

SAVE OUR FUTURE

Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children

Executive Summary

SAVE OUR FUTURE

Save Our Future is a global coalition of diverse voices all uniting to deliver a simple, yet powerful message amidst the COVID-19 crisis: **Save Our Future**.

This campaign, supported by hundreds of organizations worldwide, is driving awareness and emphasizing the connection between education and advancing the other UN Sustainable Development Goals; showcasing education solutions and innovations backed by evidence-based research; bringing together youth, their communities, and a wide range of stakeholders to promote collaboration; and engaging people around the world on the scale of the education crisis and the urgent need to respond.

As part of the Save Our Future campaign, this white paper aims to develop a common narrative around the impact of COVID-19 on education and key actions needed to protect education.

For more information on Save Our Future, visit www.saveourfuture.world

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<u>Dream a Dream</u>	<u>LEGO Foundation</u>	<u>Teach for All</u>
<u>EdTech Hub</u>	<u>Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOD)</u>	<u>TEACH Côte d'Ivoire</u>
<u>Educate Girls</u>	<u>Liliane Fonds</u>	<u>Teach for the Philippines</u>
<u>Educate!</u>	<u>Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education (LGIHE)</u>	<u>Teach For Uganda</u>
<u>Eidos Global</u>	<u>Magis Americas</u>	<u>Teenage Education and Empowerment Network (Teenage Network)</u>
<u>Fédération camerounaise des syndicats de l'éducation (FECASE)</u>	<u>Make Mothers Matter (MMM)</u>	<u>Theirworld</u>
<u>Fondation Zakoura Education</u>	<u>Malala Fund</u>	<u>Tony Blair Institute for Global Change</u>
<u>Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development (FIT-ED)</u>	<u>Maths for Girls</u>	<u>UWC International</u>
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<u>Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition</u>	<u>ONG El Ghad Essihi pour le Développement et la Protection de l'Environnement en Mauritanie (EGEDPEM)</u>	<u>VICKSLY FOUNDATION</u>
<u>Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage</u>	<u>Paper Boat</u>	<u>VVOB - education for development</u>
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Please note that issuing and endorsing organizations have expressed broad agreement on the priorities and evidence supporting the priorities set out in this paper. However, this text should not be considered as the formal policy position of any organization and some organizations may have differing views on the details within certain action areas.

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The **LEGO** Foundation

Executive Summary

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has disrupted education systems across the world, forcing school closures that have affected 90 percent of the world's students. These closures have had devastating impacts on children and their ability to exercise their human right to education. Education systems were already in crisis even before the pandemic and are now facing the likelihood of drastic budget cuts. If governments and development partners do not act immediately, this crisis could turn into a catastrophe from which millions of children may never recover. The vital news is—there are solutions and a way forward that turns this crisis into an opportunity, but only if we act together with urgency now.

- **Millions of children are missing out on education, going hungry, and becoming increasingly vulnerable to early marriage, child labor, and violence.** At the height of the crisis, the vast majority of children globally had their education interrupted. At least a third of these—in particularly the poorest children—did not have access to any remote learning. About 370 million children missed out on free or subsidized school meals and the number of families struggling to put food on the table has doubled during the pandemic; for the most vulnerable children, school meals may be their only regular source of nourishment. When not in school, girls face additional risks of child marriage and child pregnancy, and 7.6 million girls from pre-primary to secondary school are at risk of not returning to school as a result of COVID-19.
- **The pre-existing learning crisis is becoming a catastrophe.** A huge number of the world's children were learning very little even before the pandemic hit and have now been set back even further. Before COVID-19, more than 175 million children—nearly half of all pre-primary-age children globally—were not enrolled in pre-primary education and 258 million children were out of primary and secondary school. Perhaps even more shockingly, far greater numbers of children were in school but not learning. In low-income countries, a staggering 90 percent of children are in "learning poverty" meaning that they are not even learning to read a basic text by the age of 10. Most of these children are in school but learning very little. Across all low- and middle-income countries, 53 percent of children are in learning poverty already and this could go up to 62 percent as a result of the pandemic (Figure 1).
- **Inequality is being exacerbated.** Globally the differences between the privileged and those most left behind are being amplified. Within countries there is huge inequality with children facing multiple forms of marginalization falling the furthest behind. For example, in at least 20 countries where data is available, almost no poor and rural female students complete upper secondary school. However, the differences between countries are even more stark: the best-performing students in low-income countries have learning outcomes far below the lowest-performing students in high-income countries. Online learning is providing a lifeline to education to those who can access it, but the evidence clearly shows that it is driving even greater inequality. Connection to the internet or even to lower-tech solutions such as television are not a realistic prospect for hundreds of millions of children in the short term and, even if they were, connectivity alone in the absence of good quality teaching is not effective in driving learning. As budgets fall and as attention is focused on online learning, there is an increased risk that poor and marginalized children will be left even further behind.

Countries facing this impending catastrophe have a seemingly impossible task. While there are many actions which could improve education, budget pressures will mean that governments will need to make difficult choices and ruthlessly prioritize the most cost-effective interventions for those children left furthest behind. Recent estimates suggest significant cuts in budgets in low- and middle-income countries, combined with increased financing needs due to remediation, re-enrollment, second-chance programs, and infrastructure costs. In the likeliest scenarios, this means that low- and lower-middle-income countries could face an *annual* financing gap of between USD \$178 and \$193 billion over the next 10 years. This is many multiples more than the current annual ODA allocated to education, which stood at just \$16 billion in 2018.¹

FIGURE 1

COVID-19 learning losses come on top of a severe pre-existing learning crisis (see Part 1 of the full White Paper for references and methodology)

Children are considered to be in *learning poverty* if they reach age 10 without being able to read a simple text or are out of school. Most children who cannot read by age 10 never master reading.

For every 100 primary school-age children in low- and middle-income countries:

53 were already in learning poverty before the pandemic (of which 9 were out of school and the rest were in school but not learning)

10 more will enter learning poverty as a result of COVID (of which almost all will be in school but not learning)



Education is clearly a victim of the pandemic, but it can also be a key driver of the recovery. Education creates the health workers, educators, entrepreneurs, engineers, activists, and politicians essential for creating more resilient systems for the future. Education is at the heart of the entire sustainable development agenda, benefiting global economies and individual incomes, and serving as a powerful driver for healthy populations and a peaceful planet. Protecting and upholding the human right to education is the key to addressing the economic, health, environmental, and social crises we face—and the opportunity to build back better.

We need to get foundational learning right for all children and young people. Education is a source of hope and many have inspiring visions to use the pandemic to reset education systems so

¹All financing figures and estimates used in this paper are calculated and/or provided in US dollars.

they can deliver better: harnessing connectivity and integrated technological solutions; delivering personalized learning to all; and building the skills required for innovation and lifelong learning. This paper is inspired by this hopeful vision. However, it also conveys a stark message—the future reality for vast swathes of the world’s children will continue to be illiteracy and wasted potential unless we take urgent and radical action. The starting point for this action needs to be inclusive, engaging, and adaptive education that builds foundational skills including literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning for all learners at all levels of education. Foundational skills can no longer be viewed as one priority amongst many. We need to make the case that developing these skills across the entire school system and at all ages must be the key priority in low- and middle-income countries. This does not mean other skills or higher levels of education should be ignored. It does mean, however, that we urgently need to raise awareness of the scale of the crisis in foundational learning and drive radical and sustained action to tackle it.

Education and health are society’s most foundational investments and the two must be in balance and harmony. They make up two of our fundamental human rights: the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being (Article 25) and the right to education (Article 26). If we fail with these foundational investments, we fail the next generation and the future of our societies. Other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), like climate action, will never be achieved without education. Education is the only way to sustainably #SaveOurFuture.

We propose seven action areas to help guide the global community and local actors as they work to Save Our Future:

1

ACTION AREA 1

Prioritize reopening schools, deliver vital services to children, and treat the workforce as frontline workers

School closures were necessary to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are great costs to children from being away from school. Governments will need to reopen schools as soon as it is safe to do so, make concerted efforts to get children back into school, and ensure that vital services including nutrition, physical and mental health services, WASH, and child protection services are put in place urgently to support children as well as the workforce in and outside of school.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- All levels of government to take all possible measures to **reopen schools safely as soon as possible** based on balanced and contextualized analysis that considers international and national safety guidelines and dialogue with the education workforce and their representative organizations. Measures should be taken to ensure women’s participation in dialogue and decision-making. Taking all possible measures to reopen safely includes upgrading hygiene services, implementing physical distancing measures, and ensuring the needs of children and members of the workforce with disabilities, refugee children, and girls are explicitly considered and that policies do not prohibit pregnant girls or mothers from returning to school.

- Governments, donors, agencies, and civil society to **ensure that all children, particularly the most marginalized, are able to return to school** through the roll out of communications campaigns, scaling up school meals, and targeted cash transfers.
- School leaders, teachers, and other members of the education workforce (through their representative organizations) to **actively participate in planning and preparing for school reopenings**, prioritizing their students' and their own health and well-being needs.
- National governments to **treat the education workforce as frontline workers** and ensure their safety; physical and mental well-being; labor rights, including decent work and regular and timely pay, whether they are in the public or private sector; and capacity building so they can support safe school reopening. Measures should consider gendered dimensions of school closures and reopening.
- Country governments and international organizations – working with partners in the ACT Accelerator, including WHO, GAVI, and CEPI as conveners of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility – to **advocate for teachers and the education workforce to be treated as essential workers**, initiating dialogue with multisectoral coalitions to ensure teachers are included in priority access to COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines. National governments to monitor school reopenings, including tracking COVID-19 cases for students and the education workforce, and ensuring a decision model is in place for reclosing and reopening schools as needed where transmission rates increase in accordance with international human rights (e.g. right to privacy, right to education) and standards.
- All levels of governments to **ensure vital services** such as school feeding, WASH, physical and mental health services, and child protection services are delivered as soon as schools are reopened, especially to the most marginalized.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- All levels of governments and development partners to **increase collaboration and coordination** – in financing, data, and research across the health, social, and education sectors, in accordance with data protection norms ([UN, 2018](#)), to maximize the safety and health of and provide holistic support for all students and the education workforce.

2

ACTION AREA 2

Make education inclusive, engaging, and adaptive

We propose adaptive education systems characterized by inclusive and engaging teaching which builds the skills children need to flourish. Many children are not learning because the teaching they receive is not engaging and is not aligned to their level. We propose urgent action to measure learning as children return to school and "meet them where they are" by providing engaging, differentiated instruction matched to their learning levels. This will be vital in the short term, but if aligning education systems with learning becomes the new normal, this could also have tremendous longer-term impacts.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Government agencies responsible for education workforce and curricula to **commit to driving inclusive, interactive, and adaptive pedagogy** and, with support from development partners, to adapt the system to ensure this is delivered (see also Action Area 3).
- All levels of governments, with support from development partners, to **support schools to execute simple, rapid assessments of all students' learning levels** upon their return to school and as regular practice and to urgently implement differentiated instruction to ensure all children achieve foundational learning.
- Governments globally to endorse and support the process led by UNESCO to **develop and adopt intermediate benchmarks for SDG indicators** as a key driver of the focus on learning.
- CSOs and development partners to build broad cross-sectoral coalitions **to gather and publicize learning outcome data**; to **amplify the urgent need to address the learning crisis** to the broader public, and to step in to **provide interventions** (through formal and/or non-formal education) to build critical skills and knowledge to contribute to the SDGs.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- All levels of governments, with support from development partners, and in consultation with employers to **perform analyses on alignment (or misalignment) of systems/stakeholders' incentives and related accountabilities**;² to **strengthen their data systems** and capacity to measure learning and access (disaggregated for marginalized groups); to **ensure that results are used** to improve the teaching and learning process; and to take advantage of upcoming cycles of reform to **reorient curricula and pedagogy** to build the knowledge and skills needed to drive sustainable development and meet the needs of the labor market.

3

ACTION AREA 3

Strengthen the education workforce

The scale of the education crisis means that we need to harness the entire education workforce to support teaching and learning and ensure quality education for all children. By creating teacher-led learning teams with children at the center, children will benefit from education professionals, parents, the community, and health and welfare sectors, all working together to maximize children's learning, inclusion, and welfare. There is also an urgent need to provide leaders, teachers, and other members of the workforce with the data, support, and development they need to shift to more inclusive, engaging, and adaptive teaching approaches and to prioritize support to those who need it the most.

² For example, using the recent methodology developed jointly by [FCDO](#), forthcoming

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Local education authorities and schools in collaboration with teachers, communities, and other sectors to **take immediate steps to maximize support for student learning by creating student-centered learning teams** — for example, by supporting teachers with existing teaching and learning roles (such as teacher trainees); teaming the most experienced and strongest teachers with those with less experience; and recruiting and training community members and parents as "community education workers" to support differentiated instruction, continuity of learning, and the welfare and inclusion of all children.
- All levels of governments to work with teacher education institutions to **provide rapid evidence-based professional development for the highest-need teachers** (based on evidence such as learner assessments and other data). This could include content knowledge, strategies for differentiated instruction, effective pedagogy (particularly for building foundational skills), no- and low-tech ways of teaching and learning remotely, and working in learning teams. School-centered and collaborative approaches including coaching should be used where possible and technology harnessed where proven and available.
- All levels of governments to **provide school leaders with resources, evidence for decision-making, and clear and timely guidance to successfully navigate crisis responses and professional development** that enables safe school reopening, undertaking immediate learner assessments, remote and blended learning, and facilitating collaborative professional development.
- All levels of governments to use data-driven approaches to **improve the quality and availability of teachers in the most marginalized areas**, for example through incentives to address workforce needs and gender, inclusion, and specific subject gaps; improve attendance; re-allocation of qualified teachers at a local level; and sharing shortage expertise and specialist skills across schools in person and remotely, supported by technology where appropriate.
- National and local governments to create the policies and structures, including legislative measures, to **ensure fair, inclusive, and effective social and policy dialogue** with members of the workforce in both public and private sectors and proactively engage the workforce in formal decision-making, including in Local Education Groups or their equivalent. This dialogue should be continuous so it can respond in a timely way to changing contexts.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- All levels of government, with support from development partners, to **commit to longer-term strengthening of the workforce**—including transforming initial teacher education; exploring alternative routes into teaching to address teacher shortages; providing evidence-based collaborative professional development for all members of the workforce; establishing the policies, funding, and structures to uphold the rights of the workforce, ensuring social and policy dialogue with them and their representative organizations; collecting key data on the workforce to aid decision-making and evaluating what does and does not work.

4

ACTION AREA 4

Focus education technology (EdTech) where it is proven to be effective and most equitable

There is increasing interest and support for using EdTech to transform education, but also a real risk of exacerbating marginalization through increasing access for the most privileged and diverting resources from the fundamentals of an education system. Appropriate use of EdTech should be integrated in efforts to strengthen education systems, particularly by expanding data systems, enhancing teacher and workforce development, and promoting inclusion and equity of learning outcomes.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Development partners and all levels of governments with existing EdTech programs to carry out analysis and appropriate action to **ensure they are not exacerbating marginalization**, to consider the opportunity costs of focusing on EdTech solutions, and to consider pivoting to user-centered approaches which are likely to generate maximum benefit for the most marginalized.
- National governments to use open curricular content and to **ensure that there will be low- or no-cost ways for teachers, parents, and students to access** content digitally, offline, through radio, through television, or in print.
- Multilateral and bilateral organizations, national governments, and the private sector to **co-create mechanisms to share openly licensed, printable, and editable content for the core curriculum**, including teacher guides, structured lesson plans, textbooks, workbooks, teacher professional development materials, and other resources in accessible, user-friendly formats and local languages, differentiated for learning level.
- National governments, multilateral and bilateral organizations, and the private sector to **engage creatively in mechanisms and partnerships to increase funding for connectivity (without impacting education budgets)**, including the use of licensing and renewals to internet service providers on provisions of allocating connectivity to under-resourced schools and households.
- National governments with support from development partners to **strengthen education management information system (EMIS) data collection** to ensure enrollment, attendance, transition, and learning data is measured for all students (including those who are currently "invisible"); ensure data is collected on all roles within the education workforce; and ensure data is disaggregated for marginalized groups and available in a timely manner to education stakeholders for data-driven, evidence-based decision-making while maintaining high standards of privacy and data protection.
- Researchers, development partners, and governments to **rapidly test technology-based approaches to scale up effective workforce professional development and collaboration** (e.g. to facilitate peer collaboration, strengthen school-based communities of practice, and disseminate open educational resources [OER]) with a focus on effective teaching practices for improved learning outcomes.
- Governments with support from development partners and researchers to **test and evaluate child-centered approaches to learning for the most marginalized** with emphasis on contextualization, needs identification, relevance, and cost-effectiveness.

- Ministries of education, local governments, and development partners with support from national governments to **support, train, and capacitate households (parents)** to actively and appropriately engage with their children’s distance learning experience.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- Governments with support from development partners to **strengthen and contextualize research and testing on tech-enabled solutions**, including generating a robust and relevant evidence base for such interventions, testing solutions with a wide variety of local stakeholders and possible end users, as well as ensuring inclusion at the core of the design and delivery of such solutions.

5

ACTION AREA 5

Protect education budgets and target public spending at those left furthest behind

Governments across the world are facing enormous financial pressures and these are particularly magnified for low- and middle-income countries. Reductions in public spending on education will be further exacerbated by declines in household spending, often an important component of education spending in low-income countries. We urge governments to grow public revenues where possible, protect education spending as a critical component in the COVID-19 recovery efforts, and target public resources to prioritize lower levels of education and support the most marginalized across the system. Developing strategies to fully finance education will require improving financial data and public financial management systems and more widely adopting equity financing formulas.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- National governments to commit to **maintaining or increasing public spending on education** through prioritizing education as part of recovery discussions and planning. Development partners to engage across sectors to ensure prioritization of education in national country development plans and provide technical and other assistance to incentivize and make the case for countries to maintain or increase expenditures per capita in their domestic budgets allocated to education in line with targets in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.
- All levels of governments to **use cash transfer programs and other targeted efforts to reduce barriers to re-entry** and ensure the most vulnerable children, in particular adolescent girls, refugees, and students with disabilities, return to school and receive support to learn. This could also include working with other sectors to declare remittance transfer services as essential and easing taxes and regulations on those transfers.
- National governments, in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, to **develop credible financing plans to fully finance education following principles of progressive universalism**, including adopting equity financing formulas that reflect the needs of the most marginalized children. Development partners to prioritize funding for countries and programs which take a progressive universalism approach and support efforts to develop better data on education financing, estimate costs, track resource availability from all sources, and provide tools to guide equitable spending.

- Governments and civil society to work together to **ensure education is included as an essential sector for COVID-19 response** in national, global, and regional multisectoral development finance conversations and include a wide range of stakeholders in decision-making to improve education policymaking and build the case for urgent support to education. Establish a COVID-19 recovery financing taskforce to develop strategies and concrete proposals to ensure education is considered in negotiations of COVID-19 recovery packages.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- National and international education actors work more closely with other sectors to **prioritize action on growing domestic revenues** (e.g. through progressive taxation and efforts to stem illicit financial flows) and **strengthening of public financial management systems and data systems** to improve equity and efficiency in planning, budgeting, and expenditure, including in the production of education-focused Public Expenditure Reviews.
- All actors to work together to **harness innovative financing and alternative financing options where possible in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and post-secondary education** to enable public funds to be more focused on foundational learning. Donors to support these efforts by establishing an innovative financing task force to help identify and test such financing options.

6

ACTION AREA 6

Mobilize international resources to fully finance education

It is vital that governments in low- and middle-income countries do all they can to protect public spending for education, but even in the best case, there will still be a significant financing gap. We call on a diverse coalition of global actors—including donors, multilateral development banks, and philanthropists—to maximize aid for education, improve allocation, and harness innovative financing mechanisms to close the financing gap and support countries in fully financing education.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Education development partners to work with other sectors to **support calls for increased and more targeted international aid** including through the call to meet the 0.7 percent of gross national income (GNI) aid commitment, with a focus on least developed countries (LDCs) by disbursing at least 0.15 to 0.20 percent of GNI on the most vulnerable countries; encouraging the IMF to utilize its Special Drawing Rights (its global reserve asset) to be channeled toward the countries that need it most; and improving access to concessional finance to countries most in need by revising access criteria.
- Aid donors and international institutions to **mobilize additional resources for education including by collectively increasing the share of education in international aid**. Some agencies involved in this report advocate specific targets, including a 15 percent floor on education's share, matching the recommended efforts by national governments as highlighted in Action Area 5. Given that sector allocable aid from international donors is currently at \$150 billion per year according to the OECD-DAC, this would mean \$22.5 billion per year allocated to educa-

tion from those donors. Others question whether a single target applied to donors in different positions is the right approach. But all signatories to this report urge donors to increase the overall amount of finance provided to education during this critical period. This includes allocating an increased share of humanitarian funding to education interventions.

- Based on current spending trends and funding targets, multilateral agencies engaged in this report (MDBs and UN organizations) as well as the education funds (ECW, GPE, IFFED, EOF) could—with necessary support from official and private donors—at a minimum **deliver an estimated \$9 billion in aid for education annually in the immediate term**. This includes support for education as well as related services (health and nutrition) channeled through these organizations. Additional support is needed to meet this minimum. This does not include much needed additional financing that could be mobilized through the MDBs' non-concessional windows.
- Donors to establish and support mechanisms that can quickly leverage additional affordable financing for education by expanding the capacity of MDBs, including through the innovative use of guarantees in combination with grants as proposed by IFFEd.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- Development partners to **increase efforts to diversify funding for education** including by increasing non-DAC and nontraditional donors' commitment to education; by further exploring innovative financing approaches; by ramping up calls for support among philanthropists and corporations; and by working across sectors to leverage investments in other critical development sectors for education (e.g. by engaging in Voluntary National SDG Reviews and exploring opportunities for education and skills training in large-scale projects in complementary sectors).



ACTION AREA 7

Use resources better by improving evidence generation, coordination, alignment, and effectiveness

Mobilizing more funding for education is critical, but it is also more important than ever that every single dollar invested in education achieves its maximum impact. The international education architecture can play a vital role by improving its own coordination to deliver the best possible support to low- and middle-income countries and by promoting and supporting the most cost-effective approaches based on enhanced evidence generation and use.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- National governments with support from development partners to **improve donor coordination at a country level** with the aim of reducing administrative burden and transaction costs for countries, enabling alignment with country priorities. This could include exploring the use of pooled funding mechanisms at country level.
- Development partners and humanitarian partners to commit to **improve coordination around education in crisis at country level** through multisectoral coordination through UN structures and conventions, and close coordination of LEGs and Education Clusters from the outset of a response, and better harmonization and sequencing of efforts including around budgets, resources, etc.

- UNESCO to **convene a working group to lead a consultation on a global education coordination mechanism.**
- Development partners to **commit to more evidence-informed practice by including a full and transparent appraisal of evidence considered in planning documents for projects**, investing in evidence-based policies, practices, and interventions and limiting investment in projects which have generally not achieved their expected impact except where there is strong evidence that they will succeed where others have failed.

MID- TO LONGER-TERM ACTIONS

- National governments, with support from development partners to **develop capacity in effective evidence generation, implementation, and evidence-informed policymaking.** Donors to invest in global public goods that can support and leverage reforms at country level. Donors to continue to explore, pilot, and evaluate the most effective ways to maximize impact including through results-based approaches where financing is linked to outcomes.

The challenge for the education system globally is daunting. But while it may seem like an impossible task to respond to the magnitude of the challenge, we owe it to the next generation not to give up. Only by supporting effective and inclusive education systems can we recover from the devastation of this crisis and make real progress towards a sustainable and equitable future. We need to unite within the education sector and across sectors to fill the financing gap and to ensure that every dollar invested in education leads to maximum benefits for children. Only by doing this can we ensure that all children can fulfill their potential to build a better and more resilient world.

Youth Call to Action

We believe that education is the core foundation that provides opportunities for young people to thrive and maximize their potential. Every child should have the same quality of education, and the same opportunity to thrive in their personal and professional lives in spite of their background. Education should equip young people with the necessary tools, both hard and soft, to be able to navigate the ever-changing world that we live in. Our education should reflect the diversity of thought, world views, and perspectives that is displayed in the real world. It should aim not to solely teach children to memorize facts, but also to teach them critical thinking, understanding, compassion, and problem-solving. It should help students find what they're good at and pursue it, creating a holistic process unique to every student. Our education should shift in purpose, from competency and competitiveness in the marketplace to co-existence and sustainable living. Sustainability should be a transverse, universal concept embedded in all curriculum. Education should be the center of every government's focus, including budgetary allocation, as without it, the futures of young people around the world are at stake. We also believe that education should foster democratic student government in all education systems and at school, regional, national, continental, and global levels that enables all students to have a voice in education decision-making, advocate for themselves, and have the capacity to collectively implement their visions to improve their school communities.

We believe this because for too long formal education spaces have contained and marginalized the voice of young people, especially the voices of youth in poor and vulnerable communities. For too long, education has not been given the attention it deserves by our governments. Our current education systems are outdated, and do not adequately prepare us for the different challenges in the 21st century. Despite being end users, students have been largely pushed to the margins and have had to conduct advocacy from the outside looking in instead of having a seat at the decision-making table. In many cases, students have to resort to physical demonstrations like protests to make their voices heard, often at risk of injury, persecution, and death. Meanwhile, without student perspectives, education policy is less informed and less capable of improving the student experience.

We believe that if we are successful in educational reform, we will see a difference in the accessibility of education, the quality of education, representation in decision-making on education, the opportunities available to young people, and the overall state of the world. Rethinking our education will ensure a better quality of life for all, delivering the future that we want. A future where there is gender equality, concern for community and environment, racial and ethnic equality, equal opportunities, peace, and political stability.

Just imagine with us what this future could be...

This statement was developed by the Save Our Future Youth Caucus—a group of twenty-five youth activists from across the globe representing a variety of sectors including social justice, health, gender equality, climate change, and sustainability. The statement also summarizes the main findings from a youth survey conducted online with responses from 200 youth around the world. This statement also formed the basis for the youth-led creation of an innovative digital excursion—the [Save Our Future Escape Room](http://bit.ly/SOFEscapeRoom). Explore this interactive experience and see how inter-generational collaboration and young innovators can help #SaveOurFuture: <http://bit.ly/SOFEscapeRoom>