

Achieving a Learning Generation

The Role of Civil Society

The case for investing in education is indisputable. Education is a fundamental human right; it is critical for long-term economic growth; and it is essential for the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals agreed to by world leaders in 2015. In the coming decades, technological, demographic, economic and political shifts will mean that education and skills will matter more than ever to individual and national prosperity and to global stability. And yet despite the overwhelming case for investing in education and the promises made and remade by generations of leaders, domestic and global investment has stagnated in recent years, education has dropped down the priority list of world leaders, and the money that has been invested has too often led to disappointing results.

Today, 263 million children and young people are out of school, and the number of primary-school aged children not in school is increasing. For those children who are in school, many are not actually learning. In low- and middle-income countries, only half of primary-school aged children and little more than a quarter of secondary-school aged children are learning basic primary- and secondary-level skills. If current trends continue, over three-quarters of a billion young people in low- and middle-income countries will be off-track to gain basic secondary skills, and 1.5 billion adults will have only a primary education by 2030. The growing skills gap will stunt economic growth around the world, and threatens to have far-reaching social and political repercussions.

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity has set out a proposal for the

largest expansion of education opportunity in modern history: creating the Learning Generation. If all countries accelerate progress to the rate of the world's top 25 percent fastest education improvers, then within a generation, all children in low- and middle-income countries will have access to quality pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, and a child in a low-income country will be as likely to reach the baseline level of secondary school skills and participate in post-secondary education as a child in a high-income country today.

Civil society -- whether local community groups or global NGOs -- has long been central to educational delivery and advocacy around the world, and has been responsible for many of the breakthroughs that have opened up education to poor and disadvantaged children. Civil society will have a critical role to play in creating a Learning Generation.

In presenting its conclusions and recommendations, the Commission invites civil society leaders to consider in particular:

- **Strengthening and sustaining a global advocacy movement for education** to focus attention and build support for change. The movement would encompass high-level global leadership and grass-roots action across sectors and geographies.
- **Advocating for educational reform and investment** -- locally, nationally, and internationally. In particular, this includes making the case for increased and more effective financing by domestic governments, donors, philanthropists, and investors. Advocacy priorities include reforms to domestic taxation including action to tackle tax avoidance; increasing domestic budget allocations for education and tackling corruption and inefficiencies in how resources get deployed; increasing international financing and improving the way it is allocated; and backing the establishment of a Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) investment mechanism for education.
- How civil society can maximize its potential to **drive innovation in educational delivery**. This includes recommendations to increase investment and support for innovation throughout education, including through expanding access to technology

and improving research and evaluation; and ways in which governments can strengthen their capacity to partner with civil society in the delivery of education.

- Civil society's critical role in **advancing educational inclusion** – from campaigning to tackle the factors that keep children out of school, such as child marriage or labor, to delivering education to the most excluded, such as children caught up in emergencies.
- Civil society's role in **ensuring active accountability**, which is vital for delivering many of the Commission's recommendations. Accountability recommendations include, for example, community action to help to reduce waste and tackle corruption; monitoring learning to help hold schools and leaders accountable for results; and holding governments accountable on the international stage through increased transparency and a new UN Special Representative for Education.

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity is a major global initiative engaging world leaders, policymakers, and researchers to develop a renewed and compelling investment case and financing pathway for achieving equal educational opportunity for children and young people. For more information, please visit www.educationcommission.org.

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