**Transformative education: The catalyst for change in sub-Sahara africa**

# Abstract

Sub-Sahara Africa operates in an increasingly complicated and linked environment. Global issues like climate change collide with local biodiversity loss. Growing global inequality combines with local social disparities, economic problems, the normalization of violence, and a decline in mental health and socioemotional resilience at the individual and community levels. Education has the potential to positively influence individuals and communities. Education may also be a significant tool for promoting equality for marginalized groups, as well as a catalyst for progress. The chapter delves into transformative education, as defined in SGD4.7, and its ability to bring about change in SSA.

# Introduction

The foundation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lies on a transformative vision. This vision is predominantly evident in SDG Target 4.7, which views education as a transformative tool that can support sustainable development. Our society must change if we are to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and enhance everyone's quality of life and prosperity (UN, 2015). However, proactive people with essential knowledge and skills are required to tackle present issues like the pandemic and many sustainability concerns (such as those related to the climate, social justice, inequality and other humanitarian issues) (Bridge, 2020).

According to the UN Secretary-General (2012), education should equip people with the values, knowledge, and abilities necessary to contribute to the resolution of the interrelated problems of the twenty-first century. The provision of basic literacy and numeracy skills is no longer sufficient; education must now prepare people to address global issues and act as change agents. The idea of "transformative education," which frames education as a crucial instrument to pave the way for a more equitable and sustainable future, has come up in recent discussions about the purpose of education (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021).

Beyond the possibility of renewal, SDG Target 4.7 provides insight into how education may contribute to social change through a variety of "educations for," including education for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, peace, and global citizenship. The target says:

*By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.*

SDG Target 4.7 is significant from a policy standpoint and has symbolic meaning, but it also demonstrates how the diverse interests of numerous parties were combined. It encompasses a vast range of ideas (or "educations for") that are frequently challenging to understand (Sayed & Moriarty, 2020; Arbeiter & Bučar, 2021). All "educations for" have diverse historical conceptual

frameworks and traditions, which frequently lead to sectoral thinking" (Sayed & Moriarty, 2020). These subdivisions may provide stakeholders with a useful means of working together, but they may also promote segmented thinking, which is typified by a lack of cooperation and information sharing. Stakeholders may pursue their goals within their own area of interest (e.g. within a specific ‘education for’), staying close to their organizational goals, objectives and expertise (Stafford-Smith et al., 2017).

The segmented approach starts at the global level, where sectors organize agreements and even policy choices. At the international, regional, national, and even local levels, the trickle-down effect causes institutional and policy fragmentation. In the absence of a single strategy, this results in inconsistent coordination, communication, capacity-building, and even monitoring. Since the intricacy of SDG Target 4.7 makes it frequently hard to comprehend, attempts frequently veer away from taking an integrated approach to transformative education and instead focus on a single theme.

This shifts attention away from the shared goal of transformation towards a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future and increases the likelihood that governments would ignore SDG Target 4.7 and fail to adequately focus on its implementation (Sayed & Moriarty, 2020). In order to reconcile the various "educations for" that are required for social transformation, it is imperative that silo-thinking be broken (Nygaard & Wegimont, 2018). Instead of concentrating on the distinctions between various forms of transformative education, attention should be paid to the synergies that result from them and the creation of cogent strategies for achieving SDG Target 4.7.

Unpacking the various forms of transformational education described in SDG Target 4.7 is the main goal of this chapter. This chapter goes on to examine the definitions and essential parts of the many SDG Target 4.7 components and how they can be used to bring change to Sub Sahara Africa. This chapter has the following structure; it firstly highlights the importance of transformative education and explores what makes education transformative. Secondly, it presents frequently used definitions of different types of transformative education. Thirdly, it presents key interactions between different types of transformative education. On that basis, the paper concludes discussing how transformative education can be used as the catalyst for change in Sub-Sahara Africa.

# The concept of transformative education

Transformative education is not a new development. It highlights the importance of active global citizenship and the need for transformation of our perceptions and interpretations of the world and ourselves. The conception builds on the work of Jack Mezirow and transformative learning theory, which suggests that transformative learning means moving beyond the reproduction of knowledge towards critical reflection. It aims to use education as a process for accelerating the transformation of our broad sets of inclinations about the world, which stem from our social and cultural environment and make sense of our everyday life (Mezirow, 2000). Transformative learning involves deep structural changes in our perception and interpretation of the world and ourselves (O’Sullivan et al., 2002). Transformative learning often starts with what Mezirow (2000) calls a ‘disorienting dilemma’, which is a catalyst for transforming discernments. It encourages people to reflect on their perceptions, understandings and interpretations about themselves, others and the world in general (Taylor, 2000). For transformative learning to happen, critical reflection of mental perceptions of the world, one’s own experiences, predispositions, assumptions, actions and their change is required (Balsinger et al. 2017). UNESCO (2019) recognizes three interrelated dimensions of learning – cognitive, social and emotional, and behavioral:

* **Cognitive learning** refers to acquiring knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about global, regional, national and local issues, interdependencies, and the different aspects of sustainable development.
* **Social and emotional learning** refers to having a sense of belonging to a common humanity, with shared values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity, and having a sense of responsibility for the future.
* **Behavioral learning** refers to acting responsibly for a more peaceful and sustainable world.

This aligns with the Delors Report Learning: The Treasure Within (UNESCO, 1996), which identifies four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. The UNESCO Futures of Education initiative additionally recognizes a fourth element of learning: learning to become. This initiative also introduces the concept of “regenerative education” -

“education that heals, repairs, repurposes, and renews” and “has great potential to set the worlds on paths of more just and sustainable futures for all.”

Implementing Agenda 2030 is centered on high-quality education, and efforts to acknowledge the transformative potential of education have grown in recent years. It is acknowledged that students must be prepared to actively address global issues and possess knowledge about them (Goris, 2021). The enduring nature of problems like racism, poverty, inequality, and climate change indicates that universal access to education is insufficient to solve our common problems. What is required is transformative education that pushes students to realize their full potential and imparts fundamental beliefs, attitudes, and skills that support justice, equality, diversity, and human rights while also fostering a sustainable future (Yoneura, 2015).

SDG Target 4.7 suggests that education can have transformative power when it promotes sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity. It indirectly suggests what the current global challenges are and implies that unlearning the old patterns of behavior is of high importance in order to facilitate a transition to a society, which exhibits solidarity and is able to co-create a sustainable future (Pashby and Andreotti, 2016). While SDG Target 4.7 outlines the different types of education required for achieving sustainable development, it falls short of describing what the skills and competencies required for this are

For education to be truly transformative, it must provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for global justice and sustainability. Transformative education helps students understand and anticipate change, manage uncertainty, develop critical thinking skills, values, appreciate variety, and demonstrate empathy. On a societal level, this has the ability to help find solutions to global crises and create the skills required for transformation and empowerment.

Transformation is called upon by Agenda 2030 and especially SDG Target 4.7, in order to change our ways of thinking and (unsustainable ways) of living. This is of particular importance in times of persistent global issues, which were also produced because of our unawareness of how our predispositions, thoughts and beliefs have constrained the way we understand the world. As summarized in figure 1. Education must guide students on reflective thinking, empower them

with problem solving skills and these skills have to be nurtured so that the students become responsible citizens.



# Figure 1: Transformational learning

As shown in Figure 1, Goal 4.7 suggests a strategy which implements transformative education for sustainable development as a life-long learning process and a public good: promoting change and the necessary development of individuals, communities and systems. Transformative education builds constructive and democratic approaches to difference and fosters engaged, active, and critical learners. The strategy highlights the importance of reexamining assumptions and worldviews, advocating for both unlearning and learning, embracing and examining diversity, and ensuring the meaningful inclusion of those who are systemically excluded and underrepresented.

Although frequently mentioned in relation to formal education, transformative education is and ought to be a lifetime experience that occurs in formal, informal, and non-formal learning settings. As a result, we propose that it is crucial to identify and bring together synergies between various "educations for" (Bridge, 2020). Therefore, instead of concentrating on their disparities, the focus should be on creating shared learning goals that each ‘education for’ aspires to accomplish. The transition to a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future can be strengthened by taking lessons from past and present achievements and setbacks. It is the best way to bring meaningful change development to Sub-Sahara Africa.

# The principles of SDG4.7

In addition to its symbolic significance and policy significance, SDG Target 4.7 shows how the varied interests of many parties were brought together. It includes a wide variety of concepts (or "educations for") that are often difficult to comprehend (Arbeiter & Bučar, 2021). This chapter will look at six of the ‘Education for’ elements as summarized in Figure 2

EDUCATION FOR

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMNENT

EDUCATION FOR

HUMAN RIGHTS

**TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION**

EDUCATION FOR

CULTURAL

DIVERSITY

EDUCATION FOR

GENDER EQUALITY

EDUCATION FOR

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

EDUCATION FOR

PEACE & NON- VIOLENCE

# Figure 2: Principles of transformative education

**Education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles**

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) focuses on critical sustainable development issues and empowers learners to evaluate and modify their behaviors to contribute to a more sustainable future (UNESCO, 2020; Arbeiter and Bučar, 2021). As human behavior has heightened the current climate emergency, ESD is emphasized as a vital component of Agenda 2030 and serves as a key mechanism for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNESCO, 2020: 3 – 4).

*Education for Sustainable Development empowers learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take informed decisions and make responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability*

*and a just society. It is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. It enhances the cognitive, social and emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning. It is holistic and transformational, and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself (UNESCO, 2012; 2014b; 2021a).*

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a multifaceted concept applicable across various educational contexts, providing innovative pedagogical tools and enriching learning experiences (Gerd and Wells, 2017). A key component of ESD is Education for Sustainable Lifestyles, which emphasizes the connections between our daily choices, the health of our communities, the resilience of local ecosystems, and the global challenges we confront (One Planet Network, 2021). In alignment with the definition provided by UNESCO, the Council of the European Union (2010:3) recognizes ESD as:

*.. essential for the achievement of a sustainable society and […] therefore desirable at all levels of formal education and training, as well as in non-formal and informal learning.” It identifies ESD as a tool to “equip individuals and groups with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to make conscious choices aimed at achieving and preserving a world which both they and future generation will deem fit to live and work in. […]. It promotes values, principles and practices that help people to respond effectively and confidently to current and new challenges.*

Both definitions of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) underscore the significance of social transformation by promoting the active participation of individuals in the pursuit of a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behaviors, and lifestyles necessary for a sustainable future and positive social transformation, (UNESCO, 2005). Furthermore, they emphasize the need to comprehend the interconnectedness of our contemporary world and strive to establish local- global connections. ESD has faced criticism for prioritizing the environmental aspect of sustainability while providing limited attention to the social dimensions and global inequalities (Fagan, 2017). The origins of this critique can be traced back to the foundational concepts of environmental education on which ESD was established in the 1970s.

ESD equips learners with the tools to critically analyze their thoughts, beliefs, and previous assumptions, enabling them to translate these insights into tangible

solutions. Additionally, it engages a diverse range of stakeholders. A prominent actor in the realm of ESD is UNESCO, which builds upon the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2014) and the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (2015 – 2019). UNESCO aims to directly contribute to SDG Target 4.7 by raising awareness, enhancing capacity building, strengthening and reorienting education and learning, and implementing best practices, thus facilitating concrete actions for change as outlined in the Roadmap ESD for 2030 (Laurie et al, 2016; UNESCO, 2020).

Another significant contributor in this field is the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). European nations frequently draw inspiration from the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (UNECE, 2005) when developing their own guidelines for the implementation of ESD.

## Education for human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) (United Nations, 1948) contains provisions pertaining to human rights education. *"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,"* according to the second paragraph of article 26 of the UNDHR. In order to ensure that everyone is respected and that a sustainable and just future may be realized, it is essential to promote awareness of human rights and freedoms (UNESCO, 2021a).

One of the pillars of transformative education is human rights, which are central to the 2030 Agenda (Bajaj, 2011; Azoulay, 2014; Becker and Roux, 2019). Past events illustrated how human rights abuses exacerbated poverty, racism, oppression, violence, and inequality. Collective action is necessary for social and political transformation. The tools provided by human rights education enable individuals to critically examine the perpetuation of privilege and subordination that lead to disparities and jeopardize sustainable development (Bajaj, 2018; Robinson et al., 2018).

*Human Rights Education and training comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thus, contributing, interalia, to the prevention*

*of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights (UN, 2011: Article 2).*

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training in 2011, defines human rights education as:

*“Human Rights Education promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others. It develops an understanding of everyone’s common responsibility to make human rights a reality in each community. Human Rights Education is therefore a lifelong educational process in formal, informal and non-formal environment (UN, 2011: Article 3), directed to “raising awareness, understanding and acceptance of universal human rights standards and principles”; developing awareness of “their own rights and responsibilities in respect of the rights of others”; promoting ‘tolerance, non-discrimination and equality’” (UN 2011: Article 4).*

Human rights education, according to the Council of Europe, includes all educational programmes and activities that promote equality in human dignity, as well as programs that encourage intercultural learning, participation, and minority empowerment. According to Amnesty International (2021), it is an essential instrument for addressing the root causes of human rights breaches and preventing human rights abuses, discrimination, promoting equality, and increasing people's engagement. Human rights education imparts core values, attitudes and skills, needed for a more just, equal and sustainable future. This is done through activities of major stakeholders, such as the United Nations (Brander et al, 2020).

The basis for Human Rights Education activities have been laid by the United Nations and its institutions through United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, under the authority of the Human Rights Council is one of the key promotors in the field of Human Rights Education, which oversees the World Programme for Human Rights Education since 2005 (OHCHR, 2021). In conclusion, human rights education promotes critical analysis of prior actions, ideas, convictions, and worldviews. It gives students the tools they need to fundamentally alter how they see and understand the world and themselves by emphasizing equality, human dignity, empowerment, and universal human

rights. Despite the wide range of definitions, learning about, for, and through human rights is the unifying objective (Robinson et al., 2018; Bajaj, 2011).

## Education for gender equality

Gender-equality education is also seen as a way to promote sustainable development under SDG 4.7. Gender equality continues to be undervalued in education policies, initiatives and curricula despite decades of efforts to highlight its importance (UNICEF, 2019). Gender-inclusive education promotes objectivity and aims to end gender-based discrimination, although it is not yet fully integrated into national education programmes (UNGEI, 2018). It is a key element of SDG 4.7 and has the potential to support transformative change. It equips students with the values, information and skills needed to identify the root causes of unequal power dynamics and gender-based norms (Hamdani, 2020).

National education programs have not fully integrated gender awareness (Crocco, 2020). Actors working in this area are often limited to local projects,

e.g. UNICEF Project on Gender Socialization in Schools in Uganda (El-Bushra & Smith, 2016). United through important agreements, states and UN Women have advanced gender equality. Gender equality education should be considered an essential element of SDG target 4.7, which aims to expand the universality of human rights and has revolutionary potential, although it is not widely recognized. It challenges students to question harmful norms and institutions, critically evaluate global processes, challenges and issues, and actively participate in creating a more just and equitable future. In addition to emphasizing the importance of gender equality, education also has the potential to transform societies and promote sustainable development, human rights, peace and justice when implemented properly (UN Women, n.d.).

## Education for peace and non-violence

The fourth ‘education for’ as identified in SDG Target 4.7 is education for peace and non-violence. It is understood as a means for acquiring knowledge about rights and freedoms, which are considered a fundamental tool to guarantee respect for the rights of all and prevention of conflict and peace building (UNESCO, 2021b).

*Education for peace and non-violence »includes training, skills and information directed towards cultivating a culture of peace based on human rights principles. This education not only provides knowledge*

*about a culture of peace, but also imparts the skills and attitudes necessary to defuse and recognize potential conflicts, and those needed to actively promote and establish a culture of peace and non-violence* (UNESCO, 2008:3).

According to some, education for peace and nonviolence should foster human rights, gender equality, disarmament, social and economic justice, nonviolence, and sustainable development. It should also involve critical thinking, reflection, and involvement (Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace, 2019). I addition, Navarro- Castro and Nario-Galance (2010), indicated that education for peace and non- violence should foster the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavior change. This will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions to peace, whether at an interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level. This is because it encourages students to work together to reduce and eradicate violence on both an individual and societal level.

Respect for human rights is the foundation of education for peace and nonviolence, gender equality, and human rights education. As the primary stakeholder promoting education for peace and non-violence, UNESCO has established a number of programs and organizations that work in this area, such as the International Institute for Educational Planning, University for Peace, and UNESCO Chairs for Peace Education (UNESCO, 2008). A crucial component of high-quality education, according to UNICEF, is education for peace and non-violence (UNICEF, 1999). Civil society organizations like the Peace Education Foundation, Peace Education and Development Foundation, Peace Direct, and others also actively promote. Addressing students' cognitive, emotive, and active aspects is the goal of education for peace and non-violence. It seeks to foster concern, challenge proper personal and social action, and present pertinent new knowledge (Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2019). Social action, which is necessary for a more equitable, sustainable, and just future, is made possible by its implementation.

## Education for global citizenship

Defining Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is not an easy task. After the publication of the Global Education Charter by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in 1997, the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) was founded in 2001, followed by the Maastricht Declaration in (2002):

*Global Education is education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all.*

The Maastricht Global Education Declaration links the term ‘global education’ with development education, human rights education, education for sustainability, education for peace and conflict prevention and intercultural education and education for citizenship. By doing this, it implies an intention to unite the different traditions of education for social action (Nygaard and Wegimont, 2018). The intentions of uniting the different types of ‘educations for’, though aspirational, have not been fully delivered. One reason for this may lie in the choice of terminology, which was a reflection of its time in 2002

“Global Citizenship Instruction points to enable learners of all ages to expect dynamic parts, both locally and universally, in building more quiet, tolerant, comprehensive and secure societies” (UNESCO, 2014a:15). UNESCO's definition from 2014 recognizes the part of instruction as it implies that not only building information and cognitive abilities but also values, delicate aptitudes and states of mind among learners. Education for globalization can encourage worldwide participation and advance social change (UNESCO, 2014a: It moreover builds on the work of human rights instruction and instruction for peace and non-violence, pointing to rouse in learners the values, demeanors and behaviours that bolster creativity, innovation and a commitment to peace, human rights and feasible advancement (Marron & Naughton, 2019).

## Education for appreciation of cultural diversity and culture’s contribution to sustainable development

Development is not possible without including the appreciation of cultural diversity and culture (UNESCO, 2021c). No official definition of education for appreciation of cultural diversity and culture’s contribution to sustainable development exists. Its importance is identified in the Florence Declaration on Culture, Creativity and Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2014c), where it is identified as crucial investment inquality education and life-long learning:

*Achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning opportunities requires a dual commitment to investing in culture and creativity for all. Local learning, innovation and development processes are strengthened when new talents and new forms of creativity are nurtured. This can lead to the empowerment of*

*women and girls as creators and producers of cultural expressions and as citizens participating in cultural life.*

Education for appreciation of cultural diversity and culture’s contribution to sustainable development should be integrated into different learning programmes, through arts education, languages and involvement of cultural stakeholders, because of its cross-cutting nature that can help to achieve the SDGs (UNESCO, 2014c). It can nurture the skills that are needed for overcoming global challenges and the interconnectedness in which we currently live (UNESCO, 2021c).

# Transformative education and development in Sub Sahara Africa

Based on an analysis of definitions of transformative education and the different ‘educations for’ in the previous section, we present connections between them, and development in Sub Sahara Africa (SSA). We focus on the implementation of SGD4.7 and its impact on the development of social, economic, political life in SSA. The section will look at each ‘education for’ and how it influences development in SSA.

## Education for Sustainable development and development in SSA

Lupele & Lotz-Sisitka (2012) define education for sustainable development as a lifelong learning process that aims to equip people with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to create a more sustainable and just world. It focuses on climate change, economic equality and biodiversity among other current themes. SSA is part of an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Global challenges such as climate change intersect with local biodiversity loss. Growing inequality among nations intersects with local social inequalities, economic hardships, normalization of violence, and the deterioration of mental health and socioemotional resilience at individual and community levels. Education is a critical component, not only as a development goal in its own right, but also because education supports engagement with other goals and thus bringing new focus to education, learning processes and curricula, including teacher education curricula and programmes. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is oriented towards the achievement of educational quality within a lifelong learning framework.

According to the African Union Agenda 2063, Africa aims to establish a prosperous continent characterized by sustainable inclusive growth, peace and good governance. The region’s growth path shall be led by increased agricultural productivity, sustainable industrialization, investment in infrastructure development and renewable energy. Conservation of biodiversity, sustainable and fair and equitable use of genetic resources, clean air and water, and better adaptive capacity to climate change are crucial dynamics of the sustainable development agenda in this region, as is achievement of quality education for all.

Despite such aspirations, the Global Education Monitoring Report of 2016 pointed out that teacher education needs to be more adequately aligned with the SDGs, and teachers need to be supported to understand and implement Education for Sustainable Development. This same need for expanding teachers’ engagement with competence for delivery of ESD has been identified and expressed in different consultative fora in the region and beyond. Besides teacher development, funding is vital to the quality of education. Its consideration is critical to achieving education for Sustainable Development. Primary and secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) receives less public financing than other developing regions. Additionally, SSA has the highest number of children and youth out of school and is the only region where this number has increased. There has been a rise of 20 million in this population from 2009 to 2021, reaching a total of 98 million people, with teenagers representing the highest proportion of the out-of-school population.

Successful funding interventions in SSA should be designed to tackle factors affecting infrastructure, teachers, and students’ conditions. These interventions should range from electrification, building construction and renovation, laboratory development, the provision of furniture, teacher training, teaching aids and pedagogy, to school management. For the students, interventions consist of cash transfers, scholarships, school meals, and subsidies. Sustainable education can support women, people from marginalized communities and those with disabilities, which will promote other SDGs and encourage sustainable development. Education provides numerous socio-economic benefits, such as reduced mortality rates (Grant 2021), increased research and technology production (Aarts et al., 2020), knowledge transfer efficiency (Barro, 2010), higher income, and the long-term economic growth of countries (Aarts et al., 2020). These benefits may have a profound impact on SSA, the

region with the lowest levels of schooling, but where investments in education have the highest private and social returns (Barro & Lee 2010). The barriers and challenges to quality education in SSA are highly interconnected, and mitigating or eliminating them may take a variety of pointed interventions and result in remarkable development.

## Education for human rights and development in SSA

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in 1948. Long before the UN declared 1995–2004 the Decade for Human Rights Education, the UDHR and the Covenants placed education at the centre of human rights activities. Human rights and education have gone hand in hand ever since the Charter of the United Nations (UN) was accepted. By signing the UN Charter, states committed themselves to cooperating with the UN to promote and achieve *‘ … universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion*.’ With the same respect for human rights, SGD4.7 indicates education for human right as one of the key elements of transformative education. The right to education and the teaching of human rights (human rights education) are intertwined.

Children have a right to education, but the education that they ought to receive is not ideologically neutral: it is compelled to include education on human rights. If education in SSA is directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Human Rights Watch research in African countries includes reports on barriers to primary and secondary education; privatization of education in Uganda, Botswana and Zimbabwe; child marriage in Malawi, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe; school-related sexual and gender-based violence in Senegal; corporal punishment in Tanzania; discrimination against children with disabilities in South Africa and children with albinism in Tanzania and Mozambique. Discrimination against pregnant students and adolescent mothers; child labor in Tanzania, Ghana, and Uganda; the forced begging and exploitation of children by Quranic teachers in Senegal are also reported. In addition, there are reports on the impact of lead contamination in Zambia; child soldiers and children accused of being part of terrorist groups in Nigeria; attacks on education and military occupation of schools; and forced military training of

secondary school students in Eritrea, among others. The inclusion and successful implementation of education for human rights is the best catalyst to solving these challenges. The awareness of their human rights can raise awareness in the people of SSA and nurture critical thinking that will foster informed decision pertaining to infringement of human rights.

## Education for gender and development in SSA

*‘Education is a door-opener and a life-changer, especially for girls and women’*, senior United Nations officials stressed, as the Commission on Population and Development opened its fifty-sixth session, against the backdrop of a global learning crisis. Education as one of the best investments that societies can make. Despite significant progress in closing the gender gap in school enrolment, much more remains to be done to improve women’s rates of school completion and access to decent jobs.

There are many women in the world and SSA in particular whose educational opportunities were disrupted by, for example, early marriage, cultural and religious beliefs. Education for gender equality advocates for compulsory and free education. It is important to note that girls comprise three quarters of children of primary school age who never go to school. Participation in education is still an issue with room for improvement in sub-Saharan Africa, regardless of gender, but for girls as recently as 2000, the problem was even more acute. The UNESCO 2000 and 2020 statistics clearly show the growth in girls in schools though there is still need for improvement on maintaining the enrolments up to upper secondary.



# Figure 4: School enrolment in 2000 and in 2020

At primary level, just 44 percent of girls were completing their education 22 years ago. In 2020, that figure had risen to 66 percent, and had even overtaken the rate for boys. Girls remain behind boys at lower and upper secondary levels, but the gaps have been reduced in the past two decades - going from 5 percentage points at lower secondary level to just two points, and from 6 points at upper secondary level to 3 in 2020. Teaching gender equality in schools is crucial for fostering a fair and inclusive society. By promoting respect, challenging stereotypes, building inclusive communities, and preventing discrimination, schools play a vital role in shaping a generation that values equality. Education for gender equality also promote respects and challenges stereotypes. This way it promotes encourages respect and empathy among students, reducing discrimination and bullying. It challenges traditional stereotypes, allowing students to explore diverse interests and career paths.

It is also very important to note that gender equality education creates inclusive communities where all individuals have equal participation and representation in socio, political and economic issues. It empowers students to recognize and challenge gender biases, ensuring everyone's voice is heard preventing discrimination and inequality: Education on gender equality equips students with the knowledge and skills to combat discrimination. It raises awareness of systemic barriers and inspires action for equal rights and opportunities.

## Education for diversity and development in SSA

Daya (2014) provides a fair explanation of diversity as the representation of all visible and invisible distinctions such as color, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, education, class, rank, and age. In addition, diversity involves all aspects of identity and experience, including nationality, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, value system, socio-economic context, family structure, age, ability, educational background, and learning styles (Sanger & Gleason, 2020).

Diversity in SSA is also found in the personalities, backgrounds, and is the combination of all differences, applies to all, and encompasses the entire spectrum of individual differences that makes people unique (Mampane, 2019). Varga (2021) defines diversity as recognizing and managing differences to achieve multicultural institutions in which there is no form of discrimination. In a more practical sense, diversity is a tool for making quality decisions as well as producing superior creativity (Cunninghan, 2008), which enhances efficiency and productivity. In the interest of both social justice and economic efficiency, every individual must be given an equal chance to partake in higher education and its benefits, irrespective of income and other individual characteristics including gender, ethnicity, religion, language, and disability (Salmi, 2020)

Cox and Blake (1993) add that properly managed diversity and inclusion in institutions of education has a competitive advantage. Education is a key pathway for social mobility, and it is critical to understand both the challenges and the opportunities of advancing educational diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, Sanger and Gleason (2020) point out that in educational settings, diversity often connotes the bringing together of individuals with differences, and sometimes unexpected similarities. The authors further add that to realize the full potential of diversity within higher education is to appreciate and grapple with the fact that this is rife with complexity and cultural “blind spots” that inhibit efforts to create an educational experience that is inclusive and accessible. It becomes imperative that higher education administrators support efforts to create diverse and welcoming campus communities for all students.

The context and distinctive characteristics of how diversity and inclusion are handled could be different, this chapter offers thoughtful reflections on how to

enhance equity-focused higher education environments. diversity is the combination of all differences, applies to all, and encompasses the entire spectrum of individual differences that makes people unique. Diversity is the combination of all differences, applies to all, and encompasses the entire spectrum of individual differences that makes people unique.

## Education for global citizenship

As highlighted in SGD4.7 Education in a globalised world is increasingly putting emphasis on the importance of values, attitudes and communication skills as a critical complement to cognitive knowledge and skills. The education community is also paying increasing attention to the relevance of education in understanding social, political, cultural and global issues. This includes the role of education in supporting peace, human rights, equity, acceptance of diversity, and sustainable development. Global Citizenship Education represents a paradigm shift that recognizes the relevance of education in understanding and resolving global issues in social, political, cultural, economic and environmental areas. GCED applies a multifaceted approach, using concepts, methodologies and theories already implemented in different fields and subjects. While GCED has been applied differently in different contexts, including regional and community levels, it has a number of common elements (UNESCO 2014b), such as:

1. **An attitude** supported by an understanding of multiple levels of identity, and the potential for a “collective identity” which transcends individual, cultural, religious, ethnic or other differences.
2. **A knowledge** of global issues and universal values, such as justice, equality, dignity and respect;
3. **Cognitive skills** to think critically, systemically and creatively, including adopting a multi-perspective approach that recognizes the different dimensions, perspectives and angles of issues;
4. **Non-cognitive skills,** including social skills, such as empathy and conflict resolution, communication skills and aptitudes for networking and interacting with people of different backgrounds, origins, cultures and perspectives; and
5. **Behavioural** capacities to act collaboratively and responsibly to find global solutions for global challenges, and to strive for the collective good.

Thus, the goal of GCED is to empower learners to engage and assume active roles both locally and globally to face and resolve global challenges. It is built on a lifelong learning perspective, catering not only to children and youth, but to adults as well. It can be delivered in all modes and venues of delivery, including formal, non-formal and informal systems. Flexible pedagogical approaches may be useful in targeting populations outside the formal system and those who are likely to engage with new information and communication technologies, such as social media.

SSA governments, development partners, civil society and school networks have implemented numerous GCED activities since 2000. In view of the preparations for the post-2015 education agenda, key stakeholders of GCED participated in global consultations and conferences that UNESCO organized to address the issues of SSA. Most recently, experts from SSA participated in the Second UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education (GCED): Building Peaceful and Sustainable Societies – preparing for post–2015 in January 2015 (UNESCO 2015b) to discuss GCED in the context of the post2015 education agenda including consideration of the emerging Framework of Action Post- 2015, and the role of GCED for peace.

At the SSA regional level, UNESCO has been supporting the efforts of Member States by promoting a culture of tolerance, reconciliation and peace in formal and non-formal educational systems. The scope of intervention for peace education and democracy will be broadened by ensuring the integration in the national sector policy documents, learning/ training, curricula, teacher training and socio-cultural environment.

UNESCO Dakar has assisted countries in developing national capacities to mainstream peace education and conflict prevention and preparedness in the education strategic plans in West and Central Africa. It is within this context that UNESCO Dakar published the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Reference Manual on Education for Culture of Peace, Human Rights, Citizenship, Democracy and Regional Integration in 2013, in close collaboration with the ECOWAS and the African Development Bank (UNESCO, 2013). The manual includes seven modules: (1) culture of peace, conflict prevention and management, (2) human rights, (3) civic-awareness and citizenship, (4) democracy and good governance, (5) gender, prospect for peace and development, (6) public health, environment and sustainable development,

and (7) regional integration. The manual is available in English, French, Portuguese and 28 local languages.1 In addition, 144 trainers of trainers are trained to use the manual. New topics, such as sport and value education and genocide education, are planned to be included in the manual. The reference manual has been used in various countries, targeting different thematic areas.

In East Africa, Kenya is a strong supporter and proponent of GCED, guided by a three-pronged approach: policy dialogue in connection with the post-2015 agenda; providing technical guidance on GCED and promoting transformative pedagogies and serving as a clearing-house. Kenya is currently also one of five pilot countries for UNESCO’s Teaching Respect for All programme. The latter was launched in 2013 with the objective of strengthening educational responses in Kenya to reduce discrimination and violence within the nation-state, and promote respect for all.

It is expected that SSA will promote GCED through some of the key pillars of the Common African Position, such as “people-centred development”, and “peace and security”. To support the member state-driven development, the AU position paper proposes to negotiate an outcome that will lead to their collective ownership of the new agenda. GCED needs to be seen as a comprehensive concept by stakeholders. A lack of advocacy and GCED mainstreaming in national policies and strategies are priority areas to tackle. Finally, there should be documented efforts (contextually driven) to integrate GCED competencies within sustainable development compliant curricula in all learning pathways.

## Education for peace and nonviolence

There were at least 20 states (out of a total of 49 states) with active armed conflicts in sub‑Saharan Africa in 2020: Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. Ten were low‑intensity, subnational armed conflicts, and 10 were high‑intensity armed conflicts. Except for CAR and Somalia, all the other 18 armed conflicts had higher estimated conflict‑related fatalities in 2020 than in 2019. For the region as a whole the increase was about 41 per cent. Sub‑Saharan Africa also overtook the Middle East and North Africa in 2020 as the region with the most conflict‑related fatalities (Davies, 2021).

The future of Africa therefore needs an education for peace and non violence. An education for peace is an education for co-operation, for caring and sharing, for the use of nonviolence in conflict solving, but an education that fosters competition, conquest, aggression and violence is an education for war. Teachers world-wide are reported to be promoting nonviolent values, in the classroom by raising these issues, in the school by establishing procedures of mediation and reconciliation, in the community by upholding the right to a nonviolent education and education in nonviolence. If teachers in SSA practice nonviolent resistance to aggression the region and the world at large becomes conflict-zones in which teachers educate the young in almost impossible conditions.

Teachers in SSA should take an example from Afghanistan women teachers who are continuing covertly to teach girls, though the fundamentalist ruling regime forbids it. In Burundi, the Peace School brought together children from all backgrounds, encouraged them to imagine a world without war and in the process stimulated local moves towards reconciliation in which the children took part. Research shows that providing quality transformative education especially for young men, can reduce the risk of civil war.

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