

Report to the Global Education Meeting 2018
from the MGoS as represented by the NGO Major Group

In the stories emerging from NGOs and Civil Society over the past year, what repeats and coalesces is (1) a shifting perspective from “student”-centred education to whole person centred with human rights at the core, and (2) the subsequent *interdependence* of education with the other sectors of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a shift that is not only one of how we see the person who is learning, but also in the pedagogies, spaces, and policies for learning, and most importantly partnerships across sectors that address the barriers to learning. This more complete picture of education rises up through seven areas.

1. When we take a holistic human centred approach we touch all that humanity touches — the environment in which we live today and need to make liveable for the tomorrow; the technologies that are the tools of our global society world; the spaces both urban and rural where we come together; the families that are our roots and our resilience; the communities that shape us but can also be shaped by us; the global community in which we unite — for these we need knowledge, but we also need critical thinking skills, social-emotional skills, the compassion, awareness and global perspective to discern moral and ethical actions, as well as the creative skills for imagining and bringing about a better future.

In a whole person approach, we include in what we see as education the learning of life, of ethics, of what it is to think critically and look for multiple solutions, and of what it truly means to live as global citizens and as stewards of our planet, in places of learning that are outside a school building.

When we look at whole people form a framework of equity, we must see the life span as a place for learning at every age. Pre-primary education needs to be accessible to all. So-called informal programs of learning need to acknowledge for the work they do in addressing the gaps in education. Adult learning needs to be recognized for the many diverse ways it equips adults with the tools they need for a changing world. Accelerated learning programs need to reach out of school youth so that they can catch up with their in-school peers. And find this spectrum we must not continue to leave behind and leave the elderly who need places where they can continue not only to learn but perhaps also to share the wisdom of their years.

When we look at the diversity of our humanity through the framework of equality and human rights, we realize that we must disaggregate the data in order to see individuals and groups whose statics may be tossed out as outliers. We need develop locally relevant curriculum, broaden our languages of access to knowledge, and broaden our concept of what knowledge is so that all learners or all races, ages, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientation, and differing ability have equal access to an education that includes them in the story.

When we look at the whole of a person in the context of education, we must expand our view of the sources of education as well as the supports for that process. From that perspective we also must expand our concepts of what is a teacher and what is a school.

When we look at the whole person — the human being whose life and world are at the centre of learning, we realize that **education and all of the other sustainable development goals are not just interlinked, they are interdependent.**

2. In order to achieve “access to learning for all” we need to commit to and follow through with action focused multi-lateral and multi-sector collaborations and cooperation — governments, NGOs, private sector, across borders, communities, nations, we all need to work together.

3. While the world has progressed in identifying and implementing processes of ensuring quality education that do and should transfer and scale up, we must find ways to ensure that this is done with not just “for” the diversity persons and communities who are learners. Processes of consultation, accompaniment in capacity development, contextualization, and transition to autonomy can be a part of this goal of inclusion. Among NGOs, we see increasingly use of “accompaniment” whereby if expertise is needed in an area, it is taught to those who request it who then take the lead and apply that expertise in the context that they know and understand far better than any outsider.

4. In order to reduce future inequalities, we must prepare children and youth with the education needed to develop their countries and communities from within. And that cannot happen if we stop supporting education after grade 6. Nations cannot sustainably develop themselves with the tools limited to a primary school education. We have an obligation to tap into the inherent capacity in all learners and carry that forward through secondary school, with opportunities to then participate in higher education or vocational specializations, and we must support the transition from primary to secondary and on to tertiary education, so that the citizens of even “least developed states” have the tools they need to develop their own country.

But for those who are the first generation in their families to secondary school, or the first to attend university, we need to support and strengthen in them the factors that lead to persistence and completion: a sense of connection, a flexible mindset, a sense of purpose, and hope. Coincidentally these also are resiliency factors.

Among NGOs we see programs that provide these wrap-around systems of support, including educational counselling, psychosocial support, peer mentoring, tutoring for not just what to learn but also *how* to learn, critical thinking, decision making, conflict resolution, ethics or values learning, and service opportunities.

But with only 49% overall completion for upper secondary and only 11% of refugee students in lower income countries enrolled in upper secondary, much more needs to be done. And for the youth facing a choice between waiting for schools to allow him to attend or joining the militants who are ready to hand him a gun, our attention to secondary and higher education cannot wait until our primary school goals have been achieved.

In addition to addressing the needs of the learners, education for emergencies must better prepare all teachers, counsellors, and administrators to address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural impacts of crisis, conflict, displacement, and migration, while not forgetting that teachers,

counsellors, and administrators too are impacted by these conditions. Ideally, training for the impacts of crisis on learning (EiE) should begin before a crisis and not wait for the aftermath; it should be universally included in our current education sector professional development plans, and looking to the future, as a regular aspect of coursework toward teacher certification and university degrees in education. Furthermore, in the crises that they too are impacted by, we must do more to support the wellbeing both mental and physical of our educators — we must imbed into EiE training skills in *self-care* tools and we need be one of those tools of care if they are to support the children and youth in *their* care.

And finally, we speak of inclusion of migrants, displaced person, and refugees, but in these deliberations and at these table we have only those who bring the stories of those experiences and not the persons themselves. If we are to address the needs and serve the human rights of migrants, displaced persons, and refugees, we need to include and not just represent these members of our global community.

5. While from a global aggregated perspective we are making progress on access to education for girls, in the disaggregate we have not gone far enough to reach those still left out. The barriers are economic, cultural, religious, and sometimes structural. And for daughters living in poverty or fragile contexts, the gap is even wider as they spend their before-and-after-school time gathering water, cooking, caring for younger siblings, washing clothes, gathering firewood, instead of studying, while their brothers do homework (if they have books), play sports and arrive at school on time. Girls grades descend, their attendance drops, and eventually their names no longer appear on the roll.

Yes, we need to change attitudes and we need to empower girls, but we also must reach out to other sectors to change the conditions that create these barriers. Clean water, green energy sources, health and hygiene, equitable jobs for families, infrastructure, safety, peace — these need to improve in order for access to education for girls to improve.

6. Policies need to be put in place that create better continuity of learning in refugee and displacement situations. Technology needs to be used to improve tracking and continuance for students. Cross border agreements need to make it easier not harder for refugees to continue their education uninterrupted.

7. The aim of “quality education” requires greater support of teachers, which requires commitment to financing and to implementing actions to improve teacher preparation, creating in-service training for teachers already working but whom may be underprepared, paying living wages (and respectful wages) to teachers, including evidence based innovative and impactful pedagogies and technologies (and finding those innovations requires communication with and collaborating with grassroots, local and civil society actors).

Included in this should be training for all teachers in the psychosocial impacts on learning of disaster, conflict, violence, or abuse, and on building resiliency within their students to mitigate those impacts. And in a world with increasing climate related disasters and widening means of violence, we need to train teachers *before* not just after a crisis and embed EiE into university

and certificate courses. Furthermore, we must offer to teachers, counsellors, and administrators training in strategies for their own self-care and understanding for how these crises impact them too...because they do impact them too.

And all of these aims must have adequate funding in order to have the ideals we put onto paper at the international level, be put into action in the lives of individuals.

The experiences from the ground that is civil society — our shared society — provide examples of processes that transfer from one context to the other and from one SDG to the other, if we will just carry the frameworks forward. These processes include:

- Inclusive consultation that gives equal voice to all stakeholders; planning that stems from listening to those voices; and actions that harness the strengths among those diverse voices
- Contextualized approaches that are relevant and appropriate to the places applied, while connecting those local contexts to the world around them
- Developing skills within communities then empowering them to lead their own development
- Not just working across sectors but joining with them in taking a truly holistic approach to ensuring environments for learning
- Stretching our traditional framework, or tearing it down, to allow space for the valuable learning that occurs in informal settings
- Raising capacity of all teachers — those with degrees and those without, those who teach in classrooms and those who teach in libraries, under trees, at dining room tables, and out on the trails of our natural world
- Seeing the whole person and working to remove the barriers to that person's growth

What we call for is a broader more inclusive concept of the goal of access to quality education and lifelong learning. What we call for is a whole-person image of the person who is a student and a multidimensional vision of what one needs in order to learn. What we call for is not just reaching out to those who have been left behind but creating openings for them to step in, to speak for themselves in their own languages and from their own experiences, to change their futures. What we call for is working *with* one another — NGOs, stakeholders, civil society, local communities, individuals, experts across sectors, Governments, International bodies — to address the crosscutting issues that will move not just this one SDG but all of these goals one step closer to the sustainably developed world we envision for 2030.

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