

THE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030 – The contribution and the potential of youth and adult education

The international community has adopted a plan of action for the sustainable protection of people, planet and prosperity in the shape of Agenda 2030. The framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for sustainable global social, environmental and economic development. Every Member State of the United Nations (UN) is called on to help make sure that the goals are achieved by 2030 by taking action of its own. All stakeholders within society – be they in the political arena, industry or civil society – have undertaken to do their part to ensure the implementation of the global sustainability agenda.

DVV International considers education – understood as lifelong learning – to be central to the successful implementation of the overall sustainability agenda. Agenda 2030 can only be successful if millions of people around the world commit themselves to achieving its ambitious goals. It will only be possible to live up to this high standard if people have sufficient education and social participation in order to know, understand and be able to pursue the Agenda’s Goals. According to UNESCO, education equips learners of all ages with the skills and values that are needed in order to be responsible citizens of the world. Sustainable improvement and preservation of social, environmental and economic living conditions can only be achieved by creating adequate educational systems and educational opportunities.



The intersectoral approach taken by youth and adult education

Youth and adult education makes a crucial contribution towards achieving each individual SDG, as well as to the success of the Agenda as a whole. Agenda 2030 is an integrative structure in which the 17 SDGs are interdependent and exist in an exchange with one another. This holistic concept is fundamental not only to the Agenda, but also to the very idea of education itself. Non-formal youth and adult education reaches people in the longest phase of their lives, offers low-threshold programmes, and can absorb and combine all educational content through its intersectoral approach. Well-designed non-formal educational programmes serve several objectives at the same time – for example by linking literacy programmes with imparting key vocational skills.

Basic education for all by 2030

With the Agenda, the international community attaches particular importance to ensuring that all young people and adults worldwide receive identifiable basic educational skills by 2030. In addition to reading and writing (literacy) and numeracy, these also include other skills such as basic social skills, health education, basic financial education and basic ICT skills. The education sector however lacks investment in both infrastructure and equipment, as well as in skilled personnel, in order to ensure basic education in all countries of the world. According to information provided by UNESCO, there is a world shortfall of 39 billion US dollars for equitable quality education. Basic education for all can only be guaranteed if sufficient investment is also made in the field of non-formal youth and adult education.

A higher level of education has been proven to help improve people's economic, income and health situation. According to UNESCO, poverty would decrease by 12 percent worldwide if all children and juveniles left regular school with basic reading skills. Around 264 million children and juveniles across the world are however denied access to schooling. 83 percent of those children who do attend school only complete primary school. Children and juveniles from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds have the lowest chances of receiving an education. DVV International is committed to closing this gap by providing basic educational skills to juveniles and adults who are unable to attend and complete regular school.

Lifelong learning – the Sustainable Development Goal on Education (SDG 4)

The United Nations speak of lifelong learning as a goal of sustainable development for the first time in the Agenda 2030 (SDG 4). Lifelong learning encompasses all major forms of learning – formal, non-formal and informal – at all stages of life, and encompasses youth and adult education. It is therefore implicitly included in the Agenda's Goal on Education, which in turn significantly enhances its profile. The importance of youth and adult education is also evident in the wording used in targets 4.3. to 4.7. of the Goal on Education (SDG 4), for example in the elimination of disadvantages with regard to education (target 4.5.), and in ensuring basic education skills (target 4.6.). The non-formal programmes for the transfer of vocational skills and education for sustainable development, which are designed to enable people to act in a sustainable manner, play a key role in the implementation of these targets.

In addition to the goal of inclusive, equitable quality education and the targets, numbering seven in total, the Agenda identifies three necessary implementation mechanisms (4.a. to 4.c.). These include building safe learning environments and infrastructure (4.a.), as well as training teachers in developing countries (4.c.) – two core areas in which DVV International is active.

SDG 4 – THE EDUCATION GOAL OF AGENDA 2030

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

THE TARGETS

- 4.1. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- 4.2. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- 4.3. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- 4.4. By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- 4.5. By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
- 4.6. By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- 4.7. 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.

THREE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.a. Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- 4.b. By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.
- 4.c. By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

DVV International: Global advocacy and strengthening local structures

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), which represents the interests of approximately 900 adult education centres (vhs). DVV International cooperates with more than 200 partners in more than 30 African, Asian, Latin American and European countries.

Education is a human right and a public good. As a civil society player, DVV International observes and accompanies the Agenda 2030 debate worldwide with its regional and global partners. Our work contributes towards strengthening civil society. We have longstanding memberships and partnerships with the International Council for Adult Education, IC AE, and the umbrella organisations ASPBAE (Asia), CEEAL, CLADE (both Latin America) and EAEA (Europe), as well as with associations in the Arab region. At intergovernmental level, DVV International is a member of the Education Committee of the German Commission for UNESCO in the field of non-formal education.

Together with its partners, DVV International advocates

- the explicit recognition of youth and adult education as forming part of lifelong learning and constituting a major success factor for achieving the Goal on Education (SDG 4), and
- the recognition and identification of the major role played by youth and adult education in the overall success of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

DVV International pursues a structure-enhancing approach worldwide, supporting partners on four continents in the development and expansion of national, regional and local youth and adult education structures. This also includes the further development of adult education centres and the professionalisation of teachers. Adult education centres and adult educators worldwide contribute to implementing the goals of Agenda 2030 through their intersectoral approach. They provide education to people who are poor and marginalised and therefore have little or no access to education.

Our examples of the key role played by youth and adult education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Green innovation centres in Mali und Guinea

The population of Mali and Guinea is growing by about three percent every year. Global climate change and microclimate changes occurring at regional level, caused by deforestation and erosion, make the challenge of supplying an ever-increasing number of people with food more difficult still. According to a UNICEF study, more than

40 percent of 7–12 year-olds in Mali do not attend school. 80 percent of women and 60 percent of men can neither read nor write, and they lack opportunities to acquire agricultural expertise.

As part of its contribution to the “Green Innovation Centres” programme, DVV International offers courses for agricultural smallholdings in Mali. The courses combine literacy with the imparting of practical agricultural knowledge. Among other things, attendees learn about new organic farming techniques and how they can establish cooperatives, take out small loans or open up new marketing channels. This enables them to improve their income and living conditions and to counter food shortages. After completing the course, many people working on smallholdings are not only better at reading, writing and arithmetic, but they have also been able to increase their harvests more than threefold.



Partnership and peace through exchange in the Middle East

Education helps people to understand democracy, promotes the tolerance and trust that underpin it, and provides a motivation towards playing an active role in politics. Education boosts support for democracy, especially where democratic transitions have taken place only recently. Educated people are more likely to turn out to vote. Not only wars and other conflicts, but also poverty, human rights violations and a lack of economic prospects are making the situation in the Middle East more difficult.

Adult education has the potential to curb the radicalisation of young people and promote peace in the region. DVV International brings together civil society players from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco. Young street children in Morocco are given the opportunity to talk about their lives, as well as to analyse and discuss aspects such as abuse, violence and drug use. One of the consequences of their disadvantaged situation is that the young people are being approached and groomed by terrorist groups. The educational programme teaches them to recognise these connections and to develop strategies for action against radicalisation and for peace.



Youth and adult education for broad-based economic development

The total population of Ethiopia is estimated at 90 million people, and the number of adults who are illiterate, most of whom live in rural areas, is estimated at 20 million. The probability of a woman in sub-Saharan Africa being literate is one-quarter lower than among men. The Ethiopian government has set itself the goal of transforming Ethiopia into a medium-income country. Education is one of the strongest drivers of inclusive, broad-based growth, and helps individuals escape poverty. An increase of one year in the average educational attainment of a country's population causes its annual per capita GDP to grow from 2% to 2.5%.

Promoting inclusive growth is contingent on a literate, well educated population. DVV International is therefore advising the Ethiopian government regarding the development and introduction of a national adult education strategy. DVV International's project activities in Ethiopia focus on integrated literacy, gender justice and enhancing local youth and adult education structures (capacity building).



Global learning – individual participation

Agenda 2030 is a universal agenda which applies in equal measure to the countries of the Global North and of the Global South. Global learning is an integral part of development education in Germany, and an interdisciplinary educational concept which focuses on action-oriented learning, i.e. the acquisition of skills in order to gain an orientation and live responsibly in a globalised world. Critical engagement requires opportunities to take up a position based on reflection and exchange, as well as to develop alternative courses of action and to try them out. Global learning asks what role each citizen can play on the path to a globally-equitable, peaceful world society that respects people and the environment.

As the largest provider of further education in Germany, adult education centres (vhs) offer courses for the acquisition of skills that people need in order to participate in the process of “transforming the world for the better”, as postulated in Agenda 2030. Through its project entitled “Global Learning in Adult Education Centres”, DVV International helps make the experiences from international adult education usable for work in German adult

education centres (vhs) – and vice versa. Global learning is contributing towards social cohesion, education and tolerance.



By 2030: Inclusive and equitable quality education for all

As a professional organisation that is unique worldwide, DVV International and its partners are making a successful contribution towards the success of Agenda 2030 and helping to strengthen and raise the profile of youth and adult education in the global consultation process. The Agenda has set itself the goal of ensuring equitable quality education for all by 2030 inclusively, as well as promoting opportunities for lifelong learning. DVV International urges all stakeholders in the international community to use all instruments and capabilities in order to achieve the Education Goal (SDG 4) with its seven targets by 2030, and to unlock the potential of youth and adult education for the success of all 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

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