

MAY 2022

PUTTING YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF THE DRIVE TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION

PROPOSALS BY THE UNLOCK THE FUTURE ACTION GROUP ON TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Young people are frustrated. They are frustrated by governments' lack of accountability, inaction, and de-prioritisation of education commitments. We now find ourselves in an education crisis.

We are the Unlock the Future Action Group on Transforming Education and this is our call to action. A call that is shared by young people pushing for change across the world. Our ambition is to transform how children and young people learn, and in turn, equip a new generation of young leaders to be designers of their own futures.

As Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed has said, we should see the upcoming [Transforming Education Summit in September 2022](#) as a moment for “averting a generational catastrophe and rethinking education systems”.

We believe that for this Summit to be truly transformational, children and young people - as students, teachers, young parents, and policymakers - should be in the driving seat.

As such, this paper provides practical recommendations for engaging young people in the Transforming Education Summit, and beyond, and sets out education priorities put forward by young people from around the world.

It draws on key findings from Our Future Agenda, the World Non-Formal Education Forum and Rio Declaration on [Non-Formal Education](#), the [RewirED Summit](#), and the [Make Education Work](#) campaign. The Annex provides an overview of how this document was put together, as well as critical information that young people want to be considered at the Summit.

BACKGROUND

Our Action Group was formed at the 2022 Unlock the Future Big Brainstorm and brings together young people from Restless Development, the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), and many other backgrounds. We are organised and ready to work with leaders at the local, national, and international level to:

- Mobilise political ambition, action, solutions, and solidarity to transform education
- Advance the process of reimagining education systems for the world of today and tomorrow
- Highlight plans and commitments to reignite efforts to achieve SDG4 and accelerate SDG progress during the Decade of Action.

If you would like to join us on our journey, please email us thais.queiroz@scout.org and alicem@restlessdevelopment.org.

"We believe that education is a basic right for every human being. Unfortunately, that might not always be so for young people living in rural areas, those who are differently-abled, and others who are marginalised by the societies they live in. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered our way of life, affecting how we learn, work, and live. Advancements in technology and other global trends have shifted how we learn, live, and relate within our communities, and our education systems and the workforce must shift alongside that."

PURITY MUSATILA, ZAMBIA

PARTNERING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE MEANINGFULLY IN THE TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT

Young People do not have a say during global moments on the issues that most concern our futures. At best, we are afforded tokenistic speaking opportunities in youth-specific events that have been designed without our input. The cost of entry for many young children and people from under-represented communities is often too high, which results in a privileged few representing the voice of many.

Despite being part of official coordinating bodies or technical advisory teams, we are not given enough time, resources, and capacity to engage at global events meaningfully. We are seldom in the room when significant policy and intergovernmental decisions are made. Our observer status and organised youth forums are designed to lock us out of these conversations.

The Transforming Education Summit provides a unique opportunity for a more inclusive process where young leaders and young teachers no longer sit on the sidelines. At the same time, decisions are taken that will shape our lives and the lives of our children. Our recommendations to help young people lead and influence the Summit include the following:

Establish avenues for children and youth to engage across all Work Streams	The Secretariat has announced that there will be three Work Streams leading up to the Summit: 1) National Consultations, 2) Thematic Action Tracks, and 3) Public Mobilisation. We call on the Secretariat to ensure that young people are meaningfully included across all three of these.
Strengthen co-leadership (National Consultations and Thematic Action Tracks)	<p>Initiate a process to elect young representatives to join Member States as co-chairs to hold joint leadership roles for the Summit process and platform.</p> <p>Instate a youth co-lead for each Action Track to ensure that the voices of children and young people are not siloed but, instead, mainstreamed across all policy discussion.</p>
Support youth activism and encourage partnership (Public Mobilisation)	Formally recognise a children and youth working group, which brings together young thinkers and activists, educators, youth and non-youth representatives from UN agencies, other international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and governments, to connect and coordinate.
Partner with Young People to Lead	Develop targeted and official social media campaigns for the Summit with inputs from young communication experts, identified through the

Targeted Campaigns (Public Mobilisation)	<p>children and youth working group) to ensure messaging will resonate with diverse youth networks.</p> <p>Recognise the importance of grassroots mobilisation and hotspots of growing education activism.</p>
Actively Encourage Government Youth Delegates	<p>Formally invite governments to select - through a transparent and consultative process - children and youth representatives to work with them at a national level towards the Summit. These youth representatives can also join the children and youth working group to coordinate with many young representatives.</p>
Ensure Inclusive and Diverse Representation	<p>Intentionally provide space for diverse speakers and experiences to be shared and considered in the formal process leading up to and during the Summit.</p> <p>Work with children and youth organisations, movements, and networks to help facilitate this outreach and representation.</p> <p>Ensure that young teachers, particularly young female teachers, are represented.</p>
Promote Self-Selection	<p>Encourage young people to self-select their representatives and spokespeople - just as governments have elections and a representation process, so should young people!</p>
Facilitate Access to Transparent and Open Information	<p>Provide young people the opportunity to access essential information and communication materials, so that youth and children can easily follow and engage with content made available ahead of time and in simplified language.</p> <p>Offer capacity-building support for young people to engage in the communication process.</p> <p>Offer translation and interpretation of the documents, information, and discussions into multiple languages.</p>
Ensure Accountability of Leaders on Youth Recommendations	<p>Design a "Roadmap" that outlines the main planning stages, decision-making mechanisms, implementation of resolutions and outcomes, and the roles that young people will play before and after the Transforming Education Summit.</p> <p>Ensure youth input is valued, recognised in official outcomes documents, and considered in all preparatory and implementation processes.</p> <p>Formally respond to submissions and declarations made by young people and children.</p>

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 crisis has dealt a massive blow to the education of children and youth worldwide, reversing decades of hard-won progress and undermining countries' efforts towards SDG4. Even before the pandemic, over 260 million children were out of school, and half of all 10-year-olds could not read a basic text. That proportion could now [increase to 70%](#), and an [additional 24 million children](#) may drop out of school entirely.

We need to act with urgency. Young people want to ensure the Transforming Education Summit will indeed be 'transformative' and prioritise the significant issues impacting youth in the world today. Our policy priorities and recommendations include:

1. PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LIFE AND WORK

- Develop value-based curricula that provide young leaders the skills that can be adapted to the jobs and challenges of tomorrow.
- Encourage education systems that promote holistic learning by breaking down silos between science and humanities, including learning about climate change, gender equality, and civic engagement.
- Train young people with 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, critical and entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy, communication, people management and other social skills, as well mental health-awareness.
- Provide skills-building, mentoring, and networking opportunities to help young people build the skills needed to secure a stronger livelihood and successful career.

2. RECOGNISE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (NFE)

- Encourage young leaders to develop soft, transferable skills before entering the workforce, such as religious-based education, economic, and life skills, especially for girls and those living in patriarchal and conservative communities.
- Anchor NFE as an integral part of the right to education in national legislation, policies, strategies, and funding.
- Promote a system of recognition, validation, and accreditation of learning outcomes acquired through NFE and informal learning
- Set up a [common framework](#) for formal and non-formal structures that allows for equivalencies between formal and non-formal learning outcomes.

3. FORGE STRONG PARTNERSHIPS FOR A STRONG EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Encourage joint planning, investment, and implementation that spans government ministries and multiple sectors to ensure that education systems are resilient and provide continuity of learning when faced with unexpected shocks or emergencies.
- Draw on the knowledge and skills of partners from outside the education system, including local groups to share creative hands-on learning methods, employers to advise on the skills needed for the world of work, and business to increase digital and media literacy
- Leverage global partnerships to find new and creative ways to build more robust education systems and reach the most vulnerable young people.

4. PROVIDE EDUCATION THAT IS GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

- Ensure children and young people, particularly girls, have a seat at the table in the design of gender-transformative education programmes and policies to close gender gaps in education.
- Update curricula to better prepare girls and young women for the reality of the world of work and equip them for a successful livelihood.
- Increase support and investment for girls to access digital devices, build digital skills, and transform the harmful gender stereotypes that prevent girls from taking up STEM subjects and careers.

5. ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

- Prioritise education systems in national budgets and harness the Global Partnership for Education to recognise and invest in NFE.
- Target funding to support the most marginalised learners, including families with no economic means, girls, children with disabilities, and displaced and refugee children.
- Put the needs of educators first and offering them better remuneration compatible with the importance of their work
- Enable young people to shape funding and support structures, especially those from marginalised communities who are often excluded from decision-making opportunities and spaces.
- Invest in high-quality, accessible digital content that is adapted to local contexts and caters to the diverse needs of young people, including those with disabilities, possibly through a global compact with technology companies.

ANNEX

1. ABOUT THE ACTION GROUP

For the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM), and Restless Development, education is a fundamental pillar in transforming young people's lives and enabling them to take action to create positive change in their communities and the world. We teamed up to establish the Transforming Education Action Group in partnership with the UN Foundation through their [Big Brainstorm](#) process.

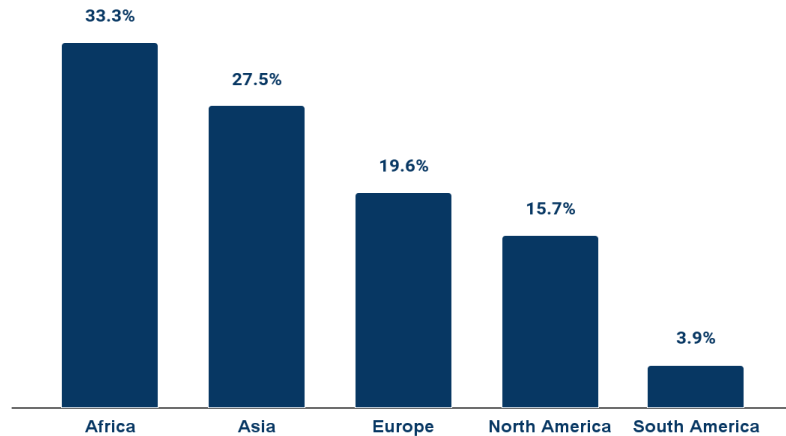
This Action Group is made up of people passionate about reforming national and international education policies to ensure they are up to date, responding to the needs of young people today, and equipping young people with the skills they need for work and life.

Throughout the Unlock the Future Coalition Big Brainstorm process, we have brought young people together from a huge list of different organisations and backgrounds with several objectives:

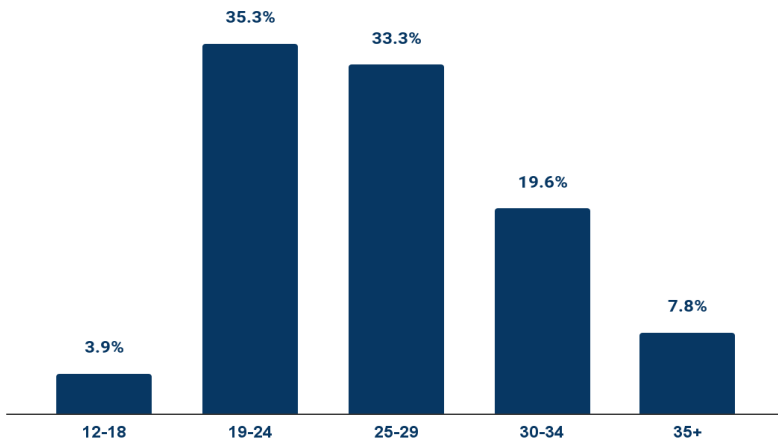
- A shared understanding of the most extensive education priorities for young people
- Shared insight towards opportunities for influencing the Transforming Education Summit and how young people can be meaningfully engaged
- An action plan for how this Action Group will continue to connect, plan and grow in the lead up to the Summit and beyond

The Action Group is based on regional representation and the age of participation. It is youth-led by youth representatives of both [Restless Development](#) (Alice Mukashyaka) and the World Organization of the [Scout Movement](#) (Thaís Queiroz).

Regional Representation

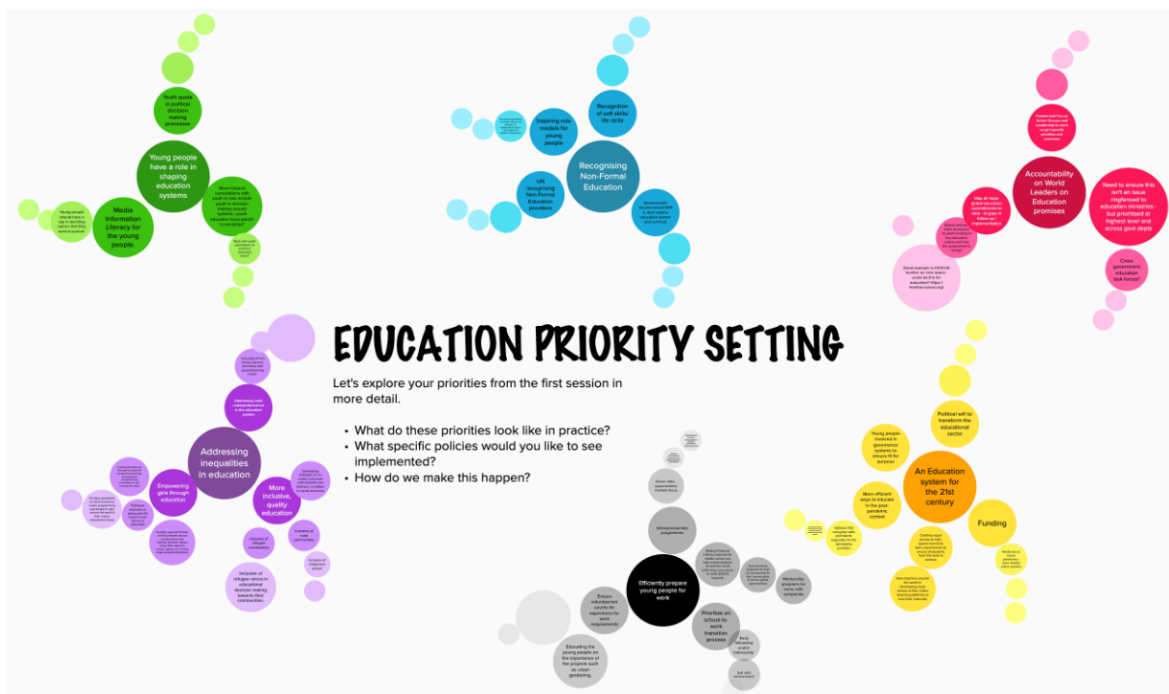


Age Representation



We have an important opportunity to ensure the Transforming Education Summit delivers on young people's priorities and demands for the future of education. For this, we need to have young people involved in all the parts of the planning till the Summit.

We started by gathering the group together and proceeded to undertake a [brainstorming exercise](#) on the priorities that young people would like to see tabled at the Summit, stakeholders to be engaged, and how young people can meaningfully be engaged throughout the Summit preparations, the Summit itself and beyond.



As a result of this process, we now have a group of engaged and active young people, consulted on their priorities and ready to engage in the run-up to the Transforming Education Summit.

2. MAJOR MOMENTS IN EDUCATION

World Non-Formal Education Forum

An international platform convened by the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM), UNICEF, UNFPA, and the Office of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, and with the participation of over 70 leading international organisations. The Forum was designed to respond to the growing need for regular convening of the world's leading organisations working on non-formal education and youth development.

The 2019 Forum was held in Rio de Janeiro and was attended by over 400 participants including civil society representatives, UN and partner agencies, academics, government representatives, young people, members from across the Scout Movement, and experts on youth development.

Rio Declaration on Non-Formal Education

The Rio Declaration on Non-Formal Education, developed at the World Non-Formal Education Forum sets out an ambitious action agenda, capturing the voices and visions of the World Non-Formal Education Forum to call stakeholders to act on what the Forum

believe needs to be done to empower millions of young people worldwide through non-formal education.

The outcome of discussions over the three days of the Forum helped assess the state of non-formal education and forged a consensus among stakeholders for actions needed to advance non-formal education as a powerful vehicle for the development of children and youth and their roles as active global citizens.

Scouts For SDGs

Scouts for SDGs is a mobilisation of 57 million Scouts across the world, with over 2 billion hours of community service to raise awareness and take action towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Scouting's action-orientated approach to education is uniquely designed to equip young people with the competencies to become active global citizens and contribute to Scouts For SDGs, the world's largest coordinated youth contribution to the SDGs.

Education is key to achieving sustainable development. Over one-third of the 169 SDG targets highlight the role of youth and the Scout Movement's focus on non-formal education links directly with SDG 4 on Quality Education.

RewirED Summit

RewirEd is a global initiative launched by Dubai Cares, in partnership with Expo 2020 Dubai, focused on "rewiring" education to ensure a future that is prosperous and sustainable for all. The focus was to break out the traditional conversations in this area, explore new ideas, and most importantly, put young people at the heart of the conversation.

RewirEd Summit took place on the 12th-14th December 2021 @Expo 2020 Dubai and it focused on three key pressing areas in Education globally: Youth, Skills and the Future of Work, Innovation in Education, and Education Financing. The Summit convened education stakeholders including educationalists and front liners, policymakers, youth, the private sector, international organisations, and foundations, among others together in one place for three days to engage in discussions, panels, hands-on workshops, and to launch exciting initiatives and experiments.

Restless Development was a RewirED delivery partner and covered three areas: research & insights, an education campaign, encouraging youth leadership at the December 2021 Summit, and ensuring that young people are at the core of making the Summit a success.

[#MakeEducationWork Campaign](#)

The MakeEducationWork campaign was launched by Restless Development in the lead-up to the RewirED Summit, alongside the publication of *The By Us For Us: Rewiring Education for a New Generation*.

The report was [launched](#) in October 2021 with a [summary report](#) and a [full report](#) published online. Young people across the world were encouraged to hold conversations with decision-makers in their locations and demand radical changes to 'make education work' based on the research findings. The MakeEducationWork campaign reached 12,944,628 people online from 84 different countries.

3. THE CHALLENGES

- **Tokenistic engagement of young people** at the big influencing platforms and at global events. Even though some youth voices are supported at these platforms (Global summits etc) through speaking opportunities and limited funded travel, young people are not given enough time and the capacity to contribute from the beginning of the planning. Young people are rarely given access to actual policy processes or intergovernmental negotiations and are often sequestered to observer roles or separately organised youth forums. More chances of meaningful engagement of young people and the provision of technical assistance to development corporations and multilateral organisations on deepening meaningful youth engagement at global events is needed.
- **Inadequate curricula and methods for a fast-changing reality.** There is still a global understanding that education prepares young people for the labour market - an assumption that is not true. [21% of young people](#) globally (ages 15-24) are not in employment, education or training (NEET), only 37% are employed and 42% are not in employment but in education or training. Such rates of youth unemployment represent one of the most challenging issues for national governments. In many countries around the world, education is not preparing young people for a successful livelihood.
- **Coordination and collaboration.** Education isn't just an issue for education ministries. Major global Summits like Transforming Education, have an opportunity to prevent the siloing of education at the highest level of government, where coordination takes place across ministries with the early and sustained engagement of diverse young people to ensure successful and effective implementation.
- **Lack of funding.** Ensuring young people's meaningful and sustained engagement in global processes is both time and resource-intensive. Far too often, young people and teachers are not involved in curriculum design or milestone discussions about education. Most actors fail to properly recognise or compensate young people for

sharing their technical insights and experiences with UN agencies, international organisations, or governments. On many occasions, young people are required to self-fund their participation in Summits and other important discussions, despite being part of official coordinating bodies or technical advisory teams, which results in a privileged few being able to represent in global platforms. Representation matters and this requires funding to be both meaningful and inclusive.

- **Persistent gender inequalities.** Although many countries around the world have made advancements in gender parity in education at the primary level, gender gaps in education widen at secondary and tertiary levels. Female teachers remain under-represented in secondary and tertiary education, and harmful gender norms underpin barriers to girls' education in particular. These often intersect with structural challenges such as poverty, conflict and displacement, disability, and geographic location. Child marriage, early pregnancy, and school-related gender-based violence are major barriers to girls' access, participation and achievement in education.

Furthermore, it is estimated that the pandemic will result in an additional total of 13 million child marriages taking place that otherwise would not have occurred between 2020 and 2030 (UNFPA, 2020), impacting education for millions of girls. An estimated 20 million more secondary school-aged girls could be out of school after the crisis has passed (Malala Fund, 2020), contributing to widening gender gaps in secondary education worldwide.

- **Exclusive education systems.** We know that education systems or provision is often based on selective merit and may or may not involve discrimination by educational authorities, representatives, or stakeholders. Young people from minority groups feel the impact of these processes the hardest and often structures cannot adapt to best support the needs of these young people. We need to ensure that learners from minority groups particularly those with disabilities are [not left further behind](#), increasing access to education for displaced and marginalised youth through equality.
- **The 'Digital Divide'.** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly all aspects of learning, leaving underprivileged young people further behind. Internet accessibility and unreliable connectivity at home was a huge concern for young people. They are being forced out of school and work due to their inability to cope with virtual working spaces.

The situation is especially acute for girls and young women who are disproportionately excluded from education. Some have gone into early marriages rather than continue their education post-pandemic. We need to ensure that young people are empowered with greater access to remote learning opportunities and digital resources. Access to the internet should be a right and lowering costs of internet connections in different countries should be considered.

- **Transformative education for climate justice** prepares this generation of children and youth to build resilience, skills, and knowledge to mitigate the impacts of climate

change, build more resilient societies, and ensure greater gender equality and climate justice around the world. This starts with [education](#).

- **Lack of qualification opportunities for teachers.** Research estimates that over a third of teachers globally work in schools with [significant staffing shortages](#) of qualified teachers. In the USA, 50% of new teachers quit their positions within 5 years. We need to ensure teachers are supported at work, are provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills and training, and maintain their work on a long-term perspective, thus increasing the quality of teaching and standards delivered to our young people.

“...if there is policy-level discussion, young people are engaged in collecting responses but when it comes to actual implementation, we are automatically considered as volunteers and nothing more.”

YOUNG MALE, GHANA