
Quality Education for All: Fighting Poverty and Achieving Equality during the Pandemic



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

The Sustainable Development Goals 1, 4, 5 and 10 aim to end poverty and set the world on a path of equality, prosperity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet. In order to do this, we need to provide quality education for all, especially the most vulnerable groups.

INTRODUCTION

This policy briefly addresses the need for applying SDGs in a cross-cutting and coherent way to seek policy and institutional coherence in achieving the agenda 2030 and the SDG 1,4,5, and 10. These SDGs interrelate across people, equality, prosperity, environment, peace and partnerships. The principle of policy coherence for development further is accorded in SDG 17.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic crisis is making inequality worse, leading to further divides in prosperity which then underpins the environment. Progress towards No poverty (SDG1) had slowed,

ANALYSIS

SDG 1.NO POVERTY

SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Pre-COVID 19: the world was off track to end poverty by 2030. The SDG1.1 states that "By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day". However, the implications of Covid-19 and some other factors such as conflicts and climate change caused the extreme poverty rate to rise for the first time in a generation, from 8.4% in 2019 to 9.5% in 2020. 71 million people are pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. By 2030, it is projected that around 600 million people will still live in extreme poverty. This can significantly affect achieving other strategic goals such as getting access to quality education. Moreover, the young and female workers, who already have a much higher likelihood to live in poverty, have been affected more severely than other social groups. This jeopardizes attaining SDGs 4, 5 and 10 (quality education, gender equality and reduce inequality).

SDG 4. QUALITY EDUCATION

Progress has been too slow across all SDG four targets. While the focus has been on student health and safety for COVID-19 prevention there has also been a lack of policy directives from the Government in developing an integrated Education for SD that can guide the evidence base for its educational policy reforms.

In moving forward there is a need for the use of the SDG framework as the basis for student co-curricular activities, such as courses, learning and teaching programs, and student leadership programs. In addition strong links with business and industry (SDG 9) to monitor employer trends and skills requirements will be critical.

SDG 5. GENDER EQUALITY

Women only represent 25% in national parliaments, 36% in local government, which means that women are still underrepresented in politics. On the contrary, the majority of low-paid job positions are held by women, such as nurses, personal care aides, and home health aides. This phenomenon becomes prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, where women account for 70% of health and social workers. Women also bear additional household burdens during the pandemic. Moreover, lockdowns are increasing the risks of violence against women and girls.

The SDG 5 - Gender Equality aims at ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. This requires securing women's rights in political, economic, public and private life. More concretely, it calls for valuing unpaid care and domestic work, giving women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over their property. Women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life should be recognized. It is also important to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres. Realizing gender equality will ultimately contribute to reducing inequality (SDG 10) globally.

SDG 10. REDUCE INEQUALITY

Despite some positive signs, inequality in its various forms persists. Firstly, while real incomes of the poorest within countries are rising, the rich still prosper disproportionately and the general level of income inequality remains high. Workers are receiving a smaller share of the output they helped produce. In

addition, gender inequality is more pronounced for women with disabilities. The main grounds of discrimination mentioned by these women was not the disability itself, but religion, ethnicity and sex, pointing to the urgent need for measures to tackle multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

The COVID-19 crisis is making inequality worse. It is hitting the most vulnerable people hardest, and may further entrench existing patterns of discrimination and stigma, with reports emerging from many countries of discrimination against different groups.

COVID-19 has also introduced a new global challenge behind access to remote learning, which remains out of reach for at least 500 million students. As discussed above, due to gender inequality, girls and women are more likely to be deprived of the access to enabling technology, in particular information and communication technology. Therefore, it is vital to pay attention to how poverty, inequalities in gender and education are interrelated in the case of denied access to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

It is important to note that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development not only concerns achieving the selected SDG goals for developing countries. Rather, the highlighted goals outline the importance of working in a global partnership to achieve prosperity for all.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has significantly diminished the amount of active effort made towards meeting the four concrete goals highlighted in this policy brief by 2030 - As a result, failing to meet one key goal - quality education for example - impacts other goals such as ensuring gender equality, reducing inequality and ending poverty, where the world is now faced with a highly raised issue of solving technological challenges that now literally impacts basic digital access to education as part of remote learning.

While remote learning can be considered a convenient method of access to learning for those that can afford the experience, data shows that inequalities in education are exacerbated by the recent pandemic, where school closures kept 90% of all students out of school. Such information must be widely shared with the public to initiate a global effort

to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Inform the public about various implications caused by COVID-19 as a global initiative.
- Provide sustained financial and technical support for students and teachers, especially those who belong to the most vulnerable groups and regions is vital.
- Ensure access to democratic decision-making.
- Scale up infrastructure investments.
- Raise the minimum wage and invest more in education.

Relevance to the 2030 Agenda

This policy brief highlights 4 out of the 13 goals for building towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Group members:

Nidal Alajaj

Sunny Choi

Zahidah Afrin Nisa

Qin Yin

Wenjia Zhou

Partners



SDG Bergen Science Advice



GLOBAL CHALLENGES

