the Education Commission

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity Contribution to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

April 2019

Introduction

The international Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (the Education Commission) was set up to reinvigorate, and chart a pathway for, increased investment in education. The Education Commission, which the Prime Minister of Norway, the Presidents of Malawi, Indonesia, and Chile, and the Director-General of UNESCO convened following the 2015 Oslo Summit on Education for Development, is steered by 27 high-level Commissioners working to make ours the first generation ever that provides a quality education for every child.

Drawing upon new research and analysis from more than 300 partners in 105 countries, the Commission's report, The Learning Generation: Investing in education for a changing world, puts forward an action plan for the largest expansion of educational opportunity in history.

At the 2016 United National General Assembly, then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon received the report and agreed to act on its recommendations, a mantle that has been taken up by his successor Antonio Guterres.

The Learning Crisis

The ever-worsening learning crisis, if left unaddressed, will leave half of the world's 1.6 billion children and youth out of school or failing to learn by 2030. There are more than 260 million school-age children not going to school today. If current trends continue, by 2030 - the deadline for delivering the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of inclusive and equitable early childhood, primary, and secondary education for all - more than 400 million children will leave school without a basic primary education. Half of the world's girls and boys, more than 800 million, will not have the essential skills needed for the modern workforce.

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Already more than half of the adult population in 20 African and Asian countries is unable to read and write. In total, 750 million adults are illiterate, and 500 million of them are women.
Extensive analysis in the 2018 World Development Report on education show that many children are excluded from schooling due to poverty, gender, ethnicity, disability and location despite a promising pattern of schooling expansion over the past decade. For instance, while girls are now much more likely to start primary school, gender parity is far from being realized: “62 million girls between the ages of 6 and 16 years are still out of school, with the highest concentrations in West and South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa,” and the likelihood of girls completing primary schools remain far below their male counterparts in some countries.

Lower-middle-Income countries (LMICs) are home to the majority of out-of-school children — 31 million at primary and 124 million at secondary school age— and children with poor quality education. Nearly half of the world’s children and young people, a total of 700 million children (more than 3 times as many as in LICs), live in LMICs, along with large numbers of refugee and displaced children. Of them, more than 65 percent will not attain basic secondary level skills by 2030. The situation is particularly dire for LMICs in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where over 80 percent of the current school - age population are not on track to reach secondary learning benchmarks.

The knowledge divide is widening. Learning standards in the typical low- and lower-middle-income country - and across Africa - are 100 years behind today’s average high-income country. On current trends, it will take until after 2100 for all countries to reach the targets set in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). Without immediate action, the global community will break its promises to the world’s children.

Today, 40 percent of employers globally are finding it difficult to recruit young people with the skills they need, and yet as the pace of technological change and innovation accelerates, new and higher order skills will be required by the 2030 labor market. Investment in human capital will be the critical driver of future economic success and development. Climbing from the 25th to 75th percentile on the Human Capital Index brings an additional 1.4 percentage points in annual growth rates over 50 years1.

Education unlocks all the main Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those related to health, employment, gender equality, quality of life, and climate change. For example, around one-

[1] World Bank (2019). The Changing Future of Work. World Development Report.

third of the reductions in adult mortality in the past few decades can be attributed to gains in educating girls and young women.

Education is the key not just to individual opportunity and economic success but to peace and stability. Evidence shows that increasing secondary school enrollment and literacy rates decreases the probability of civil war, and every additional year of schooling reduces an adolescent boy's risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20 percent2.

The Commission's report sets out a vision for the "Learning Generation" – getting all young people in school and learning within a generation. It found that if countries progress at the pace of the 25% fastest improvers, we can significantly improve education outcomes and give every child an opportunity to learn within a generation.

This is the reason why the Commission and its partners have called upon world leaders to commit to four education transformations to achieve the Learning Generation vision. These transformations underscore a critical and immediate need to strengthen performance, foster innovation, prioritize inclusion, and increase finance.

Transformation I: Performance- reform education systems to deliver results

Leaders must strengthen the performance of education systems by designing in a focus on results at every level, learning from the best results-driven systems in education and across sectors. Today, in too many parts of the world, more money alone is not leading to better outcomes.

Efforts to improve education are leading to huge variability in results, with similar investments and reforms producing widely different outcomes in different places. For example, Vietnam spends about the same amount per pupil on education as Tunisia, as a percentage of GDP per capita. Yet, in Tunisia only 64 percent of students passed the secondary international learning assessment, while in Vietnam it was 96 percent.

The Commission's analysis finds that improvements in the design and delivery of education will succeed only if they are underpinned by a system that is built to deliver results. Strong results-driven

[2] Collier, P. 2000. "Doing Well Out of Civil War: An Economic"

education systems — which ensure coherence across policies, a clear route from policy to implementation, and effective governance and accountability — are necessary for strong outcomes and lasting change.

As a first step toward creating these results-driven systems, the Commission recommends that national decision-makers set national standards, assess learning, and monitor progress. Today, the majority of children in the developing world are not tested systematically. Only about half of developing countries have a systematic national learning assessment at primary school level; far fewer do at lower secondary level. Only half of countries report data on government expenditure on education.

Assessing learning enables teachers to tailor teaching and helps leaders to target efforts and resources where they are most needed. Publishing information about outcomes and expenditure helps to strengthen accountability and improve efficiency and results. Countries should develop their own national assessments as part of a sustainable infrastructure of data collection and analysis. Countries should also track expenditure from system to school level and publish national education accounts to facilitate improvements in efficiency. Data should be made public to enable communities and families to help drive results by holding leaders and schools to account. To galvanize attention globally, a single global indicator of learning should be agreed on to complement national measures of learning. The international community should track, rank, and publicize countries' progress in getting all children learning. To provide the technical, financial, and capacity-building support necessary for all of this, global partners should establish a Global Initiative for Learning.

The Commission recommends that decision-makers invest in what is proven to deliver the best results. Funding should be shifted to the best-proven systemic changes and specific practices that improve learning, selected and adapted according to different country contexts. What works best in improving learning is better understood than ever. Unfortunately, too little of this knowledge makes it into education policy. Some of the most proven approaches remain overlooked and underfunded, while money continues to be spent on other, much less effective, practices and interventions. For example, while evidence on the benefits of mother-tongue instruction is strong, half of all children in low- and middle-income countries are not taught in a language they speak. To keep investment focused on the reforms and practices that work best requires building systems that continuously seek out and act upon the best new information on what delivers results, including by increasing the share of funding that goes towards research, development, and evaluation.

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Finally, improving performance requires cutting waste and cracking down on the inefficiency and corruption that inhibit students from learning. On average, low- and middle-income countries spend 2 percent of their GDP each year on education costs that do not lead to learning. One key reason is that due to a number of factors, too much of teachers' time is spent not in the classroom. A survey in seven African countries found that on average, primary school students received less than 2.5 hours of teaching per day, less than half the intended instructional time. Increased investment and improved efficiency cannot substitute for one another.

Both investment and reform will be needed. More resources are urgently needed, but if all resources were better managed, teaching and learning could improve sharply and returns on investment in education would become even stronger.

Decision-makers should take action, including establishing reliable education management information systems, enabling teachers to spend their time teaching, tackling the systemic causes of absenteeism, and cutting the costs of learning materials.

Way forward: The Delivery Approach

In 2016, the Education Commission launched the Pioneer Country Initiative, and through its Commissioners engaged with more than 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia who have committed to making education a top domestic budget priority. Last year the Commission co-hosted a workshop with the government of Nepal and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This was a three-day high-level conference with participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to share experience on how to tackle the learning crisis and accelerate progress across South Asia. A similar workshop was held in Nairobi for delegations of government and civil society in 14 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries learned from peers, including on new approaches to governance and accountability.

Next month (in May 2019), the Commission will begin a rigorous 3-year research program with the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University to review global evidence on delivery approaches and effective implementation of reforms and priorities in education systems. The research will also involve detailed studies of delivery approaches in three countries that will aim to provide iterative feedback to country decision-makers. This work will generate additional useful insights for governments as they prepare, deliver, and assess education priorities and key reforms programs.

Transformation II: Innovation — develop new approaches and transform to meet future needs

Improving the performance of current systems is not enough. Far-reaching innovation is needed to equip young people with the new knowledge and skills they need to succeed in this century to provide education to millions more children effectively and efficiently, and to take advantage of advancing technology and new understanding of how children learn. Leaders must foster innovation across education systems by creating an environment in which innovation can emerge and scale, and by prioritizing innovation in three key areas identified as critical for future success: the education workforce, the use of technology, and the role of non-state partners.

Innovation will be essential to strengthening and expanding the education workforce. Demand for teachers in developing countries will grow dramatically in the years ahead. In low-income countries it is set to nearly double by 2030. This presents a challenge in terms of training and recruiting enough teachers, but also an opportunity to take a new look at the education workforce and what is needed to meet the SDGs. The Commission recommends leaders strengthen and diversify the education workforce. This includes getting the basics right-- teachers must be paid a livable wage that properly reflects the importance of the profession and makes it an attractive career option. Strengthening the workforce also means the systematic professionalization of teaching, leadership and education support roles throughout the life cycle from attraction and recruitment through professional development to defined career paths. This should include consideration of the composition of the education workforce to ensure inclusive and equitable education for ALL children and an inclusive and equitable workforce. This may include roles such as pedagogic assistants, health practitioners, psychologists, coaches and administrative support to allow teachers to harness their teaching skills to the fullest and leaders to focus on instructional leadership. To explore these opportunities and develop specific proposals, the Commission recommended establishing an international high-level expert group to look at the expansion, diversification and strengthening of the education workforce.

Harnessing technology for teaching and learning offers huge opportunities to transform education at all levels. By 2020, virtually everyone will have a mobile phone, 2.6 billion people will have smartphones, and 56 percent of people will have Internet access. Digital learning makes it possible to reach new and excluded learners, lower costs, enhance teaching, and offer new ways for all learners to gain skills. It could be particularly key for post-secondary education where increasing access, affordability, and relevance of learning will become ever more critical. But today, uneven access to the

Internet and digital technologies risks exacerbating existing inequalities in learning. In the poorest countries only 1 out of every 10 people is online. Across many developing countries, less than 10 percent of schools are connected to the Internet.

To fully harness technology's power, the Commission recommends cross-sector investment to get every school online and establish the broader digital infrastructure necessary for learning. Investments in digital infrastructure must be supported by measures to provide skills and best practices to teachers, policymakers, employers, and leaders on how to maximize the impact of digital innovation on teaching and learning. To facilitate the expansion of high-quality digital learning, governments should establish common learning platforms and introduce pro-innovation regulations. In addition, to encourage innovation in delivery, it will become increasingly important to innovate in the recognition and accreditation of skills, to allow students learning in different ways to gain equally valuable qualifications.

Innovation in education can also benefit greatly if governments improve partnerships with non-state actors. While governments have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring all children have access to a quality education, there is great potential for a diverse set of organizations from every sector to help expand and improve education if partnered and regulated effectively by governments. Civil society organizations, businesses, and employers of all sectors play important, and, in many countries, expanding roles in education – in leadership, advocacy, and accountability, as well as in being education providers and investors. Whether non-state actors increase capacity and innovation or instead entrench inequalities will depend on how their role is managed and regulated. The Commission recommends governments strengthen their capacity to harness the potential of all partners. In particular, this should include improving the regulation of non-state providers of education in order to enhance their contributions and protect their rights, and expanding the role of employers in the design and delivery of education.

Way forward: The Education Workforce Initiative

In order to implement the recommendation, the Commission launched the Education Workforce Initiative (EWI) in partnership with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), to bring fresh thinking to the education workforce to meet the changing demands of this century and tackle the global learning crisis.

Drawing on concrete examples of how successful education workforce reform and innovation have been implemented across the globe, EWI has begun to reimagine the education workforce to ensure the right teams of professionals at school and district level – teachers, support personnel, school and district leaders for example – are in place for inclusive, quality education. It harnesses the latest knowledge to inform considerations of new ways to approach workforce design, strengthening and implementation, including the use of technology.

Early findings from this work indicate that inclusion is integral to workforce design and strengthening. Evidence shows that education outcomes improve when a student feels they are reflected in and represented by their teacher-- designing the workforce must therefore pay particular attention to the attraction, recruitment, and training of a workforce with diverse backgrounds and strengths that represents the students they serve. People with disabilities are more likely to face significant barriers to achieving the level of education needed to train as a teacher or for other education roles. There are some positive examples emerging however.

In Mozambique, Escolas de Professores do Futuro, community-based teacher training colleges (TTCs), have been running teacher education programs for visually impaired primary school teachers in rural areas for over ten years. Each year, visually impaired graduates from mainstream schools are identified, with assistance from the local School for the Blind, and encouraged to apply for a scholarship at a specialist TTC. During their training, visually impaired student teachers teach in practice schools nearby. As a result, communities have become familiar with their children being taught by visually impaired teachers, resulting in a positive change of attitude and helping create a more welcoming environment for teachers and students with disabilities.

A High-level Steering Group of international experts, chaired by Commissioner and former South Korean Minister of Education Ju Ho Lee, oversees this initiative. With their guidance, the Commission will publish the Education Workforce Report with concrete policy considerations this summer. EWI is also working with 3 countries (Ghana, Sierra Leone and Vietnam) to address their specific education workforce challenges and together with the governments and local partners, develop new approaches to addressing these challenges based on the thinking in the Education Workforce Report.

Transformation III: Inclusion — target efforts and resources at those at risk of not learning

Leaders should prioritize inclusion by expanding provision of education in a progressive way and mobilizing every sector to address the multitude of factors that determine whether a child starts school, stays in school, and learns in school.

Poverty is a major cause of children not entering or completing school, and of not learning once in school. In developing countries, the gap in primary school completion rates between the richest and poorest children is more than 30 percentage points. For those in school, the average gap between the chances of the richest and poorest children achieving primary-level skills is 20 percentage points. These inequalities are compounded by other disadvantages. A child's gender, family, ethnic, cultural, and economic background, geography, health or disability, and exposure to poverty or disorder, conflict or disaster all play a major role in whether a child will learn and succeed. In rural India, for example, there is a 20 percentage-point gap in rates of learning between poorer and wealthier children. Add the impact of gender, mother's education, and regional disparities, and the gap rises to 80 percentage points.

The Commission recommends applying the concept of progressive universalism as a way to close this learning gap. Progressive universalism means expanding provision of quality education for everyone while prioritizing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. It provides a guiding principle to inform spending decisions, recognizing the scarcity of public funding.

The Commission recommends that, when balancing spending across different levels of education and population groups, decision-makers should prioritize the poor and early years where social returns are highest, and minimize household spending on basic education by the poor. Unfortunately, education spending in most countries today strongly favors the richest and most educated, and is usually skewed toward higher levels of education. On average in low-income countries, around 46 percent of public education resources is allocated to educate the top 10 percent most educated students. And despite high public returns on pre-primary education, it accounts for just 0.3 percent of education spending across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Governments should develop financing formulas that factor in the higher investment needed to reach those children who are disadvantaged due to poverty, disability, or other factors. They should also support the complementary role for private financing and cost recovery for higher levels of education where appropriate, recognizing the high private returns.

Of course, providing educational opportunities is not always enough. Countries must also invest beyond education to tackle the other factors preventing learning. For many of the children and young people who are not in school or not learning today, the causes of their educational exclusion or disadvantage lie far beyond the education system. For example, in low-income countries, up to 500 million school days are lost due to ill health each year, often from preventable conditions, while one in three girls in the developing world marries before the age of 18, usually leaving education when they do.

The Commission recommends that governments undertake and encourage joint planning, investment, and implementation across sectors to tackle the most prevalent learning barriers. Efforts often require community action and advocacy, critical to challenging norms and supporting local change. Innovation and technology can be vital for inclusion, helping children find new ways to learn and participate. National legislation and international action can be key to underpinning and embedding these inclusion efforts. For example, joint action and investment on education and health is especially important. The Commission proposes that decision-makers in a set of pioneer countries invest in joint education-health initiatives, and recommends particular investment in early childhood development and in services for adolescent girls, which can deliver strong complementary health and education benefits.

Transformation IV: Finance — increase and improve financing for education

Getting all children learning will require a fourth transformation – mobilizing more money for education and ensuring all money is spent better. Implementing reforms in performance, innovation, and inclusion will not only improve the impact of investment in education, but will also be critical for mobilizing more resources for education. No country that has committed itself to investing in and reforming its education system should be prevented from achieving its objectives because of a lack of resources.

The Commission's vision for the Learning Generation will require total spending on education to rise steadily from $1.2 trillion per year today to $3 trillion by 2030 (in constant prices) across all low- and middle-income countries. Recommendations for how this can be achieved are informed by analysis of the levels of domestic resource mobilization achievable by different countries and by the most current needs and opportunities for reshaping the international financing of education.

A large majority of this money must come from domestic governments whose commitment to investment and reform will be the most important driver in achieving the Learning Generation. Much of the necessary increase will come from the fiscal dividend available to governments from economic growth, but increases are also needed in the share of public expenditures allocated to education. This will not be enough, though, particularly in the case of low-income countries where substantial international support will be needed. International finance should be available for all countries that need it, but should be prioritized according to where needs are greatest and where commitment to reform is demonstrated, with extra support for fragile states.

The Commission's costing and spending estimates project increased efficiency in the use of resources, in line with this report's recommendations. To achieve this investment plan, the Commission recommends action to increase and improve domestic and international financing of education.

Leaders should mobilize more domestic resources for education. The Commission's investment plan calls for low- and middle-income countries to increase domestic public expenditures on education from an estimated $1 trillion in 2015 to $2.7 trillion by 2030, or from 4 to 5.8 percent of GDP, requiring an annual rate of growth in public education spending of 7 percent.

Governments should devote more of the proceeds of growth to education through reallocating spending, raising more revenues, or both. The International Monetary Fund estimates show that almost all developing countries have the potential to increase their tax revenues substantially, by an average of 9 percentage points in low-income countries. The Commission's financing plan calls on countries that are below the average predicted resource mobilization for their income level to rise to that level, and countries that are above that level to maintain it. In addition, governments should consider reallocating resources from, for example, expensive energy subsidies and consider earmarking resources for education, alongside wider tax reforms. Although domestic public spending on education has risen at an annual rate of just under 6 percent per year since 2000, on average education's share of total public expenditures has slightly declined across all income groups. This needs to be reversed.

The international community — governments, financial institutions, investors, and philanthropists— should increase international financing of education and improve its effectiveness. The Commission projects that with greater efficiencies and considerable expansion of domestic financing, only 3 percent of total financing will be needed from international sources. But this still means international financing for education will need to increase from today's estimated $16 billion per year to $89 billion per year by 2030, or to an annual average of $44 billion between 2015 to 2030. These funds will remain critical for low-income countries, covering on average half of their education costs.

This will require overcoming key challenges in the mobilization and deployment of international financing. Despite a large funding shortfall for education, international development assistance has not kept pace with need. In absolute terms, official development assistance (ODA) disbursements to infrastructure and health programs have increased at a quicker pace than education. While disbursements equaled between $7 and $9 billion in 2004 for all sectors, by 2016 disbursements to infrastructure and health reached nearly $28 billion and $20 billion, respectively. Disbursements to education, in comparison, grew to only $11 billion. In relative terms, the picture for education is even more stark. As a share of sectoral ODA, disbursements to education fell from 13 percent in 2004 to 10 percent in 2016. In comparison, disbursements to health and infrastructure both grew -- in the case of health, from 15 percent to 18 percent, and in the case of infrastructure, from 18 to 25 percent.

Much of the world's education burden has shifted to lower-middle-income countries. These countries are home to 700 million girls and boys of school age, more than three times the number in low-income countries. Sixty percent of all children and young people not on track to have basic skills by 2030 reside in lower-middle-income countries, as do half of all refugee and displaced youth. By 2030, 80 percent of the total global education financing needs will be in lower-middle-income countries. Many lower-middle-income countries have gained economic ground and not qualify for grants, low-interest, or interest-free loans to finance education. At the same time, the tax receipts of these countries have not increased quickly enough to finance the expansion and upgrades that their education systems desperately need. This leaves many of them stuck in a "missing middle" conundrum - they are too wealthy to get external funding at favorable rates but not wealthy enough to finance education on their own. These countries are eager to make progress on education, but their precarious economic success hands in the balance.

To achieve international financing goals, the Commission calls on the international community to significantly scale up financing from all sources and sets ambitious but achievable targets for each. The Commission calls on bilateral donors to allocate a higher share of their GDP to ODA and to increase the share which goes to education from 10 to 15 percent. To inspire and mobilize new giving, the Commission calls for the development of an "Education Giving Pledge" encouraging high net worth individuals to make a substantial public commitment to education, and in doing so motivate their peers to do likewise. Funding for education in humanitarian crises should be increased to a level of 4-6 percent of humanitarian assistance.

Donors should also improve the effectiveness and impact of international finance by re-examining the frameworks within which they make allocations. An education equivalent of the Equitable Access Initiative in health to bring partners together to develop a shared and coordinated approach to allocation would be a valuable tool. A much higher share of ODA should go through multilateral institutions to improve coordination and support long-term system strengthening. Donors, investors and institutions should also support innovative financial mechanisms for mobilizing new sources of education finance. At most $500 million of innovative financing has been raised for education since 2000, compared to $14 billion for energy and $7 billion for global health. The Commission evaluated 18 innovative financing mechanisms for education against a number of criteria including impact, potential for additional financing, and feasibility. The five most promising proposals that should be further developed include education bonds, innovative post-secondary student financing mechanisms, disaster insurance for education, impact investing, and solidarity levies.

Way forward: The International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)

To address the critical need of LMICs for increased international assistance, the Commission has been partnering with potential contributors and the multilateral development banks (MDBs) to design the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd).

IFFEd is a financial mechanism that will partner with the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to provide LMICs with scaled-up resources for education. IFFED is a pioneering and complementary financing instrument that builds upon, and adds to, the funding capacity of the current international financing architecture.

IFFEd recognizes that LMICs face structural challenges that make them particularly vulnerable to inadequate financing. Many LMICs have gained economic ground and do not quality for grants, low-interest, or interest-free loans to finance education. At the same time, tax receipts have not increased quickly enough to finance the expansion and upgrades that their education systems need.

IFFEd will increase the capacity of the participating MDBs to provide more financing for education in LMICs committed to investment and reform. It is aligned with the "billions to trillions" approach pioneered at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, which seeks to tap new resources to finance the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

IFFEd will increase MDBs' leadership on financing education, already the largest supporters of education in developing countries, by further leveraging their capital bases, improving coordination between banks, encouraging innovation to foster more effective implementation of financing and greater use of results-based financing, and complementing existing efforts while avoiding duplication and fragmentation.

It seeks to use the ability of the MDBs to leverage funds on the capital markets, supplemented by additional grant resources, to increase the MDBs ability to offer LMICs additional concessional lending for the education sector:

> *Contingent Financing:*
>
> Based on contingent financing commitments from its contributors and the development of additional education financing packages by the MDBs, IFFEd will provide a participating MDB with non-accrual risk coverage with respect to its outstanding sovereign loan/guarantee portfolio as a tool to generate additional lending capacity. MDBs will be able to use IFFEd's contingent financing commitments as a basis on which to increase its borrowing on capital markets (issuing bonds) at a level several times greater than the value of the contingent financing commitments, thus generating additional new resources for investment in education.
>
> *Provision of grants:*
>
> IFFEd will, in addition, provide grants to reduce the price of the education financing packages to LMICs (offer better effective loan terms) with the result that LMICs will be more likely to borrow for education.

The combined outcome will increase both the quantity of education financing offered and the demand (by borrowing countries) due to resulting improved concessional terms. It is essential that IFFEd targets both goals simultaneously to attain the maximum impact on education and learning.

Country access to IFFEd financing will require (a) a credible strategic framing document, such as a national education plan, that demonstrates a commitment to SDG4, and especially to issues of learning, equity and inclusion, (b) country commitment to improving education opportunities for marginalized children consistent with the principle of “leave no one behind”; (c) country commitment to increase or maintain its domestic education budget moving towards international standards, (d) ability to sustainably utilize additional lending through the MDBs focusing on debt sustainability; and (e) increasingly integrating results-based approaches into the financing packages to achieve nationally owned targets (consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness).

IFFEd-backed financing will embrace the full breadth of SDG 4, as well as a holistic, inclusive approach to learning. The Facility will provide LMICs with longer-term, predictable, and sustainable funding to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Facility will ensure that countries can continue investing in their education systems during a critical stage in their economic development and create opportunities for more than 20 million children to attend quality schools in its initial period. It will help girls complete both primary and secondary school, support programs to get at-risk children into school, provide longer-term finance for refugees or displaced children, allow for new innovations in the delivery of education, assist countries as they build comprehensive early childhood development programs, and provide support for initiatives to bring children with disabilities into education. In short, the Facility will contribute to developing all talents of all children.

The design of IFFEd is near completion, and it is anticipated that contributor countries will agree to provide IFFEd with a level of resources sufficient to allow MDBs to more than double their financing of education investments within five years. IFFEd is expected to become operational in 2020.

Conclusion

In the three years since the publication of the Learning Generation report in 2016, Global Education has benefitted from renewed momentum. Many United Nations Members States have invested more in education, reformed their system or supported progress in other countries through bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

Yet, despite this progress, Global Education is still not given the priority attention that is needed to unleash the potential of young generations. If current trends continue, by 2030 - the deadline for delivering the SDG4 goal of inclusive and equitable early childhood, primary, and secondary education for all - more than 400 million children will leave school without a basic primary education.

Without urgent action, half of the world’s children and youth will not achieve basic secondary level skills needed to thrive, or even participate, in the workforce of 2030. Already, 40 percent of employers globally are finding it difficult to recruit young people with the skills they need, and as the pace of technological change and innovation accelerates, new higher order skills will be required by the labor market. Investment in human capital will be critical for economic success and development. The World Bank's 2019 World Development Report calls on countries "*to invest in education and health with a fierce sense of urgency to harness the benefits of technology and to blunt its worst disruptions*."

The challenges are critical and urgent. The Learning Generation vision is ambitious but achievable. Its ultimate success will depend on strong leadership and empowered citizens. The Education Commission calls upon members of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) to continue all efforts to achieve fully the SDG4 agenda and to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Learning Generation, including:

PERFORMANCE

Successful education systems put results front and center

1 Set standards, track progress and make information public
2 Invest in what delivers the best results
3 Cut waste

INNOVATION
Successful education systems develop new and creative approaches to achieving results

4 Strengthen and diversify the education workforce
5 Harness technology for teaching and learning
6 Improve partnerships with non-state actors

INCLUSION
Successful education systems reach everyone, including the most disadvantaged and marginalized

7 Prioritize the poor and early years — progressive universalism
8 Invest across sectors to tackle the factors preventing learning

FINANCE
Successful education systems require more and better investment

9 Mobilize more and better domestic resources for education
10 Increase the international financing of education and improve its effectiveness

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11 Promptly establish and finance IFFEd to provide critically needed new and additional resources, through the MDBs, to assist Lower-Middle-Income Countries to meet the goals of SDG4

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