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Transforming Education Summit Leaders' Day: Spotlight Session 2

The Global Challenge of Addressing the Learning Crisis

Location: Economic and Social Council Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York

Monday, 19 September 2022, 13:15 – 14:45 EST

Co-hosted by: Sierra Leone, USA, UK, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

A child who does not acquire foundational skills at the appropriate time during their learning journey is at greater risks of dropping out and miss opportunities for social mobility that can end in generational poverty and marginalization. Foundational skills - the ability to read with understanding, do basic math and have socio-emotional skills - is the basis for subsequent learning and skills development that are necessary for a child to realize her/his/their full potential for life, work and maximize their contribution to sustainable development. Quality early childhood education and responsive parenting are necessary to prepare children during the critical early years of rapid brain development to successfully develop foundational skills. Education, beginning with quality early childhood education and including parental support, enables girls and boys, women and men to exercise their rights, and participate in social, economic and political life. Strong foundational skills are important for development of a more prosperous, gender equal and democratic society and must reflect the advances in technology including allowing children to acquire digital skills across the life-cycle.

The current global learning crisis is resulting in an estimated 70 percent of boys and girls in low- and middle-income countries living in learning poverty - unable to read a simple paragraph with understanding by age 10. The proportion is highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (89 percent) while Latin American and the Caribbean and South Asia saw the largest increases in learning poverty since the pandemic.

The pandemic has also led to a 34 percent increase in anxiety and depression, one of the indications of the pandemic's traumatic effect on the mental health of children. Helping children develop socio-emotional skills is critical; however, less than half of countries include these skills in the national education curricula. The need to help children develop mastery of foundational skills from while engaging in opportunities to be creative, to self-regulate, live and work with their peers, is essential to the education of the future.



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Purpose of the meeting

Political leadership and accountability are key factors in solving the learning crisis by ensuring that all children have equitable access to quality education. There are many countries taking the necessary urgent, bold actions to support learning recovery and to accelerate the improvement of learning outcomes and transform their education systems. However, there is an urgent need for a global, collective movement to accelerate opportunities that enable every child, in every country, to acquire foundational skills. While national level action remains paramount, the movement also needs the support of the international community to enable the scale of action that is required.

The magnitude of the learning crises must be matched by proportional ambition, support and investment. A transformation in education requires a commitment of all countries to ensure the necessary conditions for children and youth to get the skills they need for life: first, proper nutrition and early childhood stimulation must be secured; second, given that education is a social endeavor intense in human interaction, empowering and supporting teachers, supervisors and administrators is a necessary condition; third, investing in technology and connectivity will be central to ensure that digital skills are within everyone's reach and can help support teachers at scale. The United Nations Secretary-General is convening world leaders to a Transforming Education Summit on Monday, 19 September 2022. The Summit provides a unique opportunity to engage heads of states and governments in dialogue on foundational learning as a critical contributor to address the immediate crisis in learning and enable a transformation of education systems.

As part of the Summit, Spotlight Session 2 on Foundational Learning is an opportunity to share and celebrate exemplary practices and mobilize strong leadership and action with the speed, focus and scale which the learning crisis demands.

More specifically, Spotlight Session 2 on Foundational learning of the Transforming Education Summit aims to:

- Share key actions being advanced to improve foundational skills for all, including national strategies for learning recovery and acceleration, improvements in access to and use of technology, and school and community-led practices;
- Learn from leaders of governments on national commitments being made to reduce learning poverty; and,
- Call on other national leaders and leaders of organizations and companies to take further action to reduce learning poverty.

The event is co-organized by a coalition of partners including the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, The World Bank, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO).



DRAFT PROGRAMME

Monday 19 September 2022	
13.15-13.20	Opening monologue
13.20-13.35	Remarks from co-hosts: Importance of leadership in seizing the moment
13.35-13.45	Main Address: <i>Low foundational learning levels and the risk to national and global development</i>
13.45 – 13.50	Address: <i>The Commitment to Action: Political Support Needed to Ensure Foundational Learning</i>
13.50-14.20	Panel discussion: From commitment to action: <i>Implementing the commitment</i> <i>Moderated session where leaders reflect on best practices to address the learning crisis and how they will keep the commitment to action on foundational learning.</i>
14.20-14.22	Video presentation on addressing the global learning crisis
14.22 – 14.40	Partnering on Foundational Learning: <i>Supporting Implementation of the Commitment to Action</i>
14.40 – 14.45	Closing remarks