Education as a public good, a fundamental human right and a key instrument in eradicating poverty

Education plays a fundamental role in human, social and economic development. Investments in good quality education, especially in the education of girls, are of fundamental importance for poverty reduction and sustainable development. Education is also key to building a democratic society, inclusive economic development and promoting gender equality. Sida’s support to education amounted to SEK 1.1 billion in 2020, corresponding to 4 percent out of Sida’s total support.

MAIN AREAS OF SUPPORT
The focus of Sida’s support to education lies on:
- strengthening national education systems for quality education, from early childhood education and throughout life,
- promoting equal rights and inclusive education and
- paying attention to the importance of education and the role of education in conflict and post-conflict situations and in humanitarian crises.

Education and learning encompass strengthening values, knowledge and skills that promote equal rights and opportunities to make sustainable life choices. The inclusion of good quality pre-service teacher training and further in-service training are prerequisites to improve quality learning outcomes.

Sida supports a sharper attention to education as a critical human right. This includes enhanced efforts to the importance of education in conflict, post-conflict situations and in humanitarian crises, targeting both migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons and host communities, and to make schools safe for children. Sida strongly promotes gender equality and equal rights to education, in education and through education.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD
More children are in school around the world than ever before. However, learning has become an extraordinary challenge. Before COVID-19, nine in ten children in Low Income Countries were not able to read with comprehension by their tenth birthday. Due to COVID-19, school closures has affected 1.6 billion children or 90 percent of the worlds student population in more than 190 countries, hitting hardest marginalized children and children living in communities and families without the opportunity to take part in distance learning. The unprecedented disruption to education estimates that 11 million girls may not return to school, where girls aged 12–17 are at particular risk of dropping out of school in low and lower-income countries, whereas boys are more at risk in upper-middle and

THE GLOBAL GOALS
The Global Goals for Sustainable Development include everyone - and we can all contribute. The goals are interdependent and therefore indivisible. Sida’s main contribution is to implement development cooperation, thereby reducing poverty and saving lives. Together we can build a better future where no one is left behind.

1  World Bank (2019). Learning poverty indicator developed by the World Bank in coordination with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)
high-income countries. Humanitarian emergencies and protracted crisis disrupt education and only 63 percent of refugee children attend primary school, 24 percent secondary education and 1 percent higher education.

When schools shut down early marriages increase, more children are recruited and used in armed conflicts, sexual exploitation of girls and young women rises, teenage pregnancies become more common, and child labour grows. Children have been increasingly exposed to violence and exploitation.

The inequalities in learning have received global attention. In Sub-Saharan Africa 87 percent of all children do not have basic reading skills. In Central and Southern Asia this is the case for 81 percent of the children. If not addressed, the inequalities in learning opportunities will seriously hamper most of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and leave many people behind thus failing to achieve an inclusive development.

Governments in low income countries spend, on average, 16 percent of their budgets on education, far more than richer countries, but many are off track meeting even the 2015 target of universal primary education. The level of aid to education continues to stagnate, growing by only 1 percent per year on average since 2009. These figures raise questions about the global commitment to achieving the global education goal SDG 4.

SIDA’S SUPPORT

Sweden promotes country-level processes and strongly advocates for an emphasis on national ownership and support to local education groups and other stakeholders engaged in the education sector. Sweden support the implementation of national policies, plans and programs, the right to inclusive and quality education by strengthening national education systems, but also supporting civil society organisations. Education is a prioritized thematic area in four bilateral country strategies; Afghanistan, Cambodia, South Sudan and Tanzania. However, the support to education in Cambodia has started to phase out.

The Swedish support has been provided in close coordination with other donors. The primary education sub sector has remained the main priority area for support. In conflict and post-conflict countries, cooperation with multilateral actors such as the World bank, UNESCO and UNICEF is crucial.

In Afghanistan, Sida supports the strengthening of the national education system through capacity building, curriculum development and literacy, and support to Education in Emergencies. In Cambodia, the improved capacity on national level and flexible school grants have improved quality and national investments in education. In South Sudan, Sida’s new education strategy focuses on bridging the humanitarian and development nexus and support pre-requisites for a national education system. Sida has a strong focus on gender equality in education in South Sudan.

In Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar, Sweden is the Grant Agent for Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In addition to the GPE support to basic education, Sweden provides its main support through a result-based approach to the entire education sector in Tanzania Mainland. Support is also provided to civil society organisations active in the education sector. In Zanzibar both the GPE and the bilateral support is directed towards basic education.

To complement the bilateral support, Sida is supporting education through global initiatives, such as UNESCO, GPE and Education Cannot Wait. Sida is providing UNESCO with non-earmarked funding to enable them to continue leading SDG implementation and follow-up. UNESCO also ensures that neglected areas such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education is pursued as part of the education agenda.

GPE global support enabled an estimate of 24.8 million students in 68 countries, of which 48 percent are girls, to attend school. GPE also supported 55 countries with learning materials for distance learning, radio/television broadcasting of education, support for teachers, measures and campaigns to safely reopen schools in response to COVID-19. Sida support Education in Emergencies where development actors acts rapidly to education needs of children and youth affected by crisis. Sida is also working actively to link the global and bilateral work in education to find synergies.

STORY OF CHANGE

In Tanzania some 5,500 girls drop-out of school yearly due to pregnancies. With Sida’s support to 55 Folk Development Colleges (FDC) young mothers are given an opportunity to complete secondary school as Matrida Milanzi at Newala FDC.

2 UNESCO (2021), Girls’ education and COVID-19: New factsheet shows increased inequalities for the education of adolescent girls
7 These 68 refers to low- and lower-middle-income countries of which more than half of the GPE funding goes to fragility or conflict-affected countries
8 As COVID-19 response, GPE reallocated 500 million USD of their total budget, while Sida’s supported GPE with additional SEK 14 million.
9 Sida (2021), https://www.sida.se/sida-i-vardens-utbildning

Photo: Geoffrey Nchimbi

Photo: Geoffrey Nchimbi