



**Leaders' Call and
Commit to Action on
Foundational Learning
in Africa**

Foundational
Literacy and
Numeracy Hub

Learning changes
everything.

Executive summary

Africa's growing population, presents a significant opportunity for the continent's future. However, realizing this potential depends on strategic investments in human capital, with a focus on addressing the persistent learning crisis. Recent initiatives, including the African Union's declaration of 2024 as the Year of Education and the launch of the End Learning Poverty for All in Africa (ELPAf) campaign, demonstrate increasing commitment to tackle the crisis. Nevertheless, substantial challenges remain.

The key to tackling the learning crisis lies in ensuring children acquire foundational skills—literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional competencies—by age 10. Evidence-based approaches like structured pedagogy and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) are showing promise, while governments increasingly recognize the importance of foundational learning as the building blocks of future learning and are critical for lifelong success. Technology also offers potential for expanding educational access and improving quality, particularly in underserved areas.

Looking beyond 2024, the concept of a Decade of Education is gaining momentum. This long-term vision emphasizes building resilient education systems and securing children's rights to foundational learning. African leaders are responding to the learning crisis with various commitments and actions, underscoring the continent's dedication to educational progress and the cultivation of its human capital.

We proudly acknowledge the remarkable progress Africa has made toward addressing the learning crisis including:

- The African Union’s bold declaration of 2024 as the Year of Education.
- The 12 countries that signed the Commitment to Action (CtA) on Foundational Learning.
- The 20 countries that are members of the ADEA/HCA Africa Foundational Learning Ministerial Coalition.
- The President of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency, Mr Hakainde Hichilema the first Champion of Foundational Learning in Africa.
- The former Presidents of Nigeria, Tanzania, Liberia, and Malawi’s collective communique calling for a decade on education.
- The launch of the African Union’s End Learning Poverty for All in Africa (ELPAf) campaign

Commitments to Foundational Learning

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Foundational Learning Exchange 2023 | Ministerial Communiqué

Freetown, Sierra Leone | 7 February 2023 - [Link](#)

We, the Ministers of Education from Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, at the inaugural Foundational Learning Exchange, hosted in Freetown, Sierra Leone on February 6-7 2023, recognise the impact of the multiple crises of COVID-19, climate change and the economy on quality education. We note that the burden of this challenge is even more significantly felt by children in the early years of education.

We welcome the United Nations Secretary General's Vision Statement at the Transforming Education Summit (TES). We agree with the notion that "learning to learn" is one of the key levers for transforming our education systems to reach Sustainable Development Goal 4, thereby transforming our societies to reach all the Sustainable Development Goals.

We endorse the TES [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#) and support the recommendations in the 2022 UNESCO [Born To Learn report](#). We are committed to take action to improve foundational learning outcomes for all children in our countries – all children should learn to read fluently with comprehension, acquire fundamental numeracy competencies, develop resilient socio-emotional skills, and harness digital education tools.

At this first inter-ministerial and inter-governmental summit where we affirm our commitment to improving foundational learning outcomes, our goal is to equip current and future generations of learners with the tools and abilities they need to become nation-builders by sharing and exchanging solutions and challenges from our own education systems.

With our collective set of research-backed pedagogical and technological tools and evidence-based policy interventions, we reaffirm our commitments to ensuring children acquire fundamental literacy, numeracy, and digital and socio-emotional skills in line with our SDG-4 targets by 2030 in partnership with all stakeholders.

Together we further commit to the following:

1. Create and finance realistic plans aligned with our Education Sector Plans and Policies that monitor the progress of our learners and our education systems toward SDG-4 benchmarks and Foundational Learning Indicators from TES.
 2. Ensure equitable distribution of resources at all levels of our education system including pre-primary and primary levels that enable us to reach our foundational learning and other education goals.
 3. Support continuous teacher development in order to accelerate quality learning.
 4. Contribute to the global conversation on foundational learning by sharing data and research on what works in our countries and encouraging more collaboration from academic and other non-governmental institutions to identify evidence-backed tools to accelerate progress.
 5. Meet annually or biannually in countries leading the charge on improving foundational learning outcomes across our governments. We will share our individual and collective
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progress toward reaching the targets set in our plans and continue deepening our technical exchange.

6. Collaborate on regional and inter-regional investments to accelerate foundational learning outcomes.
7. Strengthen our data collection tools and systems to ensure we can track learning on a continuous basis and intervene where necessary to ensure evidence-backed policies and strategies.

We remain committed and optimistic about system transformation in our classrooms, schools, communities, countries, and the world.

ADEA High-Level Policy Dialogue Forum on Foundational Learning

Lusaka, Zambia | 31 October 2023 - [Link](#)

WE, the Ministers of Education from Zambia, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, The Gambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ministerial representatives from Benin, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, eSwatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Senegal, and Tanzania, congregated in Lusaka, Zambia, for the ADEA High-Level Policy Dialogue Forum on Foundational Learning from 31 st October to 1 st November, 2023, under the theme **“Crafting a New Africa by Rethinking Foundational Learning”**:

AFFIRM that foundational skills are the building blocks for future learning. Africa’s future depends on its children’s foundational learning. Demographically, the African continent is the youngest in the world, and will be for the next 26 years. This holds tremendous promise for the continent. The human capital investments we make today to build these foundational skills for our young children will help us realize the continent’s potential and ambitions today and in the future.

NOTE that foundational learning skills are critical for all learners, and the early years allow learners to acquire these skills, which will support their future learning and predispose them to success.

RECOGNIZE that African learners are struggling to acquire the basic literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills they need to succeed in learning, a reality all countries present have acknowledged, confirmed, and agree that requires immediate action.

URGE for strengthened commitment and action by African governments, and concerted efforts with partners and stakeholders. At the continental, regional and national levels, this will require a comprehensive and coordinated action plan that can only be achieved through strengthened collaboration and partnerships.

REITERATE that strong foundations for Africa’s children call for intentional efforts by governments to safeguard children’s access to high-quality education.






ACKNOWLEDGE that not every intervention is relevant for each context. Interventions related to teacher training and support, evidence-based approaches such as teaching at the right level and structured pedagogy, involvement of the community members in promoting foundational learning, playful learning, use of locally made teaching and learning materials, and having policies that address out of school children have been demonstrated to be effective in furthering foundational learning.

EMPHASIZE the importance of using data at the classroom level and during policy decision-making, which will require continental action, to enable national targets to be set and monitored.

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REITERATE that realizing the AU Agenda 2063 - The Africa We Want - depends significantly on how much Africa invests in her youth and children with quality foundational learning.

We therefore **RESOLVE**:

-  To develop and adopt a starter pack model for foundational learning as a resource guide to ensure uniformity, continuity, and sustainability.
-  To urge our respective Heads of State to be “Champions of Foundational Learning” to create visibility on its importance.
-  To work with ADEA and partners to collect relevant data to inform policy and decisions on foundational learning and foster dialogue, peer learning, and sharing of good practices on what works to further foundational learning, in line with the 2024 Year of Education for Africa.
-  To strengthen links between Early Childhood Education and Early Grade Education and advance the adoption of structured pedagogy and age-appropriate and level-appropriate teaching methods.
-  To harness the power of technology to increase the number of qualified teachers and enhance their well-being.

Adopted on 1st November 2023 at the ADEA High-Level Policy Dialogue Forum on Foundational Learning in Lusaka, Zambia.

Human Capital Africa African Union Year of Education Launch

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 18 February 2024 - [Link](#)

Ahead of the 37th Summit of African Union Heads of Government taking place on February 17th and 18th 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, we the undersigned collectively:

Celebrate the leadership being demonstrated by African countries to address the learning crisis. We should be proud of the response in Africa so far:

- The decision to declare 2024 as the African Union Year of Education.
- The 12 African countries that have signed the Commitment to Action (CtA) on Foundational Learning to address the learning crisis.
- The almost 20 countries who have joined the ADEA/HCA Ministerial Foundational Learning Coalition to drive collective action, share knowledge, build awareness, and importantly, set up accountability mechanisms.
- Some countries are already developing specific strategies to address learning poverty, and are emerging as global leaders in the response.
- Countries that are already demonstrating impact at scale on foundational learning or promising implementation progress and should be recognised for their leadership

Urge all Heads of Government meeting at the African Union Summit to:

- Acknowledge that as a continent **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.**
 - Collectively **commit to all children reading with comprehension and doing basic mathematics by the age of ten.**
 - Commit to **measure learning outcomes regularly, reliably, and comparatively** - routinely collecting, and using evidence and data to make decisions necessary to improve outcomes in the classroom.
 - Commit to implementing **cost-effective evidence-based solutions** to accelerate learning outcomes, and prioritise budget allocations for these interventions - TaRL, structured pedagogy & teacher numbers, teaching materials at a 1:1 ratio, teacher guides, and training.
 - Recognise that existing scarce budget resources can be utilised to drive improvement in foundational learning through these interventions, **without significant additional funding commitments**, enabling national development priorities and delivering long-term pay-offs.
 - Actively **hold ourselves and development partners accountable** for the measurement of learning outcomes in operations to ensure support is focused on proven evidenced-based solutions.
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Human Capital Africa Presidential Dialogue | Presidents Call and Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning

Accra, Ghana | 16 July 2024 - [Link](#)

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.
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- 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.
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