SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

METADATA

1.a Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions

1.a.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)

This document only addresses the education component of the indicator.

Definition

Total general (local, regional, and central) government expenditure on education (current, capital, and transfers), expressed as a percentage of total general government expenditure on all sectors (including health, education, social services, etc.). It includes expenditure funded by transfers from international sources to the government.

Purpose

The indicator is used to assess a government's emphasis on education relative to its investments in other sectors. The indicator shows how much of a priority education is for a given government, over time or in comparison with other countries.

Calculation method

Total government expenditure for *all levels of education combined* expressed as a percentage of total general government expenditure (all sectors).

$$PXE_t = \frac{XE_t}{TPX_t}$$

Where

PXE_t = Total general government expenditure on education (all levels of education combined) as a percentage of total government expenditure in financial year *t*

XE_t = total general government expenditure on education (all levels of education combined) in financial year *t*

TPX_t = total government expenditure in financial year *t*

Interpretation

A high proportion of government expenditure on education demonstrates a high government priority for education relative to other public investments. When interpreting this indicator, one should keep in mind that some governments have more (or fewer) financial resources and therefore larger (or smaller) overall budgets, and that countries with younger populations may spend more on education relative to other sectors such as health or social security, and vice-versa. The *Education 2030 Framework for Action* has endorsed a benchmark for this indicator, which encourages countries to allocate at least 15% to 20% of their public expenditure to education.

Type of data source

Administrative data.

Disaggregation

Possibly, by level of education.

Data sources

Data on government spending come from government budgetary documents, financial reports, and official statistics provided by government agencies responsible for finance and budgeting. Additionally, international organizations such as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the OECD, Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank compile and publish government spending data based on official government sources.

The UIS compiles government spending data through:

    a.   UIS Formal Education Survey:
            i.   Numerator: data provided by countries responding to the annual UIS survey on formal education or to the UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat (UOE) data collection.

ii. Denominator: data on total general government expenditure (all sectors) are extracted from the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook database and are updated annually.
   b. [UIS Dynamic Template](numerator and denominator): data provided by countries or data obtained from the national official documents.

Data gaps are filled with indicator values published by other international organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank.

Quality assurance

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) prioritizes the accuracy and reliability of its government spending data on education. The UIS validates with countries the indicator values compiled through the UIS Formal Education Survey and Dynamic Template. These tools allow countries to contribute data directly, while the UIS cross-references it with total government expenditure figures obtained from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook database.

Limitations

While the indicator allows for cross-country comparisons, differences in government structures, budgeting practices, and definitions may limit the comparability of data between countries. Variations in how countries categorize and report spending on education can introduce biases into comparative analyses.

The indicator does not consider the demographic profile of a country's population, such as age distribution or socioeconomic status. Countries with younger populations may naturally allocate a higher proportion of spending to education, regardless of government priorities, while countries with aging populations may prioritize other essential services, such as healthcare or social security.