

# NORRAG STRATEGY

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## About NORRAG


NORRAG is a global network of 5,000 members for international policies and cooperation in education and training. NORRAG is an offshoot of the Research, Review, and Advisory Group (RRAG) established in 1976 and at the time funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Swedish International Development Authority (Sida). It was charged with critically reviewing and disseminating education research related to the developing world. The current name was adopted in 1986 and NORRAG is now mainly supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Open Society Foundations (OSF).


NORRAG's strength lies in addressing under-researched questions of quality and equity in key issues in education and development, and in amplifying under-represented expertise particularly from the South. NORRAG's core mandate is to produce, disseminate and broker critical knowledge, and to build capacity for and with the wide range of stakeholders who constitute our network. Our stakeholders from academia, governments, NGOs, international organizations, foundations and the private sector inform and shape education policies and practice at national and international levels. Through our work, NORRAG contributes to creating the conditions for more participatory, evidence-informed decisions that improve equal access to and quality of education and training.


NORRAG is an associate programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva.


More information about NORRAG, including its scope of work and thematic areas, is available at [www.norrag.org](http://www.norrag.org)

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 NORRAG

**NORRAG**

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cooperation in education and training  
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# VISION

**NORRAG envisions a world where everyone enjoys the right to equitable, quality, accessible lifelong education as a public and common good.**

## Upholding the right to education and lifelong learning as a public good

In 2015, the world recommitted to a longstanding promise to ensure access to equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Important strides have been made in increasing school enrollment - especially in access for girls and women.

However, despite reinvigorated efforts to increase access to learning, 258 million children and youth were deprived of school education in 2019. And for those with access to school learning, equity and quality concerns remain. At the same time, we're seeing how education and training are increasingly affected by issues such as pandemics, conflict and climate change, and how education affects those issues in turn. Fulfilling the right to education is both a private and public good. Education is vital for improving individuals' self-actualisation and employment prospects, and is also crucial in inspiring their contribution to wider environmental, social and economic wellbeing.

## Ensuring access to quality and equitable education and training

Serious investment inflows from governments worldwide have increased the numbers of children at school. However, marginalised groups remain harder to reach and may be left even further behind as the enrollment of learners from more accessible populations improves. Furthermore, many children and youth are experiencing disruptions in their education and currently, little support is provided to teachers or planners in adapting to these disruptions. 583 million children were affected by temporary school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic and that brings worrying longer-term consequences, particularly for girls' education. Awareness is growing of the potential tensions between reaching more immediately measurable indicators (on access and parity, for example) and achieving more contextualised, systemic progress towards the full Education 2030 vision.



# MISSION

**NORRAG seeks to actively participate in the creation of the conditions for more participatory, evidence-informed policy decisions that improve equal access to quality education**

This strategy lays out how NORRAG will continue to support public, private and voluntary sectors and academia worldwide in our common goal to improve equitable and quality education and learning outcomes for the learners and societies that are at the centre of all education policy and practice.

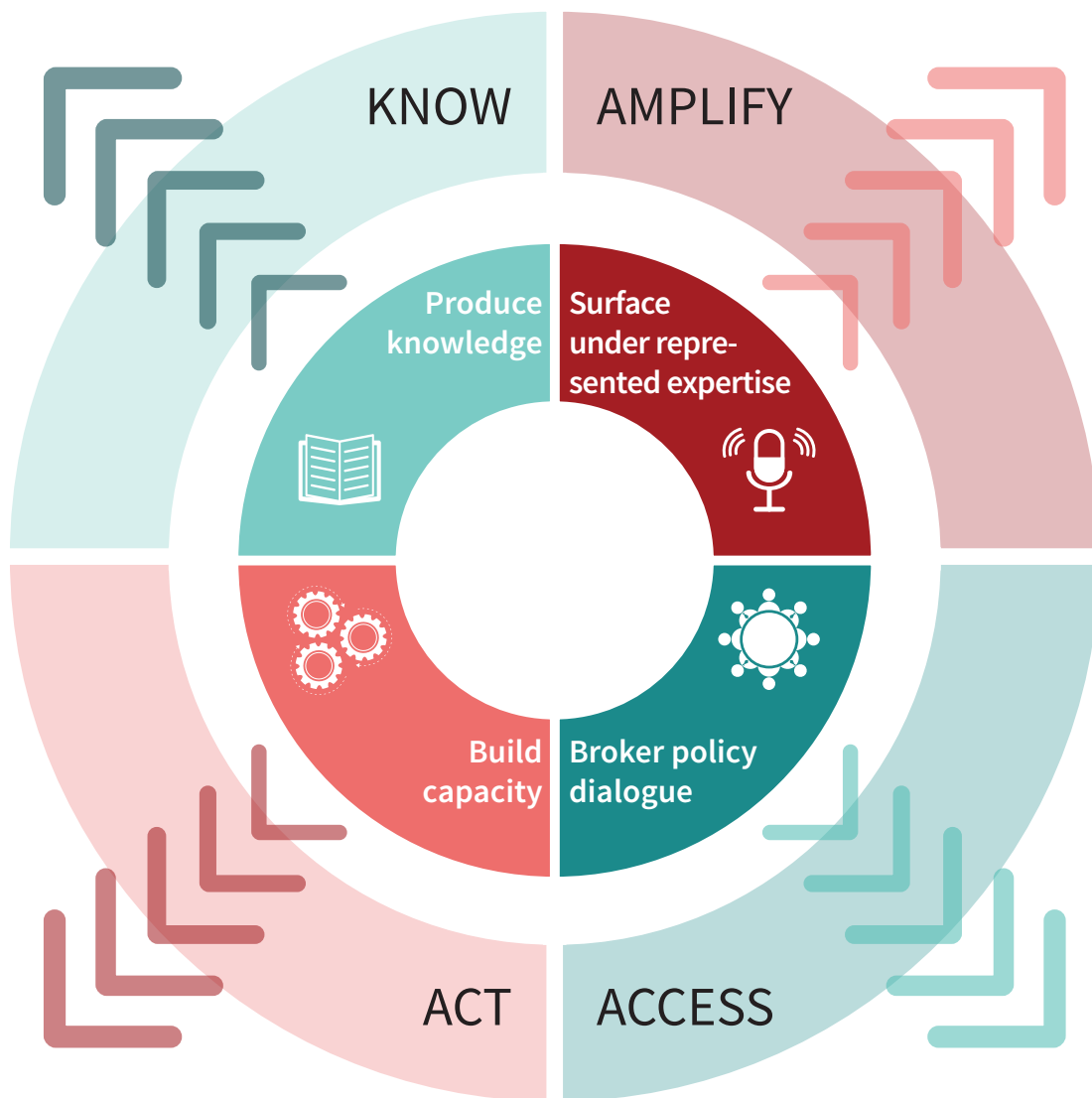
# FROM STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES TO STAKEHOLDER OUTCOMES

## Working at the interstices of knowledge, policy and practice

NORRAG co-produces, mobilises and disseminates quality **research and evidence** on education and development in order to help reduce uncertainty for policy makers, planners, practitioners and researchers. Surfacing and amplifying **under-represented expertise**, particularly from the South, helps to generate relevant and contextualised global, regional and national public goods and policy debate. Recognising that evidence use is essentially a relational process underpins our facilitation of **policy dialogue** in Geneva and worldwide. **Building capacity** to collect, interpret and use data and evidence helps to improve educational planning, policymaking and practice.

Together these ways of working activate positive feedback loops that enable a more favourable environment for evidence-informed policy, planning and practice for equitable, quality education. NORRAG's distinctive approach to advancing equitable, quality, accessible lifelong education enables our stakeholders to:

- KNOW** what robust evidence exists
- AMPLIFY** knowledge that is context-relevant
- ACCESS** under-represented knowledge relevant to their work
- ACT** work with context-relevant knowledge and expertise to formulate priorities and solutions

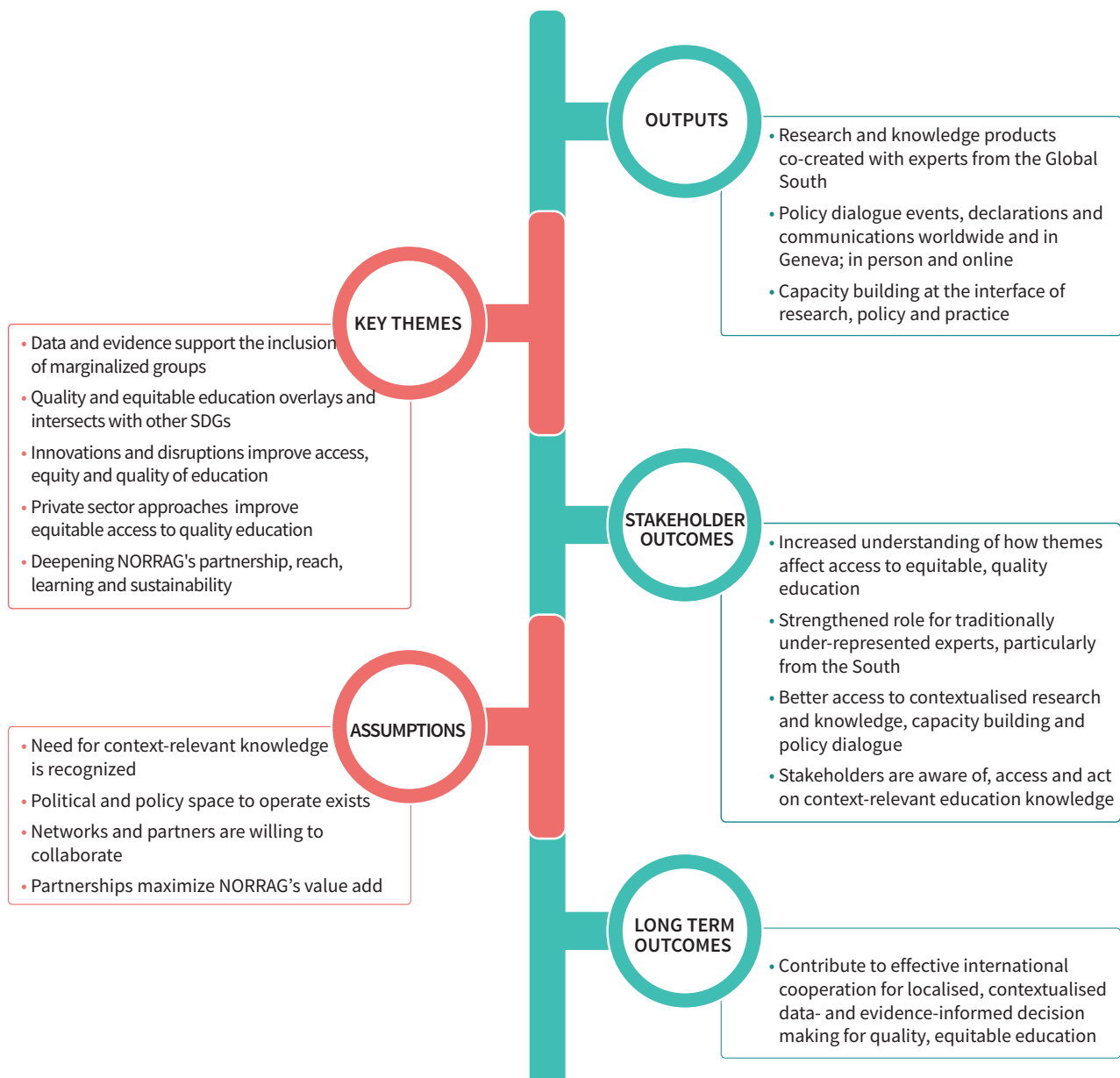


NORRAG strategic activities  




 Stakeholder outcomes

# THEORY OF CHANGE



NORRAG's vision is of a world where everyone enjoys the right to equitable, quality, accessible lifelong education and learning as a public good

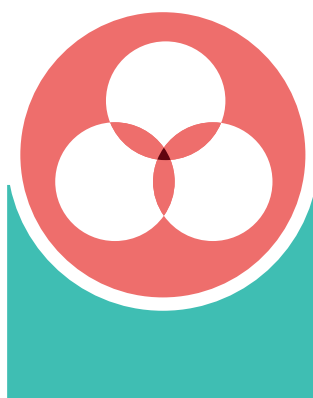
# 2021-25 THEMATIC PRIORITIES

NORRAG will undertake projects in four thematic priority areas which need more and better contextualised research and knowledge, policy dialogue and capacity building. A fifth set of transversal activities relates to ensuring NORRAG’s institutional sustainability.



## HOW CAN DATA AND EVIDENCE SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS IN LEARNING?

- Global fora are aware of missing data and evidence, and the implications for access, quality and equity
- Under-represented experts are consulted in designing and implementing global data governance
- New and existing global data is governed and curated in ways that make it more accessible and relevant to domestic stakeholders
- Strengthened role of Geneva as a hub for EiE



## HOW DOES EQUITABLE AND QUALITY EDUCATION OVERLAY AND INTERSECT WITH OTHER SDGs?

- Decision makers mitigate or prevent the risks and maximize the benefits of concepts and practices of intersectoriality
- Public, private and voluntary sectors, and academia understand how achieving equitable, quality education supports the achievement of other SDGs
- Strengthened role for national education experts in global knowledge exchange and policy dialogue



## DO INNOVATIONS AND DISRUPTIONS IMPROVE ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION?

- Decision makers mitigate or prevent the risks and maximize the benefits of disruptions to education
- Public, private and voluntary sectors and academia seek out local expertise and innovations in education
- Strengthened role of Geneva as a hub of education and international cooperation
- Innovative solutions that uphold equity and quality in education are scaled up from contextualized local initiatives



## CAN PRIVATE SECTOR APPROACHES IN EDUCATION UPHOLD ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY?

- Governments, international organisations, the private sector and foundations, NGOs, and academia are more aware of the actual risks and benefits of private sector approaches in education
- The needs and concerns of affected populations and experts in the South are included in decisions
- Decision makers mitigate or prevent the risks and maximize the benefits of private sector approaches in education

## DEEPENING NORRAG’S PARTNERSHIPS, REACH, LEARNING AND SUSTAINABILITY



- NORRAG achieves a critical mass of active partners and participants from the South
- We are relevant to more and more diverse actors in governments, international organisations, the private sector and foundations, NGOs, and academia
- We secure more core and project funding



## HOW CAN DATA AND EVIDENCE SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS IN LEARNING?

Used by policy makers, planners, researchers or at the programmatic level, education data and evidence contribute to defining and orienting the reality in which education policies and programmes are designed, financed and implemented. NORRAG contributes to ensuring that the most vulnerable and neglected groups become visible and audible in education data, thus informing policy dialogue, research and the daily practices of education stakeholders worldwide.

Beyond the traditional use of data and evidence by researchers, the renewed importance given to education data goes hand in hand with increased funding, thus creating incentives for all organizations and individuals (including non-data specialists) to engage with and rely more heavily on data-based analyses. These trends can generate an increase in the misuse and abuse of education data and statistics, and can contribute to the further neglect of marginalised people – whether in terms of ability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, or sexual orientation. The development of evidence-based practice and policy in education is a challenge among others that compels the education community to think both about the quality and governance of the data and evidence base. NORRAG has been actively involved in this topic since the early days of the Education for All agenda. We continue to examine how exclusion is perpetuated as a consequence of absence of data.



### Priority projects

#### Missing Data Summit, regional symposia series, communication and toolkit

Data collection and governance regimes can contribute to “leaving no one behind” by increasing the representation of marginalized groups in education data collection, disaggregation and governance. With universities in seven regions.

#### Expert groups in data and evidence for education in emergencies

We will continue to co-lead the Data and Evidence Expert Group in the INEE with FHI360, as well as contributing to the Geneva Hub on Education in Emergencies.

#### Professional development in data and evidence for education in emergencies

NORRAG will develop and deliver graduate-level professional development courses using research and expertise developed in previous research projects, with UNESCO-IIEP.

#### Teacher policy, training and labour market

Support the Teacher Task Force Expert group and Policy Dialogues and support the development of an international classification of teacher training programmes (TTPs).

#### Governance of data and evidence for education in emergencies

Longitudinal mapping of the ecosystem of data for education in emergencies showing actors, their priorities and connections over time.



## SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE MAP

### IF NORRAG:

builds capacity of stakeholders in collecting and using data for education in emergencies

supports the development of awareness, governance and capabilities in missing education data and data governance

supports the development and awareness of inclusive monitoring and standards in teacher policy and training



### THEN:

better understanding of the need for contextualised and needs-sensitive data collection and governance

greater awareness in global and regional fora of issues related to missing education data tools and governance

under-represented expertise is mobilised to improve global standards



### AND STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION MAKERS:

collect and use more relevant and needs-sensitive data including in emergencies and fragile contexts

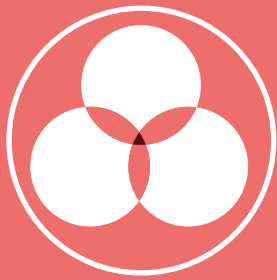
improve use and collection of appropriate data in planning and programmatic decisions to support inclusion

develop and use more locally relevant global public goods that better support the complete Education 2030 agenda



### GOAL

DATA AND EVIDENCE SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS IN EQUITABLE AND QUALITY LEARNING



## HOW DOES EQUITABLE AND QUALITY EDUCATION OVERLAY AND INTERSECT WITH OTHER SDGS?

The SDGs acknowledge the importance of the interconnections between different issue areas and sectors that have traditionally been considered to be separate domains of expertise and practice. In response to this, intersectoral collaboration has come to be seen as a more efficient and effective way of working.

Every other goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relies on quality, inclusive and equitable education that empowers people to contribute to their societies and communities. Equally, learning is affected by other SDGs, such as climate change, health and nutrition, or peace and democracy. Furthermore, how education systems are organised is critical if we are to achieve gender equality (SDG5) or reduce inequalities (SDG10); goals that underpin all of our activities.

NORRAG's work in this area aims to stimulate critical, multi-perspective and multi-stakeholder dialogue and knowledge co-production around SDG4 and the broader 2030 agenda, and its impact on policy and practice. We will draw on our strength in surfacing under-represented expertise, particularly from the South, to bring additional – and intersectional – perspectives to the debate. In each of the three themes below, we will convene working groups, commission scoping studies, publish NSIs, publish edited volumes, publish blog series, convene policy dialogue events, and apply for project funding to examine intersectorality and access to equitable, quality education.



### Priority projects

#### Intersectorality in Education Summit, regional symposia series, communication and toolkit

Drawing on case studies from intersectorality between education and health, climate change, and peace and democracy.

#### Education in times of pandemics (SDG 3)

What do increasing and increasingly widespread pandemics and other health shocks and stresses mean for education systems as well as for learners, teachers, and administrators? With UCL-CIED.

#### Education for sustainable societies (SDG 11 and 16)

How can education fulfil its potential to nurture peaceful intra- and intercommunity relations, and to foster skills and values of democratic participation?

#### Education in times of climate change (SDG 7, 12 and 13)

As the effects of climate change become more noticeable across the globe, young people are demanding action on climate change. What role can education play?

#### Education in International Geneva

Longitudinal mapping of the education ecosystem in the international community in Geneva to examine whether systems mapping techniques support education stakeholders to make new and deeper connections and partnerships.

## SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE MAP

### IF NORRAG:

curates knowledge on the connections between education and health, climate change, and peace and democracy

examines intersectorality between education and three other SDGs, and how intersectoral collaboration works

undertakes research on the Geneva education and international cooperation governance ecosystem



### THEN:

wider awareness of under-represented expertise (particularly from the South) on intersectorality

learning curated from a wider set of cases of intersectorality

awareness of depth and breadth of education and international cooperation governance ecosystem in Geneva



### AND STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION MAKERS:

can better understand and identify good practices in intersectorality

better utilise under-represented expertise and evidence in intersectorality to improve access, quality and equity of education

strengthen relations with others in Geneva ecosystem of education and international cooperation



### GOAL

INTERSECTORIALITY UPHOLDS ACCESS TO EQUITABLE AND QUALITY EDUCATION



## DO INNOVATIONS AND DISRUPTIONS IMPROVE ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION?

More than ever, safeguarding the right to education and the opportunity to learn is the most salient challenge for education leaders locally, nationally and globally. This task alone is difficult. In addition, demands are placed on education systems and institutions to innovate and respond to disruptions.

The education community everywhere is focused on realising the universal right to education and lifelong learning. Innovations are frequent within education systems and teaching practices that seek to improve how they may support learning and equitable access to quality education. Disruptions can be brought about by shock external factors or slow-burn incremental change. Such changes – and innovative solutions to them – can provide the opportunity to build stronger and more inclusive and equitable systems focused on quality education as a public and common good. However, they can also be seized by non-education interests or manipulated to reinforce old hierarchies, which may perpetuate and exacerbate the marginalisation of already underserved groups. NORRAG will continue (as it has since its inception) to address the benefits and risks of under-researched contemporary innovations and disruptions for advancing equitable quality education.



### Priority projects

#### Amplifying and scaling local innovations and public goods

Addressing local and regional challenges by engaging local policy actors in knowledge production; analysis of scalable innovations; peer exchange and policy learning in 21 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Pacific region. With partners including FHI360, ACER, NUGSE, UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF Geneva.

#### Digital disruptions in education and learning

How can the use of digital technologies for learning improve access, equity and quality concerns for learners, families, teachers planners and policymakers? With the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, OHCHR.

#### Zombie ideas in international cooperation and education

Discussing ideas that are not true but that may be widely believed and remain embedded in education and training policy discourse and practices.

#### NORRAG Policy and Academic Fellowships

Policy Fellows and Academic Fellows will be supported by NORRAG to produce an original piece of research as they join and strengthen South-South networks and mobilise a NORRAG network in their home country.

#### Systems approaches

Curated research, policy dialogue and knowledge products examining the implications of the change in global education discourse from sector to systems for the provision, financing and governance of education. With UK FCDO.

## SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE MAP

### IF NORRAG:

surfaces and amplifies expertise from the South on innovative solutions, including in the scaling up of local initiatives

develops programmes of work in under-researched innovations and disruptions in education

co-finances Fellowships for scholars and policy professionals from the South



### THEN:

evidence-informed innovations developed in the South are disseminated in the South and North, and taken to scale in context-sensitive ways

evidence-informed analyses of the actual risks and benefits of disruptions and innovations will become more readily available

they will participate in more and more relevant professional activities and networking



### AND STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION MAKERS:

use and disseminate evidence from the South on emerging issues and their solutions

have better understanding of the actual risks and benefits of proposed solutions

share and gain knowledge and expertise while embedded in a professional network



### GOAL

ACCESS TO QUALITY AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION ARE UPHELD WHEN FACING INNOVATIONS AND DISRUPTIONS



## CAN PRIVATE SECTOR APPROACHES IN EDUCATION UPHOLD ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY?

The number and type of private and non-state actors engaging in education and development is increasing across the world at the same time as public actors are adopting practices and priorities that are traditionally associated with the private sector. NORRAG aims to deepen collective knowledge of the actual benefits and risks of these changes.

The private sector's involvement in education services, financing and policy is increasing. However, there is a significant lack of data and evidence on the access and equity impacts of private actors in education. There is also a lack of open and informed dialogue between diverse stakeholders on the benefits and risks of private sector involvement in education, and how to avoid damaging trade-offs between efficiency and equity. Finally, there is a lack of capacity for engagement between public and private sector actors: public officials have not been trained to understand business models or negotiate effectively with private actors, while private sector actors are not aware of the complexity and scale of public education systems. To contribute to aligning private sector approaches with SDG4, we address these three issues by providing more rigorous and contextualised evidence for policy, practitioner and research communities.

### Priority projects

#### Results-Based Financing (RBF) at the meso-level of the education system

Results-based financing is hoped to improve the effectiveness of education spending. This project provides a comprehensive review examining the evidence for incentivising the role of under-studied meso-level (local, district) actors.

#### Impact assessment of innovative financing mechanisms on equity and quality

Do innovations in education financing bring in more and better financing to provide inclusive and equitable quality education to the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups, especially girls and people living in poverty? With University of Cape Town and Tata Institute, Mumbai.

#### Effectiveness of public-private partnerships

To what extent have the widely anticipated effects of public-private partnerships materialized in ways that improve cross-sectoral collaboration and education outcomes, provision, financing and governance?

#### Professional development in innovative financing

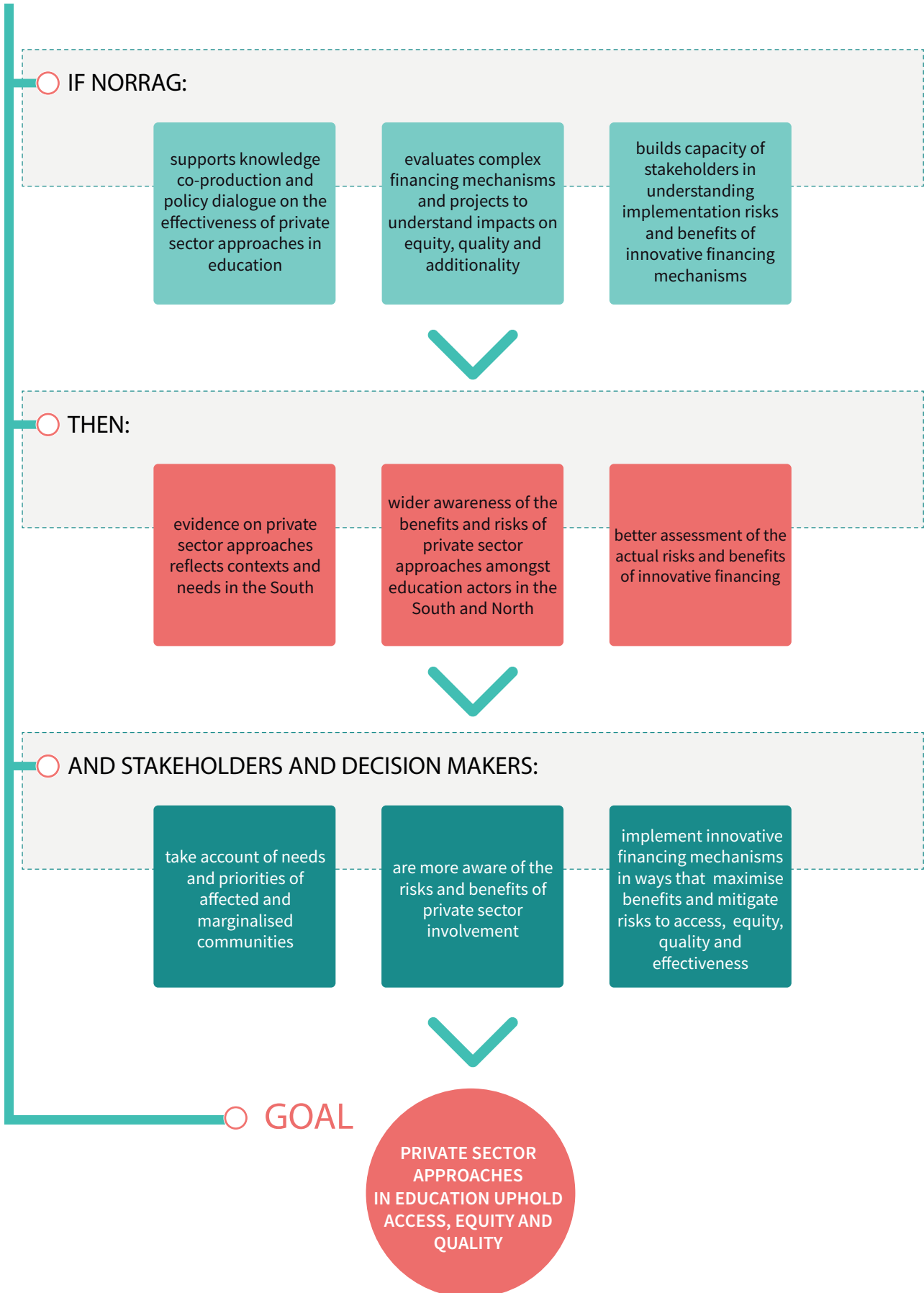
NORRAG will develop and deliver graduate-level professional development courses on innovative private and public financing for education building on research and expertise developed in previous research projects, with UNESCO-IIEP and the Graduate Institute.

#### Financing and financialisation of education

How do contemporary changes in financing and the financialisation of education foster quality, equality and inclusion?



## SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE MAP





## DEEPENING NORRAG'S PARTNERSHIPS, REACH, LEARNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

For over four decades, NORRAG has been a means for amplifying the expertise of its members in the pursuit of education and development goals. Our partnerships with global, regional, and national organisations and with individual experts lies at the heart of our successes.

As a co-convenor of the INEE Data Working Group, NORRAG became instrumental in drawing attention to the huge numbers of Internally Displaced Persons denied access to education and yet invisible in existing data regimes. Similarly, our Philanthropy in Education conference series mobilised a large global network of researchers, policy makers and funders. Our work in both themes has moved these issues (and their implications for achieving SDG4) higher up the agenda in Geneva and other policy fora.

In order to continue to contribute to achieving access to equitable quality education and lifelong learning, we are undertaking an ambitious organisational development effort. Our focus is on further surfacing and amplifying under-represented expertise, particularly from the South; institutionalising organisational learning; and deepening and extending our outreach and partnerships. These efforts underpin our contributions of research, policy dialogue and capacity building to the multiple constituencies confronting the challenge to improve educational access, equity and quality.

### Priority projects

#### Partnerships

Working in partnership with our stakeholders from academia, public, private and voluntary sectors increases our effectiveness and reach. We have identified partners for each project that we undertake, and aim to engage more – and more diverse – partners as we implement this strategy.

#### Network membership mobilisation

Task an internal Working Group to develop further participation opportunities to attract new members and 'ladder up' members' engagement with NORRAG.

#### Communications

Demonstrate the success of our work and that of our partners through online and offline communications, and make that work more accessible to more audiences, for example through translations and contextualisation.

#### Fundraising

Continue to increase the share of project and staff costs that are provided by an increasingly diverse set of funders.

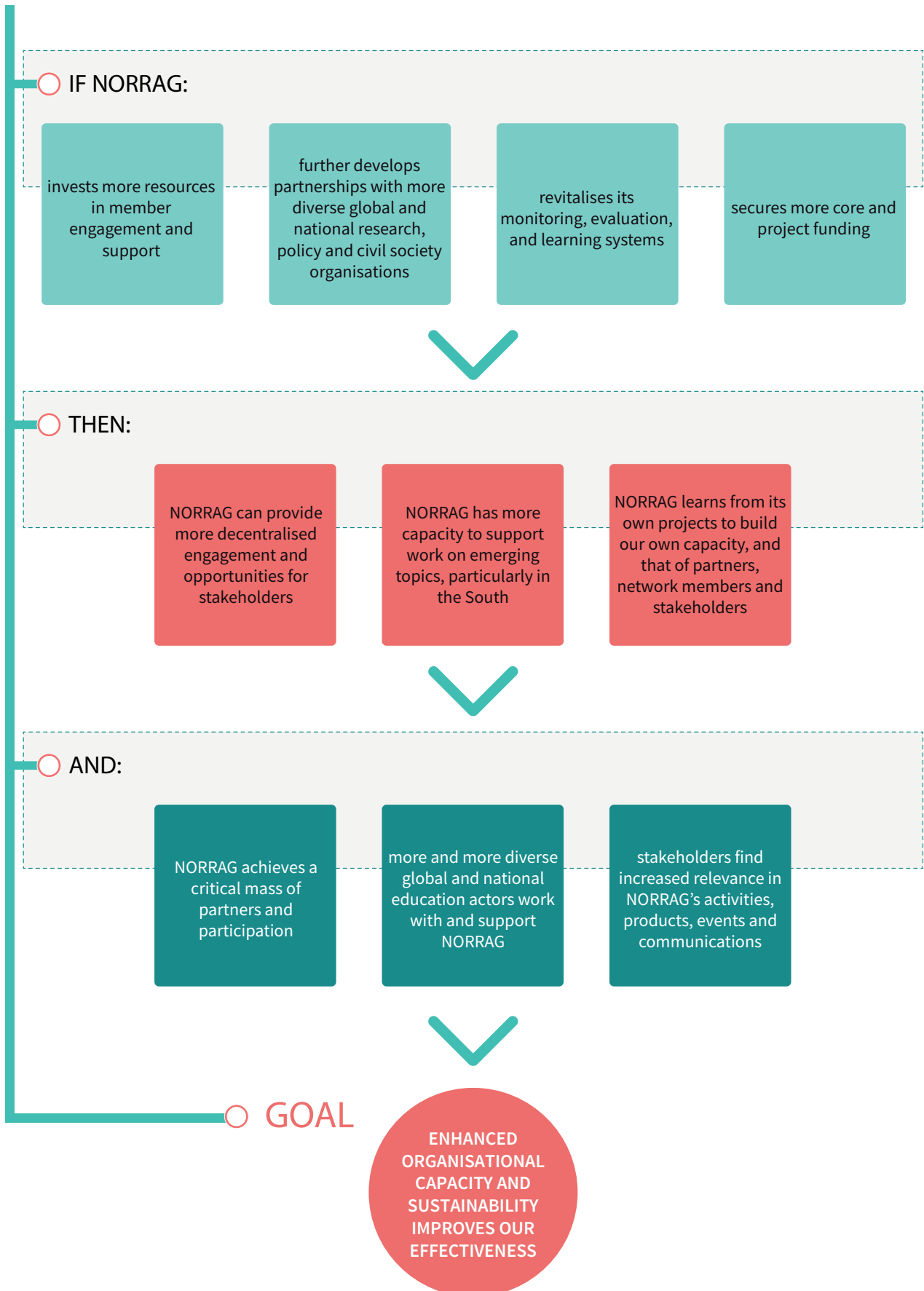
#### Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

NORRAG's reinigorated MEL strategy allows us to learn how and why our activities are effective and valued by our stakeholders, and learn from that to improve. More detail is provided in the accompanying Results Framework.





## SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE MAP



# INDICATORS

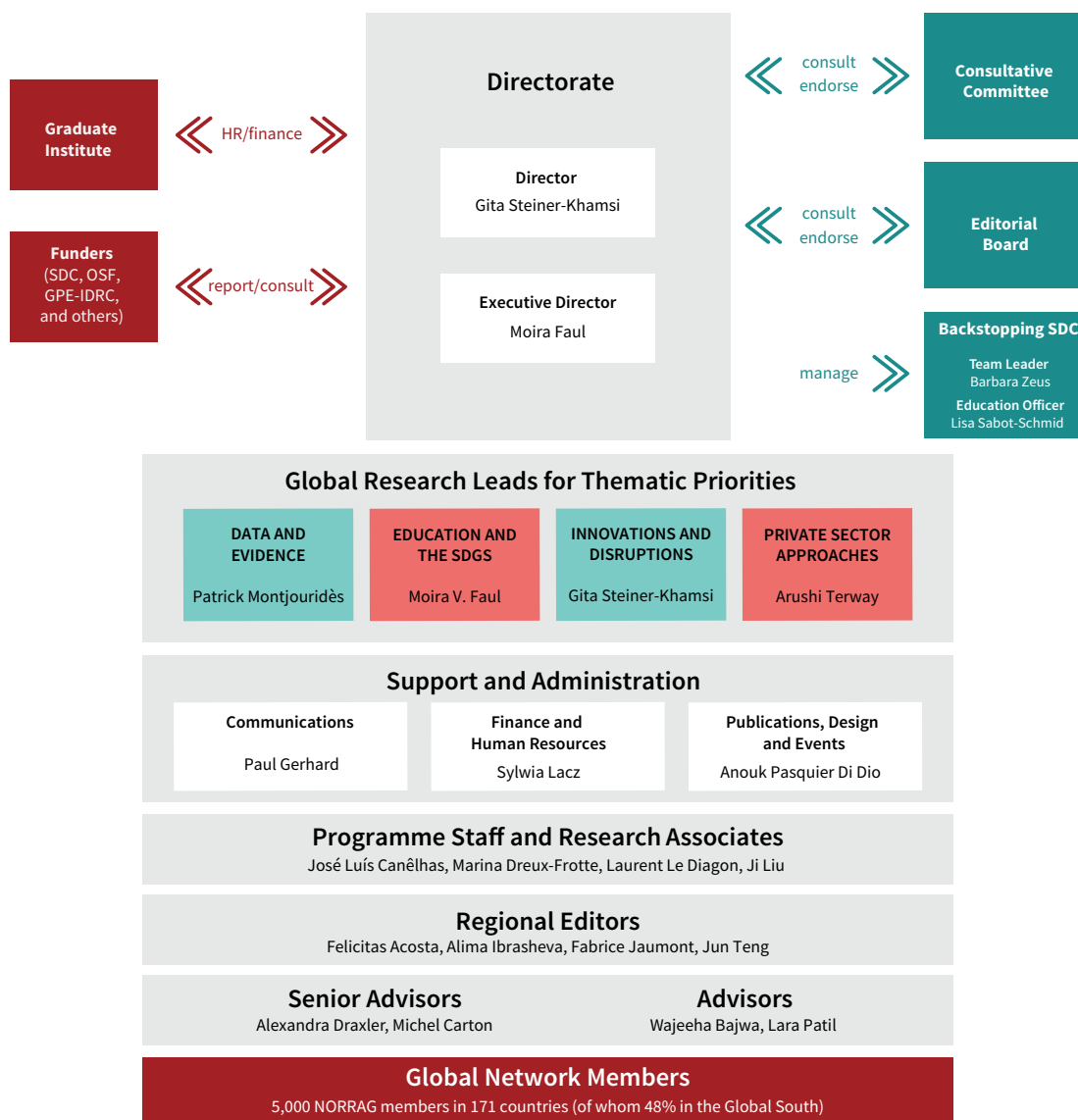
These four sets of “umbrella” indicators reference the stakeholder outcomes we seek to stimulate. They are designed to enable us to monitor our progress towards our objective of contributing to galvanizing global and national policy environments that are evidence-informed and focused on education as a public and common good and human right.

Tracking these indicators as part of our reinvigorated monitoring and evaluation strategy facilitates both internal learning and external accountability. It will also allow us to appropriately adapt our strategies in order to ensure we are on track to achieve these ambitious goals. More detail is provided in the accompanying Results Framework.

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>KNOW</b></p> <p><b>Increased understanding of how priority themes affect equitable, quality education.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More and more diverse stakeholders report increased awareness of key themes.</li> <li>• NORRAG is approached by institutions or government bodies to advise on key themes.</li> <li>• Publications and co-production; impact analysis of publications; bi-annual web survey for members; quarterly Newsletters; Social Media presence and activities; downloads and website hits.</li> </ul> | <p><b>AMPLIFY</b></p> <p><b>Strengthened role for under-represented experts, particularly from the South, in national, regional and global education decision making.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative share of activities with partners from the South.</li> <li>• Increasing share of funded activities initiated alongside and/or led by partners from the South.</li> <li>• Enhanced participation and level of influence of partners from the South in decision making.</li> </ul> | <p><b>ACCESS</b></p> <p><b>Better access to more policy-relevant evidence and dialogue on issues and solutions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More and more diverse participation in NORRAG activities.</li> <li>• Increase in invitations for us to contribute to existing and new partners’ activities.</li> <li>• Cumulative number of participants and partners in policy dialogue activities, disaggregated by geography; public, private, voluntary sector; issue area; gender; etc.</li> </ul> | <p><b>ACT</b></p> <p><b>More evidence informed decision making that maximises equitable, quality education and learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluations of trainings, Executive Education and Certified programmes indicate learning outcomes achieved by critical mass of participants.</li> <li>• Cumulative number of capacity building activities across themes.</li> <li>• Number of primary research or policy outputs presenting insights on scaling innovation to strengthen national education systems.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|---|



# ORGANISATIONAL CHART



## CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The NORRAG Consultative Committee serves as a sounding board for NORRAG’s strategic development and endorses NORRAG’s Annual Reports.

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