Education is a top focus of Norway’s development policy, particularly for girls

Norway is the sixth-largest government donor to global education, spending US$426 million on education official development assistance (ODA) in 2016, according to OECD data form the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; latest year for which full data is available). This represents 9% of Norway’s total ODA, above the DAC average of 8%. Norway is the 10th-largest donor to education as a proportion of its total ODA.

The successive governments of Prime Minister (PM) Erna Solberg have made education Norway’s top development policy priority since 2013. This focus was reiterated in Norway’s April 2017 white paper on development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ‘Common responsibility for the common future – the SDGs and Norwegian development policy’. In line with this political priority, funding to education has grown and will continue to do so. According to the government, and in line with PM Solberg’s pledge, the education ODA budget doubled between 2013 and 2017, to reach NOK3.4 billion in 2017 (US$411 million, or 13% of total ODA). Budget for education, research and professional cooperation ODA stands at NOK3.8 billion (US$460 million) in 2019, a NOK160 million increase from 2018.

OECD data confirms this trajectory. Education ODA as reported to the OECD DAC increased by 78% between 2013 and 2016, going from US$239 million to US$426 million in the time-period. The increase is driven by greater spending on primary education, which grew from US$123 million in 2013 to US$260 million in 2016. This is in line with Norway’s focus on achieving universal primary education as a fundamental human right and key driver of development.

In its 2013-2014 ‘Education for Development’ strategy, the Norwegian government emphasizes primary education, system-level improvements, facilities, and teacher training as focus areas. The strategy was published in June 2014 but is still an accurate statement of the current government’s priorities. The strategy outlines three overarching goals:
1. ensuring all children have the same opportunities to complete schooling;
2. ensuring all people acquire basic skills; and
3. ensuring that as many kids as possible acquire skills that contribute to transitioning into the labor market.

Further information: ‘basic’ and ‘general’ education

In this profile, ‘basic education’ refers to the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) sector code ‘basic education’ (112), which includes primary education, basic skills for youths and adults, and early childhood education. ‘General education’ refers to the OECD CRS sector code ‘education, level unspecified’, which includes education policy and administrative management, education facilities and training, teacher training, and educational research.

Around these three main goals, the strategy outlines specific prioritized actions, including:
- Working toward free, high-quality primary education for all, including for girls and marginalized populations, such as those with disabilities;
- Ensuring literacy and other basic skills;
- Working to ensure that girls start and complete secondary education;
- Working to provide safe and secure school facilities;
- Ensuring continuity of education during humanitarian crises, including increasing funding for education as a component of humanitarian assistance;
- Helping improve national education systems and teacher training;
- Building up opportunities for high-quality vocational training.

In addition, Norway is one of few countries globally which regards education as an explicit component of its humanitarian assistance policy and shows international leadership. It is one of five founding donors to the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) initiative, a special fund launched in 2016 that aims to improve access to education services in humanitarian emergencies and crises. Norway contributed US$22.2 million to ECW since its launch, making it seventh-largest contributor. In its 2018 humanitarian strategy, the government committed to continue to give priority to education in situations of crisis and conflict, as well as to promote closer coordination between humanitarian and development efforts in education. According to the government, Norway spent 9% of its humanitarian assistance budget on education in 2016, and 12% was set aside for this purpose in the 2018 budget.
Norway also assumes international leadership in bringing global education in general, and particularly girls’ education, higher on the development agenda: Solberg co-initiated the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity and hosted the Oslo Summit on Education for Development in 2015. The Commission aims to set the course on how to promote and find innovative financing solutions for education in order to achieve the SDGs. In 2018, Norway committed NOK2.1 billion (US$276 million) to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for 2018 to 2020, a NOK600 million increase compared to its previous 2015-2017 pledge. As of December 2018, Norway was the third-largest donor to the GPE, having contributed US$566 million since 2002 (10% of total funding).

In total, 63% of Norway’s education went through multilateral organizations in 2016, either as core contributions (7%) or as earmarked funding (55%, reported to the OECD under bilateral funding). Key partners include the United Nations’ Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), GPE, and the World Bank.

Norway’s bilateral investments focus on ‘basic education’ (63% of bilateral education ODA in 2017), which mostly consists of support for primary education. Other funding priorities include ‘general education’ (23% in 2017), which primarily consists of support for system strengthening, facilities, and training. Funding to both basic education and general education has grown exponentially between 2013 and 2017, with respective increases of 80% and 108%.

A separate action plan for increasing the use of digital learning platforms and solutions in the educational efforts will be developed in 2019.

**Norad leads on education policy development**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for Norway’s global education portfolio and sets strategic priorities. Traditionally, Norad’s Department for Global Education and Health advises the MFA on development assistance for education and carries out evaluation processes. Norad’s Department for Global Health in Education also plays a key role in evaluating progress around Norway’s education priorities.
NORWAY'S ODA TO EDUCATION

US$ millions

OECD CRS, and imputed multilateral contributions to the education sector: DAC secretariat estimates. In 2017 prices.

NORWAY'S BILATERAL ODA TO EDUCATION ACROSS SUB-SECTORS, 2017

Total: US$382 million

OECD CRS. In 2017 prices.
TOP 10 DAC DONORS TO EDUCATION, 2016
Total education ODA; US$ millions; in 2017 prices; incl. bilateral and multilateral funding

- Germany: 2,294
- United States: 1,690
- United Kingdom: 1,671
- France: 1,357
- Japan: 737
- Norway: 426
- Korea: 278
- Canada: 274
- Australia: 273
- Italy: 234

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the education sector (DAC Secretariat estimates)

TOP 10 DAC DONORS TO EDUCATION, 2016
Education ODA as % of total ODA

- New Zealand: 15.7
- Portugal: 14.8
- Luxembourg: 14.3
- Hungary: 12.9
- Slovenia: 12
- Korea: 11.4
- France: 11.2
- Austria: 11
- Poland: 9.3
- Norway: 9.3

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the education sector (DAC Secretariat estimates)