

Human Capital Africa Presidential Dialogue

Presidents Call and Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning

Movenpick Hotel, Accra, Ghana

July 16th 2024

We, the former Presidents of Nigeria, Tanzania, Liberia, and Malawi, came together today at the invitation of former Minister of Education of Nigeria Dr Oby Ezekwesili and Human Capital Africa at a high-level briefing to discuss the learning crisis in Africa on the sidelines of the 2024 African Union Mid-Year Summit in Accra, Ghana.

Following these discussions, we are compelled to issue a collective communique on the urgent imperative to **call for a decade on education** that will prioritize action on literacy and numeracy at foundational levels if the continent is to achieve its Agenda 2063 development goals and national development visions.

We recognise the continent is at an inflection point: prioritize foundational learning, ensuring the natural potential of young people is evenly distributed, or risk having economic growth and human capital development held back. The crisis is solvable, but to drive change at scale, we need more demonstrations of impactful programs, more measurement of learning, and rapid data available to make the necessary shifts to improve.

The African Union must, therefore, make a continental commitment to foundational learning, and member states must build on the political commitments they have made to accelerate action that ensures that Africa's children are equipped with the skills to fulfill their potential.

Recognising that the delivery of the African Union's Agenda 2063 hinges on the empowerment of citizens and their ability to drive the inclusive growth and development that will make Africa a dynamic force in the international arena.

Deeply concerned about the state of learning on the continent. With 9 out of 10 of our children unable to read with understanding or do basic maths by the age of ten we are failing to develop the generational talent needed for gainful employment, social progress and fiscal stability, let alone achieve our continental vision for global leadership.

Concerned that millions of Africa's children are not transitioning, completing their education and dropping because of low learning levels in the early grades.

Emphasising that the response to critical development priorities, including healthcare, food security, climate change, inclusive economic green growth, digital development, gender equality, economic empowerment, and security, is interconnected with our ability to develop and build our human capital for which literacy and numeracy are fundamental building blocks.

Understanding that the education deficit is not a challenge for tomorrow. It is a fundamental barrier to achieving our continent's potential, and we must take ownership, act, and build scalable solutions suited to our continent today.

Noting that current levels of data collection, use on the continent, and reporting are insufficient to inform effective policy decisions, resource allocations, and targeted interventions.

Encouraged by the innovation and leadership demonstrated at country level on the continent, with scalable, cost-effective, and globally relevant solutions being developed around proven interventions

Underscore that we need more leaders to recognize, prioritize, that foundational learning is the backbone of their country and continent's development agenda.

Appreciative of the efforts being made to drive awareness and action, enable solutions and encourage peer learning by Human Capital Africa, the Association for Education Development in Africa (ADEA), PAL network, other regional and national education stakeholders, development partners supporting them.

We therefore call for Heads of Government, through the African Union, to take the following decisive steps to address the learning crisis.

- Declare that **it is unacceptable that nine (9) out of ten (10) of our children are unable to read with understanding and do basic maths by age 10.**
- Acknowledge that **the delivery of Agenda 2063 and its social, economic and developmental objectives is deeply connected with learning outcomes** and that the vision will not be achieved if the learning crisis is not addressed.
- Collectively **commit to all children reading with comprehension and doing basic mathematics by the age of ten** by 2030 as the foundation for future academic success and beyond.
- Take action to urgently **implement cost-effective evidence-based solutions** that can **accelerate learning outcomes and be delivered within existing budget resources, supporting internal efficiencies in the face of debt servicing and other fiscal pressures.**
- Expand the active use of available tools that allow countries to **measure learning outcomes early, consistently, and comparatively** - routinely collecting and using evidence and data to make decisions that improve outcomes in the classroom.
- Build a continental mechanism that allows countries, development partners and citizens to **hold each other accountable for learning outcomes and peer review progress.** This could be set up like an annual stocktaking review.
- Establish and drive a **continental mechanism to enable constructive peer learning and knowledge sharing** between governments and development partners so that the innovative work happening at local and country level can be scaled.
- This communique calls for a decade on education, a strong African voice and commitment to foundational literacy and numeracy at the next February 2025 AU Summit and beyond.