

# TST Issues Brief: EDUCATION and CULTURE<sup>1</sup>

## EDUCATION

Education is a fundamental human right and the bedrock of sustainable development: it contributes to all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, and environment - and underpins governance, and security of the individual. The interconnected dividends that result from investments in equitable quality education are immeasurable – generating greater economic returns and growth for individuals and societies, creating a lasting impact on public health, decent work and gender equality, and leading to safer and more resilient and stable societies.

As an enabling factor for the multiple dimensions of societal development, quality education is a key lever for sustainable development. It plays a crucial role in shaping personal and collective identities, promoting critical social capital and cohesiveness, and responsible citizenship based on principles of respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity.

### I. **Stocktaking**

Education is one of the core ‘unfinished businesses’ of the MDGs that must be prioritized in the post-2015 development agenda.

**The efforts to achieve MDGs in the past 13 years have yielded unprecedented human progress.:** From 2000 to 2010, more than 50 million additional children were enrolled in primary school. A large majority of these are girls who now attend primary and secondary schools.

**Despite this progress, primary school enrolment has slowed since 2004, even as countries with the toughest challenges have made large strides.**

61 million children of primary-school-age (more than half in Sub-Saharan Africa) and 71 million children of lower secondary-school-age children currently remain out of school.<sup>8</sup> Approximately 120 million children either never make it to school or drop out before their fourth year.<sup>9</sup> Rural-urban disparities in access to education also remain

*Investment in quality education, particularly for girls, generates immediate and intergeneration paybacks across all dimensions of sustainable development.*

- Each extra year of a mother’s schooling **reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5% to 10%.**<sup>2</sup>
- A year of secondary education for girls correlates with as much as a **25% increase in wages later in life.**<sup>3</sup>
- On average each additional year of schooling for a country’s population **reduces that country’s chances of falling into civil war by 3.6%.**<sup>4</sup>
- People of voting age with a primary education are **1.5 times more likely to support democracy** than people with no education.<sup>5</sup>
- Well-nourished children are **13% more likely to be in the correct grade at school**, boosting lifelong skills.<sup>6</sup>
- If all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty, **resulting in a 12% cut in global poverty.**<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, 2011. [EFA Global Monitoring Report – the hidden crisis: armed conflict and education.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Gene Sperling and Barbara Herz, 2004. [“What Works in Girls’ Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World,”](#) Council for Foreign Relation, Center for International education.

<sup>4</sup> See above, note 2.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, 2009. [EFA Global Monitoring Report – overcoming inequalities: why governance matters.](#)

<sup>6</sup> Save the Children, 2013. [Food for Thought – Tackling child malnutrition to unlock potential and boost prosperity.](#)

<sup>7</sup> See above, note 2.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, 2012. [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012.](#)

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO, 2012. [Education for All Global Monitoring Report– Youth and Skills: putting education to work.](#)



significant in many developing countries, and in some regions rural enrolment rates are half those in urban areas.<sup>10</sup>

**The focus on access and completion has not been sufficiently complemented by what children actually learn in school.** At least 250 million children are not able to read, write or count well even among those who have spent at least four years in school.<sup>11</sup> In the least developed countries one quarter of young men aged 15 to 24 and one third of young women aged 15 to 24 are illiterate.<sup>12</sup> In low- and middle-income countries, as many as 200 million young people (58% girls) have not completed primary education, failing to acquire the necessary skills for a successful transition to adult life and decent jobs. 775 million adults – almost two-thirds of whom are women – still lack basic reading and writing skills and there has been slow progress on the provision of early childhood care and education.

**The emphasis on global targets imposed one-size-fits-all targets for countries, irrespective of countries' diverse starting points, financial resources and capacity.** Such a 'one-size-fits all' approach has often compromised national priorities: for instance, stalling the educational agenda in countries where a key challenge has been to improve quality in primary schooling, and to boost access to secondary and higher education, and ensure the relevance of the skills acquired. However, more and more countries have been able to successfully adapt global targets to address their particular challenges and needs in the education sector.

**Inequalities in education remain a big challenge, and poverty and exclusion the major markers of disadvantage.** Exclusion from education occurs most often among girls, rural and indigenous peoples, working children, children living in conflict, orphans, migrants and nomads, children with disabilities, persons living with HIV/Aids, and persons living in conflict and disaster contexts, and linguistic and cultural minorities.<sup>13</sup> Poor, rural girls often face multiple disadvantages through gender discrimination and violence, sexual and reproductive health issues including teenage pregnancy, and poverty which bar them from enrolling and lead to dropouts at greater rates than boys.<sup>14</sup> Young adolescents from the poorest households are three times more to be out of school as those from the richest households.<sup>15</sup> Provision of quality education also remains a challenge in disasters and conflict or post-conflict contexts, with children from these contexts comprising around 40% of out-of-school children.

The expansion of access to primary education has resulted in growing demand for secondary and tertiary education. This is also accompanied by **growing concern for transferable skills development: there are more young people than ever, disproportionately concentrated in the developing world and about three times as likely as adults to be unemployed.** Indeed, too many young people and adults, particularly women, are currently unable to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need for today's rapidly changing technologies and world of work. Adequate technical and vocational education and training systems should provide young people with the skills to seize economic opportunities and find decent jobs.

**Inadequate attention had been paid to the financial, human capital and infrastructural resource constraints which undermine progress towards achieving effective learning environments for quality education.** In particular, to provide quality universal primary education (UPE) for all by 2015, 114

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<sup>10</sup> IFAD, 2011. [Rural Poverty Report](#).

<sup>11</sup> See above, note 15.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, 2012. [Progress for Children: a report card on adolescents](#)

<sup>13</sup> Henceforth, the use of the term 'disadvantaged' or 'vulnerable' groups refers to the groups listed here as well as others.

<sup>14</sup> Brookings Institute, 2012. [Global Compact Policy Guide](#).

<sup>15</sup> See above, note 14.

countries will need at least 1.7 million more teachers by 2015.<sup>16</sup> Increased spending and national budgets on education have been important ingredients in positive educational outcomes in the period 2000-2010. But recent aid stagnation to education has resulted in the need for an additional US\$ 26 billion annually to achieve basic education in poor countries.

## II. Overview of current proposals

**As part of the post-2015 deliberations, various goals have been proposed for education highlighting:** i) expanded access and completion; ii) the provision of quality education and learning; iii) the enabling conditions necessary for quality education and learning; iv) a renewed focus on gender equality; v) the need for measurable targets and indicators, which allow for regional and national adaptation, taking into account the rural urban divide.<sup>17</sup> Across many of the proposals, the following success factors are identified for education and these strongly resonate with the SDG agenda and correspond with the lessons learned from the MDG and Education for All (EFA) efforts:

- **A focus on access to education for all at all levels.** A lifelong learning approach, including access to early childhood care and education (ECCE), post-basic and higher education, and adult learning and non-formal education, and responding to country contexts and settings, development challenges and priorities, including in conflict-affected countries. Expanding access to education requires for the formal education sector to establish innovative partnerships with non-governmental service providers, private sector, communities and parents.
- **A greater focus on equity.** The need for disadvantaged children, youth and adults to acquire relevant technical and vocational skills combined with the necessary transversal skills for a decent life and work should be fully reflected in education policies and strategies. Reaching out to out-of-school children and youth using innovative, flexible and mobile interventions, including school-feeding programmes, and partnering with non-formal education providers and communities should be a priority, especially for those countries that have large out-of-school populations.<sup>18</sup>
- **Gender equality remains a high priority,** with a renewed focus on enhanced access to post-basic and post-secondary education for girls and women in safe, supportive learning environments.
- **A renewed focus on relevant and measurable learning outcomes,**<sup>19</sup> such as foundational literacy and numeracy, as well as other relevant social, civic, economic, agricultural, environmental and health-related skills and competencies; and ensuring there is an adequate supply of well-trained and motivated teachers and learning materials to support the desired learning outcomes and curriculums that impart relevant life skills and competencies. Greater commitment to fund education and skills development for all, particularly for rural populations, is needed.
- **A greater focus on skills and training.** Ensuring young people are equipped with social, employability and technical skills and competencies to be informed, responsible and active citizens, find decent work<sup>20</sup> and contribute to sustainable growth and peaceful societies.

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<sup>16</sup> See above, note 15.

<sup>17</sup> Some of these constituents and proposals include, but are not limited to, [Save the Children](#), [the Basic Education Coalition](#), [The Global Campaign for Education](#), [Education International](#), [Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Framework for Education](#), [Oxfam](#), the [Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies](#), the [UN Girls' Education Initiative](#), the [Global Partnership for Education](#), [The Centre for International Governance Innovation \(CIGI\) and the Korea Development Institute](#), [Results for Development Institute and the Overseas Development Institute](#), [The Center for Global Development](#), the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development](#), the [Learning Metrics Task Force](#), and the [EFA Global Monitoring Report](#).

<sup>18</sup> Currently, about 8 countries in the world account for nearly half of the 61 million out-of-school children.

<sup>19</sup> The Brookings Institution, 2013. [Learning Metrics Task Force, Toward Universal Learning: What Every Child Should Learn.](#)

<sup>20</sup> Decent work, as defined by the [ILO](#), involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom

- **Strengthening the provision of enabling learning environments.** Ensure safe and healthy learning environments, inclusive of safe, disaster-sensitive school buildings and classrooms; the availability of safe and clean drinking water, school feeding programmes, gender-sensitive sanitation and hygiene; and the integration in the curriculum of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education as well as indigenous knowledge and knowledge relevant to the lives of rural populations.
- **Sustainable financing** with a clear commitment by governments and donors to provide the necessary financial resources to achieve educational priorities both in urban and rural contexts.

### III. Suggestions on the way forward

The unfinished business from the MDG and EFA efforts must be acknowledged and addressed, so that countries that have not yet been able to make progress in education (especially in conflict and post-conflict settings) have the chance to establish firm foundations in the primary education for girls and boys. Countries still need an accelerated approach to resolving ‘bottlenecks’ in advancing quality education through cross-sectoral partnerships that include private sector, trade unions and civil society. Improving the linkages and coherence between education, training and the world of work requires the active participation of employers and workers. School feeding needs to be recognized as an essential pillar of the education system globally, wholly interrelated to the provision of quality education, serving both as a safety net and a complement to other support and services.

The provision of education contributes to progress on a range of development goals, including the eradication of poverty and hunger, the promotion of food security and nutrition, social cohesion, good governance and participatory citizenship and peacebuilding, improved health and gender equality. The SDG agenda must therefore include **education as a cross-cutting issue across all development goals, as well as an explicit education goal**. Relevant, education must prioritize the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies that are linked to 21st century livelihoods and employment, and contribute to shaping attitudes and behaviors that promote social inclusion and cohesion, and environmental sustainability. These skills and competencies include critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, ICT proficiency, conflict resolution, living and learning to live together in a multi-cultural world; and relevant content knowledge like nutrition, agricultural, sexual and reproductive health education, environmental and climate change education, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, sustainable consumption and lifestyles, and green technical and vocational education and training. Therefore it is essential that education systems and institutions have the capacity to promote the principles of sustainable development across the learning cycle throughout life, and build resilient and socially-responsible citizens and communities.

The achievement of this vision demands a **single harmonized global education framework**, informed by the successes and challenges of the MDG and EFA agendas. In keeping with the spirit of the summary of outcomes from the ongoing Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the post-2015 Development Agenda, the overarching explicit education goal of **“Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All”** is endorsed. The recommendation is to develop specific goals, indicators and targets around the following four priority areas:

- 1) All girls and boys are able to access and complete quality pre-primary education of an agreed period (at least 1 year);
- 2) Equal access to and completion of a full course of quality primary schooling, with recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy;

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for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

- 3) All adolescent girls and boys access and complete quality lower secondary/secondary education with recognized and measurable learning outcomes;
- 4) All youth and adults, particularly girls and women, access post-secondary learning opportunities for developing knowledge and skills, including technical and vocational, that are relevant to the worlds of work and life and necessary for further learning and forging more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

**Global and national targets** should be set for each of the above areas, with due attention to vulnerable groups in order to address inequalities and discrimination and disaggregated by gender, wealth, ethnicity, location, etc. While goals should be relevant to all countries, target-setting at the national/local level should remain flexible so as to allow for the diversity of social, economic and cultural contexts.

**Appropriate governance and accountability mechanisms** are needed both globally and at country levels to prioritize transparent, well-functioning, effective, and accountable education systems which are capable of delivering high-quality education to all. The meaningful **participation** of key actors, in particular girls and women, is essential to implement and track an education agenda under the SDG and to uphold the principle of mutual accountability – of education Ministries and other partner Ministries to citizens, donors to national governments, schools to parents, and teachers to students and vice-versa. All **partnerships** should be explicitly strengthened or designed to address inequalities and their interplay with education progress.

**Key questions, among others, to keep in mind going forward include:**

- How might education fit within the post-2015 agenda framework to prioritize poverty reduction, food security and human development, whilst covering the broader range of sustainability issues?
- What should the architecture for delivering on education goals within the broader sustainable goals look like, given the existence of education MDGs alongside EFA?
- How can goals and targets be framed in order to foster and capture the cognitive, social, and emotional strengths of students as well as the relevance and resiliency of education systems?
- What kind of disaggregated targets and indicators can we use to realize principles of equality and non-discrimination in education?

## CULTURE

### **I. Stocktaking**

There has been a growing interest and support to recognize culture as an integral part of the broader development debate. Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.<sup>21</sup> Culture shapes individual's worldviews and the way communities address the changes and challenges of their societies. For this reason, education serves as a critical vehicle for transmitting these value systems as well as for learning from the humanity's diversity of worldviews, and for inspiring future creativity and innovation.

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<sup>21</sup> UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 2 November 2001. This reflects the definition adopted at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT), Mexico City (1982)

The close nexus between education and culture should be understood as an opportunity to promote human rights, including cultural rights, global citizenship and respect for cultural diversity. A rights-based approach to culture is the soil in which education must grow and, through education, flourish and further develop, helping young generations to learn about themselves and others. Cultures are dynamic and evolving: a rights-based education offers opportunities to challenge negative cultural norms or stereotypes, especially those related to gender and race for example, in a culturally-sensitive manner by provoking dialogue, raising awareness and providing alternative models. It is a framework to build truly sustainable development, drawing from the experiences of past generations and serving as a wellspring for creativity and renewal.

At the international level, the Outcome Document of the 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Summit, adopted ten years after the Millennium Declaration, emphasized the importance of culture for development and its contribution to the achievement of the MDGs. These crucial messages were reiterated in two consecutive Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on “Culture and Development” in 2011 (65/166) and 2012 (66/208), which called for the mainstreaming of culture into development policies and strategies, and underscored culture’s intrinsic contribution to sustainable development, as well as a number of other relevant declarations, statements and normative instruments adopted at international, regional and national levels. In addition, the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio + 20), “The Future We Want”, included a number of important references to culture and highlighted the importance of cultural diversity and the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development.<sup>22</sup>

The UNESCO International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” (Hangzhou, China, 15-17 May 2013), **recommended that a specific Goal focused on culture be included as part of the post-2015 UN development agenda**, to be based on heritage, diversity, creativity and the transmission of knowledge and including clear targets and indicators that relate culture to all dimensions of sustainable development.<sup>23</sup>

There is a legacy of UN engagement on diverse features and facets of culture, which has resulted in some critical tools for analysis, programming and evaluation of human development initiatives and humanitarian interventions.<sup>24</sup>

At the national level, the UN system has piloted in recent years a range of innovative interagency programmes to support Member States in their efforts to safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, to foster cultural institutions, to strengthen cultural and creative industries, and to promote cultural tourism and the culture sector in general. A total of 18 UN inter-agency joint programmes on culture and development have thus been implemented under the MDG Achievement Fund in 2008-2013.<sup>25</sup> In addition, several culturally-driven development programmes, which insisted on enabling creative partnerships with cultural agents of change have been a feature of over 100 UN Country Development

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<sup>22</sup> The document recognized, for example, that “many people, especially the poor, depend directly on ecosystems for their livelihoods, their economic, social and physical well-being, and their cultural heritage” (Para. 30) and that “all cultures and civilizations can contribute to sustainable development” (Para. 41). It also stressed “the need for conservation as appropriate of the natural and cultural heritage of human settlements, the revitalization of historic districts, and the rehabilitation of city centers” (Para. 134), and emphasized the “intrinsic value of biological diversity, as well as its ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values” (Para. 197).

<sup>23</sup> The Hangzhou Declaration “[Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies](#)” adopted in Hangzhou, People’s Republic of China, on 17 May 2013, available on

<sup>24</sup> Examples include the UNESCO Cultural Diversity Programming Lens and the UNFPA ‘Culture lens’ tool.

<sup>25</sup> Detailed information on results and impact of the MDG-F Culture and Development Joint Programmes are available on [www.unesco.org/new/mdgf](http://www.unesco.org/new/mdgf) and <http://www.mdgfund.org/>

Frameworks.<sup>26</sup> Whereas five years ago culture was mentioned in less than 30% of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) at country level, it is now mentioned in 70% of them<sup>27</sup>. The UN Secretary-General's 2011 report on Culture and Development, moreover, underscored the work being undertaken on a daily basis by 15 United Nations entities, which already includes a culture-sensitive approach.

At the same time, efforts were continued at the global and regional levels to encourage respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, as key pillars for peace, reconciliation and human rights.

A number of countries have assessed the inclusive and multidimensional role of culture in their national development processes through the UNESCO Indicators on Culture for Development (CDIS)<sup>1</sup>, leading to the production of new facts and figures which illuminate the inclusive role of culture for development at the national level, both as a driver and an enabler, and offer a global overview of national challenges and opportunities for sustaining and enhancing cultural assets, resources and process from a development perspective.

## II. Overview of current proposals

Building on an increasing recognition at both international and national levels and on the need expressed in recent years to broaden the development debate, it has emerged that the future development framework for post-2015 should acknowledge the role of culture as an enabler and a driver of sustainable development:

- Culture is a fundamental **enabler of sustainable development**, being a source of meaning and energy, a wellspring of creativity and innovation, and a resource to address challenges and find appropriate solutions.
- Culture is a **driver for sustainable development**, through the specific contributions of the culture sector to inclusive social, cultural and economic development, harmony, environmental sustainability, peace and security. One size does not fit all. Different cultural perspectives will result in different paths to development.

## III. Suggestions on the way forward

Culture should be placed at the heart of the Post-2015 Agenda, ideally through a specific goal focused on culture, including development objectives, clear targets and indicators that relate culture to all dimensions of sustainable development.

Building on the recommendation formulated by the International Congress of Hangzhou (15-17 May 2013), development objectives linked to culture are based on the need to:

- ❖ **Integrate culture within all development policies and programmes in line with international normative instruments**  
Development is shaped by culture and local context, which ultimately also determine its outcomes. For this reason, the cultural dimension should be systematically integrated in definitions of sustainable development and well-being, as well as in the conception, measurement and actual practice of development policies and programmes.
- ❖ **Build on culture as a resource to address each of the dimensions of sustainable development, from a social, economic and environmental perspective, as well as to foster peace and reconciliation.**

<sup>26</sup> The UNFPA Inter-Faith Network on Population and Development is one instance of a “culturally-sensitive” development partnership.

<sup>27</sup> Analytical Overview of Culture in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), UNESCO, 2012, available on <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/culture-in-the-undafs/search-tool/>

- ✓ Ensure cultural rights for all to promote **inclusive social development**  
Guaranteeing cultural rights, access to cultural goods and services, free participation in cultural life, and freedom of artistic expression are critical to forging inclusive and equitable societies.
- ✓ Leverage culture and partnerships with cultural agents for poverty reduction and **inclusive economic development**  
Culture, as knowledge capital and as a resource, provides for the needs of individuals and communities and reduces poverty. The capabilities of culture to provide opportunities for jobs and incomes should be enhanced, targeting in particular women and youth.
- ✓ Build on culture to promote **environmental sustainability**  
Access to essential environmental goods and services for the livelihood of communities should be secured through the stronger protection and more sustainable use of biological and cultural diversity, as well as by the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge (including knowledge specific to indigenous peoples' communities and to different gender groups) and skills in synergy with other forms of scientific knowledge.
- ✓ Mobilize culture and mutual understanding to foster **peace and reconciliation**  
In the context of globalization, and in the face of the identity challenges and tensions it can create, intercultural dialogue and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable and resilient societies.

Based on the above objectives, specific targets and indicators should be developed for inclusion within the Post-2015 Agenda, taking into account the following priority areas:

- 1) **The need to strengthen normative, policy and institutional frameworks to support culture**
- 2) **The contribution of cultural and creative activities to economic growth and employment**
- 3) **Education and training systems to strengthen the role of culture and creativity in society**
- 4) **The protection, promotion and transmission of heritage**

It will therefore be necessary to foster innovative and sustainable models of cooperation.