



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development

BMZ Position Paper

# Quality education for all

Achieving a sustainable, just and liveable future



# 1 Achieving a sustainable, just and liveable future

Education is a human right and, as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, it is also a central pillar of the 2030 Agenda. This is the background against which the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) promotes quality education worldwide. Everyone should receive quality basic and secondary education for free and have access to vocational, higher and adult education. Everyone should be able to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to gain a secure future livelihood with decent work in an increasingly digital and decarbonised world.

The BMZ is realigning its activities in the field of education. This position paper sets out the basis for the joint activities of the BMZ and its partners at national, European and international level, both governmental and non-governmental, to establish quality education around the globe. It is the result of a wide-ranging process of consultation with a variety of stakeholders.

Quality education is a decisive factor for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It empowers people to shape their own futures and the societies in which they live. This applies to every area of life: employment and income, climate change and environmental protection, peace and democracy, health, equality, justice and participation in society. Yet there are major challenges for educational institutions in the face of crises and conflicts.

Since 2020, the BMZ has been promoting basic education mainly through multilateral cooperation. As for vocational and higher education, the BMZ is continuing its bilateral and European-level cooperation with partner countries. At European level it works with the European Commission (EU-COM) and other EU Member States – increasingly in the framework of the Team Europe approach and Global Gateway. Educational programmes are also, in many cases, implemented in cooperation with civil society organisations, businesses, foundations and faith-based organisations. Alongside these efforts, the BMZ also undertakes development education initiatives within Germany aimed at fostering a better understanding in the population of global issues and of how these issues are interlinked, while also motivating children, young people and adults to get involved in development issues and to live more sustainably.

## 2 Objectives

The German government is working with the international community to make the human right to education a reality and to secure for all people inclusive, equitable and quality education as well as lifelong learning by 2030.

This human right is enshrined in universally binding treaties.<sup>1</sup> As signatories, countries recognise this right to education and are obliged to provide primary schooling and basic education<sup>2</sup> for free. Technical, vocational and higher education, as well as lifelong learning opportunities, must be made available to everyone on the basis of merit.<sup>3,4</sup>

Education forms the basis for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Education enables individuals and societies to understand global interrelationships, to grasp their dependency on the natural environment and their responsibility for future generations. In this way, education makes an essential contribution to achieving SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 3 (good health), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and sustainable economic growth), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace and justice) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

With its strong focus on education in development cooperation, the BMZ seeks to:

- convey prospects of a better future and enable people to understand how their own actions affect others and the environment, to make responsible decisions and to find sustainable solutions to the challenges of our times;
- strengthen gender equality and drive forward the inclusion of vulnerable groups in society, such as people with disabilities, following the key 2030 Agenda principle of “leave no one behind”;
- strengthen independence and social and economic participation, also for the weakest in society;
- provide stability and protection, and promote peace and (re-)integration;
- encourage social cohesion, factors which will, in turn, bolster democracy and safeguard constitutional freedoms;
- improve the health and well-being of children and young people;
- lay the foundations for sustainable, inclusive economic systems that generate jobs and income and, in this way, overcome poverty and inequality.

1 Art. 13 of the Social Covenant of the United Nations (UN), Art. 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 24 of the UN Disability Rights Convention

2 Basic education includes primary school education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary (second stage). Basic education also encompasses a number of non-formal and informal public and private educational activities designed to meet the fundamental learning needs of people of any age.

For further information on this, see UNESCO: Basic Education. [uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/basic-education](https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/basic-education) and UNESCO: World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. [unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127583](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127583)

3 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner: Universal Declaration of Human Rights [www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english](https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english)

4 UN Disability Rights Convention. [social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/article-24-education](https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/article-24-education)

# 3 The current situation

## Education in the context of global challenges

As a consequence of multiple, mutually reinforcing crises, conflicts, climate-driven disasters and a dire global health situation, some 250 million children and young people worldwide of primary and secondary school age did not go to school in 2022.<sup>5</sup> They include, above all, girls and young women, the forcibly displaced and people with disabilities. But educational opportunities are further hampered by factors such as poverty, sexual orientation, ethnic background, place of residence, age, and socio-economic status.

Even among all those children and young people who are able to attend school, their progress as learners is often poor. More than 750 million adults are illiterate.<sup>6</sup> This is due to the low quality of educational provision.<sup>7</sup> By 2030 it is likely that the proportion of children who cannot read or understand a simple text at the age of ten will rise to 70 per cent (from 57 per cent in 2019).<sup>8</sup> There is a worldwide shortage of teachers. By 2030, schools will need around 44 million new qualified teachers in order to ensure that good basic and secondary education can be provided worldwide. Fifteen million are lacking in sub-Saharan Africa alone, partly because the school-age population is growing very rapidly.<sup>9</sup>

In all regions there are still too few digital learning opportunities of high quality.<sup>10</sup> Most educational systems are not designed for distance teaching and learning, especially at basic and secondary level. Only 40 per cent of primary schools worldwide have internet access. In the poorest countries this figure is as low as 28 per cent.<sup>11</sup> Teachers themselves often lack digital skills and know-how. Discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes lead to girls and women having even less access than boys and men to the internet, digital technologies and digital learning opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

Where large numbers of people are excluded from education there are fewer skilled workers available to the labour market. In Africa, more than 23 per cent of young people fall into the category of “neither in employment, education or training” (NEET).<sup>13</sup> In many countries graduates completing education programmes still lack the necessary skills wanted by employers. Consequently, many jobs remain unfilled even though there are high numbers of unemployed looking for work. The lack of suitable skilled workers presents local companies with considerable challenges and is seen as a major barrier to investment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) predicts that, worldwide, some 24 million new green jobs will be created by 2030.<sup>14</sup> Under Germany’s 2022 G7 presidency, the G7 nations pledged to increase official development assistance (ODA) for investment in green jobs by 2025, along with the skills needed for green jobs.<sup>15</sup>

5 UNESCO: 250 million children out-of-school: What you need to know about UNESCO’s latest education data. [www.unesco.org/en/articles/250-million-children-out-school-what-you-need-know-about-unescos-latest-education-data](http://www.unesco.org/en/articles/250-million-children-out-school-what-you-need-know-about-unescos-latest-education-data)

6 UNESCO: Literacy. [uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy](http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy)

7 UNICEF: Education. [www.unicef.org/education](http://www.unicef.org/education)

8 World Bank: 70 per cent of 10-Year-Olds now in Learning Poverty, Unable to Read and Understand a Simple Text. [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/23/70-of-10-year-olds-now-in-learning-poverty-unable-to-read-and-understand-a-simple-text](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/23/70-of-10-year-olds-now-in-learning-poverty-unable-to-read-and-understand-a-simple-text)

9 UNESCO: What you need to know about teachers. [www.unesco.org/en/teachers/need-know](http://www.unesco.org/en/teachers/need-know)

10 UNESCO: Technology in Education. [www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/technology](http://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/technology)

11 TU: Global Connectivity Report 2022. Geneva. [www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/global-connectivity-report-2022/](http://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/global-connectivity-report-2022/).

12 UNICEF: Bridging the Gender Digital Divide – Challenges and an Urgent Call for Action for Equitable Digital Skills Development. New York. [data.unicef.org/resources/ictgenderdivide/](http://data.unicef.org/resources/ictgenderdivide/)

13 ILO: World Employment and Social Outlook: September 2024 Update. WESO September 2024 Update – Final.pdf

14 ILO (2018): World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs.

15 BMZ (2022): [BMZ lädt zum G7-Dialogforum zu grünen Arbeitsplätzen and Kompetenzen: Messbarer Erfolg!](#) and ILO: Support to improve the effectiveness of development assistance in ‘green jobs and skills’. [www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/epaf/WCMS\\_870116/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/epaf/WCMS_870116/lang--en/index.htm)



*In South Sudan ECW's partner organisation, AVSI, trains teachers in prevention of gender-based violence in schools and conflict sensitivity. The aim is to close the gender gaps in education and to create an integrative space where girls have equal opportunity to learn.*

A positive trend can be seen in the fact that more and more people worldwide are enrolling at higher education institutions. In 2010, the proportion was 29 per cent globally for the relevant age groups, while by 2020 the figure had soared to 40 per cent. In sub-Saharan Africa only 9 per cent are enrolled.<sup>16</sup> Yet despite relatively low enrolment ratios in these countries, the universities are overcrowded. They are not able to offer enough places for students and lack adequate numbers of well-qualified academic staff, especially in subjects of relevance to development. The quality of teaching and research suffer as a consequence.

There are too many countries investing too little in education. The funding of schools, teaching material and teachers is a major challenge. The funding gap preventing the achievement of national educational goals in low-income and medium-income countries has been put at 97 billion US dollars per year.<sup>17</sup>

The mid-term review of progress towards the 2030 Agenda makes rather sobering reading with regard to SDG 4, even though some steps forward have been taken. To achieve SDG 4 by 2030 the Member States would have to enrol a child into school every two seconds, while the current annual progress in primary school completion rates would have to increase threefold.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> UNESCO, 2023. Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in education – A tool on whose terms?  
[unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723)

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO: Global Education Monitoring Report 2023. [unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723)

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO: Halfway to 2030, how far are we from achieving SDG 4.

[medium.com/@UNESCO/halfway-to-2030-how-far-are-we-from-achieving-sdg-4-f2b64c47a79b](https://medium.com/@UNESCO/halfway-to-2030-how-far-are-we-from-achieving-sdg-4-f2b64c47a79b)

## Multilateral and bilateral educational cooperation

The BMZ promotes basic education above all through multilateral cooperation, seeking to work effectively and as equals with like-minded partners on shared objectives (see the BMZ's Position Paper on "Strong multilateral development policy for social justice worldwide"<sup>19</sup>). The BMZ cooperates in this context with, among others, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund, as well as with organisations of the United Nations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI).

Together with the European Commission and EU Member States, the BMZ is active in Team Europe Initiatives on education as part of the EU's Global Gateway initiative. Beyond these commitments, it mobilises funding on a considerable scale as cofinancing from the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE).

As for vocational training and higher education, the BMZ is continuing to implement programmes with partner countries through bilateral (Germany together with its partner country) and regional cooperation (Germany together with several countries of a region). The focus of bilateral cooperation is on improving both access to, and the quality of, vocational training, higher education and labour market schemes. With regard to higher education and research, the BMZ works primarily with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) as intermediary organisations to support universities and researchers in and from partner countries. Complementing these initiatives, the BMZ engages in multilateral cooperation with, for example, UNESCO's International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC).

## Cooperation with civil society, the private sector, foundations and faith-based organisations

Education is among the top three development sectors supported by privately-owned organisations. Religious and civil society organisations create important educational offerings, especially for disadvantaged groups. Working together with private sector organisations, the BMZ pushes for greater involvement of the local economy in, above all, technical and vocational education and training and for focusing on the skills and know-how actually needed. The BMZ also promotes development education projects run by civil society organisations in Germany with a view to communicating to a wider public the global challenges and competencies required to meet them in future.

## Cooperation within the federal government and with the *Länder* (federal states)

In seeking to foster development education, the BMZ supports Germany's National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development (BNE), working closely with, among others, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV). In this respect, the BMZ is able to build on its long experience of close and successful cooperation with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and with various *Länder* ministries in charge of education, cultural affairs and schools.

19 [www.bmz.de/resource/blob/175050/bmz-position-paper-multilateral-strategy.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/175050/bmz-position-paper-multilateral-strategy.pdf)

# 4 Our approach

## Lifelong learning

The BMZ supports early childhood education, basic and secondary education, technical and vocational education and training, practical higher education, and adult education. It supports formal education within public education systems, non-formal education outside of the public education system, and informal learning as part of lifelong learning embedded in everyday life. The concept of lifelong learning entails the ongoing development of life skills. The BMZ is also committed to facilitating transitions between the various educational paths, enabling recognition of competencies already acquired.

### Early childhood education

“Championing Early Childhood Development at Home”, a project run in South Africa by the children’s relief organisation **Kindernothilfe**, promotes education for disadvantaged children in their first years of life. It fills an important gap that exists between public assistance for kindergarten or nursery provision and support for early

childhood development from birth. Three local organisations, Dlalanathi, Singakwenza and Thandanani Children’s Foundation, are rolling out a successfully trialled parent-based and community-based model of early childhood support. The project is reaching more than five hundred children and their parents or guardians through parent-child groups and forms the basis for enabling parents to encourage their children’s early learning at home, especially in the decisive first thousand days of life.<sup>20</sup>

### Quality adult education

Working together with the **Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV) e.V.**, the BMZ is supporting needs-based, quality adult education aimed, above all, at disadvantaged groups.

20 Document of the Kindernothilfe “Championing Thrive by Five in South Africa” ([thrivebyfive.co.za/](http://thrivebyfive.co.za/)) and input from Kindernothilfe



*The GPE’s Girls’ Education Accelerator supports gender equality in and through education in countries with the greatest inequalities, like Mozambique and El Salvador.*

## Strong national education systems and stable education funding

The BMZ assists partner countries in their efforts to reform education systems, design and implement education sector plans, adapt curricula to current needs, and give school staff the necessary training. This support also includes initiatives to advance national standards and curricula, upgrade teaching and learning materials, and establish and properly resource educational institutions (including primary schools, vocational schools and universities).

### Girls' education

The BMZ co-founded the **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** and has played a key role in resourcing this, the largest multilateral education fund and shaping its activities. For more than two decades, GPE has helped to build strong and resilient education systems in countries facing extreme poverty or conflict. Since the fund's foundation, the number of children in the partner countries attending school has increased by 160 million, and more than half of them are girls.

In the consultations on GPE's strategic plan for 2021 to 2025, the BMZ advocated a greater focus on gender equality and the establishment of a special funding mechanism for girls' education. This has become the Girls' Education Accelerator, a facility to which countries with a high incidence of gender-based discrimination can apply for funding.



*In 2022, Storm Harold destroyed hundreds of schools in Vanuatu, leaving thousands of pupils unable to attend school. GPE is supporting the government there in preventing school closures as a result of natural disasters or pandemics. A resilient education system will make Vanuatu better prepared for future crises.*

## Strengthening education in the context of crises and conflicts

The BMZ is committed to ensuring that children and youth have access to education even in conflict regions and situations of protracted crisis or forced displacement. It is a challenge that demands appropriate solutions geared to the special needs of children and their families. To this end, the BMZ supports educational and employment programmes both in countries of origin and host countries. The BMZ also promotes quality education in the host communities and advocates for the integration of displaced children and young people into state-run education programmes. The BMZ pledged to pursue this goal in 2023 at the second Global Refugee Forum and at other fora. Education offers displaced children, young people and their families stability, protection and hope for a better future. Education fosters resilience and self-reliance. It is through education that refugees and internally displaced people gain opportunities to participate in the economic and social life of their host countries.

### A better future for conflict-affected children

An important partner in the context of crises and forced displacement is the UN agency for children, **UNICEF**. Through its regional programme **No Lost Generation**, UNICEF is enabling children and young people who have experienced violence and displacement in Syria and neighbouring countries to go to school and have some normality in their daily lives. By upgrading school infrastructure and paying school fees and teachers' salaries, this programme improves access to both formal and non-formal education. UNICEF is also implementing child protection measures designed to help families and children cope with past trauma, prevent the emergence of new conflicts in the host communities and, above all, give children and young people hope for a better future.

Working together with partners such as ECW, UNICEF and UNHCR, the BMZ supports partner countries with the task of developing crisis strategies and plans that will make their education systems resilient. Teachers and other school staff are being given in-service training to enable them to maintain educational opportunities in the face of crisis and conflict. Equipping schools with digital capacities enables classes to continue even when schools have to be closed down. The BMZ also supports initiatives to promote mental health and provide psychosocial support for teachers, parents and



school students. Beyond these initiatives, the BMZ is committed to fostering peace education activities.

### Education in emergency situations

**Education Cannot Wait (ECW)** is the first global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. The BMZ is the fund's largest donor and has played an active role since 2023 as Co-Chair of the Executive Committee in tandem with Norway. It is through ECW that the BMZ makes a core contribution to strengthening education at the interface between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding. The fund's aim is to enable children to learn while caught up in crises and conflicts.<sup>21</sup> In South Sudan, for instance, ECW is helping teaching staff to take care of their own mental health and that of their school students. This initiative has so far reached a total of 140,000 crisis-impacted children, including 10,000 who are internally displaced.<sup>22</sup>

## Greater gender equality in and through education

In line with its feminist development policy,<sup>23</sup> the BMZ is committed to dismantling discriminatory structures. It aims to build inclusive societies in which everyone can participate on equal terms in social, political and economic life.

This is why the BMZ promotes gender-transformative education designed to overcome harmful gender stereotypes and contribute to greater gender equality. The BMZ supports its partner countries in designing policies for education, vocational training and the labour market in ways that address the roots of gender-based inequalities so as to overcome harmful gender stereotypes, roles and power structures. This approach is also helping to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, stem gender-based violence and mitigate harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Tackling inequalities in access to education and employment opens opportunities for girls and women, impacts positively on economic growth and reduces inequality.



*With the support of ECW, secondary school pupils in Magwi, South Sudan learn reading, writing and arithmetic and also social and emotional skills.*

### Gender equality in and through education

In 2022, the BMZ launched the **Feminist Network for Gender Transformative Education (FemNet4GTE)**. FemNet4GTE activities are implemented by the **United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)**. The network seeks to bring together non-governmental organisations, feminist activists, academia, government representatives, multilateral partnerships and international funds in a cross-sectoral conversation on gender-transformative education and to push internationally for gender equality in and through education.

## Better qualified teachers

Skilled teachers are a key factor for delivering quality education. The progress made by learners depends critically on good practice-based teacher training and on the motivation of teachers. By setting an example, teachers and trainers are in a particularly good position to have a positive influence on processes of social change. Teachers should take account of the holistic nature of a learner's development. They should encourage cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth in learners and convey to learners the skills and knowledge needed for a green and digital transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

21 Education Cannot Wait. Who we are – Transforming the Landscape of Global Education. [www.educationcannotwait.org/](http://www.educationcannotwait.org/)

22 ECW: ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) South Sudan 2023-2026. [www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/ecw-multi-year-resilience-programme-myrp-south-sudan-2023-2026](http://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/ecw-multi-year-resilience-programme-myrp-south-sudan-2023-2026)

23 BMZ: Feminist development policy – for just and strong societies worldwide. [www.bmz.de/resource/blob/230936/bmz-strategy-feminist-development-policy-2024-summary.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/230936/bmz-strategy-feminist-development-policy-2024-summary.pdf)

It is with this in mind that the BMZ promotes teacher training worldwide and advocates job security and appropriate salaries for teachers. To enhance recognition of education staff as professionals and to assist partner countries in the designing of teacher training programmes, the BMZ cooperates with higher education institutions, training centres and private-sector companies.

### Teacher training

The BMZ contributes to efforts to train more teachers by working through the **Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030**. Germany cofounded this international network and has been a Co-Chair with South Africa since 2022. The network's aim is to ensure that all learners are taught by qualified and motivated teachers.

### Better inclusive education

The BMZ has a strong focus on school students with disabilities. Inclusive education recognises the diversity and needs of all learners and aligns structures, content and teaching techniques with these needs. Institutions offering general education should be enabled to cater additionally for students with special learning needs. Among the factors to be considered are accessible

buildings, manageable routes to school, suitable learning materials, an awareness of disability inclusion among teachers and fellow students, and the additional technical, personnel and financial resources required for inclusion. The BMZ also supports learners with inclusion-related needs to access vocational training and become integrated in the regular labour market, which will in turn benefit from this diversity.

### Inclusive education

Commissioned by the BMZ, the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH** has been running the “**Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education in Jordan (PROMISE)**” programme since 2019.<sup>24</sup> Supported by this initiative, the Jordanian government has widened its national Education Sector Plan to embrace the aspect of disability inclusion. The project heightens inclusion awareness of administrative staff, school principals and teachers, while also helping teachers to better address the individual learning needs of school students. Measures taken at school level are making it possible for children with special learning needs to participate in lessons. The approach has clearly shown that inclusion can be a lived reality even in a largely underfunded public school system.

24 GIZ: Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education in Jordan (PROMISE). [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/200662.html](http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/200662.html)

*Mahmoud is a bright six-year-old who was accepted into a public nursery in Jordan in 2023. Now he can say a few words and has learned to hold a pencil and draw shapes. He has enjoyed making friends with his new classmates.*





*Areej Alsayed, a member of the BMZ Youth Advisory Council, advocates for the inclusion of young people in decisions on education and in the global education funds.*

## More participation by children and young people

The BMZ seeks to empower children and young people to become actively involved in formulating educational policies. At local, regional, national and international levels it is creating opportunities for representatives of children and young people to be part of decision-making processes. In this way the BMZ helps to strengthen the competencies of young people and give them a genuine say.

### Youth inclusion – the BMZ Youth Advisory Council

By establishing the **BMZ Youth Advisory Council**, the BMZ has created a body whose members offer advice to the Ministry in all fields of relevance to children and young people. The BMZ Youth Advisory Council consists of up to sixteen committed young people aged between 16 and 24. It voices the views of the younger generation on the work of the BMZ. The Council plays an active role in the development of strategies and concepts. Indeed, it was involved in the participatory process of drafting this position paper.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Council members join the BMZ delegation to certain international bodies and conferences in order to put forward their positions.

## Strengthening digital learning

The BMZ is combining easily accessible low-tech and innovative high-tech, such as the use of virtual reality and artificial intelligence, to improve access to education and enhance educational quality. Digital solutions can, for example, facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged or educationally excluded groups, such as children and young people with disabilities or forcibly displaced children and young people. For instance, the BMZ offers free access worldwide to non-formal learning content on [atingi.org](https://www.atingi.org), a digital learning platform. It gives young people, in particular, an opportunity to acquire new skills and know-how and to improve their prospects on local labour markets.<sup>26</sup>

The BMZ creates programmes for young people, teachers and education authority staff that are designed to boost their digital and media skills. It also looks to digital solutions for improving education management and educational data collection. In addition, it is promoting the digital upgrading of curricula used in public schools, vocational schools and universities.

In seeking to overcome the digital gender divide and pursuing its feminist development policy approach, the BMZ promotes the digital skills of girls and women in its role as a member of the “EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age”.

### Digital training for teachers

With the **Future Teacher Kit**, developed in cooperation with UNESCO, the BMZ has created a digital low-tech solution that makes use of technologies familiar to people worldwide, such as WhatsApp or Telegram, to give teachers access to training and communities of practice. The Future Teacher Kit is currently being rolled out in Latin America and Africa in cooperation with UNESCO and UNICEF.

<sup>25</sup> BMZ: the Youth Advisory Council. [www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/aufbau-und-struktur/bmz-jugendbeirat-142690](https://www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/aufbau-und-struktur/bmz-jugendbeirat-142690) (only available in German)

<sup>26</sup> Digital Enquirer Kit. [online.atingi.org/blocks/share/referral.php?code=DiQR8AL4SbDXbrH](https://online.atingi.org/blocks/share/referral.php?code=DiQR8AL4SbDXbrH)



*A teacher in Jamaica calls up the Future Teacher Kit support programme on their mobile phone.*

### E-learning project

“Unlocking Talent” is an e-learning project in Malawi funded by the **Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)** as commissioned by the BMZ. Learning centres are being set up and equipped with tablets, software and solar panels. Children from the second grade upwards can use the tablets to advance their skills in arithmetic, writing and reading. Teachers, district and school committees and education ministry staff are being trained to use and service the new IT resources. A total of 90,000 primary school students have already benefited from the project. The results speak for themselves: reading skills have improved very markedly, by almost 20 per cent, while competency in mathematics has improved slightly. Moreover, 413 children who had stopped coming to school took part in a voluntary educational scheme and have consequently re-enrolled at school. The project has also enabled 6,000 teachers to receive training.<sup>27</sup>

### Education for sustainability

Through its efforts to promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and climate education, the BMZ is empowering learners to understand how their actions impact on the conditions of life today and in the future. This kind of educational intervention is intended to enable people to make the informed decisions needed to create a decent future for humanity and to counter the climate crisis.

The BMZ also promotes climate-resilient schools, teachers and education systems in partner countries so as to lessen the impacts of climate change on access to education. This approach includes the training of teachers in climate education, improving crisis planning by education authorities and making greater use of digital technologies.

A socially just, ecological and economic transformation can only be achieved by expanding green skills on a global scale through technical and vocational education and training programmes to produce specialists in the required fields. The task of training and deploying skilled workers must be promoted through partnerships that transcend national borders. So it is of central importance to have worldwide mobility for specialists, allowing them to use safe, regular migration pathways. Universities are working on solutions to the challenges of mitigating climate change and advancing the necessary adaptations. This is why the BMZ invests in vocational training and academic education<sup>28</sup> in the new “green jobs” such as engineers specialising in wind and solar energy or project planners for transitioning to sustainable energy and transport systems.

### Green skills

The BMZ has commissioned the GIZ to implement the “**Reform of technical and vocational education and training in Viet Nam**” programme, which supports efforts to align the Vietnamese vocational training system to an increasingly green and digital world of work. The programme promotes TVET centres and green skills that are important for a social and ecological transformation.

27 KfW: Unlocking Talents. [www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/ipfz/Projektdatenbank/Unlocking-Talent-E-Learning-Fuer-Primarbildung-40700.htm](http://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/ipfz/Projektdatenbank/Unlocking-Talent-E-Learning-Fuer-Primarbildung-40700.htm) (only available in German) and BMZ: Education – Digital transformation for more educational justice. [www.bmz-digital.global/en/topics/education/](http://www.bmz-digital.global/en/topics/education/)

28 BMZ (2023): Skilled workers for the global energy transition. [www.bmz.de/resource/blob/195360/skilled-workers-for-the-global-energy-transition.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/195360/skilled-workers-for-the-global-energy-transition.pdf)

Every year, more than 3,000 trainees, including members of marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, benefit directly from the courses on offer. More than 1,600 of these trainees are enrolled in programmes that meet international quality standards.<sup>29</sup>

Within Germany, the BMZ encourages people to take a critical look at development issues such as implementation of the 2030 Agenda, migration and forced displacement, environmental conservation, protection of natural resources, inequality, establishment of sustainable supply chains and feminist development policy, and to advocate for a more just and sustainable world.

### BMZ Schools Programme

The **BMZ Schools Programme**, which is implemented by **Engagement Global – Service for Development Initiatives**, aims at making Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) an integral part of school systems in the German *Länder* (federal states). ESD, which is introduced within individual subjects and as an interdisciplinary topic, sensitises students in Germany to global challenges and developments in the BMZ’s partner countries.

### Development Education

“**Development Education**” is a funding programme that supports civil society organisations in Germany working on educational topics that raise awareness, across all age groups, of development policy issues. The projects funded cover a broad spectrum of development topics, of which the five most frequently treated are the SDGs in general, the basics of development, climate change, fair trade, and human rights. Aspects such as women’s rights and gender equality are also addressed.



*Two female builders assess the work done on a wall.*

## Sport for Development

Through its “Sport for Development” approach the BMZ is creating prospects for a better future for children and young people. This approach prioritises efforts to improve the participation of girls and young women, integrate quality modules for soft skills development into educational and vocational programmes, foster physical and psychological health, and contribute to social cohesion and violence prevention. Training for sports becomes a context for fostering dialogue on issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion, violence prevention and sustainability. This helps to boost self-confidence and self-determination, especially among girls, while demonstrably improving attitudes towards gender equality and reducing gender-based violence.

### Sport for Development

A total of more than 1.4 million children and young people across Africa, Latin America, Western Balkans, the Middle East and South-East Asia have so far benefited from **Sport for Development** measures commissioned by the BMZ and implemented at schools and in youth and social work contexts. The Sport for Development approach has been integrated in, for instance, school curricula and teacher training programmes in **Namibia, Indonesia and Uganda**.

<sup>29</sup> GIZ: Reform of TVET in Viet Nam: [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/151753.html](http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/151753.html), and KfW: [www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Download-Center/Materialien/2022\\_Nr.5\\_Gr%C3%BCne-BB\\_Materialie\\_EN.pdf](http://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Download-Center/Materialien/2022_Nr.5_Gr%C3%BCne-BB_Materialie_EN.pdf)

## Better health through education

Following its “One Health” approach,<sup>30</sup> the BMZ promotes interdisciplinary collaboration between medicine, environmental sciences and sectors such as education. The BMZ also helps to improve the training of health professionals and career opportunities for women in health professions. By creating networks of scientists from both the Global South and Global North, building institutions with the help of university cooperation agreements, and providing grants for researchers, the BMZ is strengthening health systems worldwide.

### Scholarships for courses on global health

As part of the BMZ-funded **Development-Related Postgraduate Courses (EPOS)**, the **DAAD** (German Academic Exchange Service)<sup>31</sup> offers, for example, courses on global health at the Charité university hospital in Berlin and the universities of Freiburg, Heidelberg and Bonn. Graduates with professional experience from developing and emerging economies are awarded scholarships to advance their knowledge of health equity, healthy lifestyles, disease prevention and epidemiological methods. Having completed their studies, they work with others in their regions of origin on solutions to development-related challenges. The programme also helps to internationalise the work of the higher education institutions involved, sharpening their research profiles and widening their global networks.

Another focus of the BMZ initiatives in this field is on the improvement of water supplies, drinking-water provision, sanitary facilities and hygiene at schools, not least to achieve effective disease prevention and control. It also promotes school meals programmes and is a member of the *School Meals Coalition*<sup>32</sup>. Children who are given a meal at school are found to attend classes far more regularly. Enrolment rates, especially for girls, also improve thanks to the provision of school meals. And students learn better if they are not hungry in lessons. The BMZ also promotes education on sexual and

reproductive health and rights for young people both in and outside schools and supports initiatives to tackle violence at school and against schools so as to create safe learning spaces.

## Strengthening vocational training

The BMZ has set out its principles for promoting vocational training in a strategy paper entitled “Sustainable Economic Development, Training and Employment” (2023).<sup>33</sup> The BMZ is committed to promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and ensuring equitable access to vocational training, which must be inclusive, of good quality and geared to the labour market needs of partner countries. The BMZ’s initiatives in this field are guided by elements of Germany’s own experience with a “dual system” of vocational education and training. This system requires close cooperation between government and industry and includes learning on the job. Another aspect of the dual approach to TVET is that common standards are applied to professions, training courses and testing regimes. The continuous in-service upgrading of teachers and trainers is another element, as is the integration of research and advisory services in education systems.

Activities in this field are guided by an integrated approach to employment promotion which combines measures to create and upgrade jobs (private-sector development) with measures that enhance employability (vocational training, higher education and upskilling) along with matching mechanisms to facilitate job placement on labour markets.

The BMZ also wants to see vocational training linked more closely to regular migration pathways. Higher quality in technical and vocational education and training in partner countries can, if these countries so desire, indirectly facilitate regular labour migration and, in this way, create more employment options abroad, especially if curricula and professional qualifications are internationally comparable. By introducing

30 BMZ: One Health. [www.bmz.de/en/themen/one-health](http://www.bmz.de/en/themen/one-health)

31 DAAD: Development-Related Postgraduate Courses (EPOS) [www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/epos/](http://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/epos/)

32 [schoolmealscoalition.org/](http://schoolmealscoalition.org/)

33 BMZ: Strategy paper on “Sustainable Economic Development, Training and Employment” [www.bmz.de/resource/blob/216548/sustainable-economic-development-training-employment-1-.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/216548/sustainable-economic-development-training-employment-1-.pdf)

migration components in vocational training, the training programmes will not only improve the opportunities for the target group on the local labour market in the partner country but also facilitate access to the labour market in the country of destination. However, it is essential that this approach be agreed through close consultations with partner governments to avoid the risk of harming a country's development prospects by causing a "brain drain".

To ensure that vocational and higher education in partner countries actually leads to employment, the BMZ supports systems that are permeable and responsive to labour market demands. It strengthens cooperation between government, business and social partners with a view to improving the design of vocational training, and it also promotes transitions to employment through, for instance, career guidance services, job placement and schemes to foster entrepreneurial skills. The BMZ funds initiatives to provide demand-driven in-service training and retraining programmes for tomorrow's labour markets and for efforts to integrate disadvantaged target groups through training schemes and the recognition of informally acquired skills. It encourages universities to cooperate with businesses by such means as the Special Initiative on "Decent Work for a Just Transition", which is impacting positively on the development of businesses and industries and on graduate employment.

With regard to vocational training, the BMZ works with the network of the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs), delegations of and bodies representing German industry,<sup>34</sup> national and regional chambers of industry and commerce (IHKs) in Germany, the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK e.V.), business enterprises, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), and the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET). Trade unions are also important partners for the BMZ, especially in its efforts to design vocational training programmes that are forward-looking, resilient and generate decent jobs in the partner countries.



*Two female experts in solar technology take readings of a solar module.*

At multilateral level, the BMZ's key partners for cooperation are the EU, the Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET) and, in contexts of displacement and crisis, UNHCR and UNICEF. To advance its position on vocational training in international processes and negotiations the BMZ works with the ILO, UNESCO (including UNESCO-UNEVOC), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the regional development banks.<sup>35</sup>

#### Employment promotion for women

The BMZ has commissioned the GIZ to implement the "Employment promotion for women for the green transformation in Africa (WE4D)" regional programme. The objective is to improve the economic situation of women in Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda, especially through employment opportunities in companies and value chains that are driving the green transformation towards a low-carbon economy. There is a focus on sectors with high job-creating potential for women, including renewable energy, the circular economy and waste management, sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and ecotourism. WE4D is co-funded by the Norwegian development agency Norad and the European Commission through several Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs), including the "Investing in Young Businesses in Africa – Women Entrepreneurship for Africa" TEI.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs). [www.ahk.de/en](http://www.ahk.de/en)

<sup>35</sup> BMZ: vocational training. [www.bmz.de/de/themen/berufsbildung/zusammenarbeit-mit-partnern-57690](http://www.bmz.de/de/themen/berufsbildung/zusammenarbeit-mit-partnern-57690) (only available in German)

<sup>36</sup> GIZ: Employment promotion for women for the green transformation in Africa. [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/123226.html](http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/123226.html)

## Strengthening higher education and science

The BMZ is committed to the consistent provision of support and funding for higher education and research of relevance to development. It supports universities and university cooperation initiatives designed, for instance, to establish and upgrade their teaching and research programmes, improve higher education management and develop quality assurance systems. A focus of this work is on study programmes geared to labour market demands, advanced courses for experts and managers, and research primarily in key sectors such as renewable energy, water, agriculture, health, climate and digitalisation. Universities should also be strengthened in their role as key partners for employment promotion and social change by receiving more support for their cooperation with business, society and policymakers.

By promoting higher education networks and academic exchange programmes, the BMZ supports universities and scientific institutions based in developing and emerging economies to strengthen their participation in international scientific and academic dialogue. Alongside this support, there is an important focus on funding for individuals, with grants awarded to students, lecturers and researchers, especially women and people from disadvantaged groups. Support is provided both in partner developing countries and in Germany.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) have been key partners over many years in the work of building higher educational structures, creating networks between universities, students and academics, and assisting individuals so they can become drivers of social change.

### Higher education partnerships

More than 140 cooperation projects between universities in developing countries and in Germany are being funded through the **DAAD**. They range from university-business partnerships to cross-continental networks of excellence, such as the network for Sustainable Energies,

Entrepreneurship and Development (SEED)<sup>37</sup>, and the co-operation projects of the Technical University of Munich on renewable energy, SMART mini-grids<sup>38</sup> and their potential for local enterprise. This work is flanked by higher education management courses run by the DAAD and the German Rectors' Conference (**HRK**) as part of the programme for "Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies" (DIES).<sup>39</sup> A new course for female vice-rectors will focus on the role played by universities in social change and the impact of artificial intelligence.

### Research fellowships

Since 1997, the BMZ-funded **Georg Forster Research Fellowship**<sup>40</sup> programme, run by the **Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH)**, has been awarding grants to qualified academics from developing and emerging economies who have already obtained a PhD. These fellowships enable them to conduct research at a German scientific institution on topics of relevance to development. The programme has, since 2012, been conferring the **Georg Forster Research Award** on internationally recognised academics from developing and emerging economies for their research excellence.



*In Senegal DAAD is supporting a higher education programme for renewable energy and energy efficiency (PESEREE).*

37 TU Munich: Welcome to TUM SEED Center. [web.tum.de/seed/home/](http://web.tum.de/seed/home/)

38 TU Munich: SEED Center's Living Lab. [web.tum.de/seed/living-labs/](http://web.tum.de/seed/living-labs/)

39 DAAD: higher education management (DIES). [www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/higher-education-management-dies/](http://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/higher-education-management-dies/)

40 AvH: Georg Forster Research Fellowship. [www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/apply/sponsorship-programmes/georg-forster-research-fellowship](http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/apply/sponsorship-programmes/georg-forster-research-fellowship)





*In Pakistan the BMZ is supporting efforts to improve the education offered by the state to refugees and host communities.*

## 5 Outlook

To ensure quality education for all and make education systems more resilient in the face of crises it is essential that we strengthen joint efforts in this direction. Education is not only a human right but also a lever for achieving sustainable development. This is why the BMZ will continue to treat education as an integral part of its work going forward.

Governments throughout the world need to invest more in education. Official development assistance (ODA) for education makes, in global comparison, only a minor contribution. It constitutes just 0.2 per cent (11 billion USD) of all expenditure on education. Nevertheless, international funding remains critical for urgently needed investment that will meet the demands of the future, above all in low-income countries.

More investment in education means more equality, more peace, more employment, greater prosperity, greater gender equality, and better protection against climate change – worldwide. So more investment in education also means investing in faster implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In the face of multiple and diverse challenges (not least health and climate change), the financial resources of the international community are limited. For this reason, it is particularly important that the expenditure still available for education be better coordinated and used more effectively.

In the field of basic education, the BMZ will continue its commitment to multilateral partnerships such as GPE and ECW. In the field of vocational training and higher education, the BMZ will continue to deepen its cooperation with the private sector and redouble its efforts to train skilled workers and managers so that the socially responsible, ecological transformation in its partner countries can succeed. The BMZ will also keep pushing for equal access to practice-oriented higher education and for an intensification of cooperation as equal partners within the global networks of academic and scientific cooperation. Working together in this way, we can find innovative solutions to the challenges before us.

# Abbreviations

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AvH	Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
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AHK	German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (Auslandshandelskammer)
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BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
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BMUV	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
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BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
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DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademische Austauschdienst)
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DC dVET	Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training
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DIES	Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies
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DIHK	Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag)
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DVV	German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband)
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ECW	Education Cannot Wait
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EPOS	Development-Related Postgraduate Courses (Entwicklungsbezogene Postgraduierten-studiengänge)
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ESD	Education for Sustainable Development (Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung)
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EU	European Union
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GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
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GOVET	German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training
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GPE	Global Partnership for Education
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G7	Group of Seven
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HRK	German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz)
IHK	Chamber of Industry and Commerce (Industrie- und Handelskammer)
ILO	International Labour Organization
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
KMK	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the <i>Länder</i> (Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder)
NDICI-GE	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe
Net4GTE	Feminist Network for Gender Transformative Education
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEED	Sustainable Energies, Entrepreneurship and Development
TEI	Team Europe Initiatives
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
ZDH	German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks)

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