

TEN POINT CALL TO ACTION ON DOMESTIC FINANCING OF EDUCATION POST-COVID

We the undersigned 190 organisations from 55 countries endorse this call to action which emerged from a webinar on 28th July 2020 convened by ActionAid with key speakers from UNESCO, Education International, the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, the UN Girls' Education Initiative, Open Society Foundation, Wellspring Philanthropy, The Peter Cundill Foundation – with opening remarks by the Minister of Education from Sierra Leone.ⁱ Hundreds of participants from developing country governments, civil society organisations, philanthropic foundations, unions and movements, UN agencies and multi-stakeholder partnerships came together to identify solutions to the coming crisis in domestic financing of public education. This ten-point call for action is based on the critical issues and insights that were shared. Already Covid-19 has thrown 1.5 billion children out of school and with education systems facing a devastating crisis in public financing, it's unclear how many of them will be able to safely return, or what quality of learning schools will be able to provide to them if they do. UNESCO estimates at least \$210 billion will be cut from education budgets next year simply owing to declines in GDP. Pressure to reallocate scarce resources to health and social safety nets, might cut 5% from education budgets amounting to a total loss of \$337 billion in education spending – and the World Bank projects that even deeper cuts of 10% could be on the horizon. This is probable but not inevitable. We need political will, bold solutions and urgent action to prevent this health crisis triggering an education calamity that could affect the life prospects of a whole generation of children.

1. Defend the share of the budget spent on education

Developing countries should spend at least 20% of their national budgets on education. Covid-19 must not be an excuse for retrogression, reducing the share of budgets allocated to education, as this would be a betrayal of the next generation and a violation of human rights commitments. All international education actors should use their own resources and influence to incentivise governments to maintain or increase the share of domestic budgets allocated to public education.

2. Increase the size of the budget through action on fair tax

Countries should work towards a minimum tax-to-GDP ratio of 20% in order to provide quality public services. The IMF estimates most countries could raise their tax-to GDP by 5% in the coming years, which would allow a doubling of spending on health, education and other essential services. But progressiveness and a "do no harm" principle in relation to discriminated groups, including women, should be a precondition for raising tax/GDP. Post-Covid there is extra urgency for raising taxes in a fair and progressive way, including through setting new global rules for ensuring companies pay their fair share, raising taxes on excess profits and wealth, ending harmful tax incentives (through which developing countries lose \$138 billion a year), preventing corporate tax abuse (through which developing countries lose at least \$200 billion a year) and stopping other illicit financial flows. Actors concerned with education justice must connect more closely with those working on tax justice.

3. Harness existing resources in national treasuries by action on debt service

There is a looming debt crisis that could starve education at a time when billions of young people living in poverty face the prospect of permanent unemployment and destitution. According to UNCTAD, in 2020 and 2021 alone developing countries will be forced to hand over up to \$1 trillion in external debt payments, money that is desperately needed for education and other frontline services if we want to avoid massive increases in poverty and inequality. So G20 leaders, IFIs and private sector lenders must commit now to extend a moratorium on debt payments to all developing countries in need, at least through to the end of 2022. Longer term there also needs to be a new compact on debt restructuring: suspended debts must be permanently cancelled so that no country is spending more on servicing debts than they do on spending on education or on health, and a wider approach must be taken to debt sustainability which considers long

terms needs for financing, with debt negotiations premised on countries investing in the SDGs, climate goals, human rights and gender equality commitments; and donors and creditors committing to full transparency and accountability in giving and taking out future loans.

4. Push back against decades of austerity

In recent decades, the IMF have encouraged austerity policies in developing countries, placing greater priority on holding down inflation and deficits than allowing countries to invest in development goals. There are some positive signs that the IMF is changing its rhetoric but in the face of the Covid-19 economic crisis, these changes need to be accelerated and delivered in practice. Spending on public services like health and education should be regarded as part of the core social infrastructure of a country, that should be protected – and investments in quality public services should be seen as part of the solution to the crisis rather than part of the problem.

5. Resist public sector wage bill constraints to recruit more teachers (and nurses)

To deliver SDG4 targets and keep up with population growth, over 17 million new professional teachers are needed in Africa alone by 2030. However in the past 3 years the IMF have advised countries to freeze or cut public sector wage bills, sometimes unintentionally blocking recruitment of urgently needed teachers, doctors, nurses and other essential public service employees. Covid has increased awareness of the importance of a public sector ethos and it is thus time to challenge any unconscious biases and reappraise attitudes to public sector employment. The IMF needs to urgently review its policy advice and loan conditions in this area – and developing country governments should explore seek alternatives, seeing investment in teachers (and health personnel) as a key part of building back better.

6. Reverse the decline in aid to the countries most in need

The Covid-related fall in GDP around the world is likely to lead to a fall in aid budgets next year. This comes on top of the trends towards donors using their aid to advance their own trade and security interests rather than the needs of the poorest countries. Aid budgets needs to be protected and redirected towards countries facing the biggest challenges. Aid to education should be a particular priority in the post-Covid period, part of a revaluing of public systems, with a clear priority for equity both in the distribution and allocation of aid.

7. Harmonise and align aid behind strengthening public education systems

Too often in the past we have seen national disasters or crises used as opportunities to dismantle public systems and advance privatisation. Covid-19 must be different. It is a global crisis and it is already clear that government action and public systems will be key to the rebuilding and reform of education on the scale that is required. Aid from bilaterals and multilaterals needs to better harmonise and align behind strengthening government systems, following the positive model of the Global Partnership for Education. Trusts and Foundations need to recognise the crucial role they can play in strengthening public systems, seeing private provision as a symptom of failure rather than a sustainable or equitable solution.

8. Ensure education budgets prioritise inclusion, equity and transformation

Central to building back better must be a recognition that existing education systems are inequitable, excluding girls and children with disabilities and disadvantaging the poorest or most excluded communities. As the GEM 2020 report notes, *the promise of reaching the furthest behind first is not being kept*, and *“children with disabilities are particularly at risk of exclusion from education”*. Covid-19 could exacerbate these existing inequalities or could be used as a pivotal turning point where a gender and inclusion lens is applied to all aspects of education, including planning, budgeting and expenditure - to advance equality and inclusion in access, retention and achievement at all levels. A focus on equity and inclusion is central to effective education spending. Too often education systems contribute to replicating the inequalities and injustices within the societies that they serve, yet education has the potential to be the most powerful

equalising force within a society, if the system itself is genuinely equitable at all levels. Post-Covid let us renew a transformative vision for effective education systems.

9. Increase transparency and accountability – as key to effective and efficient spending

Too often education budgets fail to reach the schools in the most disadvantaged communities. Unless there is independent scrutiny, budgets are misused or go astray. Covid-19 is already placing extra strains on budgets and on oversight systems to ensure they are transparently and effectively utilised. Civil society actors can play a crucial role in tracking budgets, making sure that money allocated arrives and decisions are made transparently at the appropriate level. Strengthening civil society voices - and the political space for those voices to be heard - is essential. Post-Covid there needs to be a revolution in public accountability of education systems both at local level and at national level – a public-public partnership so that public systems facilitate and respond to public engagement.

10. Work across sectors to defend public services and engage Ministries of Finance

Covid-19 has made it clearer than ever that education advocates need to work closely with health advocates – and other public sector supporters. We will not win strategic breakthroughs on financing one public service when others are being cut. There are strong common areas of concern – around tax, debt, austerity and the public sector workforce. We need to learn to work with others to engage in higher level strategic discussions with Ministries of Finance.

With just ten years to go to the 2030 deadline for the SDGs, the Covid crisis must represent a turning point in the financing of education. We commit to working together to mobilise the resources needed to deliver on SDG4, using international resources to expand rather than displace sustainable domestic financing. International support can play a crucial role when it is used to leverage or incentivise the predictable domestic financing needed to achieve real transformations in public systems.

As we respond to this Covid crisis let us keep in mind too the existential challenges presented by the climate crisis. We need public education to help forge a new generation of active global citizens that care about sustainable development. We commit to work together to build public education systems that are sustainably financed and that contribute to building economies and societies that can truly care for both people and the planet.

ⁱ You can see a recording of the webinar here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mw7cRGecz5q9cDexp2VSs8fPpVzo6FNC/view?usp=sharing>

The presenters and discussants in the webinar were: **Julia Sanchez**, Secretary General, ActionAid International; **Hon. Dr. David Moinina Sengeh**, Minister of Education, Government of Sierra Leone; **Caroline Othim** – Policy Coordinator, Global Alliance for Tax Justice; **David Archer** – Head of Public Services, ActionAid; **Dennis Sinyolo** – Senior Coordinator, Education International; **Nalucha Nganga Ziba** – Country Director, ActionAid Zambia; **Stefania Giannini** – Assistant Director General UNESCO; **Nora Fyles** – Director, United Nations Girls Education Initiative; **Alice Albright** – CEO, Global Partnership for Education (*by video*); **Jean Marc Bernard** (GPE); **Camilla Croso** – Director of Education, Open Society Foundations; **John Rendel** – Director, The Peter Cundill Foundation; **Michael Gibbons** – WellSpring Advisers.

THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS HAVE SIGNED ON TO THIS CALL TO ACTION

1. ActionAid International
2. Education International,
3. Tax Justice Network
4. Global Alliance for Tax Justice
5. Global Campaign for Education
6. Public Services International

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7. Oxfam International
 8. Global Education Monitoring Report,
 9. Malala Fund
 10. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
 11. Right to Education Initiative (RTE)
 12. Eurodad
 13. Coordination Group of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030
 14. Society for International Development (SID)
 15. Open Society Foundation
 16. Save the Children International
 17. Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights - GI-ESCR
 18. Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage
 19. Plan International
 20. The Graca Machel Trust, South Africa
 21. ONE
 22. Global March Against Child Labour
 23. Bretton Woods Project
 24. Association Montessori Internationale
 25. CONCORD, the European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs"
 26. The Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), US
 27. World Vision International
 28. International Council for Adult Education, ICAE
 29. Light for the World
 30. VSO
 31. DVV International, Germany
 32. The Global Alliance for LGBT Education, Netherlands
 33. Aide et Action, France
 34. Stichting IPA- Parents International
 35. Minority Rights Group International
 36. RET International
 37. OMEP: World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, Argentina
 38. The International Federation of Business and Professional Women
 39. CBM Christian Blind Mission
 40. Arab Campaign for Education for All – ACEA, Palestine
 41. Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA)
 42. All-Africa Students Union (AASU)
 43. Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE),
 44. European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
 45. Latin American Campaign on the Right to Education (CLADE)
 46. Africa Education Watch
 47. Able Child Africa
 48. The East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) - Kenya
 49. Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education
 50. Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
 51. National Campaign for Education Nepal
 52. Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI)
 53. E-Net Philippines

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54. National Coalition for Education for All of Burkina (CN-EPT/Burkina)
 55. Civil Society Action Forum on Education for All – CSACEFA, Nigeria
 56. Education for all Somalia Coalition (EFASOM).
 57. Colectivo de Educación para todas y todos de Guatemala.
 58. Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC)- Malawi
 59. TENMET Tanzania Education Network/ Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania
 60. Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
 61. Coalition Education. France
 62. Pakistan Coalition for Education
 63. GCE Coalition Netherlands
 64. Education For All - Sierra Leone Coalition (EFASL)
 65. Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA)
 66. Sudanese Coalition for Education For All (SCEFA)
 67. Elimu Yetu Coalition, Kenya,
 68. National Education Coalition in South Sudan
 69. Afghanistan National Education Coalition Organization (ANECO)
 70. Campaign for Popular Education - CAMPE, Bangladesh
 71. NGO Education Partnership in Cambodia
 72. Global Campaign for Education USA
 73. Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC)
 74. COSYDEP – National Education Coalition Senegal
 75. Send My Friend to School coalition UK
 76. National Coalition for Education (NCE) India
 77. Peruvian Campaign for the Right to Education
 78. Arterial Network, Congo Brazaville
 79. Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE)
 80. Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN)
 81. Global Campaign for Education Germany
 82. Network for Education Watch Indonesia (NEW-Indonesia)
 83. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) Uganda.
 84. West Africa Youth Network for Peace Education and Economic Development (WAYNPEED)
 85. Campaign for Human Rights and Development International (CHRDI) in Sierra Leone
 86. Panos Institute Southern Africa
 87. The Steve Sinnott Foundation, UK
 88. Solidarité Laïque, France
 89. The Alliance of Government Workers in the Water Sector (AGWWAS) Philippines
 90. International Child Development Program, Ghana
 91. Women Action Movement, Sierra Leone
 92. Chipata Youth Creative Center (CYCC), Zambia
 93. Child and Youth Protection Foundation (CYPF), Nigeria
 94. RESULTS UK
 95. Wise Support Aids foundation (WSAF) – Zambia
 96. Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK), Bangladesh
 97. CESTA Friends of the Earth El Salvador.
 98. Open Society Association of Mozambique
 99. Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium- KANCO
 100. National Campaign for Sustainable Development, Nepal
 101. SDGs National Network Nepal

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102. Associazione Tripla Difesa Onlus ODV, Italy
 103. Social Support Foundation (SSF), Ghana
 104. Social Economic Empowerment and Development in Sierra Leone (C-SEED/SL)
 105. FUNDACION para Estudio e Investigacion de la MUjer - FEIM- Argentina
 106. LEARN Organization Afghanistan
 107. Africa Development Interchange Network (ADIN), Cameroon
 108. North Star, Jordan
 109. National Education Union, UK
 110. NASUWT, The Teachers Union, UK
 111. Coalition des Organisations Mauritanienes pour l'Education (COMEDUC)
 112. Talent Search International, Ghana
 113. Parental Care, Liberia
 114. Alliance of Concern Sierra Leoneans (AC-SL)
 115. Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)
 116. The Observer Human Rights Center (OHRC) Iraq
 117. Centre for Research Communication & Gender in Early Childhood Education (CRECHE),Kenya
 118. Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors (ZINECDA)
 119. Nifin'Akanga Movement, Madagacar
 120. EDUKANS, The Netherlands
 121. Sisters of Charity Federation, US
 122. Centro para la Implementación de Derechos Constitucionales (CIDC), Argentina
 123. Graduate Women International, Switzerland
 124. Zukunftskonvent Germany
 125. Kédougou Encadrement et Orientation pour le développement Humain, Senegal
 126. Global Action Nepal
 127. Global Peace and Development Organization, Liberia
 128. Centre For Initiative Human Trafficking CIAHT-Ghana
 129. Right to Education Forum, India.
 130. Action for sustainable change (Afosc Kenya)
 131. Wote Youth Development Projects, Kenya
 132. Nirantar Trust, India
 133. International Child Developed Program Ghana
 134. Women Action Movement,....
 135. Analytica think tank Skopje
 136. Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education, Uganda
 137. International Aid Services – Sweden
 138. Voter Information Network And Education - Africa (Vine-Africa), Kenya
 139. Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF), Bangladesh
 140. Network Movement for Youth and Children's Welfare (NMYCW), Sierra Leone
 141. Ngopee foundation, Sierra Leone
 142. Research Center for Inclusion (RCI), Vietnam
 143. Kapsabet Reds Youth Group, Nandi County, Kenya
 144. Young Professionals for Development (YPD), Kenya
 145. Nitya Bal Vikas Deutschland e. V, Germany
 146. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, ISER, Uganda
 147. Tana River County Citizen For Change, Kenya
 148. Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB).

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149. Christian Council of Mozambique
 150. Homa Bay County Education Network (HOCEN), Kenya
 151. Community People Empowerment for Rural Development (CPERD-Sierra Leone)
 152. Young Professionals for Development (YPD), Kenya
 153. Integrating Development towards Guided Parenthood (IDGP), Kenya
 154. Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA)
 155. National Health Workers' Union of Liberia (NAHWUL)
 156. Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Élémentaire (SNEEL /CNTS) Senegal
 157. National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) in Canada
 158. Union De Empleados De La Justicia De La Nacion. Argentina.
 159. Observatorio De Derechos Humanos De Las Cgt Ra. Argentina
 160. The Center for Non- formal education and Community development of Vietnam
 161. Syndicat Unique Des Enseignants Du Senegal (SUDES)
 162. Kalenya's Dream, Kenya
 163. Foundation For Children Rights- Malawi
 164. The Zambia Association For Computer Education
 165. Seekapor Ghana
 166. La Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ)
 167. Centre For Initiative Agianst Human Trafficking (CIAHT-Ghana)
 168. Centro de Teatro do Oprimido CTO Mozambique
 169. Rakhine Youth New Generation Network (RYNG-N), Myanmar
 170. Association for Education Development in Kyrgyzstan
 171. ActionAid Association, India
 172. Rural Women And Youth Development (Ruwoyd), Sokoto State, Nigeria
 173. Amis des Étrangers au Togo: ADET, Togo
 174. Samaky, Cambodia
 175. Réussir l'Égalité Femmes-Hommes, France
 176. kakamega county education network, Kenya
 177. Núcleo Académicos para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade – NADEC, Mozambique
 178. Youth Empowerment Development Association Sierra Leone (YEDA-SL)
 179. Khwisero Social Accountability Network (KOSAN), Kenya
 180. Français du monde - Adfe - France
 181. HUMANITY Youth Center, Northern Rakhine State, Myanmar.
 182. 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World (Ireland)
 183. Association Cultures du Monde. Gannat, France
 184. Alliance for Education and Empowerment in Development (ALEED), Kenya
 185. Management and Sustainable Development Institute (MSD), Vietnam
 186. Child Rights Governance Network - Vietnam
 187. AM BE KOUN, Senegal
 188. REMIDEV (Senegalese Network of CSOs working on Migration)
 189. Small holder farmers association, APROVAG Senegal
 190. Réussir l'Égalité Femmes-Hommes, France

+ KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. Dankert Vedeler, former Co-Chair of the SDG Education Steering Committee / presenter of the Incheon Declaration (2015).
2. Nesmy Manigat, former Minister of Education, Haiti
3. Hon. Dr. Betty Udonga, former member of the Ugandan Parliament
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5. Vernor Munoz, former UN Special Rapporteur on Education
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9. Aaron Benavot, former Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report & Professor of Global Education Policy, SUNY-Albany, USA
10. Alexandra Draxler, Senior Advisor NORRAG, Secretary of the Delors Commission
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12. Professor Emerita Angela W. Little UCL Institute of Education