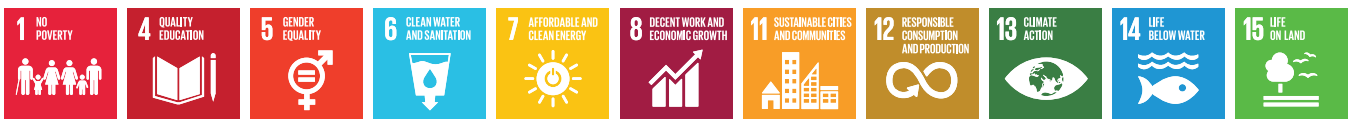


EDUCATION POLICIES AND SYSTEMS CAN SHAPE RESOURCE EFFICIENT BEHAVIOURS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

THIS POLICY BRIEF PROVIDES SUGGESTIONS TO HELP ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, AND 15



SUMMARY

In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These Global Goals cannot be achieved without behavioural changes. Education systems and policies shape societal behaviours. This policy brief presents policy recommendations to ensure education systems and policies teach children and youth to lead sustainable development and resource efficient communities.

INTRODUCTION

This policy brief shows how the 3 pillars of Sustainable Development embodied in the SDGs i) environmental, ii) social and iii) financial education can be integrated into education policies and curricula. *By 2050 we are expected to be 9.7 billion people on this planet.*¹ Human consumption and production patterns are causing unprecedented pressure on our planet's ability to sustain life.¹ The latest reports from the WWF Living Planet Index show a *58% decline for global biodiversity between 1970 and 2012*, and this decline will continue if no actions are taken to ensure more sustainable consumption and production behaviours.² The aim of the SDGs is to "Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns". This is embodied in SDG 12, but is also linked to 13 of the 17 SDGs.

Changing the behaviour of today's children is essential for the sustainability of our planet. By integrating environmental, social, and financial education into primary and secondary school curricula, children can be taught to lead resource efficient lives at an early age. A cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda is to leave no one behind – in particular children who will make up tomorrow's leaders, producers and consumers. Policymakers today can take action to ensure education systems and policies shape resource efficiency behaviours. Resources are more than financial capital – water, energy and other materials are all valuable resources that can be leveraged for sustainable livelihoods. But these lessons need to start early!

THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, Environmental Studies became an elective subject of the Humanities Group curriculum for children ages 14-15 in 2008. However because of Pakistan's high dropout rate, only 49% of children continue to lower secondary school (age 11).³ Behaviours are actually shaped at a much earlier age during primary school education, which is often universally mandated in many countries. By providing primary schools with an adapted and nationally contextualised curriculum that embeds the SDGs, education systems in countries can reach more children.

1 "The current world population of 7.3 billion is expected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion in 2100." UN-DESA, 2015. World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision. Online at: www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/2015-report.html

2 WWF Living Planet Index, 2016. Online at: http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/lpr_2016/

3 In 2013, only 49 % of children attended lower secondary school, according to UNESCO's Institute of Statistics. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?queryid=121> (viewed 11/12/2016), compared to 72 percent in primary schools.



UN Environment, through the European Union SWITCH-Asia Programme, has partnered with the Ministry of Climate Change of Pakistan, Aflatoun International, and the Pakistan Institute for Environment-Development Action Research (PIEDAR) to strengthen Pakistan's environmental education and national curriculum policies to shape resource efficient behaviours and sustainable livelihoods. Pakistan aims to achieve the SDGs in the context of a growing population and natural resource scarcity. *"Raising awareness about sustainability issues is not enough. Parents and school teachers hold the keys to enabling children to become agents of change for sustainable behaviours"* according to Ayub Qutub from PIEDAR. Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change has made it a priority to work towards achieving the SDGs by strengthening environmental education policies in line with the SDGs and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The curriculum developed by Aflatoun International focuses on teaching children how to manage resources more efficiently and lead sustainable enterprises from an early age.

THE AFLATOUN CURRICULUM IS BUILT ON THE 3 PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Aflatoun's Curriculum is implemented in 112 countries, reaching four million children (in 2014) and teaching them to manage resources, including natural resources, more efficiently and in effect creating sustainable enterprises. It has measurably increased children's confidence in understanding and providing solutions for environmental challenges such as desertification.⁴ It has instilled responsible saving and planning habits, around both financial and natural resources.⁵ 60% of children who completed an Aflatoun programme demonstrated more responsible saving and planning habits, in both financial and natural resources. Through Aflatoun, children and youth learn about children's rights and responsibilities, gender equality, civic skills, financial skills and environmental management. The environmental topics include reusing and recycling waste and natural resources, tree planting, curbing marine pollution, clean water, and green enterprise, all of which align with the SDGs highlighted in this policy brief. Children develop skills on how to save, how to budget and how to set up sustainable enterprises.

In 2016, Aflatoun's curriculum was adapted to suit Pakistan's context. Following a review of existing education policies,

By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population may face water shortages. In Pakistan, one of the world's most water-stressed countries, growing population and industry demands on water are exceeding dwindling supplies. Teaching resource efficiency is key.⁶

the national primary school curriculum was selected for mainstreaming the SDGs and implementing Aflatoun lesson plans. The primary school curriculum was broken into three grade levels to provide adapted lessons for each age group focusing on 1) Managing Natural and Financial Resources, 2) Planning and Budgeting for a Sustainable Future, and 3) Environmental and Financial Enterprises. The first level 'Managing Natural and Financial Resources' contains the most critical lessons related to saving, reusing and recycling resources, especially freshwater resources.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Develop a set of measurable priorities on increasing sustainability awareness among children and youth, in line with national SDG plans and natural resource constraints in countries;
- » Strengthen the integration of resource efficiency and sustainable livelihoods in national primary school education policies, especially through lesson plans (not textbooks), and a compulsory integrated curriculum;
- » Leverage the influence of local green enterprises as motivational and practical examples for children;
- » Integrate environmental pillars and natural resource management lessons across compulsory learning subjects;
- » Establish partnerships between school systems, government, and local community stakeholders to support school and children's sustainable enterprises and launch community campaigns;
- » Monitor the behavioural changes displayed by children through their resource use and consumption patterns;
- » Integrate Sustainable Development and Resource Efficiency subjects comprehensively into teacher training and certification including active learning methodologies.

CONCLUSIONS

This form of curriculum integration is easily replicable in the surrounding regions, especially those that are dealing with the problem of water scarcity. It can work for both countries and school systems that need to strengthen their national curricula's ability to achieve the SDGs and resource efficiency.

The development of green mindsets and skills at a young age is crucial to achieving the SDGs. Educating primary and secondary school children on sustainable economic, environmental and social development will pave the way for green economies in the future as these children go on to be policy makers, business owners and overall responsible consumers.

4 Bathily, M. (2012). Qualitative Evaluation of the Oceanium/Aflatoun's Programme in Senegal. Aflatoun final report.

5 O'Prey, L., and Shephard, D.D. (2014). Financial Education for Children and Youth: A systematic Review and meta-analysis. Aflatoun Working Paper 2014.

6 Sources: www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/scarcity.shtml and www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30205/ado2013-pakistan.pdf.