



### 3. G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021 WORKING GROUP Education (September 2021)

#### **Building Resilient and Well-Being Sensitive Education Systems: Recommendations for Practical Action by G20 Leaders**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in worldwide educational systems. In particular, during the mass school closures, and the attempted shifts to hybrid modes of learning, significant inadequacies and drastic global disparities in students' access to quality education have been brought to light. Alongside these concerns is a further recognition of the sufferings (material, physical, social-emotional, mental, spiritual) endured by children and young people throughout the lockdowns, and a striking gap in the provisions of online learning facilities and resources between higher and lower income countries. All these have aggravated an existing epidemic of youth ill-being, not least amongst young people who are already at the margins.

In response to this year's G20's agenda, *People Planet Prosperity*, and the G20 Interfaith Forum's (IF20) theme, *A Time to Heal*, the IF20 Education Working Group partners launched a **Global Listening Initiative (GLI)**. The aim of the **GLI** was two-fold: (1) to ground policy inquiry in existing global proposals, (2) to understand youth lived experiences in diverse contexts and engage them in identifying actions for positive change in education.

The **GLI** consisted in two parts: an extended Desk Review to *listen to* the widespread calls to action from diverse international organisations, global educational commissions, religious communities, grassroots movement and scholars; and a global consultation to listen to young people and engage with their perspectives. Over two thousand adolescents (aged 14-19) from 26 countries across five continents took part in online and/or in-person workshops hosted by NGOs, schools, and faith-based organisations. Adolescents from diverse backgrounds were invited to reflect on their experiences of life and education during the Covid-19 pandemic; identify who and what have been most supportive to their learning and well-being; and propose policy priorities that can explicitly support healing, learning and flourishing in education. Instead of a systematic comparative study, participants' insights were drawn out through a deep listening and dialogic process, and immersive data analysis, bringing together themes arising from structured and unstructured facilitators' and youth's reports, images, drawings, and quotes from participants.

Both processes have yielded rich understandings on the potential to work purposefully through education programmes to advocate for and advance equity, inclusion, and well-being. Conceptions and practices of healing and well-being rooted in faith, indigenous and other spiritual traditions have special importance and distinctive facets in the circumstances of the COVID-19 emergencies. In the light of policy priorities outlined by G20 leaders, and the emergent insights from the **GLI** processes, the IF20 Education Working Group partners support five key interconnected recommendations to address global challenges:

#### **1. Safeguard healing and well-being as a cornerstone of education**

- a) Focusing teaching and learning specifically on enriching students' and teachers' healing and well-being
- b) Developing whole school relational processes
- c) Shifting from stress-inducing standardisation and high-stakes testing to a relational, participatory, and well-being-sensitive approach to educational evaluation

#### **2. Engage youth in educational decision-making**

- a) Involving young people formally and informally in educational decisions at all levels, e.g. school, community, and beyond
- b) Providing opportunities for youth to play an active part in innovative educational visions and strategies that can enable them to meet global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, social injustice, and climate
- c) Nurturing relevant competencies to empower youth leadership

#### **3. Ensure all children and young people's equitable and consistent access to quality education**

- a) Committing to financing education inclusively, equitably and equally
- b) Investing in good quality educational resources and facilities for all
- c) Providing infrastructures that ensure access to online learning

#### **4. Embed global and ecological concerns in curricula agenda**

- a) Supporting co-created curricular contents with young people to ensure that they are community-rooted as well as relevant to global concerns and challenges
- b) Integrating environmental and nature-based learning in curricula
- c) Enabling young people to participate in service learning and contribute to community regeneration

#### **5. Prioritise teachers' well-being and strengthen their capacities to facilitate blended learning**

- a) Establishing online platforms and resources for teachers' professional learning and well-being
- b) Financing professional development programmes that can enhance teachers well-being and strengthen their pedagogical capacities for digital and online education
- c) Nurturing teachers' professional competencies