# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION

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## What is the International Day of Education All About?

The International Day of Education is commemorated every 24th of January to celebrate the role of education in peace and development (UNESCO, 2022). In 2022, the world will be celebrating the 4th international day as a result of the resolution A/RES/73/25 passed and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 3rd December, 2018.

The theme for the International Day of Education 2022 is "***Changing Course, Transforming Education***". UNESCO's (2022) Futures of Education Report states that transforming the future requires an urgent rebalancing of our relationships with each other, with nature and with technology that permeates our lives, bearing breakthrough opportunities while raising serious concerns for equity, inclusion and democratic participation (UNESCO, 2022; UN, 2022). The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres referred to the Report as 'an important benchmark' which gives a "..vision of education that ensures justice, human rights and opportunities...and will allow us to better respond to emerging challenges and better address the interests of future generations."
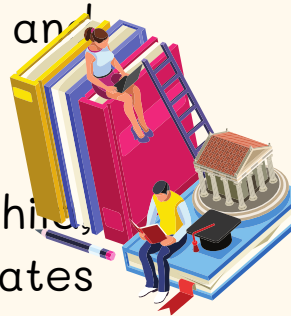
The International Day of Education will be a platform to showcase the most important transformations that have to be nurtured to realize everyone's fundamental right to education and build more sustainable, inclusive and peaceful futures (UNESCO, 2022; UN 2022). The platform will also generate debate around (i) how to strengthen education as a public endeavor and common good, (ii) how to steer the digital transformation, (iii) support teachers, (iv) safeguard the planet, and (v) unlock the potential of everyone to contribute to collective well-being and our shared home.

## What are the relevant laws and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that promote the right to education in the world?

For education to be recognised as an important human right worldwide, there needed to be laws in place that would support and protect this right as far as children are concerned. We will look at some of the laws and policies briefly:

One of the laws is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Article 26 of this law declares that everyone has the right to free education and that elementary education should be compulsory.

Another law is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, commonly known as the UNCRC or CRC. Article 28 (1) (c) of this law states that countries should make higher education accessible to all.

In addition, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) also supports the right to education for children in Africa. Article 11 provides that every child shall have the right to education. That Article also gives authority to African countries that have adopted the Charter to provide free and compulsory basic education, to encourage the development of secondary education in its different forms, and to make higher education accessible to all.

SDG 4 is at the heart of education. This goal exists to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. All includes children and young people with disabilities to access education that caters to their needs.

## Therefore, what are the core themes to be addressed on this day?

From the introduction above, some of the key themes that should be addressed include:
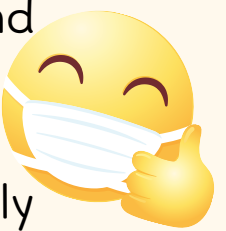
- **The COVID-19 pandemic**

The pandemic has slowed down some of the transformations in the education sector in many countries across the world. In Africa, some schools closed down at the beginning of the pandemic and reopened for the first time in 2 years in 2022. One of these countries is Uganda which reopened its schools for the first time this year since the pandemic began.

Furthermore, what the pandemic did was to worsen the already existing crisis in the education sector, bringing inequalities and exclusions through technology. There were so many children in Africa who could not attend classes online because they could not afford the internet, and some children did not have computers, tablets or smartphones to use to attend school.

On the bright side, COVID-19 has been key in highlighting the importance of education and being innovative to ensure that children globally are in school using technology and digital tools. The pandemic showed us that teachers play an important role in education even in the presence of technology and digital tools in education.

Teachers were helpful in making sure that children were learning virtually with the use of technology, as well as offering homeschooling services with the necessary cautions. All that was so that they could obey the rules that had been set up by the World Health Organisation to keep everyone from getting infected with the virus. Even though most of the teachers were not well-prepared to teach virtually, they received the necessary training needed to be able to teach. This is why they still require support to ensure that the agenda of transforming education is realised in our communities.

- **Technology**

The 21st Century has brought with it a lot of goodies in technology and the digital world. However, the education systems in Africa have had difficulty making those systems work. This is because of the inability to offer equal opportunities to children and adolescents. The dependency on digital technology for learning has not been pocket friendly to the schools and to children. This poses a great threat to the enjoyment of education as a human right and for the common good of the society.

On the other side of the coin, COVID-19 opened the eyes of the world to see how technology could save the day. As much as technology and the necessary digital tools were not accessible to and affordable by many children, both teachers and children showed the world that they could easily adapt to the change to make sure that children continue learning.

# What can be done to ensure that education is used to better the lives of children around the world?

Education is considered very important so that people all over the world appreciate it as a human right, a public endeavour, and a common good. To redefine our relationships with each other, this requires that people be taught about the importance of working together in unity. It also requires that people have the right knowledge to fight misinformation and divisiveness plaguing the society.

To redefine our relationship with the planet, learning must empower students with the mindsets and competences to care for it through education for sustainable development. Crucially, teachers are at the heart of education renewal. The pandemic has more than ever highlighted their irreplaceable role. Providing teachers with the recognition and professional support to collaborate and innovate will carry strong influence on the futures of learning.

Finally, redefining our relationship with technology begins with ensuring that digital tools benefit all and are at the service of all, starting with the most marginalized. The digital transformation must be steered around inclusion and quality. This means that technology and digital tools should be made available and accessible to children as they enjoy their right to education, and these tools should be made in such a way that even children with disabilities can easily use and access them.

## Conclusion

It is with no doubt that education is important all over the world for children. Rethinking the future through transforming the principles of education requires groups such as governments, the civil society, children who themselves are students, educators and the youth to mobilise their communities' collective intelligence. Everyone needs to be involved in this cause so that our children are taught and given the right information concerning what goes on around them.

Education is not enough as a means for children to get jobs in future, but it is a gateway for them to make informed choices and properly engage their leaders on issues that affect their ability to enjoy this right. Therefore, let us all work together to make the right to education for all children possible in this digital age, and give them an opportunity to participate more within their communities.