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**Forum:** General Commission 2

**Issue:** Measures to strengthen the role of education in achieving sustainable development

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## **Introduction**

Among the main points emphasized in the organization of the Sustainable Development Agenda in the U.N. is the notion that almost all of the goals and proposals are intertwined. That is, they feed off of each other and they make each other possible, especially education, since it makes such a drastic difference in the way populations perceive the world around them, the opportunities that are available to them, and what they would need to do to move towards a sustainable system with a supportive society. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital (1).

Considering the demands of today's society, a deep understanding of one's roles as citizens and humans is only achievable with a sound education, thus it may be stated that education is a vital investment in individuals. Arguably, education and high enrollment rates in schools does not guarantee a nation's prosperity but is most certainly one of the biggest factors in the process, and so education is considered one of the primary requisites for growth and civilization (2). Education for sustainable development (ESD) promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understanding, values, and actions required to create a sustainable world, which ensures environmental protection and conservation, promotes social equity and encourages economic sustainability (3). The importance of education in this process is obviously not limited to ecological concerns; rather, it cultivates a general awareness in citizens that will transform their outlook altogether.



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## Definition of Key Terms

**Sustainable development:** Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. It is the main theme around which the new 2030 U.N. agenda is centered. The concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission (formally the World Commission on Environment and Development) as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Brundtland, 1987) (3).

**Education:** the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.

**Civilization:** the stage of human social and cultural development and organization that is considered most advanced.

**Poverty:** the state of being extremely poor. Some nations may set some standards in this aspect considering their citizens’ average income and the taxes that need to be paid.

**Economic Growth:** an increase in the number of goods and services produced per head of the population over a period of time. This research report and the concept of this issue is highly related to the economic growths of member states, their patterns and by what factors they are affected. Many organizations believe that education lies at the heart of all kinds of economic development, and thus have made it their policy to incorporate such opportunities in order to enhance financial improvements.

## Background Information

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):



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Following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, Millennium Development Goals were established in order to improve the prosperity and well-being of people living in developing regions. The first goal of the Millennium Development Agenda was eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Extreme poverty rates have been reduced in every developing region, and the MDG target on the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been met five years ahead of the target date. About 700 million fewer people lived in extreme poverty conditions in 2010 than in 1990 with an estimated decrease in proportion from 36% to 15%. Despite this impressive achievement at the global level, 1 billion people are still living in extreme poverty.

## United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development:

In order to promote and emphasize the important role that education plays in all forms of development, the United Nations adopted this process of a decade, UNESCO in the lead to make a difference. This was the period between the years 2005-2014. The main purpose of this decade was to work towards a vision ‘of a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behavior, and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation’ (4).

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Global Development in 2015. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.





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Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Agenda aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Here are the specific targets of this goal.

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational



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training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

- By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

### Transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs:

The outcome of the MDGs is inarguably positive as they enhanced the well-being and prosperity of many people universally. However, with the population world approaching 8 billion, there are some issues that can't be fully resolved within 15 years.

Poverty, unfortunately, is one of them. However, by building on the success of the MDGs and correcting the flaws of it, the SDGs can be the tool to end poverty.

It is important to note the differences of the SDGs in comparison to the MDGs in order to have an insight into the things that can be done.

- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets are broader in scope and go further than the MDGs by addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. The goals cover the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.
- The new Goals are universal and apply to all countries, whereas the MDGs were intended for action in developing countries only.
- A core feature of the SDGs is their strong focus on means of implementation—the mobilization of financial resources—capacity-building and technology, as well as data and institutions.



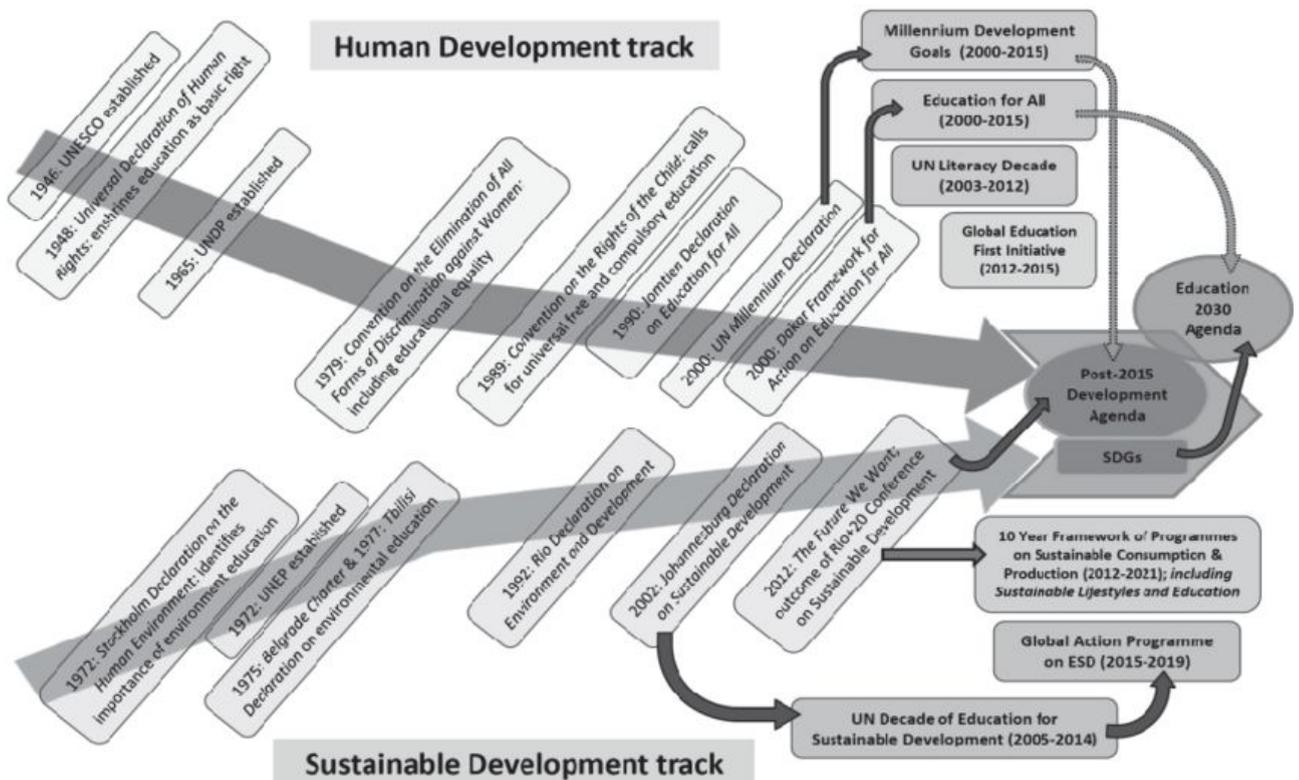
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Bearing these in mind, there is a lot of hope that the SDGs will be a greater success in eradicating extreme poverty. The ‘Possible Solutions’ section of this study guide elaborates on the things that should be done in order to achieve this in a sustainable manner.

## Poverty:

As has been mentioned in the previous section, poverty is one of the targets of the SDGs and is thought to be one of the biggest contributors to people being unable to receive adequate training and education. In the cycle of poverty, families remain poor for three or more generations due to a number of factors. Short life expectations among the extremely poor cause the cycle of poverty to last for a long time such that the older generation does not live to positively impact economic or social values to the younger generation. With making education available for all, it is possible to break this chain.

## Timeline of Major Events





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**Figure 1:** Timeline of events closely related to the applications of education in Sustainable Development Policies, providing more detail than the table below.

1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights established education as a basic human right
1972	The Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment identifies the importance of being educated about the environment
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, including educational equality.
2000	United Nations Millennium Declaration (Millennium Development Goals, Education for All)
2005	United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development adopted

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **United Nations Educational and Social Council (UNESCO):**

Education, as a transformative force is a cornerstone of the agenda of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO). It is regarded as a gateway to building peace, eradicating poverty and enhancing sustainable development. UNESCO works with the understanding that education, as a human right must be supported by its quality. The organisation is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all aspects of education. It leads the Global Education 2030 Agenda through Sustainable Development Goal 4.



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UNESCO is the leading institution in education on both global and regional levels. Their duty is to strengthen education systems all over the world and respond to contemporary challenges hindering education.

Its work involves educational development from pre-school to higher education and beyond. Themes include global citizenship and sustainable development, human rights and gender equality, health and HIV and AIDS, as well as technical and vocational skills development.

### **Finland:**

Finland has managed to raise the profile of the teaching profession which resulted in a consistently higher number of applicants to teaching positions. Working conditions inspire the interest in the profession, more than salaries do. Further incentives were available to teachers, such as continuous training, keeping them updated and motivated. Finland is highly respected worldwide when it comes to educational policies and success.

### **Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue**

- GA resolution (*A/RES/70/209*) on the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014)” conveys the importance of a high-quality, equitable and inclusive education globally in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- GA resolution (*A/RES/70/137*) on the Rights of the Child emphasises the importance of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols.
- GA resolution (*A/RES/69/2*) on education for democracy highlights the role of education in the reinforcement of democracy.
- GA resolution (*A/RES/69/145*) on World Youth Skills day expresses preoccupations on the high number of unemployed youth.



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## **Possible Solutions**

Measures to ensure inclusive and equitable access to education for all must be taken into consideration more on the national level. There are conspicuous differences in the context of each country in terms of the needs of the citizens and the policies of the government. Therefore, country-specific policy-making and development strategies would be the most effective in making education available for all.

The conditions a country is in must be evaluated with utmost care and a sustainable development plan should be formulated accordingly based on the country's potential. This plan should have education in the center, given the importance of a quality education. For girls who grow up in a remote rural area with socio-economic challenges, staying in school can protect her from child marriage, violence and continued poverty. For boys who are living in an urban slum, schooling instead of child labour can provide the skills needed for a better-paying and more fulfilling job as an adult. All policymakers should work towards a future where no one is left behind, meaning that girls and boys must be given equal access to education.

Focusing on primary education only would not be enough. Accessibility of early childhood development facilities and preschools need to be increased. Governments should allocate a certain amount of budget to provide the public with such opportunities, especially in areas where the youth is densely populated. Technical and vocational education plays a very significant role when it comes to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. Therefore, these facilities should be popularised in order to enhance the productivity of the public and make efficient use of the resources.

Partnership among states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector should be encouraged and the crucial role played by education in the development and



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stability of a society, particularly in conflict and post-conflict contexts should be well-acknowledged. Governments should realise that they have the primary responsibility to provide education to the public.

Governments must take action in order to enhance the accessibility to education and maintain the safeguarding of schools, teachers and students in order to avoid further deliberate attacks, especially in confinement areas.

A clear message of zero tolerance for discrimination on any base should be sent, including gender, ethnicity and religion, in educational systems. Girls' access to education, (especially if they have been marginalised and excluded from receiving education, as a result of discriminatory ideologies) must be further emphasised. People with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations must be addressed as well, in order not to leave anyone behind.

Most importantly, the youth should be educated with a global mindset, internalising the values underlying the Sustainable Development Agenda. This means that, all learners need to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity. This would be possible by integrating the 2030 Agenda to school curricula worldwide.

## **Useful Links For Further Research**

1. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development>
2. [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444\\_eng](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444_eng)



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