

4-5 April 2023



Introduction

The High-level Global Dialogue Series on SIDS was launched in 2021 as a joint initiative between the UNESCO secretariat and the SIDS Group to mobilize UN partnerships and others to seek funding and to enhance UNESCO's efforts in strengthening resilience of SIDS. The first event, which took place on 22 October 2021, was dedicated to [Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and it was organized in two different sections, one for the Pacific region and the other for the Caribbean and AIS regions. The event included interventions by high-level dignitaries, as well as representatives from regional and multilateral organizations, regional development banks, relevant ministers from SIDS, bilateral partners and youth representatives.

This second meeting will be in line with UNESCO's Strategy on Technological Innovation in Education 2022-2025 (212 EX/Decision 12).¹ This Strategy, developed jointly by the Communication and Information Sector and the Education Sector, builds on the recommendations of the 2019 Internal Oversight Service (IOS) Evaluation of UNESCO's work in information and communication technologies (ICT) in education.² It seeks to leverage technologies and digital innovations to ensure more inclusive, effective and relevant learning.

Digital technologies have been proven to be crucial in building inclusive knowledge societies. Increasing usage and users of new technologies has a significant impact on how information is produced, used, archived and shared. Societies, especially young people, are much more connected today than ever

¹ Accessible at: [UNESCO Strategy on Technological Innovation in Education \(2022–2025\) - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

² Accessible at: [Evaluation of UNESCO's work in information and communication technologies \(ICT\) in education - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

before. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the impact of digital technologies on societies by establishing their roles in ensuring the continuation of educational and development activities online and worldwide. Information and Communication technologies played a vital role in responding to this crisis and in building the resilience of societies to deal with such crises.

With the advancement of digital technologies, data production has grown exponentially. Increased usage of data has generated pathbreaking advantages in managing disasters, forecasting weather, gaining access to valuable and actionable insights, helping governments to enact and monitor policies, and accelerating processes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. For this reason, UNESCO advocates for the increased digitalization of information, inclusive usage of Information and Communication technologies, and the openness of research and government data worldwide, including in SIDS. It aims at enhancing access and openness of information for citizens to use and share.³

During the COVID-19 pandemic, vulnerable communities, minorities, and women and young girls in particular, were unable to access information and knowledge when educational institutions and libraries closed. The pandemic made digital and knowledge divides more visible within and among countries, including in many SIDS, which deprived them from generating and benefitting from innovative solutions. Additionally, ethical and accessibility issues that interfere with fundamental human rights are increasingly challenging the use of digital technologies. Increased surveillance, data mining and profiling, as well as algorithmic bias and automated decision-making, are new risks to the rights to privacy and non-discrimination. Social, economic and gender inequalities, between and within countries, are also reinforced by the divides that exist in digital skills and accessibility.⁴

Digital technologies can contribute to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of learning systems and its models for financing. It includes the use of digital technologies in increasing access to high quality and contextually relevant content for all learners, especially those that are commonly marginalized. Digital technologies empower teachers by providing them professional development opportunities and facilitating effective pedagogical practices. The digital transformation of education is aimed at a wider systemic upgrading of models including the reimagining of the modes of provision of education by using technologies to abridge formal, non-formal and informal settings; and enable the use of technology productively for education, lifelong learning and life-wide empowering purposes. It also supports the knowledge deepening and knowledge creation autonomously, sometimes according to idiosyncratic interests, and enhances the resilience and the quality of education and lifelong learning systems including in times of disruption and in emergencies.

Open Solutions, comprising Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Access to scientific information (OA), Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) and Open Data, have been recognized to support the free flow of information and knowledge, thereby informing responses to global challenges. UNESCO supports Member States in the implementation of the [2019 Recommendation on Open Educational Resources](#) (OER), the first UNESCO instrument in technologies and open digital content. This normative instrument promotes the mainstreaming of OER by supporting actions in five areas (i) building capacity of stakeholders; (ii) developing supportive policy; (iii) encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER; (iv) nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER, and (v) facilitating international cooperation. UNESCO also supports the strengthening of data governance mechanisms and innovations to promote availability and accessibility of open data. This contributes to the advancement of open science, notably within the framework of the [2021 Recommendation on Open Science](#). UNESCO supports Member States by strengthening their national capacities for open access to scientific information for enhanced scientific research, innovation and domestic research as a common good.

³ UNESCO, Communication and information, Open solution, Open data. Accessible at: [Open Data | UNESCO](#)

⁴ Communication and information sector's programme and meeting document. UNESCO - CI-2021/EO/PI/1.2021. Accessible at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375369>

Digital public goods are essential in unlocking the full potential of digital technologies and data to attain the Sustainable Development Goals.

Digital transformation is the summation of all processes of using digital and Information and Communication technologies enabling technologies to generate new or modify existing development processes, culture, teaching and learning experiences to meet changing developmental and societal demands. As the lead United Nations agency for education, UNESCO guides international efforts on the role technology can play to accelerate progress toward SDG 4 while learning from the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes strengthening policies that improve educational access and learning outcomes by investing in quality education. Digital transformation of education systems and openness of data ensure that no one in this system is left behind by supporting teachers to exercise their role effectively; administrators to make informed decisions;⁵ and citizens in general to have open access to the information produced. Taking into consideration the importance of the aforementioned issues, 'Transformation of education in the Digital Age', was selected as the theme for the 2023 Global SIDS Dialogue.

The two-day dialogue will be structured around the following themes:

- **Global Gateway and national digital learning platforms:** As part of the [2022 Transforming Education Summit](#), countries were invited to make commitments in the area of digital learning content. One of the commitments was to establish and improve national digital learning platforms with high quality, curriculum-aligned education resources, in line with UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Educational Resources to ensure these platforms empower teachers, learners, and families, support accessibility and sharing of content, and meet the diverse needs of users including learners with disabilities, girls and women, and people on the move. This theme will examine the unique potential of national digital learning platforms to deliver rich and engaging content beneficial to learners, teachers, caregivers and other education stakeholders; to assure the continuity of learning and expand educational options for learners facing disadvantages due to disability, geography, conflict, poverty, ethnicity, language, gender and/or other factors; and to provide learning opportunities for learners outside formal education systems, such as migrants and refugees. The theme will encourage the sharing of best practices, research and evidence about digital education resources and platforms, across different contexts.
- **Open Educational Resources:** The [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#), the only UN normative instrument in the area of openly licensed educational content and technologies, calls on Member States to make available freely and openly accessible content, and leverage "open licensed platforms with interoperation of metadata [...] to help ensure OER can be easily found, accessed, re-used, adapted, and redistributed in a safe, secure and privacy-protected mode." OER have been recognized around the world as a key means to ensure equitable, inclusive access to knowledge and learning. This theme will examine the actions taken, but also the considerations and propositions for leveraging OER to address the challenges in teaching and learning processes through the 5 areas of action outlined in this normative instrument adopted by UNESCO Member States by consensus : (i) building capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER; (ii) developing supportive policy; (iii) encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER; (iv) nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER, and (v) facilitating international cooperation, of the OER Recommendation , and to improve or even

⁵ The Digital Transformation of Education: Connecting Schools, Empowering Learners (September 2020), Broadband commission for sustainable development , International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374309/PDF/374309eng.pdf.multi>

transform educational provision. The theme will also explore how the Recommendation provides the necessary conditions for the establishment of safe, sustainable and quality open educational resources and platforms. It will also explore the value of internationally agreed-upon instruments and resources and examine innovative best practices of Governments on the implementation of the UNESCO OER Recommendation 2019.

- **Digitalization of SIDS:** SIDS share similar development challenges that can be positively addressed by digital transformation, which has proven to have a positive impact on our economies and societies. In particular, digitalization of education allows for more flexible and personalized learning processes and pathways and pedagogical innovation, but also drives changes in the way education management systems are conceived and learners' competences evaluated. Digital technology has become a social necessity to ensure education as a basic human right, especially in a world experiencing more frequent crises and conflicts. This theme will examine how SIDS can leverage digital technologies to respond to their major challenges and will provide a platform for sharing experiences in working towards the digitalization of their processes.
- **Leveraging AI for the transformation of education:** AI is part and parcel of the infrastructure of the digital transformation of education and plays a unique role in addressing some of the biggest challenges in education today, innovating teaching and learning practices, and ultimately accelerating the progress towards SDG 4. This theme will examine the value of AI in the transformation of education as a public endeavor, share experiences on how global governance of AI and national policies can be enhanced and synergized to ensure AI can be used for the common good of humanity, and promote proven best practices and effective use of trusted AI tools to transform learning, teaching, education management and provision of education while ensuring the protection of human rights, data privacy, digital inclusion and digital well-being of both teachers and learners. This theme will also examine complex issues in handling data based on the findings of a focused survey undertaken of SIDS worldwide.

Objectives of the SIDS Global Dialogue Series

- Provide SIDS with the opportunity to share their experiences on the digital transformation process of their education systems;
- Share critical needs and new advances on data innovations for SIDS in their digital transformation efforts;
- Identify additional priority areas to further support SIDS;
- Advocate for digital transformation and openness of data in the education sector in SIDS;
- Mobilize partners and facilitate international cooperation to support the digital transformation of the education sector in SIDS; and
- Identify funding opportunities for digital transformation, resilience and openness in SIDS.

Expected outcomes

During the dialogue, Member States will be able to identify the gaps, challenges and opportunities related to the digital transformation of the education systems in SIDS, with a focus on concrete solutions to address them. The report of the meeting will be used to identify funding opportunities, use them to inform decision making process about extrabudgetary projects, and advocate and raise awareness about the challenges and opportunities that exist. Some possible project proposals to address digital transformation in SIDS may include:

- The launch of a Digital Strategy in SIDS countries in cooperation with the group of SIDS to advance connectivity, capacity building and service provision.

- The training of youth and targeted professionals such as teachers and policymakers in the creation and use of advanced digital technologies to develop the necessary knowledge and skills, which will generate income and improve the efficiency of the education system and decision-making.
- Assessment of data innovation and the support needed for AI and take stock of the legal and regulatory frameworks required for improved Data Governance.

Format of the event

A hybrid meeting will be organized from 4 to 5 April 2023. A 3 hour and 30 minute meeting will be organized for Small Island Developing States from the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea and Caribbean Regions on 4 April, with interpretation in French, Spanish, Portuguese and English, and a 3 hour and 30 minute meeting will be organized for the Pacific Region on 5 April 2023. The 2-day event will take place online and in room XI.

Target audience

The participants will include Heads of States, Ambassadors and other high-level personalities from UN agencies, as well as representatives from private sector.

Agenda

(CET time, Paris time)

Day 1 <i>Caribbean and AIS Regions</i> Tuesday 4 April 2023, 13:00-17:00		Day 2 <i>Pacific Region</i> Wednesday 5 April 2023, 8:00-11:30	
Sign in		Sign in	
13:00 - 13:45	High-level Opening session	8:00 - 8:30	High-level Opening session
13:45 - 14:45	Session 1 Setting the Scene (challenges - opportunities)	8:30 - 9:30	Session 1 Setting the Scene (challenges - opportunities)
Break (20 min)			
15:00 - 15:55	Session 2 Solutions (new skills sets and strategies for the digital age)	9:50 - 10:30	Session 2 Solutions (new skills sets and strategies for the digital age)
15:55 - 16:35	Session 3 Partnerships	10:30 - 11:15	Session 3 Partnerships
16:35 - 17:00	Closing Session	11:15 - 11:30	Closing Session