



JOINT STATEMENT

G20 Global Pandemic Preparedness:

Attending to Access to Education & Employment

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 17 August 2020

The humanitarian and economic effects of the outbreak of the COVID-19, have drawn attention to the fragility of, and limitations to, existing forms of global governance. While the development of urgent international response mechanisms and ongoing relief efforts must be the major priority in combating against these global crises of any nature, it is our joint contention that by specifically targeting action to health and education, job creation and a labour protection floor, we as an international community can build a more resilient population that can aid in the economic and social recovery. By rendering our ways of life more resilient, and achieving development that is genuinely sustainable, we can co-create the world we want for citizens globally now and in the future.

The crisis has caused hundreds of millions of jobs losses, increased precariousness and desperation and has put millions of frontline workers' lives in peril. The pandemic has exposed the chronic, sustained underfunding of public services, including health and education. Developing countries in particular need access to a Global Social Protection Fund and increased access to finance as to support their economy and upgrade education and other services. Governments have failed to adequately invest in quality public health and education that can rapidly adapt to and continue functioning during emergencies. This underfunding arise from the failure to prioritize health and education funding, from a lack of action on promoting progressive tax reforms and allowing **a new debt crisis** which is currently squeezing public spending in many countries.

A hallmark effect of the pandemic has been that of access; access to school have been and continue to be for many, effectively off-limits to billions of students and workers worldwide. It has also placed a significant burden on the family to provide the interim online education while maintaining a job or looking for new employment. By making the way we teach and learn more flexible and responsive, we can ensure that a comparable crisis taking place in the future does not result in a loss of access on this scale. This means making immediate provisions for those unable to attend classrooms to continue learning from home, support for individuals and families with education and care burdens that now must be handled at home, in addition to large-scale social protection for those whose education is impeded by crisis. At the moment, more than 300 million students have no access to any form of distance learning. Upgrading technology and closing the digital divide is necessary to address access issues. Creative use of reverse innovation, diversifying and upgrading technology, and closing the digital divide for equitable connectivity is also necessary to address access issues.

We have already entered a global recession which, according to the World Bank, by the end of 2020 is expected to be twice the volume of the Great Recession. This means that governments should take measures now to safeguard funding for employment, health and education. Dealing with the 2008 crisis shows that reversing to austerity early has only delayed recovery. This time the G20 must put people before profit in our policy priorities – and commit to this. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) must move away from routinely imposing austerity, for instance, freezes or cuts to public sector wage bills, which they have done in 78% of countries in the past 3 years, as these block the recruitment of urgently needed doctors, nurses, teachers and education support personnel.

We the G20 Engagement Groups **[B20, C20, L20, T20, W20, Y20]** call on the G20 to do everything in its power to safeguard public spending, including education budgets around the world to respond to the health crisis and lead a recovery with resilience, while ensuring that there is a gender lens applied to the budgets. We also invite the G20 to work with donors and NGOs to replenish existing multilateral education funds, particularly the Global Partnership for Education. Education systems must be adequately funded, and they must be oriented towards achieving suitability for jobs which offer decent pay and empowering life prospects. Investing in job creation for the youth would give young people the best possible chances of surviving through times of rocketing unemployment. States must intervene into markets in order to ensure that workers and families for whom the market is not currently providing, are covered by social protection and recovery action. This will mean generating new jobs through investment in green infrastructure, the care economy, adequate re-training opportunities for workers who find themselves out of work, all under a New Social Contract with social protection and a labour protection floor. The G20 should ensure the provision of paid sick leave for those infected and income guarantees for those affected by measures.

Success in these aims can only be achieved collaboratively, involving states, civil society organisations, trade unions and employer associations. We call on the G20 to take a leading role in coordinating international efforts at achieving collaborative and progressive education and labour reform, in light of the overall burden of COVID-19 on youth currently and for upcoming generations. This will involve prioritising access, continuity and completion in education, social protection, fostering civic spiritedness and global solidarity, and harnessing technology for the needs of learners and workers.

Acknowledging the role of youth labour not just in the current crisis, but in the context of a generational shift in global society.

As such, we call on G20 Leaders to take the following immediate measures towards safeguarding access to education and employment as part of their pandemic preparedness efforts:

A. Provide Social Protection

In the face of multiple crises, health-related, climate, economic and geopolitical, we must use systems of global governance to protect and promote the health, dignity, and empowered life prospects of the world's citizens.

- The G20 should establish a Global Social Protection Fund that would enable developing countries and Least-Developed Countries to create social protection systems and upgrade the existing ones aiming at universal coverage for all basic needs.
- Governments should commit to safeguarding national expenditure on education as outlined in the Incheon Declaration (2015). “Allocating efficiently at least 4 - 6% of Gross Domestic Product and/or at least 15 - 20% of total public expenditure to education,” as well as the fulfilment of all commitments related to official development assistance (ODA) with concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7% of GNP for ODA to developing countries. Likewise, they should increase education financing through bilateral and multilateral cooperation by allocating 20% of national budgets to education and ensuring sensitivity of allocation of these funds so that they are reaching the most marginalised groups. Adequate, ongoing and preventative funding must be provided for areas of deficit as well as short-term crisis funding.
- Immediate suspension of debt payments until the end of 2021 in order to finance domestic responses to Covid-19 through investment in education, health and other public services. There also needs to be an emergency renegotiation of debt servicing so that no country has to cut spending on essential public services in order to service debts. Research suggests that in practice any country that spends over 12% of national revenue on debt servicing is forced to cut spending on services. We need to push for independent debt workout mechanisms and ensure that all new loans are negotiated with full transparency to national parliament, media and citizens.
- Educational and labour market inclusion requires paying special attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups including youth, girls and women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, nomads, children facing the risk of child labour, people with mental health issues, rural and remote communities, and those living in crisis caused by conflicts and natural disasters. We call for the extension of all protections to all informal workers and special action in order to reverse the trend towards informalisation in the labour market.
- Ensure the right to social protection, to include access to education, including early childhood education and care (ECCE) and opportunities for lifelong learning, thereby upholding the commitments made in [the 2018 G20 Initiative for Early Childhood Development](#). Supporting and empowering families, children and youth today can not only interrupt cycles of racial injustice and inequality, but build a strong foundation for peace and security, resilience, social justice and social cohesion. Ensure access to social housing, universal healthcare, out-of-work social security, and re-training for those who find themselves marginalised from the job market for long periods. We call for guaranteed minimum living wages and collective bargaining.

- Teachers are essential to the successful continuation of providing equitable, inclusive and quality education before, during and after the crisis. As such, it is equally essential to maintain the continuation of quality terms of employment, on time payment of salaries and benefits. Increased responsibilities beyond current norms should not be mandatory but bargained collectively. Measures such as double shifting should be reflected in teacher remuneration, benefits, or other mechanisms where teachers are requested to accept additional responsibility. Amendments to employment and working conditions must be developed through social dialogue with teachers' unions via collective bargaining. Given the nature of the health crisis paid sick leave should exist for need for teachers or staff to self-isolate if they present symptoms or come into contact with confirmed cases of COVID-19. Lastly, as teachers themselves have suffered loss, and are reporting high levels of stress and burnout during the pandemic, proactive measure must be taken to support their mental health and wellbeing.
- Overcome gender and other forms of identity-based discrimination, and eradicate sexual violence and harassment both inside and outside the classroom and in the workplace. In addition, improve infrastructure and facilities of schools and workplaces to be more gender-responsive.
- Promote education and raise awareness about gender equality targets and efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes and unconscious bias in all forms.
- Encourage more girls into STEM learning and STEM-careers, recruit more female teachers and managers, establish universal ECCE, and promote women's full and equal economic participation – as well as female leadership – everywhere. Additionally, provide national programs in schools in order to prepare girls to address and overcome discrimination so they can take those lessons into the world of work and beyond.
- G20 governments should evaluate whether their laws limit access and progress of women in education, related to developing STEM skills, and employment, and to subsequently eliminate it.

B. Foster Global Citizens with Future Skills for Future Work

When crisis strikes, it is essential that we work together to confront issues that blight us in common. This means thinking of ourselves as being citizens of the world, as well as of our nations and immediate localities, and considering these identities as mutual and co-constitutive.

- Ambitious and dedicated internationalisation of education, embedding Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in formal, informal and non-formal education settings, to equip youth with the tangible competencies of a modern worker (ILO, 2018).

- Traditional institutions and approaches to learning remain outdated, with significant variation in learning outcomes both across and within nations. The G20 countries should upgrade the education system to align with the future of work skills requirements. We call for G20 to update the framework of learning to incorporate innovative methodologies including those envisaged by GCE, critical and transformative thinking and active student self-reflection. We also call for social, emotional, behavioural learning to be included in national curricula. Thinking innovatively and responsively will be especially important during the time of this pandemic and crucial for the future of education and for preparation for future work.
- Emphasising the role of formal education for preparing youth for future skills and future jobs with capabilities for new jobs covering both technical and GCE skills in the interest of fostering the competencies of a global worker (inclusive of respect for common rules, cultural sensitivity, and creative and critical competencies). Education creates the health workers, the entrepreneurs, the engineers and other professionals of the future.
- Ensuring the preparation and training pathways of teachers equip them with the relevant knowledge and pedagogies to embed transferable and job-specific skills within education and connecting education and training with the labour market. Communication between educational institutions and employers should be enhanced in order to minimize the gap between what the teachers think is necessary to teach and the reality in the workplace. For example, short term internship for teachers would be effective.
- Implementing a system of incentives to businesses and SMEs to increase apprenticeship provision and young employment services, in efforts to enable transitions of learners from education into sustained skilled employment and ensure the alignment of education and training to genuine labour market needs. Along with putting in place incentives to increase the training/re-skilling for women coming back to work after having been away from work because of child rearing.
- Integrate teaching and learning methods of entrepreneurship education in schools and academics as a part of the curriculum. Methods such as knowledge skills, entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, basic management skills, vocational and life skills.
- Reducing the percentage of marginalised groups who are most at risk of being permanently left behind in the labour market with special attention to women (25% by 2025) and youth (15% by 2025) paying special attention to women and youth with disabilities.
- Emphasize past G20 commitments to enhance accountability by producing annual progress reports detailing the status, targets and timelines for achievement of actionable policies to increase representation of marginalised groups in employment.

- We call for G20 countries to commit to producing on a regular basis disaggregated figures of youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), to help account for the status of youth and fulfil their SDG 8.6.1 target. Additionally, we ask the G20 to recommit to SDG 8.6.1 target due expire by 2020, and increase their efforts to substantially reduce the share of youth NEET by 2025.

C. Harness Technology for Human Need

Confronting and overcoming the challenges that face learners and workers will require the appropriate and efficient utilisation of all instruments and resources we presently have at our disposal. In this regard, it is imperative to draw upon the 'white heat' of all presently available and emerging technology and to build skills for both women and men.

- Agree on a high-quality international standard on privacy, workers' data rights, ethical use of AI to encourage diversity and access to educators, as well as regulation of all other aspects of digital markets as to share technological benefits, protect democracy and empower all people.
- Agree that each country has ample industrial policy space to pursue its own digital development while aiming at one accessible internet by all. Public investment in digital and data infrastructure should provide affordable access for all.
- Invest more in the technology industry to employ latest technological advancements such as IoT, AI, etc., to support human needs and to ensure business continuity in many industries, such as Consumer Goods, Retail, Education, Healthcare, Infrastructure and other industrial services. Investments in technology should guarantee the human rights of individuals and communities, while protecting the environment.
- Focused investment aimed at building the skills required for the emerging digital economy, fostering the competencies of the modern resilient and multi-skilled worker, making basic digital construction skills as well as coding and other ICT competencies core aspects of formal education.
- Prepare and engage workers and their representatives for and in the adoption and infusion of new technologies, including worker protection and guarantees, as well as investment in public digital infrastructure.
- Online protection tools for youth whose learning has been shifted online, putting protection in place for students who are being bullied online and plans to create anti-bullying learning tools for youth and raising awareness about threats online, alongside labour legislation protecting digital workers from exploitation.

- Ensure digital access for students who do not have access to digital resources both in the classroom and at home by providing learning and financial resources (i.e. computers, online teachers, classwork online, tutors). Utilise digital technologies to eliminate barriers to completion of higher education and TVET, focussing on improving the employability of candidates for job opportunities emerging in digital industries, both at school-level and in the context of lifelong learning, as well as improving access to entrepreneurial opportunities for those with digital skills. Ensure involvement of labour market institutions (trade unions, employers' organisations and public employment institutions) in the planning and design, and where relevant the delivery, of TVET.

The present calls on us to act in concert to mitigate against the multiple crises we find ourselves facing. This means enhancing welfare provisions currently in place for learners and workers substantially and efficiently. We ask that G20 recognize that provisions in education and employment are critical during and post the global health emergency and the economic crisis that it is triggering. Education benefits the economy and individual incomes – it must not be a victim of the crisis but must be seen as part of the solution to the crisis.

The lessons from previous global crises indicate the need of robust recovery measures and also tailored policies to those who are most vulnerable in society, through education and employment. We remind G20 Leaders of this year's G20 Presidency theme of "Realizing Opportunities for the 21st Century", which can only be achieved by putting both education and employment at the top of the G20 agenda for all.