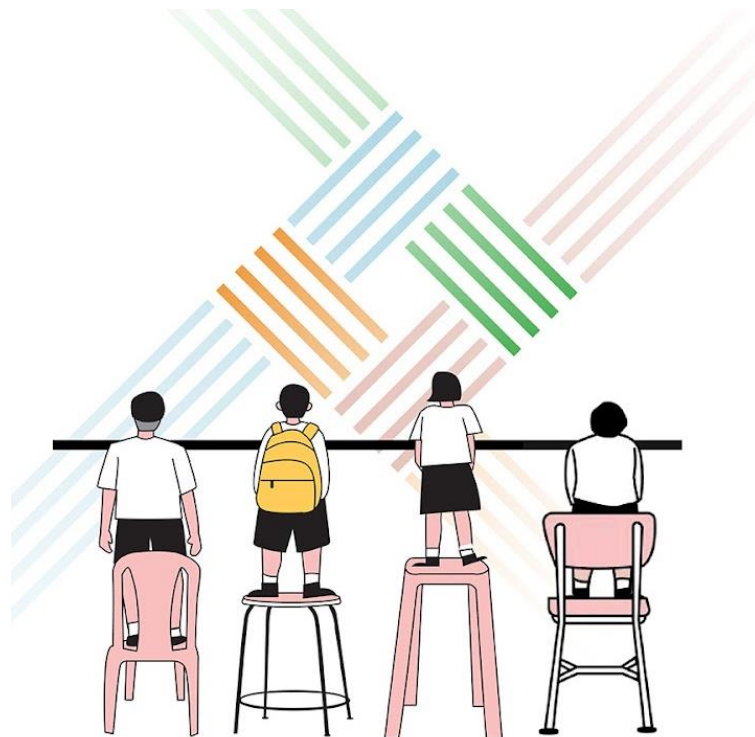# Equitable Education Conference 2022

Outcome Document

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON EQUITABLE EDUCATION:
TOGETHER TOWARDS EQUITY
2022

International Conference on Equitable Education:

Together Towards Equity

19–20 October 2022, Bangkok, Thailand

Outcome Document

Background

The Equitable Education Fund (EEF) of Thailand, in partnership with the Thailand Ministry of Education, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau of Education, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO), UNICEF Thailand, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and Save the Children, jointly convened the 'International Conference on Equitable Education: Together Towards Equity', from 19 to 20 October 2022, in Bangkok, to promote equity-based learning for all. 3,577 participants attended the AFE Conference virtually, and 141 participants attended in person. Out of the 3,577 remote participants, 1,872 were Thai, while the remaining 1,705 were from outside the country.

At the Asia-Pacific level, the 2nd Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister's Conference (APREMC-II) was convened in June 2022, in Bangkok, to discuss and make recommendations on how to achieve learning recovery as an immediate step to post COVID-19, and strengthen and transform education systems to become more equitable, inclusive, responsive, relevant, and resilient, with the overall objective to accelerate SDG4 implementation. As the outcome of APREMC-II, the *2022 Bangkok Statement,* 'Towards an effective learning recovery for all and transforming education in Asia-Pacific', was adopted on 7 June 2022. The present outcome document for the International Conference on Equitable Education: Together Towards Equity, builds on the Bangkok Statement, offering resources for implementation showcased in the conference itself, as well as presenting additional solutions related to remaining education challenges.

The Transforming Education Summit (TES) was held in New York, United States, in September 2022, as part of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, to bring together related governmental bodies, policy-makers, and agencies at the global level, to review the commitment to education and lifelong learning as a pre-eminent public good. Action tracks on 1) Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools; 2) Learning, skills for life, work, and sustainable development; 3) Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession; 4) Digital learning and transformation; and 5) Financing Education guide the prioritization and implementation work of national governments.

Many of the current challenges facing regional education systems predate the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though today's primary and secondary enrollment rates are high, children with disabilities

and from long-marginalized ethnic groups continue to face difficulties in completing a full cycle of education. Globally, nearly two-thirds of children at 10 years are unable to read and understand simple texts. In South-East Asian countries, out-of-school-rates in upper secondary education vary from 10 percent to 56 per cent (UIS). Vocational education has been neglected, and opportunities for lifelong learning are limited. Indeed, more than half of all adults in Asia and the Pacific have been unable to pursue their education to tertiary level. The COVID-19 pandemic has considerably amplified existing challenges, especially among marginalized groups, including those in poor or rural areas, where access to education has been limited, and those living with disabilities. There is also a growing 'digital divide' that continues to challenge the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which seeks to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.'

1. Safe School Reopening, Learning Recovery and Continuity of Learning

The safe reopening of schools and ensuring the re-enrollment of all students should be the priority for regional governments. It is suggested that stronger emphasis be placed on early childhood development stressing foundational reading skills. To accelerate learning recovery, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)[1] should be integrated into school curriculums and practices to increase learner self-awareness, academic achievement, and positive behaviours both in and out of the classroom. Schools, learning centres, and communities should be well equipped and prepared to provide psychosocial support for those in need. This includes capacity building for teachers, facilitators, and parents, and ensuring that resourcing in schools (e.g. special education professionals, counseling, psychosocial professionals, safe school culture) is adequately provided. Flexible learning programmes (remote and blended learning), non-formal education, and equivalency programmes should be promoted to meet the diverse needs of learners.

2. Equity, Inclusion, and Gender Equality

Recognition of prior learning and equivalency programmes also encourages more enrollment at basic education level and continuity of education. At school level, individualized learning plans (ILP) should be

developed for each learner, and universal design principles are to be implemented for equity and inclusion. Multisectoral collaboration among concerned ministries (e.g. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Defense), NGOs/CSOs, and all stakeholders are key to the sustainable holistic support, ensuring up-to-date educational data and information (also considering cross-border elements),

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1 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills can be broadly defined as the process of acquiring the competencies, skills and/or attitudes to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations (Payton et al., 2000; Greenberg et al., 2003; Weissberg et al., 2015).

inclusion in education, and integration into society. In the Asia-Pacific region, gender affects educational opportunities, and girls, especially in rural settings, having fewer opportunities than boys; on the other hand, boys evidence lower completion rates and not continuing their education; and persons from other genders are entirely being left out of education systems overall. Lack of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), as well as discriminatory attitudes and structures negatively affect the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals on a daily basis.

Children and Youth with Disabilities

Access to education for children and youth with disabilities should be promoted at the national level and made into reality through putting in place policies in the system. Both pre-service and in-service capacity-building for teachers and caretakers should be provided. Multisectoral collaboration among ministries (education, social welfare, health, and so forth) should be prioritized and supported by third sector organizations to accelerate change. A better understanding of, and improved education system could be developed by the more proactive recruitment of individuals with disabilities into the education work-force.

Migration, Language and Ethnicity

To leverage access to education for all, policy-makers need to ensure that open education law is in place to guarantee the rights of migrants and undocumented and ethnic minority learners, as well as the rights to their mother tongue, and that their studies are recognized by the governments of country of origin and host country to offer multiple and flexible learning pathways enabling smooth educational transitions. Operational guidelines should be developed with capacity development training for all concerned education officials and teachers.

In addition, national curriculum and learning materials in ethnic languages permits children from linguistic minorities to be taught in their native tongue. Necessary support measures should be implemented at the school/learning centre level to accelerate enrollment, prevent future dropouts, and provide positive learning environments, all in support of learner engagement with the local community. These interventions include assistance from ethnic/migrant teachers, language preparation classes, legal documentation/ citizenship facilitation, psychosocial support, and employment opportunities.

Urban Poor

Social welfare programmes that address daily necessities first are key and interrelated to education. City and national governments could focus on three priority areas for their high payoff in urban poverty

reduction: 1) employment and labor markets (including safety nets); 2) land, housing, and infrastructure (including private financial markets); and 3) intergovernmental relations (including municipal finance and capacity building). At the same time, interventions in other areas – including education, health, transport, and energy, as well as macroeconomic and fiscal stability – are also important for reducing poverty in cities. Equity-based financing models for education are encouraged at district level to allocate more resources to the needed areas and disadvantaged groups.

3. Quality and Relevance of Education and Developing a Highly Skilled Generation of Teachers

Change in the current education system towards greater equity begins by providing autonomy, support, and capacity-building to educators. Change can be accelerated through awareness of biases and addressing discriminating structures across all levels in the education system. Radical equity work requires models to support the needs of learners (3 level support in Finland). Approaches across the system need to change to student-centered pedagogies, with flexible or blended learning modalities, individualized learning content, and formative assessment to support learning. Curriculum should ensure essential skills acquisition through applicable and relevant content, but aim to develop skills through project, problem, and phenomenon-based methods. Local communities and teachers should have the opportunity to adapt contents serving the local context.

To effectively address learning recovery, we must support teachers and promote teacher quality in both content and pedagogy through ongoing teacher development.

4. Learning and Skills for Life, Work[2] and Sustainable Development

It is essential that governments incorporate entrepreneurial and work-life skills into the national curriculum and ensure that they are implemented at the school level towards skills-based learning, and not only in knowledge-based education. Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) of prior learning should be developed at the national level to recognize all flexible learning pathways of learners, including migrants and undocumented persons. Micro-credentials should be promoted to offer skills development opportunities for employability and lifelong learning purposes. Engagement of the private sector is crucial,

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[2] The entrepreneurial mindset refers to the ability and willingness to continuously search for opportunities to create sustainable social and economic value, and the courage to take action to pursue these opportunities even in times of uncertainty.

such as via programmes for bridging education service providers to the private sector through apprenticeship – a flexible education model currently popular in Germany.

5. Digital Skills and Digital Transformation[3]

Digital skills enable people to create and share digital content, communicate efficiently, and collaborate readily, as well as solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment in life, learning, work, and socializing at large. Digital skills are the most urgently needed professional asset in working life in an increasingly digital economy. Learning advanced digital skills should be supported for work-life purposes and integrated into the curriculum and job training. These skills include digital marketing and analytics, cybersecurity, cloud-based tools, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and digital business creation and entrepreneurship. Governments must create training programmes, some of which may be developed and delivered in collaboration with the private sector.

6. Planning, Governance, Monitoring and Assessment

Decentralized education can be more responsive to community and individual needs, as well as more efficient, transparent, encouraging of participation, better-reflecting of local priorities, and generally better at improving access, quality, and equity. Area-based education management, multisectoral collaboration, and local leadership are keys for creating positive impact and informing evidence-based policy choices at national level. As a priority, education budgets need to be distributed differently through an equity-based budgeting approach to narrow down disparities among learners and enhance inclusive educational opportunities for marginalized groups, which will ultimately benefit all learners, their livelihoods, and their communities.

New assessment practices need to be established to develop unique competences, interests, passions, and characteristics possessed by learners from diverse backgrounds and contexts. The results of the assessments will prove useful for the development of learners' growth mindset, as well as for enhancing their self-esteem and self-knowledge, including understanding their own strengths and weaknesses, and helping them connect with family, society, country, and world. The assessment should support each child to be a

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[3] Digital skills are defined as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. Digital literacy is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. It includes competences that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy (UNESCO 2018).

resilient lifelong learner with a growth mindset, as well as individuals possessing an enhanced sense of their unique competencies, passions, and interests.

7. Partnerships for Education

The private sector could offer unique resources and expertise to complement government initiatives and introduce innovative approaches to addressing barriers to education. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be promoted by considering local needs, community ownership, and sustainability. More local participation in education can increase local responsibility and support democratization, increase efficiency, accelerate economic development, and enhance equity education. Engagement and buy-in by the community via community dialogues – including parents – are essential for success. It is important that schools/community learning centres engage parents and community members to raise awareness of the importance of education. Parents and caretakers, community members, leaders of local businesses, school principals, and teachers should all collaborate in partnership and support each other's work.

Resources for Implementation

Safe School Reopening, Learning Recovery and Continuity of Learning	- RAPID framework (Reach-Assess-Prioritize-Increase-Develop) should be considered for learning recovery - Teaching at the Right Level, assessing and measuring tools and practice to divide per level, not per grade - Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can be supported through the CA-SEL model based on five core competencies: Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills and Making responsible decisions - SEL for Schools training and contents - Suggested policy choice: Accelerated learning and catch-up programmes to reach minimum proficiencies and keep students enrolled in the system. Fee waivers and transfers (cash or in-kind) are needed - UNICEF Learning Passport improving access to education
Children and Youth with Disabilities	- Accessibility as the key criteria: develop standards and procedures to ensure accessibility (in processes and procurements, physical and digital environments, and curriculum and pedagogies) - Disability-Inclusive Teaching in Emergencies (DTeEm) Online course to responding to educational needs of Learners with Disabilities during emergencies, in multiple language versions - Support and establish a third sector collaboration to support implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on national and local (municipal) levels; Benchmark from Finland - Third sector collaboration on advocacy and supporting governments' work, disability forum and support and collaboration with parents - Tools for inclusive education from World Bank

Migration, Language and Ethnicity	• Ensuring registration of all learners by providing education for free and the establishing of migrant and refugee councils
	    ○ Preparatory language education and social cohesion
	• Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education as a national policy and practice
	• Back to Learning Strategy from UNICEF Poland: 1) training for teachers; 2) devices, materials and supplies; and 3) provision of financial compensation to teachers and assistants
	    ○ Social tutoring with volunteers and establishment of migrant integration (information) centers

Urban Poor	• Zoning system, trialed in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, can be one way to improve access to education and diversify classes
	    ○ Systematic cooperation of the municipality, NGO, civil sector, and private sector
	• Innovative financing approaches should be promoted (evidence-based conditional cash transfers, crowdsourcing, social bonds)
	• Setting clear, achievable objectives, autonomous and accountable school leadership for improving learning. Case from Sobral, Brazil.
	    ○ Flexibility of education programmes, multiple pathways and second change education programmes and counseling on pathways

Quality and Relevance of Education and Developing a Highly Skilled Generation of Teachers	• Recommendation from Regional Conference on Teachers and Equitable Education 2021 • Advocacy on importance of and rights to education, raising awareness in local communities • Teaching tools designed to help countries collect data on teaching practices to improve teaching quality • Enhancing learning in classroom; • Comprehensive Reading and Mathematics Assessment Tool (CERMAT) • Three-level support in Finland to support the diverse needs of learners • COACH tool for teachers

Learning and Skills for Life, Work, and Sustainable Development	• ILO Framework for core skills: The biggest skills gaps in foreign language skills, strategic thinking, problem solving, creativity, and innovation • Enhancing opportunities for lifelong learning, continuing education and re-enrolling education programmes; focused training programmes in collaboration with the private sector to reskill workers • Revitalization of Technical and Vocational Education: STEM in TVET Guide and Toolkit • Enhancing work-based learning and establishment of apprenticeship opportunities • Allowing and encouraging students to practice entrepreneurship or work alongside their studies

Digital Skills and Digital Transformation	• Digital Skills and Digital literacy should be included in the curriculum, and capacity- building for educators and local management needs to be prioritized for resiliency of the education systems
	    ○ Digital Programme should be offered to girls and all the genders at early years
	    ○ Digital Skills courses with private sector
	
	• Flexible learning programmes and upskilling trainings in collaboration with private sector
	
	• Rapid assessment of information and communication technology skills demand in Indonesia

Planning, Governance, Monitoring and Assessment	• Individualized assessment gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their competence in different ways ○ Learning Assessment Platform explains the process of gathering and evaluating information on what students know, understand, and can do • The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) is an example of a regional learning assessment and capacity-building programme that promotes equity • PISA for Schools informs how well schools are performing and how social and emotional skills and well-being are considered • New Zealand Equity Index and Cost Modeling provides an equity-based budgeting approach in education • Good quality management is essential for evidence-based, effective policies: RISE model and management of decentralization • Inclusive student assessment guide
Partnerships for education	• Community provides parental support service to contact parents via SMS messages and calls. Local community volunteers are trained to support learning and teaching, including peer support groups for parents of young children (Pratham) • Community Education Watch Groups (CAMPE) is an example of a collaboration of local education activists, teachers, community leaders, and local government representatives with the aim of identifying students at risk, bringing out-of-school children and youth back to school, and reducing disparities • EEF-Sansiri collaboration

- Equitable Education Hub: https://equity-ed.net/
- 2nd Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister's Conference (APREMC-II) concludes with adoption of Bangkok Statement 2022: https://bangkok.unesco.org/apremc2ap
- Transforming Education Knowledge Hub: https://transformingeducationsummit.sdg4education2030.org/
- Asia-Pacific SDG 4 Education2030 Knowledge Portal: https://apasdg4education2030.org/
- Regional Conference on Teachers and Equitable Education 2021 Recommendation: https://afe2021.eef.or.th/