



Education within the Belgian Development Cooperation

*2016 Recommendations to the
Belgian Development Cooperation*

Table of content

| | |
|--|----|
| Educaid.be | 2 |
| Vision – Prioritising education | 2 |
| Education and the Belgian development cooperation – general considerations and recommendations | 4 |
| Premises and specific recommendations | 7 |
| 1. Early Childhood and Primary Education | 7 |
| 2. General Secondary Education | 8 |
| 3. Development of Technical and Vocational Skills | 9 |
| 4. Higher Education | 11 |
| 5. Basic Education for Young People (and) Adults | 12 |

EDUCAID.BE

Educaid.be is a national platform that brings together institutions, organisations and individuals active in the field of education and training within the context of the Belgian Development Cooperation. The platform aims to further strengthen its members' capabilities and expertise, and to develop and support the Belgian education and development policies.

The education sector within development cooperation has undergone major changes since the publication of the first Educaid.be recommendations (2012): a strategic paper for the education sector was passed by the General Directorate for Development Cooperation (DGD, 2013); a new policy paper was issued by the Minister for Development Cooperation (2014); the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted (2015), etc. Furthermore, Educaid.be undertook considerable work that provided further food for thought: monitoring of the policies and budgets with regard to official development assistance in the field of education; working out nine key factors on the subject of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), etc. These changes have prompted us to update our position.

VISION – PRIORITISING EDUCATION

All children and young people – girls and boys alike – from the South have equal access to quality education that provides them with the skills they need to make the most of their human potential, to be able to meet their long-term needs and to be able to contribute to an harmonious and democratic society, and to improve both their personal well-being and that of the family.

Education is a *fundamental human right* that is laid down in international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is **the** basic individual right that has the most marked multiplier effects in terms of sustainable societal development (economic development, development with regard to health, citizenship, promotion of peace, etc.). Quality education does not only form the pillar of the efforts for sustainable development but also constitutes **the cradle of active citizenship, inclusive growth, the fight against gender inequality, etc.**

As stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the concept of education includes the entire cycle, from the young child's early pre-school years right up to higher levels of education and access to employment.

Educaid.be emphasises the importance of **three interconnected priorities for education:**

- To achieve **equal and real access** to education for all:
 - With special endeavours for disadvantaged and excluded populations, as well as for vulnerable children and young people, with particular attention being paid to women and girls;
 - By ensuring to improve the retention rate by **increasing the completion rates** and reducing **the school drop-out rate**.

- To contribute to the emergence of **active citizens** and **partners in the sustainable development of their country**, for example, by encouraging the promotion and acquisition of basic rights and gender equality, and by paying more attention to environmental issues.
- To aim to improve the quality of education and of the **learning results** upon completion of the various levels of education in order to improve the socio-professional integration of the learners at the end of the process (i.e. through technical and vocational education and training (TVET), apprenticeships, training for entrepreneurship).

For Educaid.be, Belgium, as a modest development partner, has most to offer in terms of quality of the educational system. In this regard, two conditions must be fulfilled in order to achieve quality education: (1) equal/real access to all the levels and sub-sectors for the fringes of the disadvantaged and excluded population, and for vulnerable children and youngsters, by paying special attention to gender (“equity”) and (2) the smooth transition from one level of education to another for these groups, children and youngsters (“transitions”).

This plea to improve the quality of education in the South is also a core feature in the SDGs. For Educaid.be this implies, among other things, better governance of education systems, qualified teachers and heads of school, appropriate curriculums and educational methods as well as learning material, the establishment of a suitable, safe and totally fulfilling environment in which all children, boys and girls alike, can grow.

Within this context, Educaid.be also insists on the multiple interactions between education and:

- The **environment** (“green and safe schools”), and this not only in terms of the physical environment in which the education institutions are located (construction materials, renewable energy, waste management, etc.), but also adapting the school curriculums to pay more attention to environmental aspects (for example, through interaction between the school and community activities: school gardens, management of conservation areas, etc.) and training for sectors with potential (green jobs).
- The **new information and communication technologies**, which offer multiple opportunities, but whose role in education must be viewed with the necessary vigilance in terms of the capacity of the school systems and the children’s education.

Educaid.be also emphasises the importance of taking an **integrated approach** to education and training: a **mutual strengthening of all the levels of education and a smooth transition between the latter**. This implies a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approach, that can be built up in the long term, and that can also include the local civil society and the public authorities, as well as the private sector when this is relevant, for example, in the context of Technical and Vocational Training (TVT) partnerships.

Finally, education cannot be an isolated player within a society in which it aims to be the mainstay of development. Educaid.be therefore also insists on the importance of the **link between education and other sectors** (such as, for example, health, employment, agriculture or the environment) whilst maintaining the specific approach of these sectors.

Furthermore, Educaid.be insists on the importance of guaranteeing **policy coherence** with regard to education and development cooperation between the different levels of power as well as between the various departments.

EDUCATION AND THE BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION – GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The New SDG Framework

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a new policy framework that will provide structure to the sector's efforts until 2030. For Educaid.be, it is primarily SDG 4 and its commitments for the benefit of children and young people, girls in particular, that will drive our work: *“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.”*

In comparison to the previous Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), this goal:

- Does not just confine itself to primary education, but encompasses early childhood, secondary and higher education, vocational training, etc.
- Does not just target quantitative criteria but insists on the quality of the education provided.

Furthermore, the 2030 Sustainable Development Programme includes other goals that are important to us:

- Goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.
- Target 8.6 that aims to reduce, between now and 2020, the proportion of youth not in education, and not in employment or training.
- Target 13.3 that aims to “improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning systems.”

In addition, the SDGs provide a universal framework that goes beyond the North-South relationship as such but applies to all countries, and put forward the founding principle of *“no one left behind”* in order to fight inequality.

Premises

Educaid.be is extremely pleased with the approach that has been chosen in the SDGs, which corresponds with the consistent vision that it has been defending since it was first set up. The approach that Educaid.be supports is also based on the conclusions that were, for example, formulated by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank and UNESCO, with regard to the major impact of education upon human and economic development:

- Quality education from early childhood offers opportunities to new generations and is crucial to **break the cycles of discrimination, inequality and poverty**.
- Education gives people access to a good standard of **employment, income and quality of life**. Education increases income and economic growth. Every additional year of schooling results in a 10% increase in personal income, and every average additional year improves the gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.37%.
- Education leads to **better health**. Every additional year of schooling received by mothers thus leads to a reduction in child mortality of 5 to 10%.
- Quality education increases awareness of **globalisation** and its effects, such as climate change, migration, etc.

- Quality education plays a part in **consolidating peace and promoting democracy**. Education is one of the conditions for creating harmonious societies and is crucial in the fight against religious fundamentalism.
- Education is crucial for equal relations between women and men. Education for girls gives girls and women the opportunity to make their own choices and to develop a full and dignified life. Girls who receive quality education marry later, have fewer children, have a higher income, and fall less victim to (sexual) violence, and know how to protect themselves against early marriages and other harmful practices.

According to the 2016 UNESCO¹ Global Education Monitoring report (GEM), in 2014, 263 million children and adolescents all over the world were not in education.

Access – even if this has, globally speaking, become less problematic – nevertheless remains a major concern in a certain number of African countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Furthermore, these figures do not include those that go to school but who do not learn sufficiently due to the poor quality of education. Indeed, **the inequality** in learning results is still high across the world:

- 130 million children reportedly are still not able to read and write after spending four years at primary school.
- At least 758 million adults would not master the basic reading skills, among whom 114 million young people from 15-24, and two thirds being women.

This has major repercussions upon access to continuous training and/or the labour market.

There is also the issue of a lack of trained teachers, particularly due to the poor quality (or in some cases even the non-existence) of the teachers' training.

Furthermore, the resources spent on education are distributed unequally²:

- In the least developed countries, investment is geared to the best educated pupils (10% of the best educated children receive 46% of public investment). In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 0.3% of the budgets allocated to education are invested in pre-primary education.
- With regard to gender, inequality in education is reducing. However, Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region where we see the biggest disparities: girls represent 55% of children not in education and 52% of adolescents not in education.

Funding

The SDGs must be viewed in a context in which the previous commitment from the international community in terms of education (MDG 2 concerning primary education) has not always been met in several of the partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation – whereas, at the same time, these countries are confronted with important demographic growth rates.

Educaid.be recognises that it is important to mobilise the internal resources of the partner countries to fund education. However, Belgium's role as a donor must also be further strengthened.

¹ <http://fr.unesco.org/gem-report/>

² The Learning Generation, Investing in Education for a Changing World. Report by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (2016).

According to UNESCO, to provide 12 years of quality education for all, 39 billion US\$ would need to be targeted towards low and lower middle income countries (i.e. 6 times the current sum). However, the aid levels to the sector are 8% lower compared to their level in 2010.

At international level, the development aid specifically for education has therefore dropped by 4% between 2013 and 2014. Numerous donors have cut their basic education aid by more than 40%. During that same period, the share of education in the total development aid package was reduced from 9.5% to 8.2%. Between the education sub-sectors, basic education has declined by 5% since 2013.

Furthermore, we see that the countries that are most in need of aid receive the least:

- The share of aid allocated to basic education in the Least Developed Countries has been reduced by a sixth in comparison to the 2002-2003 levels (i.e. a total of 28% of all the aid for basic education received by the LDCs in 2014, whereas they account for more than a third of the children not in education in the world).
- The share of development aid received for basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa was reduced from 49% in 2002-2003 to 28% in 2014, whereas the Region accounted for more than half of the children not in education.

If one looks at the distribution of the **aid granted by Belgium and its bilateral cooperation programmes** over the course of the last decade, the share allocated to the education sector is less significant than the aid for the agriculture or health sectors, for instance. Still education is nevertheless one of the priority sectors of bilateral co-operation, but it is only taken up by 4 of Belgium's 14 partner countries.

Starting out with the aim to achieve SDG 4 by 2030, Educaid.be recommends that the Belgian development cooperation...

- Improves the efficiency of its interventions by ...
 - Taking appropriate measures in order to improve the efficiency of its development cooperation – in particular, by targeting more active participation from the local civil society in national debates on the supply of vital social services, and in operations funded by the Belgian government.
 - Taking care of a better alignment of the education sector and the other sectors in order to ensure its contribution to the sustainable development challenges of the partner country.
 - Focusing on improving the transition of the development and education programmes in early childhood and primary education, between primary and secondary education, and between informal and formal vocational training.
 - Giving priority to broad-scale solutions that are better able to tackle the root causes of the challenges.
- Increases the budget of the Official Development Aid (ODA) to 0.7% of the Gross National Income (GNI) and
 - Dedicates at least 10% of its budget to the education sector (compared to 7.2% in 2015). Indeed, as mentioned in the Report drawn up by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (September 2016): *“To achieve international financing goals, the Commission calls on the international community*

to significantly scale up financing from all sources and sets out ambitious but achievable targets for each. The Commission calls on bilateral donors to allocate a higher share of their GDP to ODA and to increase the share which goes to education from 10 to 15 percent.”

- Dedicates 4% of the resources allocated to humanitarian aid to education in emergency situations, as planned among others by the EU.
- Identifies the real priorities with the partner country on the basis of accurate sector-based analyses within the context of direct bilateral cooperation. That is why the platform pleads for in-depth analyses of all the priority sectors of the Belgian development cooperation for the establishment of the Cooperation Programmes.

PREMISES AND SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS³

1. Early Childhood and Primary Education

Early Childhood and primary education constitute a very important part in the educational system, as it lays the ***foundations for the next stages in the education*** of pupils and for continuous training that is accessible for all.

Starting out from the premise that...

... with regard to ***early childhood***:

- a. Studies have shown that it is crucial for the cognitive, motor, social and emotional development of children;
- b. More than 200 million children out of 652 million children of less than 5 years of age are behind in their potential development in this particular phase of their life;
- c. This educational delay comes at a considerable cost to the individual and society and undermines the efficiency and equity of the educational systems;
- d. Access is very poor and the groups most affected are children from disadvantaged families;
- e. International bodies are paying increasing attention to this topic.

... with regard to ***primary education***:

- a. Specific groups, such as the poorest children, children from isolated and rural areas or from marginalised urban areas, and particularly girls within these groups, always experience the greatest difficulty in completing primary education;
- b. 67 million children do not always receive primary education and 42% of these children live in areas of conflict. Millions of other children live in countries affected by natural disasters;
- c. The Global Education Monitoring Report notes that there is not only a severe lack of international aid for primary education, but that it is also particularly unreliable as a result of recent changes. The countries in regions facing the biggest challenges, such as

³ We have applied the OECD-DAC classification/criteria (5 digits).

Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, risk becoming dependent upon one sole bilateral donor;

- d. More than half of the partner countries of the Belgian actors are located in one of these regions, i.e. Sub-Saharan Africa, and that it is primarily indirect actors who remain widely present in South and West Asia.

Educaid.be recommends that the Belgian development cooperation...

- Strengthens the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of the population by investing in **access to quality development and education programmes for early childhood**; including in terms of information to young parents.
- With regard to **primary education**, focuses on quality, particularly measured by improving the **learning results**, in terms of literacy, basic arithmetic, basic scientific knowledge and everyday life skills.
- Promotes **partnerships between multiple interested parties**, both within the context of development and education programmes for early childhood as well as primary education, for example, between education, well-being and/or health, as well as the development of *“green and safe schools.”*
- Interlinks with health programmes and programmes for the production of healthy and balanced food in order to ensure the children’s overall development, and not just their cognitive development.
- Promotes education that aims to make local societies more resilient in the face of socio-economic and environmental challenges, both at local and global level.
- As far as primary education for the disadvantaged is concerned, focuses on:
 - children from the countries and sub-regions of **Sub-Saharan Africa and from South and West Asia**, without for that matter neglecting other regions or continents;
 - children in **regions affected by conflict and humanitarian disasters**;
 - children in **rural and isolated areas and marginalised urban areas**, from **ethnic minorities** and **the poorest sections of the population**, as well as **children with disabilities**;
 - **girls**, including those within the above-mentioned groups.

2. General Secondary Education

Starting out from the premise that...

- a. The SDGs aim to ensure *“that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and **secondary** education leading to really effective learning outcomes.”*
- b. Participation in general secondary education is directly linked to family planning, reduced child mortality, reduced HIV/AIDS contamination, improved well-being and higher life expectancy;
- c. Specific groups, such as the poorest children, children from isolated and rural areas, children from ethnic or social (casts) minorities, children suffering stigma on religious grounds or on account of their sexual orientation, or children from marginalised urban areas, and particularly girls within these groups, always experience the greatest difficulty in accessing secondary education;

- d. The request for access to secondary education will grow as the goal for universal primary education is achieved;
- e. An ever increasing number of countries are in need of workers, with specific skills that cannot be acquired by just attending primary education;
- f. More than half of the children from the poorest countries are nevertheless unable to attend secondary education, and among those who do have access, less than half manage to attend all the years of secondary education;
- g. Those who succeed in secondary education are mainly from the richest families;
- h. Girls – mainly in poor or rural areas – always experience significant inequality of access to education, and particularly in the Sub-Saharan African regions and in South and West Asia;
- i. Secondary education is underfunded and its quality is often not up to standard;
- j. Secondary education attendance and the quality of this education are vital in order to be able to meet the increasing demand for teachers.

Educaid.be recommends that the Belgian development cooperation...

- Invests in **access to quality secondary education**, particularly in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, without for that matter neglecting other continents;
- Pays sufficient attention to the **transition** between secondary education and higher education and between school and employment;
- Focuses, among vulnerable and disadvantaged groups on the **crucial transition between primary and secondary education for girls and women**.

3. Development of Technical and Vocational Skills

Educaid.be has published nine factors of success relating to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). These principles particularly concern: the need to work with a multi-actor and systemic approach in TVET; selecting sectors with potential; the implementation of efficient and practical educational approaches anchored in reality; ensuring that TVET teachers and trainers are motivated and effective; ensuring successful school leadership in TVET; the involvement of communities and parents in vocational training systems; the promotion of cooperation between the training sector and the professional sector (private and/or public); the development of (independent) entrepreneurship or self-employment; and, finally, the need to promote TVET.

For Educaid.be, the development of technical and vocational skills must be accessible to all, men and women alike, and just as much for those who have successfully completed their primary education as those who have not achieved this, and who still need to acquire the necessary basic skills. This education must also take into account the general trends which societies are facing: gender inequality that prevents girls from having access to this kind of training, the conditions in which the young people live, which sometimes make formal long-term training inaccessible, constraints in terms of the environment and the development of sustainable production, etc.

Furthermore, within this context, training for entrepreneurship is a strategic tool that gives people the means to become financially independent and to integrate into business life, and from the outset constitutes a vital driving force for inclusive and fair growth.

Starting out from the premise that...

- a. The acquisition of skills...
 - can result in the individual obtaining a sustainable and dignified job and income, a higher standard of living and social integration;
 - can result in society enjoying sustainable economic growth, and efficiently combating youth unemployment, reducing poverty and increasing social cohesion;
- b. The quality and relevance of the development of technical and vocational skills are often below standard, and this education is often ranked as second choice;
- c. The development of technical and vocational skills is often underfunded, even though it is relatively expensive to provide a relevant programme of good quality in this sub-sector;
- d. The development of technical and vocational skills is complex due to the wide diversity of the interested parties (ministries, employers, employees, formal/informal actors in education and other sectors, civil society, etc.);
- e. The development of technical and vocational skills covers a wide field, including formal training courses provided by public or private training institutions and/or at work as part of a formal/informal economy;
- f. The reality of the (formal/informal) world of employment is changing, with employers making different demands: formal/informal training courses, employment sectors that are given priority (agriculture, industry, supply of services, etc.);

Educaid.be recommends that the Belgian development cooperation...

- Ensures that it incorporates and applies the nine factors of success issued by Educaid.be for a better alignment of training and employment as much as possible.
- Promotes **partnerships** between the ministries, employers/employees, formal and informal actors, with the needed attention for a proper alignment:
 - of the range of training courses available and for quality guidance towards employment;
 - with regard to funding, certification and quality assurance.
- Invests in access to decent and paid employment, as well as to self-employment or entrepreneurship;
- With regard to the development of technical and vocational skills within vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, focuses on improving the attendance:
 - of young people and young adults (NEETs, Not in Education, Employment or Training) from **rural and isolated regions** and **marginalised urban areas**, originating from **ethnic minorities** and from the **poorest sections of the population**;
 - of **girls** and women, including from the above-mentioned groups.
 - of migrants.
- Invests in creating pathways between formal and informal training and capitalising of the experience acquired.

4. Higher Education

Starting out from the premise that...

- a. The acquisition, consolidation, **creation and transfer** of knowledge and competencies in higher education and research,
 - at global level, can result in increasing people's ability to meet global challenges;
 - at social level, can result in greater intellectual and political empowerment, economic growth, development, social cohesion and poverty reduction;
 - at personal level, can result in social empowerment, decent employment and a dignified salary, a higher standing of living and active participation in society.
- b. Universities, and other higher education and research institutions make a major contribution
 - to political action (criticism);
 - to the quality of other education sub-sectors, in particular, general secondary education and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training).
- c. Universities in the South often lack the resources, the scientific and teaching skills, and the managerial skills to be able to achieve their mission.

Educaid.be recommends that the Belgian development cooperation...

... invests in higher education and research in the countries of the South in order to enable the higher education and research institutions to fulfil their triple mission and ensure high quality in the process. This objective can be achieved by:

- **Partnerships** between the higher education institutions in Belgium and the higher education and research institutions in the countries in the South in order to support the following aspects in the institutions and their sub-entities:
 - The promotion of quality education that meets the local needs and requirements by mobilising and reinforcing the educational capabilities of the partner institutions and their academic and strategic management and by investing in the implementation of relevant and quality training courses and programmes;
 - The promotion of quality research – also on education – by mobilising and reinforcing **the research capabilities** of the partner institutions, by investing in education grants, scientific collaboration projects and by capitalising the research results;
 - The improvement of activities developed by the partner universities as part of the three fundamental missions by **reinforcing the capabilities** in terms of **education management and organisation**;
 - The promotion – in the South – of **inter-university/inter-institution activities and activities with multiple interested actors**, with involvement from all the actors (civil society, private sector, agriculture, etc.);
- In the North, setting up
 - **Training courses/exchanges** focused on the **actors in the South**:
 - Focused on the field of development cooperation or on a need identified in the countries concerned in the South for which there (still) is not any higher education available;

- In an appropriate form (short course/master's/doctorate level);
- In order to make use of the personal skills acquired (trainers/teachers/managers/researchers/experts) within the local institutions in order to ensure the transfer of knowledge and the development of local initiatives, whether or not in the form of a partnership (See item 1. above).
- **Research mechanisms** enabling Belgian higher education institutions to put their expertise at the service of the Belgian development cooperation policies and actors by appropriately providing them with the necessary scientific support for their policy and their activities.
- **Campaigns to create awareness** among the communities of the higher education institutions in Belgium about the needs in terms of development support.

5. Basic Education for Young People and Adults

According to the UNESCO definition, young people aged between 15 and 24, represent the main economic driving force of developing countries. Studies have shown that from 2060, young people from Sub-Saharan Africa will represent almost one third of the active human workforce. However, they require a special approach in terms of literacy and basic and technical training.

There is growing concern about preparing young people for the world of work, in particular through technical training. Numerous international bodies, such as the International Labour Organisation or the World Bank, are paying increasing attention to this issue, in particular through their new initiative "Solution for Youth Empowerment" (S4YE) conducted with other partners.

Starting out from the premise that...

- a. Some 757 million adults – two thirds of whom are women – i.e. approximately 16% of the world's population aged over 15 – still do not have basic reading and writing skills and that the vast majority of these people reside in South or West Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- b. The latest data have shown that, in 2013, the literacy rate of adults across the world stood at 85% and the literacy rate of young people at 91%;
- c. The adult literacy rate was less than 50% in several countries, some of which are partners in the bilateral federal cooperation: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

Educaid.be recommends that the Belgian development cooperation...

- Invests, within the context of **youth and adult functional literacy**, in training courses that combine the acquisition of basic skills, such as **literacy** and **basic arithmetic**, and the acquisition of other competencies that are necessary to gain access to dignified work and income, as well as to a higher standard of living, and in order to fully participate in society by taking into account the socio-economic conditions of young people and by adapting the teaching content and methods so as to ensure maximum attendance of these courses by young people, especially from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
- Is careful to ensure bridges between informal and formal training.