

Critical Analysis of SDG Four

By Teagan Lee

Goal Four: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Summary of SDG Four Targets:

The overarching goal of SDG number four is to ensure inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning for all people worldwide. This goal has been split into 10 targets to be achieved by 2030. The targets begin with early childhood, move into adult education, touch on education for minorities and end with infrastructure. All the targets stress gender equality. The first two advocate for free quality education at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. The next targets promote affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education with an emphasis on increasing the number of youth and adults with relevant skills for employment, honest work and entrepreneurship. Following adult education the targets include: eliminating gender disparities; providing equal access to education for the vulnerable and for minority groups; and improving literacy and numeracy for everyone. The need for widespread knowledge and skills of sustainable development is a target that stands alone. Then the targets delve into infrastructure and systems addressing the quality and accessibility of education facilities, and the need for more scholarships in developing countries for individuals seeking higher education. The last target calls for more qualified teachers worldwide.

Entry Points for Achieving SDGs Goal Four in Zambia

The quality and accessibility of pre-schools, primary schools and colleges in Zambia varies. In rural communities there is limited access to quality education. In larger urban areas quality education is a question of resources. In order to ensure inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all Zambians the nation will have to invest heavily at all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary). Entry points could include work with teachers, work with rural and/or impoverished communities and work with adult populations.

Recommendations for Achieving Goal Four in Zambia

Since the younger population is bound to the care and direction of their elders, I feel that addressing stigma and any cultural barriers as well as providing basic education to older populations would be an appropriate initial approach. Culturally sensitive and informative knowledge sharing could have a trickle-down effect for younger Zambians. Educating elders will allow them to model the benefits of a hard earned education and empower them to create change within their communities.

Rural communities such as villages and impoverished communities such as city compounds lack infrastructure. They also lack a strong understanding of the importance of education. Schools cost money and require children to leave their work (both gross and domestic). Farmers may see their children's time as better spent tending to produce that will sustain the family for the coming year. In addition, some parents might view household chores and caring for animals or other children as more important. Labouring with these communities to provide infrastructure and systems to support a work/school balance is integral. The need for extra hands around the house should be acknowledged and space made in both realms to better young people's lives.

Addressing the younger population's labour distribution (aka chores and school work) requires community involvement. All members should be able to voice their opinions and table ideas of how a balance can be achieved. I feel each community would have a different approach and ideally each community would be able to realise that approach as they implement new or upgraded schools and education programs in their neighbourhoods.

Finally, work done with teachers will improve everyone's learning experience. I feel that the teachers here need to feel supported and have strong incentives to provide fun effective education. In addition, teachers need more access to continuing education and professional development. Again, things should be community driven. Teachers and the community should

teachers here need to feel supported and have strong incentives to provide fun effective education. In addition, teachers need more access to continuing education and professional development. Again, things should be community driven. Teachers and the community should have a say in how, with whom, in what areas, when, where and why teachers are being trained.

Two Birds One Stone: How Goal Four Relates to Goal Five

The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of goals each participating nation intends to achieve by 2030. The goals are all related as they all aim to improve every person's quality of life. Of the 17 Global Goals, I have looked at goal four and goal five. Goal number five is to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Goal four is to *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*.

Goals four and five are symbiotic friends. One cannot exist without the other.

If quality and inclusive education is to provide lifelong learning opportunities for even one gender, the other needs to be involved. For example, a mother needs to be involved in her son's education in order for him to succeed. Even if all she does is make his breakfast. She will learn from him as he learns from her. Kofi Annan encapsulates my sentiments about the subject: "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family." Goal four emphasises *equal* education thusly incorporating goal five. In its turn, goal five requires an arena for women and girls to realise gender equality. The starting place for gender equality is in the home and the community. The larger community involves schools. The best way to encourage this social change is to educate everyone because families and communities need to want women and girls to go to school.

In Sum

Sustainable development goal number four aims to make certain that inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities are available to everyone. Entry points for education could include work with teachers, rural and/or impoverished communities and work with adult populations. My recommendations build on the entry points listed. Throughout my recommendations, I highlight the importance of community and individual collaboration. I believe sustainable social change comes from the heart of all societies – the people. Lastly, goals four and five are interdependent. The recommendations and entry points for both goals are similar. Therefore, everyone needs to work together to achieve both goals.