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**Delhi Statement  
Towards SDG4 for Inclusive Quality Education**

*Adopted by the*  
**International Conference on Inclusive Quality Education:  
Towards SDG4 and Lessons from the Kerala Experience<sup>1</sup>**

**New Delhi, India, June 17-18, 2017**

*“In the history of our own country, Kerala has been a role model. Education played an important part in Kerala’s transition from a caste ridden society into one of our more egalitarian states. The initiative was taken two centuries earlier... .”*

*- M. Hamid Ansari, Vice-President of India, June 17, 2017*

***Preamble***

The *International Conference on Inclusive Quality Education: Towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Lessons from the Kerala Experience* was a unique gathering that brought together multilateral and national organizations working in the area of education, educationists and experts from universities and research institutions, practitioners from government and from national and international civil society organizations and persons from political backgrounds who have championed the cause of education.

This statement represents a consensus emerging from the deliberations at the conference.

***Highlighting that***

education is the foundation for a country’s sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions, it reaffirmed the endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 and its targets as enshrined within *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *Education 2030 Framework for Action*.

the central role of education in sustainable development is based fundamentally in promoting human rights and is a key element of the right to a decent life and to individual development for reducing poverty and inequality.

equity in education, gender equality, acceptance of diversity and learning to live together are basic imperatives of democracy and the rule of law.

***Noting that***

the most vulnerable population groups requiring focused attention are:

- Marginalized groups of children, especially those out of school

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<sup>1</sup>This conference was supported by the Government of Kerala and UNICEF, India.

- Children affected by multiple deprivations such as poverty, caste, ethnicity, gender and gender-based violence, disabilities, language, discriminatory cultural practices and socio-economic disadvantage
- Children from urban poor pockets
- Adolescents

### *Underlining that*

there is a need for the contextualization of SDG4 targets for achieving equity and inclusion through equitable access, quality learning and literacy (4.1, 4.6), early childhood education (4.2), teacher quality and management (4.C), skills development and tertiary education (4.3, 4.4), the elimination of gender and other disparities (4.5, 4.A), life-long learning, skills for sustainable development and global citizenship (4.7) and financing education for equity (4.B). The spirit of SDG4 is further enunciated in the SAARC Framework for Action 2030.

the concept of equity and inclusion require a wider understanding. There is a strong tendency to treat all marginalized groups in a homogenous manner. Such an approach cannot lead to achieving equity. Each type of vulnerability requires differential approaches to planning and strategy development that will address the specific nature of deprivations while at the same time a general culture of inclusiveness, against all barriers to learning, is promoted in the education system.

the declining trust in the public education system will require increased commitment and political will for public investment in education and allocation of appropriate resources.

learner quality and the quality of education, key thrust areas in the 2030 agenda, are a function of well-qualified, professionally-trained and motivated teachers at all levels of education – from early childhood to tertiary/higher education. Changing learner characteristics, emerging learning needs of students and diversified knowledge requirements in both local and global contexts demand new profiles and roles from teachers that necessitate new orientations, learning and the acquisition of appropriate pedagogical skills. The current situation necessitates sustained and well-planned actions to institutionalize a system of teacher development that will be engaged in developing teachers with quality, competence and character with consistent teacher support.

the race between technology and education needs to converge and values imbibed for the new emerging world through lifelong learning. Fundamental changes are required in re-designing curriculum that is futuristic, integrating approaches that prepare children with skills for life such as preventing gender-based violence, promoting a culture of peace, non-violence and environmental ethics; learning to live together; going beyond narrow national concerns for global citizenship and celebrating diversity.

data reliability in the education sector needs to be increased through local involvement and calls for a robust, evidence-based research and documentation that can guide realistic planning, governance and accountability.

wider dissemination of the international, regional and national instruments related to SDG4 and its targets at national and sub-national levels, especially amongst educational and research institutions, civil society organizations and universities is important, to mobilize partnerships and strengthen support for SDG4.

*Lessons learnt from the Kerala experience and best practices from participant countries at the conference, showed that:*

- The 1817 edict on education in Kerala marked the beginning of progressive state policies in education. The spread of education set the stage for social and economic progress that contributed to overcoming traditional inequalities of caste, class and gender. It also enhanced the public's capacity to demand better public services.
- As demonstrated by the Kerala model, educational and social development can take place even at lower levels of economic growth provided progressive public policies are put in place.
- Effective implementation of educational policies, legislations and programmes on equity and inclusion, depends on their good governance - efficient administrative support, transparency and accountability of results.
- Giving children a right start to life has long term benefits on learning and well-being into adulthood. Multi-sectoral planning and coordinated services among health, nutrition and learning, while ensuring appropriate sectoral accountabilities, impact upon children's development and their quality of learning in later years. Prioritizing Early Childhood Development (ECD) in educational investment calls for political will. Strengthening institutional capacities in ECD and standardizing child development indicators to assess children's developmental milestones in early years will ensure equity right from the start.
- Gender equity in education is achievable when supply and demand side barriers are addressed at pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education levels. Differential planning and target-specific measures address safety and protection from gender-based violence, child marriage and other socio-cultural barriers. Flexible strategies vis-à-vis a one-size-fits-all approach, and well-coordinated cross-sectoral services have been most successful in mainstreaming out of school girls and those who drop out.
- Schools are important vehicles to enforce gender equity through the curriculum to combat the high rates of violence on women in society. Woven through different subjects, children are made aware of the differences between gender and sexuality and of respect for human rights.
- Education that develops cognitive skills needs to be distinguished from education that develops affective traits or non-cognitive skills that achieves a premium in the labour market. Closing the gap between students' learning and earning, positively impacts male and female earnings. Innovation in strengthening skill formation and its acquisition amongst disadvantaged groups, both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, provides productive employment opportunities.
- Multi-stakeholder partnership and alliances between government at all levels, donor agencies, civil society, academia and media are a necessary condition towards achieving SDG4 targets. It identifies the potential contribution of partners. A national level platform of multiple stakeholders catalyzes consensus building on planning processes, roles and responsibilities, fundraising, efficient and accountable implementation, joint monitoring and wider ownership of the outcomes.

*Reinforcing the role of the critical drivers of change, namely:*

- a) *continued state support* and targeted financial allocations ensure higher social benefits in favour of the disadvantaged.
- b) *good governance in education* ensures administrative accountability on funds invested, effective and efficient policy implementation, and monitoring and tracking of performance indicators both of the service providers and of the learners.

- c) *cross-sectoral coordination* between education and other critical sectors strengthens inclusion especially of vulnerable groups. It helps to address multiple deprivations to ensure that children are healthy, have good nutrition and access to water and sanitation. It may also help combat practices that negatively affect girls' education.
- d) *partnerships and alliance building* help to consolidate and/or leverage material, human and financial resources, promote shared responsibilities between government and communities, between the public and private sectors and amongst government sectors.

### ***Action Agenda***

It was agreed to advocate and promote widely the 2030 agenda with special reference to SDG4 targets. The Action Agenda calls for:

- 1) Constituting an advisory/expert group to support SDG4 activities and promoting knowledge exchange at regional, national and sub national levels on education for sustainable development, gender equality, peace and non-violence.
- 2) For effective implementation of SDG4, encouraging the constitution of voluntary platforms of multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local, state and national levels, promoting a bottom-up approach.
- 3) Bridging the prevalent gaps between theory and practice and promoting evidence based research and knowledge management on SDG 4 targets.
- 4) Building a repository of knowledge through documentation of best practices and lessons learnt with reference to: a) good governance in public policies; b) partnerships and alliances: and c) cross-sectoral linkages.

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