO adopted the strategic objective of leading and coordinating the Education 2030 Agenda.[48]

4. Education, as one of the major Programme Sectors of UNESCO,[49] has ten expected results for its approved Programme and Budget of the 2018-2019 biennium, which are aligned with SDG4 targets.[50]

5. To achieve its high-level strategic objectives, as well as its expected results, the Education Sector (ED) operates through the five UNESCO functions (see box at right) defined in the Medium Term Strategy.

6. The five functions summarize the range of UNESCO work. In fulfilling these functions UNESCO plays two main roles:

   • An intellectual and normative role with a global reach.

   • A technical and operational role at country level.

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### UNESCO Functions

1. Serving as a laboratory of ideas, generating innovative proposals and policy advice
2. Developing and reinforcing the global agenda through policy analysis, monitoring and benchmarking
3. Setting norms and standards and supporting and monitoring their implementation
4. Strengthening international and regional cooperation and fostering alliances, intellectual cooperation, knowledge-sharing and operational partnerships
5. Providing advice for policy development and implementation, and developing institutional and human capacities

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47 SO 1 and SO 2 read slightly differently in the Education Strategy and in the Medium Term Strategy. In the Education Strategy they are, SO1: Developing education systems to foster quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all and SO2: Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens.

48 In 37 C/4 SO3 is concerned with the role of UNESCO in advancing Education for All (EFA). In the two most recent Programme and Budgets (38 C/5 and 39 C/5) this has been revised to reflect the role of UNESCO in the 2030 Education Agenda.

49 In 37 C/4 SO3 is concerned with the role of UNESCO in advancing Education for All (EFA). In the two most recent Programme and Budgets (38 C/5 and 39 C/5) this has been revised to reflect the role of UNESCO in the 2030 Education Agenda.

50 In 39 C/5, pp. 47-48.

6. And, in education, the roles are primarily carried out by:

- The Education Sector (ED) housed in UNESCO Paris Headquarters.[51]
- Specialized Institutes including one Centre.[52]
- Field Offices (FOs).[53]

7. Headquarters and the specialized institutes are mainly responsible for UNESCO's global intellectual role. This includes a number of elements such generating intellectual products on education; producing practical policy advice on educational topics; acting as a global observatory and laboratory of ideas; supporting the monitoring and benchmarking the 2030 Education agenda; facilitating the development of norms and standards; facilitating knowledge sharing at the global level and leading SDG-4 through international partnerships. Some of the category I Institutes were designed as capacity development entities (IIEP, IICBA) and therefore have regional or global capacity development mandates.

8. The field offices are primarily responsible for an operational country support role. This involves providing concrete policy advice and capacity development; developing operational partnerships and supporting the implementation of norms and standards.

9. There are overlaps in carrying out the functions and field offices also conduct policy analysis and generate policy advice, albeit mostly focused on a region or country. Furthermore, headquarters and specialized institutes are at times called upon to support capacity development or provide policy advice at the country level. In addition to overlaps in implementation, overlaps are present in the mission and or mandate of various entities.

| | Carried out by | |
| | **Field Offices** | **Headquarters and Specialized Institutes** |
|---|---|---|
| **Global-intellectual** (UNESCO roles) | ◆ generating policy advice<br>◆ policy analysis | ◆ intellectual laboratory of ideas<br>◆ generating policy advice<br>◆ policy analysis<br>◆ monitoring and benchmarking the global agenda<br>◆ setting norms and standards<br>◆ knowledge sharing<br>◆ international partnerships |
| **Operational country support** | ◆ providing policy advice<br>◆ capacity development<br>◆ supporting the implementation of norms and standards<br>◆ operational partnerships<br>◆ knowledge sharing | ◆ supporting the implementation of norms and standards<br>◆ providing policy advice<br>◆ capacity development |

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51 The Education Sector is composed of the Office of the Assistant Director General and three Divisions (Division for Education 2030 Support and Coordination, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems and Division for Peace and Sustainable Development). Each Division has Sections and Units.

52 The specialized institutes are: International Bureau of Education (IBE), International Institute for Educational planning (IIEP), Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIL), International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa ((IICBA), Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peaceful and Sustainable Development (MGIEP). The centre is: the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC). In the rest of the ToR they will all be referred to as "specialized institutes."

53 These can be composed of Regional Bureaus, Cluster Offices and National Offices.
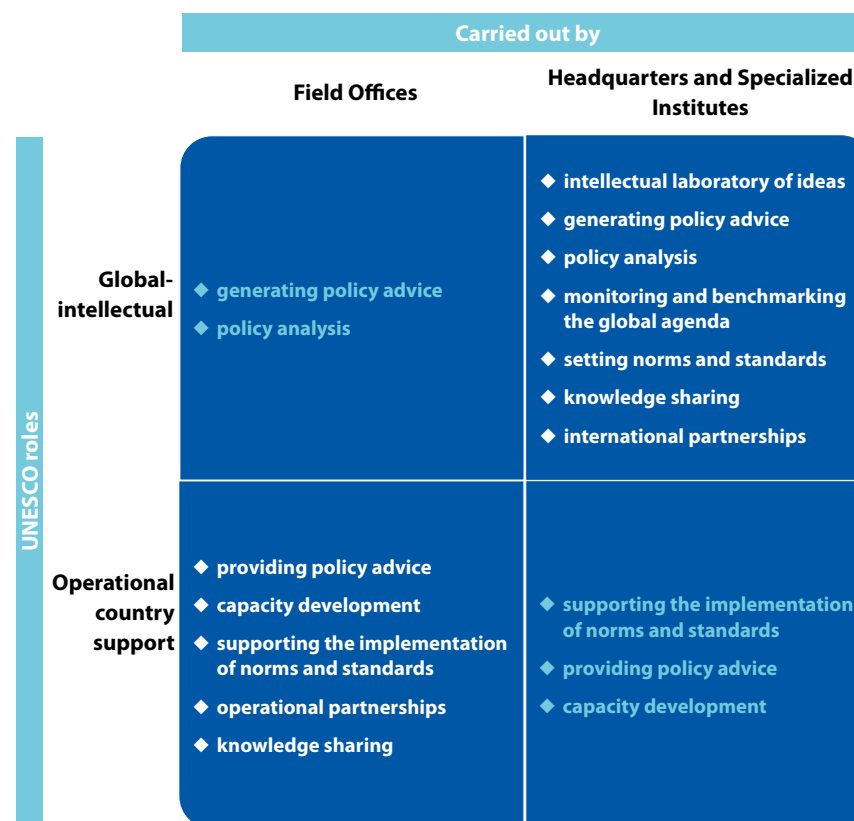
### Global roles

#### *Intellectual*

10. The UNESCO Constitution stipulates that one of its missions is to promote peace by supporting the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.[54] A corporate strategic objective is to: serve as a laboratory of ideas and innovations in education, and to steer international debates on critical issues and emerging challenges for education.[55] The UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021 asserts that in order to consolidate its intellectual mandate, UNESCO must strengthen its capacity for foresight and anticipate the challenges, paradigm shifts and trends in the global education field. This work is central in UNESCO's role as a laboratory and clearing house of ideas.

11. The various entities that comprise the ED Headquarters sections,[56] and UNESCO specialized institutes[57] all conduct research on education. In addition the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM), an editorially independent annual report published by UNESCO, has a collection of publications comprising policy and technical papers.

12. UNESCO's intellectual body of work is comprised of a wide array of outputs including analytical reports, journals, occasional papers, policy briefs, working paper series and studies.[58] Broadly these intellectual outputs can be classified as high level theoretical pieces, meant to influence global paradigms and discourse on education, or reports and publications seeking to guide educational practice.

13. *High-level* theoretical outputs: Some of UNESCO's better-known intellectual work in education are three analytical landmark reports by which the organization sought to influence concepts framing educational discourse. The 1972 Learning to Be (Faure Report) and the 1996, Learning: The Treasure Within (Delors Report) which articulated the idea of lifelong learning or learning throughout life as an educational paradigm. The notion is that learning should be present for people of every age, in different contexts and using different modalities.[59] The Delors Report also advanced the concept of the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together, which has been a mainstay of educational

dialogue. More recently the report Rethinking Education, towards a common global good (2015); reaffirmed UNESCO's support for a humanistic and holistic approach to education. It also argued for the principle of education as a common good with the state as its custodian.[60] It underscored the importance of education based on principles of quality, equity and inclusion. The intellectual footprint of UNESCO is clearly present in the formulation of SDG4 and in its seven outcome targets. [61]

14. *Practical outputs:* Other publications provide concrete policy advice or deliver lessons learned on UNESCO technical cooperation and support. As an example, the Education Research and Foresight Working Papers series, comprises 22 think pieces so far. They explore emerging issues, challenges and opportunities facing education in the 21st century. The series links concepts and principles guiding global education policy and the commitments of the Education 2030 Agenda.[62] From specialized institutes, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) produces publications in educational management, planning and development.[63] Another example is the recent publication on mobile technology to support teachers which charts lessons from UNESCO pilot projects in four countries.[64] There are many other illustrations relating to a range of subsectors/issues in education.

#### *Normative*

15. The normative work is part of the intellectual role exercised principally at a global level. Normative work includes the development of norms and standards through conventions, recommendations, declarations, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard setting instruments.[65] UNESCO is required to encourage the ratification, monitor and support the implementation of the education Conventions and recommendations developed under its auspices.[66]

54  UNESCO Constitution, p. 2.
55  Strategic objective 3. Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 37 C/4.
56 UNESCO headquarters account for about 30 percent of overall research output.
57 The Specialized Institutes account for some 40 percent of overall research output.
58 https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/publications
59 Adapted from: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/santiago/education/lifelong-learning/

60 Position paper on the post-2015 agenda put forward by UNESCO's Executive Board at its 194th session.
61 Lifelong learning is part of the wording of goal 4. Target 4.5 focuses on issues of equity and inclusion.
62 Education Research and Foresight (ERF) Working Papers are published in English, French, Arabic and Spanish https://en.unesco.org/themes/education2030-sdg4/rethinkingeducation/working-papers
63 Since 1963, approximately 1,200 publications have been produced in print and/or electronic editions. http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/library-resources/iiep-publishing
64 Supporting teachers with mobile technology, lessons drawn from UNESCO projects in Nigeria, Mexico, Pakistan and Senegal.  http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002515/251511e.pdf
65 The definition of normative work comes from the United Nations Development Group.  UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System (2012), p.5.
66 The 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and the 1989 Convention on Technical and Vocational Education

16. Apart from conventions and international treaties, other instruments, such as declarations, recommendations, guidelines and principles applied by Member States provide a normative basis for the right to education. UNESCO monitors the implementation of recommendations every four years by gathering information from Member States.[67]

### Leadership of the global agenda

17. UNESCO is the lead of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, the global multi-stakeholder consultation and convening mechanism for education in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. UNESCO has the responsibility to convoke partners at different junctures and lead global statement by the steering committee.[68] In December 2018, UNESCO convened the Global Education Meeting in Brussels to take stock of progress. It was the first major meetup to address global progress towards SDG4 since the Incheon Declaration in 2015. It produced the Brussels Declaration with key messages for the 2019 High-Level Political Forum and the United Nations General Assembly.

18. In the recent period other global education actors such as UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have received considerable donor funding to pursue their education agenda.

### Operational country support

19. UNESCO's strategic objective 1 is to support Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong earning for all. In this pursuit, UNESCO is involved in technical support and targeted programmes helping develop and providing advice on educational policies and plans; accompanying countries in their education reform, and offering capacity development especially to improve teacher effectiveness.[69]

20. UNESCO's operational function is comprised of in country support in response to country requests. In its technical assistance and operational work, UNESCO prioritizes countries facing particular development challenges or recovering from armed conflicts, political crisis or natural disasters. Some indicative examples of direct technical support are:[70]

- The Capacity Development for Education Programme, CapED operational today in around 25 Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It offers help in educational planning and development of reform agendas. It includes an element on improving quality through teachers by supporting the development of teacher policies and teacher-training institutions.

- Work in Technical and Vocational Training (TvET). The UNESCO-UNEVOC[71] Better Education for Africa's Rise II (BEAR II) supports five Eastern African countries in improving the relevance, quality and perception of their TVET systems.

- The Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) is a project mainstreaming youth issues and priorities across national decision-making and policy implementation. It is active in 10 countries of the Southern Mediterranean.

- Education for health and wellbeing. Guided by a strategy, UNESCO supports countries to implement good quality educational programmes for health and well-being.

- Education Sector Analyses and Education Sector Plans are developed in many Member States with the technical support of IIEP. IIEP also provides a variety of policy guidance products that help countries design and develop specific policies and programs.

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67 The recommendations falling under this exercise are: Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace, and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974); the 1993 Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education; the 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) and the 2015 Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

68 For a list of members of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee as of 5 December 2018, https://sdg4education2030.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/2018-12-05%20SC%20members%202018-2020.pdf

69 The Medium Term Strategy indicates that in the first four years of the 2014-2021 period UNESCO will prioritize literacy, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education where UNESCO has a strong comparative advantage. Paragraphs 24-30.

70 Annex 1 provides a table with a summary of ongoing UNESCO technical cooperation initiatives in the area of education.

71 UNEVOC is the International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It is a Category I institute. It undertakes activities through a global network of TVET institutions.

### *Linkages between the global intellectual and the country based operational roles*

21. It is critical that UNESCO's global intellectual role and its country based operational role are well articulated. For example, policy advice at country level must be informed by the global policy analysis function. The work in the field provides a testing ground for piloting and strengthening evidence which in turn feeds back into the intellectual work of the Organization.

22. The Education Strategy points to the importance of maintaining a close link between UNESCO's global coordination, on the one hand, and its operational country level activities on the other. The same document stresses that UNESCO "has a role to play both technically and intellectually." [72]

23. Ideally, when UNESCO provides concrete support and technical expertise to Member States this expertise is grounded and guided by research and reflection. Furthermore, knowledge production cannot occur in a vacuum and UNESCO needs to link to the actual educational challenges in order to provide the most effective and evidence based intellectual leadership. The challenges is for these two roles to feed each other effectively and to achieve the best possible balance between the two.

24. The area of inclusive learning and teaching provides an example of UNESCO working through both roles to reach common objectives. As explained in the UNESCO Education Strategy: UNESCO strives to be a global learning hub on the latest reflections and innovative practices (intellectual role), it supports the translation of principles of inclusion and equity into teaching practices (both intellectual and operational roles) and provides technical assistance to improve the content and process of learning (operational role).[73]

### *Rationale for the Evaluation*

25. This evaluation is part of the UNESCO corporate biannual evaluation plan and its theme has been determined by the Education Sector. The UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (IOS) Evaluation Office (EVS) will conduct this strategic-level evaluation on the strengthening, balancing and positioning of UNESCOs global intellectual and country based operational roles in the field of Education within the context of Agenda 2030.

26. The rationale for the evaluation is its potential to provide evidence, ideas and insight on two overall questions: i) how to strengthen the Organization's leadership in its global level intellectual role; and ii) how to strike the best possible balance between the global level intellectual role and its operational role supporting countries.

27. How to strengthen the organization's leadership in its global level intellectual role? Since its creation UNESCO has sought to be an intellectual leader in the global conversation on education. UNESCO seeks to exercises its leadership in education in two principal ways: 1. Leading and coordinating the Education 2030 Agenda.[74] 2. Through an intellectual leadership involving a steadfast promotion and advocacy of a humanistic and holistic vision of education. This vision of education promotes education as a lifelong pursuit, a human right, a public good, and foundation for peace and sustainable development. It emphasizes elements of quality, equity and equitable access to education.[75]  In crafting the Education 2030 Agenda, for example, UNESCO's intellectual footprint is evident with the concepts of quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning at the core of the global goal.

28. UNESCO delivers the message a holistic view of education in its intellectual outputs as well as in its public pronouncements. Some have argued that UNESCO is exercising this intellectual leadership at a time when a utilitarian approach to education is becoming more widespread and research is increasingly dominated by universities and private foundations. [76]

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72 UNESCO Education Strategy, p.9.
73 UNESCO Education Strategy, p. 43.

74 Leading the Education 2030 Agenda involves: advocacy to sustain political commitment; facilitating policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and standard setting; monitoring progress towards the education targets; convening global, regional and national stakeholders to guide the implementation of the agenda; and functioning as a focal  point for education within the overall  SDG coordination architecture. Education 2030 Framework for Action, p.10.
75 See Education Beyond 2015, 194 EX/6 (2014)
76 UNESCO, the Faure Report, the Delors Report, and the Political Utopia of Lifelong Learning, Elfert (2015).

29. How to strike the best possible balance between the intellectual and operational role. This question has been a recurrent debate since the origins of UNESCO. In the context of Agenda 2030 it is a critical area for continued reflection. UNESCO needs to maximize the results from its diverse areas of work to provide the most relevant and effective support for the sustainable implementation of the agenda. A sustained relevance and effectiveness in education requires harnessing both its intellectual leadership as well as its involvement implementing technical, concrete hands-on support to countries in achieving and monitoring SDG4.

## Purpose and Use

30. The main purpose of the evaluation is to review in depth the two main functions of UNESCO in education --its global role, including the intellectual element, and its country based operational role-- and assess if, and to what extent, UNESCO has achieved an effective and sustainable positioning and balance between the two.

31. The results of this evaluation will feed into future decisions on how to strengthen the intellectual role of UNESCO, how to maximize the synergies and complementarities between the two roles, and balance them strategically. It will seek to provide guidance, through specific examples, of how both functions can best support each other and provide value added to Member States. It shall provide evidence based and future oriented recommendations to UNESCO's senior management on: how to better position UNESCO in the intellectual realm and how to optimize the balance between the dual roles of UNESCO in the field of Education. The evaluation will take into account that UNESCO has certain comparative strengths and the global responsibility of coordinating and leading the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda.

32. The primary intended users of this evaluation are UNESCO's senior management, in particular the Assistant Director General (ADG) for ED as well as other sectors as relevant, the Director of the Bureau for Strategic Planning (BSP), as well as related programme staff (at headquarters, field offices, and specialized institutes). Secondary users of the evaluation are Member States, other UNESCO partners and networks.

33. The results from the evaluation can also potentially be used to inform high-level discussions notably on SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda and, internally, on UNESCO's strategic transformation process.

## Scope

34. The evaluation will assume both a retrospective and a forward-looking analysis. It will describe how UNESCO distributes its intellectual and normative functions and its operational responsibilities. It will also review the organizational set up, including issues of staffing and resources, and institutional capacity for fulfilling these roles. It will seek to provide proposals on how to strengthen its functions and how to better balance these roles.

35. On its intellectual work, the evaluation will review the historic role of UNESCO as a laboratory of ideas and an intellectual leader in the education field in order to propose recommendations on how the organization can take steps to strengthen this role taking into account the changes in the global international and development landscape over the past few decades. Although the evaluation will take a historic overview to understand how this leadership role has evolved, the scope of the evaluation will focus primarily since 2010 providing an overview of the period before and after the introduction of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The evaluation will focus on operational projects and initiatives as outlined in the current 39 C/5 programme and Budget for 2018/19.

36. The evaluation will attempt to answer high-level questions on the most efficient/ effective strategic arrangements between the intellectual and operational roles of UNESCO in the field of education. The evaluation shall assist in decision-making and help introduce improvements by making evidence based and future-oriented recommendations on the following two key dimensions: i) the strengthening of UNESCO's intellectual role and ii) the optimal balance between the intellectual and the operational roles.

37. UNESCO's global priorities Gender Equality and Africa shall also be given adequate consideration.

38. Some possible **evaluation questions** on each of the two key dimensions are proposed below. The questions cover the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness and coherence. At present the number of possible evaluation questions is extensive. These are indicative and will be further refined and validated during the inception phase in consultation with the evaluation reference group.

## Strengthening of the global role

### Intellectual

i.   Over the 2010-2018 period, how effectively has UNESCO identified the most salient educational issues to prioritize through its global intellectual role, in alignment both with its mandate and with emerging trends and key discussions?

ii.  What has been the influence of a sample of UNESCO's knowledge products on global educational discourse?

iii. To what extent has UNESCO maximized its partnerships with other entities, outside the UNESCO networks, who are also producing research and intellectual outputs in education?

iv.  How well has UNESCO exerted is role as a Secretariat in the Teacher Task Force? (as an example of UNESCO's role as Secretariat for education global processes)

v.   To what extent is UNESCO prepared to strengthen its future role as an intellectual thought leader in the educational field?

vi.  To what extent has UNESCO been able to influence global discussions on education in the face of new and emerging challenges?

### Leadership for the Education 2030 Agenda

vii. How well are UNESCO Regional Offices and Headquarters working in coordination to provide a strong leadership and convening role for SDG 4?

viii. To what extent is UNESCO establishing effective interactions with Member States through United Nations processes surrounding SDG 4 at United Nations Headquarters?

ix.  How well is UNESCO managing its relationship and partnerships with other influential entities on the global education stage, such as Global Partnership for Education, as well as with civil society organizations at the country level?

x.   To what extent has UNESCO capitalized on its own networks to strengthen its global function?

xi.  To what extent is the organizational set-up in terms of resources and staffing conducive for UNESCO to fulfilling its global role?

## Balance between the two roles

How adeptly has UNESCO harnessed the synergies from its global intellectual role and its country based operational role to achieve maximum results?

To what extent have UNESCO's global intellectual outputs contributed to a more effective operational support role in countries?

To what extent is the country based operational work feeding into the intellectual work of the organization?

To what extent is the balance between UNESCO's roles favorable to be an effective and recognized leader and coordinator of the SDG 4 - Education 2030 Agenda?

What would be an optimal balance between the two roles in order to maximize the visibility of UNESCO as an intellectual leader in the area of education?

What would be an optimal balance between the two roles in order to maximize the effectiveness of UNESCO in its operational role?

## *Methodology*

39. The evaluation may include some or all of the methodological elements below. The specific methods will be further refined during the inception phase and in consultation with the evaluation reference group and IOS. The evaluation will require a combination of multiple and complementary evaluative methods and strategies in order to answer the evaluation questions and meet the evaluation purpose. The evaluation team will use a mixed method approach involving quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources.

- **Desk review.** Review relevant documents including: UNESCO programme and budgets,  corporate and education strategies, implementation reports and Agenda 2030 documents, previous evaluations and synthesis reports. Incorporate non-UNESCO academic literature and articles. The evaluation team should also review past documents reflecting the cycles and trends in the way UNESCO's role in education has been perceived, notably regarding the balance between the intellectual and the operational functions. In addition, the analysis needs to cover documents produced by other institutions active in the field of education globally: GPE, the World Bank, UNICEF, Education cannot Wait (ECW) and the Education Commission. An indicative list of documents is provided at the end of the ToR, however the evaluation team is expected to exercise due diligence in canvassing the relevant literature.

- **Theory of Change** Reconstructing, refining and further developing the expected theory of change of the two main roles of UNESCO in the context of the SDG 4 - Education 2030 Agenda.

- **Bibliometric analysis.** The team can consider using secondary sources from UNESCO publication monitoring data and from previous evaluations. It may also complement with primary extraction of readership of UNESCO intellectual outputs through media downloads and online readership.

- **Direct observation of internal and external meetings and events.** This method would capture first-hand data on how UNESCO presents its two roles in internal and external interactions. If possible, one visit to UNESCO HQ should coincide with a relevant internal or external meeting. Other relevant meetings and/or will be identified as the evaluation progresses.

- **Semi-structured interviews.** The team will explore the perspectives of key interlocutors representing main stakeholder groups. The evaluation team, supported by IOS and ED, will develop a more precise list of these stakeholders during the inception phase but should include UNESCO management and staff in headquarters, regional offices, a selection of cluster/national country offices; specialized institutes; members of National Commissions and Member State Delegations; donors; representatives of global education funding mechanisms; representatives of UNESCO networks and partners including SDG 4 Steering Committee; UN system partners; global and regional bodies; NGOs and academia.

- **Case studies.** The team might consider selecting between two to three country-level case studies or thematic areas to undertake an in-depth assessment of the interplay between UNESCO intellectual and operational work.

- **Survey.** The evaluation team could consider conducting a survey of global educational policy 'thought leaders.' This is experts such as academics, think tank representatives, who do not necessarily work at or for UNESCO, but who are recognized by their peers as influential experts in the global educational arena.[77]

### Roles and Responsibilities

40. UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service (IOS) Evaluation Office, with support from the ED Executive Office and Divisions, will manage the evaluation. IOS is responsible for the overall management of the evaluation and quality assurance of the deliverables. IOS is the owner of all evaluation tools, and may request to review data collection tools such as interview protocols and survey instruments.

41. A team of independent external evaluators will conduct the evaluation. The team will need to have specific expertise in the substantive areas of strategic planning and educational policy as well as overall experience evaluating initiatives in the field of global education.

42. The external evaluation team will develop an inception report, which will include the theory of change and a detailed evaluation methodology including data collection tools. It will conduct data collection and conduct the fieldwork. The team will then analyze the data and prepare a draft and a final report as well as other communication outputs (such as a presentation in power point, or other presentation software). The reports will detail the evaluation process and synthesize the main results (in English). The team might also be required to present findings and recommendations in UNESCO management meetings.

43. The evaluation team will be in charge for their own logistics: office space, administrative and secretarial support, telecommunications, printing of documentation, travel, etc. IOS will provide suitable office space when working from UNESCO premises. ED will support access to relevant documentation contact details and lists of stakeholders. It will also facilitate access to relevant UNESCO staff from Headquarters, field offices and specilized institutes.

44. IOS is ultimately responsible for the content of the evaluation and is the owner of both the reports, the data collection tools and the raw data.

45. The evaluators will comply with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) updated 2016 Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations and UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.

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77 Since there is no clearly defined universe for a "thought leader" the team would need to develop a convenience sample.

*Evaluation reference group*

46. In consultation with ED, IOS will establish a reference group to accompany the evaluation process and provide feedback on the terms of reference, the inception report and the draft evaluation report. The reference group will be comprised of members from: the IOS Evaluation Office; the ED Executive Office; the three ED Divisions (i. Policies and Life Long Learning Systems; ii. Inclusion, Peace and Sustainable Development and iii. Education 2030 Support and Coordination). The reference group shall also include members from UNESCO specialized institutes, and field offices. The reference group will be consulted periodically as necessary.

## Qualifications of the Evaluation Team

47. The recommended composition of the evaluation team includes two to three core members: one team leader senior evaluator and one or two junior level evaluator/ researcher. IOS will also consider alternative team compositions.

48. The consultant(s) should collectively possess the following mandatory qualifications and experience:

49. Team Leader/Senior evaluator

- University degree at Masters level or equivalent in education, social sciences, political sciences, economics, or any related field;

- At least 10 years of working experience in evaluation acquired at the international level or in an international setting;

- Substantive knowledge and experience in the field of global educational policy;

- Familiarity with UN mandates and its programming in relation to education in the framework of the Sustainable Development Agenda;

- Experience with strategic planning, strategic management and RBM principles;

- Professional work experience in developing countries or in a national/regional/ global development context;

- Excellent analytical and demonstrated excellent drafting skills in English;

- Working knowledge of French;

- No previous involvement in the implementation of the activities under review.

50. Team members (Junior evaluator/researcher)

- An advanced university degree in the social sciences, public policy or related field;

- At least 5 years of professional experience in conducting programme and policy evaluations;

- Familiarity with the field of global educational policy;

- Excellent analytical and demonstrated excellent drafting skills in English;

- Working knowledge of French;

- No previous involvement in the implementation of the activities under review.

51. At least one member of the team:

- Experience in gender and gender sensitive approaches in evaluation;

- Work experience in the UN or experience with assignments for the UN;

- Understanding and application of UN mandates in Human Rights and Gender Equality;

- Other UN language skills will be considered an advantage.

52. IOS will use curriculum vitaes to verify qualifications. There is a preference for gender-balanced and geographically and culturally diverse evaluation teams. Moreover, the technical proposal requires the team to provide references, web links or electronic copies of at least one recently completed evaluation reports. Candidates are also encouraged to submit other references such as research papers or articles that demonstrate their familiarity with the subject under review, as well as their analytical and writing skills.

53. The estimation is that the evaluation assignment will require approximately 75 to 85 professional working days. The evaluation exercise will require two or three visits to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris by the team leader and/or the senior evaluator and one or two country visits (to be determined). Each visit to UNESCO Headquarters as well as to countries will require three to five working days.

## *Deliverables and Schedule*

54. The timeframe for the evaluation is limited. The evaluation will commence in February and conclude in August 2019. The indicative timetable of key activities and deliverables is shown below.

| Activity/Deliverable | Indicative Timing |
|---|---|
| Procurement – Request for Proposals | January 2019 |
| Selection of external evaluation team; contractual arrangements completed | February 2019 |
| Evaluation launch – Kick off meeting in Paris | February 2019 |
| Inception report | Early March |
| Data collection & analysis; field missions | March-June 2019 |
| Stakeholder workshop | June 2019 |
| Draft Evaluation report | July 2019 |
| Final Evaluation report and synthesis or other communication output(s) | August 2019 |

55. The evaluation will consist of four main deliverables: inception report, draft report, final report and summary communication outputs.

56. Initial meeting. The full evaluation team will be required to participate in the initial kick off meeting in UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The team will meet with ED staff as the main clients of the evaluation. The discussions will serve to clarify for the team the evaluation purpose, the questions the evaluation seeks to answer and how the clients foresees using the evaluation results. This will also be an opportunity to discuss a communication plan, which IOS will develop.

    i. Inception report: After the initial meeting and reviewing relevant documentation, the team will prepare and inception report. This is a plan outlining how the team will carry out the evaluation. It should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following elements: introduction and relevant background information; purpose of the evaluation; evaluation framework systematizing the methodology and identifying the issues to be addressed; further elaborated sub-questions; sources of information and data collection methods; revised work schedule; and draft data collection instruments. It is advisable to use an evaluation matrix that connects questions and indicators to data collection methods/sources and sampling.

    ii. Draft evaluation report: The evaluation team will prepare a draft evaluation report and IOS will circulate it for comments among the evaluation reference group. IOS will consolidate all comments for the evaluation team. The team, for their part, before embarking on the final draft will provide a table explaining how they addressed each comment. The report will be written in English according to UNESCO IOS's Evaluation Report Guidelines. IOS will share with the evaluation team the guidelines and a detailed final report template at the beginning of the assignment. The main body of the draft report shall not exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes.

The structure of the draft report should include:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Chapter(s) for each key evaluation dimension or question
- Conclusions and Recommendations

Annexes. Including the Terms of Reference, detailed methodology and limitations to the methodology, interview list, data collection instruments, list of key documents consulted and case study /field visit reports. If relevant quantitative tables and visuals.

    iii. Communication output(s): The evaluation team will prepare a synthesis of the main findings from the evaluation. This might take different formats such as a power point presentation or slides, a 2-page brief or an infographic. The evaluation team, IOS and the client stakeholders will discuss during the initial meeting the specific type of communication output(s) based on the requirements of the client. IOS will recapitulate any decisions in a communication plan.

    iv. Final evaluation report: The final evaluation report will follow the aforementioned structure. As part of the UNESCO IOS quality assurance processes, all evaluation reports are subject to review by an external expert to ensure compliance with quality standards. The recommended actions from the quality assurance process will be addressed prior to finalization of the report.

### *References*

- UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (document 37 C/4)

- UNESCO's Education Strategy 2014–2021

- UNESCO's Programme and Budget 37C/5, 38C/5 and 39 C/5

- Incheon Declaration and Framework of Action (2015)

- Qingdao declaration (2015 International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education)

- Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- UNESCO's Education 2030 Briefing Note 1, 2, 3 and 4

- Unpacking Education 2030-SDG4 (2016)

- SDG 4 – Education 2030 Relationship

- Learning: The treasure within (1996)

- Brussels Declaration (2018)

- Accountability in Education: Meeting our commitments (2017)

- Cracking The Code: Girls' and women's education in STEM (2017)

- Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good? (2015)

- UNESCO in the 2000s EFA Coordination, GMR Production and Organizational Legitimacy in the Global Education Policy Field, (Edward, Okitsu, da Costa and Kitamura) (2015)

- UNESCO, Education Beyond 2015 194 Ex 6

- Executive Board 205 EX/19 - Implementation of standard-setting instruments: General monitoring (2018)

- UNESCO, the Faure Report, the Delors Report, and the Political Utopia of Lifelong Learning (2015)

- Stern, Independent external evaluation of UNESCO (2010)

- Evaluation of the Education for All (EFA) Global and Regional Coordination Mechanisms (2016)

- UNESCO's Education Evaluations in 2016 – A Review (2017)

- UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system

- UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation

- UNEG Handbook: Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations

- GEM Policy Paper March 2018, Fulfilling our collective responsibility: Financing global public goods in education

- Evaluation Report May 2017, External Evaluation Technical Cooperation Programme, IIEP Paris, MDF Training and Consultancy

- UNESCO, World Education Forum 2015 Final Report

# B. Detailed Methodology

## Key users of this report

The primary users of this evaluation include the Assistant Director General of the Education Sector, and her senior leadership team. In particular, the findings and recommendations are intended to inform the development of the new Medium-Term Strategy for the Education Sector as well as the strategic transformation of the Organisation.

Other key stakeholders with an interest in the evaluation and its recommendations include:

- The Director General and Cabinet of UNESCO

- The Director of the Bureau for Strategic Planning

- Staff of the UNESCO Education Sector, at headquarters, in the field and in Institutes and centres

- Representatives of UNESCO Member States, including members of UNESCO Executive Board, National Commissions, Education Ministers and senior officials

- Key partners, including UNICEF, UNHCR, The World Bank, ILO, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and a range of other intergovernmental organisations and NGOs working in the field of education

- Major donors to the UNESCO Education Sector

Intellectual leaders in the field of global education and sustainable development.
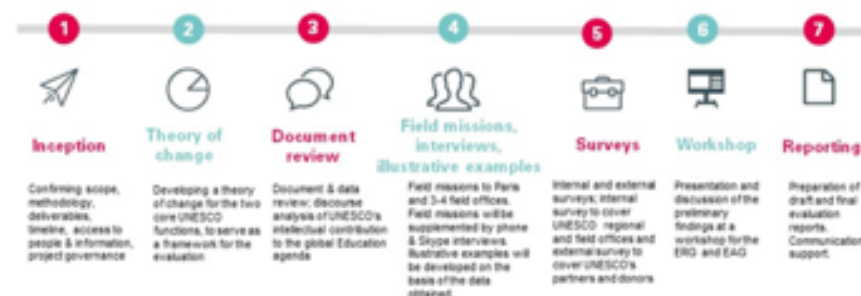
## Mixed-methods design

Our approach to the evaluation is to provide UNESCO with an independent, credible and useful evaluation based on robust analysis and feasible recommendations to inform future decisions about how to strengthen the intellectual role of UNESCO, how to maximise the synergies and complementarities between its global and country-level roles, and how to balance these dual roles of UNESCO in the field of education

- Our approach adheres to the following guiding principles:

- Triangulation of data will be achieved by extensive review of the background documents, interviews and discussions with relevant stakeholders and survey data

- Inclusive approaches that encourage active participation by a range of stakeholders

- Field work to ensure we are able to observe the work and operation of UNESCO, so as to ensure a realistic understanding of the operating environment.[78]

- Testing our findings and recommendations with an Evaluation Reference Group and an external advisory group.

The evaluation will utilise a mixed method design comprising:



The evaluation design adheres to the requirements set out in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. We set out below in more detail the scope of each data collection strand.

## Methods

### Desk review

The purposes of the desk review are to:

- Understand and document UNESCO's work in the field of Education, with a particular emphasis on the balance between UNESCO's global intellectual leadership and coordination roles, and its provision of country-level operational support, and how this has changed over time

- Undertake a targeted literature review to evaluate the contribution of UNESCO's intellectual and normative work, as reflected in a sample of UNESCO's knowledge products, has contributed to shaping global education priorities and the Education 2030 Agenda

78 These principles are underscored in the "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System", April 2005.

- Understand the broad span of UNESCO projects and activities undertaken in the field of Education, with a particular emphasis on activities over the period 2010-2018

- Inform the development of interview guides, online questionnaires, and to identify key stakeholders to be interviewed

- Gather evidence in relation to specific evaluation questions.

Based on the list of references noted in Appendix 3, we undertook a thorough desk study of relevant documents and available online resources. The identified list of relevant documents includes a selection of UNESCO's knowledge products, relevant non-UNESCO literature (including that produced by other institutions active in the field of education globally, UNESCO strategies, programme and project documents, budgets, programme implementation reports, previous evaluations and synthesis reports, financial reports and relevant excerpts from SISTER).

## Field missions

### Headquarters

The mission to UNESCO headquarters enabled us to conduct semi-structured interviews with UNESCO staff, members of National Commissions as well as visiting global stakeholders. The 4-day visit took place over the period 26 April to 2 May.  During the visit to Headquarters we conducted semi-structured interviews with a selection of:

- Senior managers and programme staff in the Education Sector, including the Directors of the responsible Divisions, relevant Chiefs of Sections and senior programme staff, representatives of the Executive Office,

- Relevant representatives of the: Bureau of Strategic Planning; Gender Equality Division of the Office of the Director General; Division of Field Support and Coordination; Africa Department,

- Relevant representatives from other UNESCO sectors and the International Institute for Educational Planning.

- Members of the SDG 4 Steering Committee, Members of National Commissions and Member State Delegations

- Other visiting stakeholders (e.g., representatives of UN system partners, global and regional bodies, NGOs and academia) if available.

A list of conducted interviews is included in Appendix 4.

### Country visits

Country-level field missions prove valuable for gaining a more in-depth understanding of the context for specific initiatives and activities, in particular country-level operational support, and for gaining first-hand perspectives from field staff and stakeholders on challenges experienced and results achieved.

We conducted field missions to four regional offices:

7 Multisectoral Regional Office for West Africa (Sahel) in Dakar,

8 Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok,

9 Regional office in Beirut, and

10 Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago.

The field missions took place late June and July.

The purpose of the field visits is to gain more in-depth understanding of particular projects and activities, and to enable insights to be drawn from programme, partner institutions and Member State representatives.  It provides a means of gaining an on-the-ground perspective on the overall coherence and interactions between UNESCO's global and country-level activity.

During the field visits we conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the following stakeholders:

- Relevant UNESCO field office/Institute staff,

- National stakeholders such as Ministries of Education

- Specialised Institutes/centres (where relevant)

- Other locally-based partners, donors and stakeholders.

A list of conducted interviews is included in Appendix 4.

### *Phone and Skype interviews*

To supplement the interviews conducted during the field missions and visit to the Headquarters, and to ensure sufficient coverage and representation of key stakeholder groups, we conducted 29 semi-structured Skype and telephone interviews. The interviewees were drawn from across the following stakeholder categories:

- Key UNESCO programme staff working in the field of Education in multi-sectoral and national offices and the various Instituters/centres,

- Members of the SDG4 Steering Committee,

- Members of UNESCO National Commissions and Ministries of Education,

- UN system partners and global and regional bodies,

- Academic experts,

- Private sector partners and foundations.

A list of potential stakeholders to be interviewed was compiled based on our desk research, from which we selected the final list of interviewees in discussion with the Evaluation Reference Group. Each interview used a semi-structured approach based on the interview guide developed together with the Evaluation Reference Group, with appropriate tailoring of the guide to ensure the relevance of questions to each interviewee.

### *Illustrative examples*

On the basis of the field visits and stakeholder interviews, we drafted several short illustrative examples79 to clarify, render more specific and make more tangible the results of our qualitative analysis of the collected data. Illustrative examples are not representative of our findings. Rather, they help explain the information we obtain, justify the insights we develop and make the general results of the evaluation more detailed and specific. Examples of possible areas of focus for the development of illustrative examples include: UNESCO's work monitoring countries' observance of normative instruments relating to the rights to education; cross-sectoral work on the prevention of violent extremism; work on women's education; work on HIV/Aids and sexuality education; and UNESCO's Future of Education project.

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79 We decided to use illustrative examples in lieu of case studies because the design and the timeline of this evaluation project will not allow us to collect the systematic, detailed, representative data necessary for the identification of appropriate case studies and their completion.

### Online surveys

Given the very large number and broad range of stakeholders for this evaluation, we supplemented the interviews and field visits with short online surveys. They help us gain a wider range of perspectives on the core evaluation questions.

We undertook two short (10-15 minutes) surveys of internal and external stakeholders. Surveys were available in English and French and primarily administered online, although questionnaires can be provided on request. Surveys include routing to ensure questions are appropriate for the respondent.

The internal survey cover UNESCO regional and field offices and intends to capture:

- Basic demographic information, so as to identify characteristics of respondents and enable categorisation of responses

- Information and perspectives on UNESCO's activities and responsibilities at the operational (regional and country) level

- Perspectives on interactions and inter-relations between the global and operational levels, including the quality of engagement and coordination between headquarters, regional and national level and with UNESCO Institutes and centres

- Views of survey respondents on opportunities to improve the functioning of the Education Sector.

The external survey target UNESCO's partners and donors, including intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and civil society, private actors, and on academics who work on questions of education policy and development and are who are not affiliated with UNESCO. The external survey aims to capture:

- Demographic information, to identify characteristics of respondents and enable categorisation of responses,

- Perceptions of UNESCO's global role as a thought leader on education policy and coordinator for the Education 2030 Agenda,

- Perceptions of UNESCO's activities at country level and collaborations with partners,

- Perceptions of inter-relation between UNESCO's global and operational roles and their realisation.

The surveys were conducted in July and were opened for responses for 3 weeks. We were reliant on access to UNESCO email databases to efficiently contact all relevant stakeholders. The survey questions were designed in close consultation with the Evaluation Reference Group.

In addition to the stakeholder surveys, we emailed a few questionnaires to a select group of respondents (e.g., UNESCO Institutes), in cases where we are unable to complete telephone or Skype interviews. In this way we ensured that all key stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in the evaluation.

### Workshop

We delivered a workshop for the Evaluation Reference Group and the External Advisory Group to validate and refine the findings and discuss preliminary recommendations prior to submitting a draft report. The main deliverable associated with the workshop will be a set of slides summarising key findings and draft recommendations, and minutes recording the workshop discussion.

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# D. Interview List

Total Interviewees: 155 (Please note some interviewees were interviewed jointly).

## Via Skype/Telephone

### UNESCO Staff

Mr Paolo Fontani, Director, UNESCO representative to Iraq, Afghanistan

Ms Lily Gray, Education Programme specialist, Senior Liaison Officer, UNESCO Liaison Office New York

Ms Min Jeong Kim, Director, Head of Office UNESCO Myanmar

### UNESCO Institutes and Centres

Dr Anantha Durraiappah, Director, UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP)

Mr Shyamal Majumdar, Director, UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC)

Dr Silvia Montoya, Director, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)

Mr Zhan Tao, Director, UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies (IITE)

Ms Yumiko Yokozeki, Director, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)

### Member States

Mr Joakim Bakke, Regional Representative - Western Europe/North America - on SDG Steering Committee, Director, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway

Mr Hongjun Chai, Regional Representative on SDG Steering Committee, First Secretary Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO

Mr Emis Njeru, Regional Representative - Africa- on SDG Steering Committee, Deputy Director of Education, Directorate of Policy Partnerships and Eastern Africa Community Affairs, Ministry of Education Kenya

Susana Postigo, Planning Director, Bolivian Ministry of Education

Dr Kazuhiro Yoshida, Director, Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education, Hiroshima University, Co-chair on SDG 4 steering committee

## Via Skype/Telephone

### Multilateral and Intergovernmental Organisations

Lisa Bender, Education Specialist, UNICEF, New York

Mr Shem Bodo, Senior Programme Officer, Executive Secretary, Association for Development of Education Africa (ADEA)

Ms Anna Falth, Policy Advisor, Education and Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women

Mr Jaime Saavedra, Global Director for Education, The World Bank

Ms Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General, OECD

### NGOs/CSOs

Mr David Archer, Head of Public Services and Financing, Action Aid International

Camilla Croso, President, Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

Dr David Edwards, General Secretary, Education International

Ms. Rasheda K. Choudhury, Executive Director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Bangladesh

Kate Lapham, Deputy Director of the Education Support Program, Open Society Foundations (OSF)

Mr Refaat Sabbah, General Director, Teacher Creativity Centre Palestine as part of CC NGO network, President Global Campaign for Education (GCE), CC NGO Network

### Academia

Prof Aaron Benavot, Professor, University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY)

Prof Mark Bray, Chair-holder, UNESCO Chair in Comparative Education (University of Hong Kong)

Prof Michel Carton, Former Director, NORRAG, Deputy Director Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Geneva)

Prof Daniel Wagner, Chair-holder, UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy (UPenn)

### Donors/Private Sector

#### Via Skype/Telephone

Tomas Lundström, Head of Education, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

### Paris Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)

### UNESCO Staff

Mr Edem Adubra, Chief, Section for Teacher Development (Secretarist of the International Task Force on Teachers), UNESCO Paris

Mr Manos Antoninis, Director, Global Education Monitoring Report Team, UNESCO Paris

Mr Christopher Castle, Chief, Section of Health and Education, UNESCO Paris

Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO Paris

Ms Anne Coupez, Chief, Unit for Strategic Planning, Monitoring, Institute and Field Coordinator, UNESCO Paris

Ms Sabine Detzel, Chief, Unit for ASPnet, UNESCO Paris

Ms Kirimoke Drollett, Chief, Administration Office, Education Sector, UNESCO Paris

Mrs Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director General for Education, UNESCO Paris

Ms Astrid Gillet, CEO, Education Sector, UNESCO Paris

Ms Kerstin Holst, Chief, Desk for Education in Emergencies, UNESCO Paris

Mr Hiromichi Katayama, Chief, Section of Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO Paris

Mr Alexander Leicht, Chief, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO Paris

Mr Jean Yves Le Saux, Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO Paris

Mr Francesc Pedro, Chief, Section of Education Policy, UNESCO Paris

Ms Ranwa Safadi, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO Paris

Mr Sobhi Tawil, Chief, Section of Partnerships, Cooperation and Research, UNESCO Paris

Mr Peter Wells, Chief, Section of Higher Education, UNESCO Paris

### Paris Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)

Mr Gwang-Chol Chang, Chief of Education Sector, Dakar Regional Bureau

Ms Katja Konkola, Chief, Unit for Human Resources, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

Mr Dov Lynch, Chief, Section of Global Citizenship and Peace Education, UNESCO Paris

Mr Bruno Mesquita Valle, Unit for Capacity Development and Field Support, UNESCO Paris

Mr Jordan Naidoo, Director, Division for Education 2030 Support and Coordination, UNESCO Paris

Ms Justine Sass, Chief, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, UNESCO Paris

Mr. Noah Sobe, Senior Researcher, Futures of Education Project, UNESCO Paris

### UNESCO Institutes and Centres

Mr David Atchoarena, Director, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)

Ms Suzanne Grant Lewis, Director, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)

### Member States

Lorna Betrand, Head of International Education Division, UK Department of Education, UK Delegation

Mr Latyr Diouf, Counsellor, Senegal Delegation

Ms Piia Immonen-Seurguenot, Special Advisor, Finland Delegation

Antonio Novoa, Ambassador of Portugal, Portugal Delegation

Ms Grethe Sofie Bratlie, Deputy Permanent Delegate, Norwegian Delegation

Emma Spicer, Education Policy Team, UK Department for International Development , UK Delegation

Mr Maxim Polya-Vitry, Deputy Permanent Delegate, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UK Delegation

**Bangkok Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)**

**UNESCO Staff**

Mr Shigeru Aoyagi, Director, UNESCO Bangkok

Ms Maki Hayashikawa, Section for Inclusive Quality Education, UNESCO Bangkok

Ms Jun Morohashi, Head of Executive Office and Regional Programme Coordinator, UNESCO Bangkok

Mr Nilesh Sharma, Senior Administrative Officer, UNESCO Bangkok

Mr Nyi Nyi Thaung, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok

Mr Libing Wang, Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development, UNESCO Bangkok

**Institutes and Centres**

Melissa Alvarado, Ending Violence against Women Programme Manager/UNITE Programme Manager, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations (UN) Women

Mr. Ekraj Sabur, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC

Dr. Josephine Sauvarin, Adviser on Adolescents and Youth, UNFPA APRO, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

**Member States**

Khun Kanittha, Secretary-General, Thai National Commission for UNESCO, Ministry of Education (Office of Permanent Secretary), Thai National Commission

**Multilateral and Intergovernmental Organisations**

Mr. Francisco Benavides, Regional ED Advisor for East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF

Dr. Kraiyos Patrawart, Deputy Managing Director, Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

Mr. Kirk Person, Director for External Affairs, South East Asia, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) International

**Donors/Private Sector**

Ms. Rommuk Piachan, Specialist in CSR Communications Strategy, Public Relations, True Corp

Dr Supoet Srinutapong, Public Sector Programme Lead, Microsoft Asia Pacific

**Beirut Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)**

**UNESCO Staff**

Ms Rana Abdul-latif, National Education Programme coordinator and Education in emergencies, UNESCO Beirut

Dr Hamed Alhamami, Director, Regional Office, UNESCO Beirut

Dr Anasse Bouhlal, Education specialist Higher Education, UNESCO Beirut

Ms. Maysoun Chehab, Programme Officer, UNESCO Beirut

Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, Education Specialist Curriculum, Teachers and Higher Education, UNESCO Beirut

Dr. Hegazi Idris, Programme Specialist, Basic Education, UNESCO Beirut

Ms. Yayoi Segi-Vltcheck, Programme Specialist Education and SDG4 focal point, UNESCO Beirut

Mr. Salim Shehadeh, Programme Specialist TVET, UNESCO Beirut

**Member States**

Khalil Al-Hussaini, Donor Coordinator, Yemen Ministry of Education

Ms. Sandra El Hadi, Education Manager, Lebanese Ministry of Education

Dr. Farah Sleiman, Assistant to Minister of Education/ National Coordinator on SDG4, Ministry of Education Syria

Mr. Fadi Yarak, Director General and focal point for SDG4, Lebanese Ministry of Education

**Multilateral and Intergovernmental Organisations**

Dr. Abdelsalam Aljoufi, Education Advisor, former Minister of Education of Yemen, Arab Bureau of Education in Gulf States (ABEGS)

Mr. Alberto Biancoli, Education Specialist, UNICEF Jordan

Mr Tariq Khan, Senior Education Specialist – Country Lead for Syria and Yemen), Global Partnership for Education

Mr Nilse Ryman, Regional Portfolio Programme Manager, Global Partnership for Education

Ms Jeannette Vogelaar, Regional Education Advisor for MENA region, UNICEF Jordan

### NGOs/CSOs

Ms. Lamia al Masri, Project Manager, Kayany Foundation

Ms. Basma Chaikh, Project Manager, Kayany Foundation

Mr. Assem Chreif, Programme Director, Lebanese Association for Studies and Training (LOST)

Mr. Qais Dashti, Project Manager of Syrian Refugee Education Grant, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)

### Academia

Ms. Rana Abdallah, Education Advisor, CERD, Republic of Lebanon

Ms. Hauda Najem, Projects Coordinator, CERD, Republic of Lebanon

Dr. Nada Oweijane, President, Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), Republic of Lebanon

Dr Raymond, Statistician, CERD, Republic of Lebanon

### Donors/Private Sector

Dr. Nidal Hassan, Secretary General, NATCOM Syria

Christiane Jeitani, National coordinator ASPNet, NATCOM Lebanon

Ramza Saad, Assistant to Secretary General, NATCOM Lebanon

Dr Tala Zein, Secretary General, NATCOM Lebanon

### Dakar Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)
### UNESCO Staff

Xavier Hospital, Regional Health and Education Advisor for Western and Central Africa, UNESCO Senegal

Olivier Pieume, TVET Regional Specialist for Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO Senegal

Mr Dimitri Sanga, Director, UNESCO Senegal

### UNESCO Institutes and Centres

Guillaume Husson, General Manager, Pole de Dakar, IIPE

Ndeye Yacine Fall, Assistant Programme Specialist/Statistical Advisor Regional Coordination, UIS

### Dakar Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)
### Member States

Mr. Mamadou Diop, Coordinator of the Unit for Studies and Planning and Evaluation Monitoring, Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MSER)

Ms. Lee, Deputy Country Director for Senegal - Head of the Education and Health sector, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

Mr Djibril Ndiaye Diouf, Director of Planning and Reform of Education, Ministry of Education Senegal

### Multilateral and Intergovernmental Organisations

Hamoud Abdel Wedoud Kamil, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank

Matthias Lansard, Head Education Programme for Senegal UNICEF,

### NGOs/CSOs

M. Arfa Desire, Director, Aide and Action

M. Abdou Diao, COSYDEP

Alassane Diop, Education Advisor, Plan International

Houraye Mamadou-Anne, Regional Coordinator, FAWE - Forum for African Women Educationalists

Babacar NDong, Programme Manager, Fondations pour secteur prive pour l'education, (Private Sector Foundation for Education)

Diouf Oumou Sall, FAWE - Forum for African Women Educationalists

M. Sylla, Project Officer, Human Development, French Development Agency -AFD

### Santiago Mission (Both Face-to-Face Interviews and Skype)
### UNESCO Staff

Ms. Cecilia Barbieri, Senior Education Specialist, Head of 2030 Section, UNESCO Santiago

Mr Nicholas del Valle, Assistant Programme Specialist - Education 2030 Cultural Heritage, Human Rights, UNESCO Santiago

Ms. Danela Garcia, Administration Officer, UNESCO San Jose

Ms. Mary Guinn Delaney, UNESCO Regional Advisor, Education for Health and Well-Being for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO Santiago

Mr. Ramón Iriarte, Education Programme Specialist, Education 2030 Section, Technical Vocational Education and Training, TICs, STEM, UNESCO Santiago

Ms. Romina Kasman, Programme Specialist, Regional Programme Coordinator, UNESCO Santiago

Ms. Esther Kuisch-Laroche, Director, UNESCO San Jose

Claudia Uribe, Director, Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO Santiago

Mr Carlos Vargas, Specialist, Chief of Teacher Development Unit, UNESCO Santiago

## UNESCO Institutes and Centres

Carlos Henriquez, Advisor to the Director, LLECE

Mr. Atilio Pizarro, General Coordinator, Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE)

## Member States

Mr. Gonzalo Donoso, Technical Professional Training Unit, Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education Chile

Mr. Felino Garcia, National Coordinator, Intercultural Bilingual Education Programme, Ministry of Education Chile

Mr. Enrique Laval, Executive Secretary, Chilean National Commission for UNESCO

Mr. Pablo Rojas Durán, Head of Education and Training in Arts and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage

Claudia Tellez, Alternate Head of International Relations, Ministry of Education

## Multilateral and Intergovernmental Organisations

Dr. Laurette Bristol, Programme Manager, Human Resource Development, CARICOM, Guyana

Dr Javier Gonzalez, Director, SUMMA (Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean)

## NGOs/CSOs

Jorge Manzi, Director, MIDE UC

Lorena Meckes, International Coordinator, MIDE UC

Maria Pauline Flotts, Executive Director, MIDE UC