Background

My School Today! is a call to action to support students, local communities and ministries of education to geo-reference schools and education facilities as part of an effort to promote timely information on school locations in Africa. To support the call to action, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network’s SDGs Today is providing an accessible product using open source data to share national population counts within various travel distances and times from recorded educational facilities. Our goal is to engage local students, communities, and other actors in the ongoing development of this dataset, and learn how we can work with education ministries and statistical offices to complement official data sources. We are grateful for the support of Esri, the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT), and UNESCO IIEP, and other organizations in this effort.

My School Today! Objectives

SDG 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (learn more information about the SDGs below). Several targets under SDG 4 are concerned with access to various levels of education, especially for vulnerable populations. Timely data on school locations are essential for the assessment of school and student needs, planning for resource allocation and access to other services such as health facilities, and policymaking processes that can improve the quality of education for students. This call to action aims to:

- Understand the state of data on school locations in Africa and how open source data can compliment timely data gaps;
- Raise awareness about the importance of integrating geospatial and mapping skills across education programs; and
- Provide students and local communities with the information they need to participate in the call to action.

How to Use this Guide

This guide aims to support teachers, community leaders, facilitators, communicators, and other participants in engaging communities in the call to action by explaining each piece of this project and walking you through the resources that our My School Today! toolkit\(^1\) offers. Use this guide as a resource for information about the SDGs, My School Today!, geospatial technologies, and how to get involved in this call to action.

\(^1\) sdgstoday.org/myschooltoday
What are the SDGs?

In 2015, 193 member states of the United Nations (UN) unanimously adopted a new global framework to end poverty, protect our planet, and promote peaceful and inclusive societies by 2030. The decision to develop the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a framework that builds upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2012). The sustainable development agenda includes 17 Goals that are “universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world” according to UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. The SDGs, also known as the 2030 Agenda, promises to create a sustainable and inclusive future for everyone and leave no one behind.

To effectively track the status of the SDGs, governments and civil societies need quality, spatially disaggregated, and timely data. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) defined 169 targets and 230+ indicators to monitor the SDG framework and ensure that we meet the economic, environmental, and social objectives of the global goals. Six years into the implementation of the SDGs, much of the data is either out-of-date or simply unavailable. There is an urgent need for timely and geo-referenced SDG data to inform local and national development plans, prioritize implementation programs and evaluate outcomes. SDGs Today intends to support and improve the implementation of the SDGs by providing access to new data sources and methods that can complement official SDG monitoring processes. The My School Today! call to action can contribute to the development of a timely dataset on school locations in Africa.

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2 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/733FutureWeWant.pdf
3 https://sdgs.un.org/goals
4 http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/
Additional Resources

- Learn more about the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals) (United Nations)
- Check out this Self-Paced Course on "How to Achieve the SDGs" (The SDG Academy)
- Access SDG Lesson Plans (The Global Schools Program)
- Explore SDG Resources for Educators (UNESCO)

SDG 4: Quality Education

Globally, an estimated 58% of students will not reach minimum proficiency levels (MPL) in reading and mathematics by the time they finish primary school. For Sub-Saharan Africa, [88% percent of students will not reach those same MPLs](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/09/more-than-half-of-children-and-youth-worldwide-not-learning-unesco/).

Education is the foundation for social and economic well being. SDG 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Several targets under SDG 4 are concerned with access to various levels of education, especially for vulnerable populations.

However, access remains a major challenge. While enrollment rates continue to increase, other quality barriers remain for many students and learners. Physical distance to educational facilities is one such barrier.

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5 https://sdgs.un.org/goals
6 https://sdgacademy.org/course/how-to-achieve-the-sustainable-development-goals/
7 https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdgs/material
8 https://www.globalschoolsprogram.org/resources
Timely data on school location is essential for the assessment of school and student needs, planning for resource allocation and access to other services such as health facilities, and policymaking processes that can improve the quality of education for students.

Additional Resources

- Start with an Overview of SDG 4\(^{10}\) (United Nations)
- Get Inspired with "Goal 4 in Action"\(^{11}\) (The Global Goals)
- Learn about Mission 4.7 and Transformative Education\(^{12}\) (Mission 4.7)

What is My School Today!?

The **My School Today!** call to action aims to support students and local communities to geo-reference their schools and education facilities as part of an effort to promote timely information on school locations in Africa. To support the call to action, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network’s SDGs Today is providing an accessible product using open source data to share national population counts within various travel distances and times from recorded educational facilities. Our goal is to engage local students, communities, and other actors in the ongoing development of this dataset, and learn how we can work with education ministries and statistical offices to complement official data sources.

SDGs Today aims to leverage geospatial data to measure and communicate geographic access to educational facilities through the Mapping School Locations dataset. The **My School Today!** call to action aims to mobilize local communities to support the efforts of local education ministries and organizations in pursuit of inclusive education for all.

Learn more about the call to action at [www.sdgstoday.org/myschooltoday](http://www.sdgstoday.org/myschooltoday).

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\(^{10}\) [https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4](https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4)

\(^{11}\) [https://www.globalgoals.org/4-quality-education](https://www.globalgoals.org/4-quality-education)

\(^{12}\) [https://www.mission4point7.org/](https://www.mission4point7.org/)
Geospatial Technologies Used in this Project

Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT)

HOT is an international team dedicated to humanitarian action and community development. They work together to provide map data through Open Street Map (OSM), which is a map of the world created by people like you. HOT aims to revolutionize disaster management, reduce risks, and contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through open source mapping.

The term open source refers to these data and technologies being free and accessible under an open license. OSM provides the tools to edit and use these open data, such as creating new points of previously unmapped locations or drawing the outline of buildings on a map. They also provide a guide to help you get started with mapping, and their OSM Analytics Tool to learn more about the available data and how they were edited over time. In addition to the resources that OSM provides, HOT provides resources for people interested in using OSM for humanitarian action. To get started, the HOT Toolbox contains a guide on how to plan the mapping workflow you will need for your particular mapping project. All of these resources and more can be found in the Tools & Data section of the HOT website.

ESRI

The Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri) is the global market leader in GIS and has helped customers improve results since 1969. They build ArcGIS, the world’s most powerful mapping and spatial analytics software. ArcGIS software and apps combine mapping and data analytics to deliver location intelligence and meet digital transformation needs for organizations of all sizes. They support users’ important work with a commitment to science, sustainability, community, education, research, and positive change.

The ArcGIS tools used in this project include their desktop-based mapping software for analysis, and their cloud-based mapping applications for visualization. ArcGIS Pro for desktop can be downloaded on your computer to create and analyze GIS data, while ArcGIS Online can be used anywhere you have an internet connection to create and share interactive web maps. On ArcGIS Online specifically, we use ArcGIS Dashboards that present the maps of our datasets and overview statistics in an interactive format. We also use data from Esri’s Living Atlas, which is a collection of geographic information from around the globe that is hosted on ArcGIS Online.

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13 https://learnosm.org/en/
14 https://osm-analytics.org/
15 https://toolbox.hotosm.org/pages/introduction/how_to_use_toolbox/
16 https://www.hotosm.org/tools-and-data
20 https://livingatlas.arcgis.com/en/home/
How My School Today! Tracks the Locations of Schools

Our project uses the OpenStreetMap Buildings for Africa dataset from Esri's Living Atlas, which is updated every minute directly from OSM. This call to action supplements that dataset with the schools that you will help us map directly in OSM or by using ArcGIS Survey 12321, which is a data collection tool created by Esri.

How can YOU participate in My School Today!?

My School Today! is a product of community involvement and open-source data reporting. Inclusion of local insights and fostering a social media presence are key for driving the production of quality school data. Our My School Today! toolkit22 contains all of the information you will need to get involved; please adapt these suggestions to your audience. We focus on the following sections below:

1. How to Participate in Georeferencing a School in Africa
2. Social Media and Outreach Material
3. Education Material

1. How to Participate in Georeferencing a School in Africa

You can take part in creating this dataset by georeferencing a school, inviting more participants, exploring the Mapping School Locations dashboard, and reading the methodological note about how the school you just georeferenced is used to calculate distances and travel times from schools.

Sequence of activities to encourage participants to locate a school:

- Print a poster23 and introduce students to the SDGs
- Provide information on the importance of geospatial information
- Go over the My School Today call to action
- Give them a copy of this guide
- Walk through each step so they learn how to use OSM and ArcGIS Survey123 to map a school
- If they are old enough to be on social media, encourage them to share their experience
- Encourage them to reach out to their local media, fellow students, etc.

2. Social Media and Outreach Material

Social media is an outlet which will allow you to help amplify this call to action. Since we are using open source data provided to us by individuals, the more people involved in My School Today! the more data we will receive. There are multiple social media platforms you can use in order to support our project. Below is a list of the various platforms you can utilize along with instructions on how to get started.

22 sdgstoday.org/myschooltoday
23 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1B8fiDuoy52Rg3lIQpSZBCTpMDUNAnbCv
Social media is a tool we can use to interact with the individuals providing the data. There are a few different ways to use social media to promote this call to action depending on the social media platform of your choosing. To get started, you can:

- Use our suggested hashtags, #iMappedMySchool and #MySchoolToday, when posting on social media
- Tag our suggested accounts (found in My School Today! toolkit) when posting on social media
- Simply tell your peers, friends, colleagues, etc. about the project and how they can get involved and map a school

3. Education Material

The education materials contain the step-by-step guide to mapping schools in four different languages (English, العربية, Français, Português), this participation guide providing more information for the SDGs, a guide to using the HOT toolbox, a guide to teaching with GIS, and more information about SDG 4.

Get Started!

Now that you have all of the information you need to participate, let's get started! Feel free to reach out to us, especially about:

- Connecting with a local org to teach them more about GIS, OSM, and potentially organize a workshop
- Featuring your story - do participants want to create a mural, a video, or a StoryMap about their experience? We'll work with them to feature their story in a way that effectively showcases their work.
- Connecting with SDSN’s teams to learn more about other education initiatives

About SDGs Today

SDGs Today aims to advance the production and use of real-time and geo-referenced data for the SDGs with a one-of-a-kind data platform, and education and training resources. The initiative provides a snapshot of the state of sustainable development around the world while enabling countries, institutions, researchers, journalists, and civil society members to produce, access, and engage with real-time and timely (updated annually or more frequently) data on sustainable development, obtain geospatial information systems (GIS) training and education resources, and learn how to use the data effectively to drive action towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

25 https://members.linkedin.com/how-to-use-linkedin
26 https://www.facebook.com/help/570785306433644/?helpref=hc_fnav