

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the Education Commission?**

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity was convened by the Prime Minister of Norway, the Presidents of Malawi, Indonesia, and Chile, and the Director-General of UNESCO following the 2015 Oslo Summit on Education for Development. The Commission's purpose is to reinvigorate the case for investing in education and to chart a pathway for increased investment in order to develop the potential of all of the world's young people. Its members are current and former heads of state and government, government ministers, and leaders in the fields of education, business, economics, development, health, and security.

## **Why is education such an important global priority?**

The major trends set to shape the world over the coming decades will increase the value of skills and worsen the prospects of those without them. In particular technology and shifting demographics will reshape demand for skills. By 2050, half of today's jobs will be lost to automation; the population of Africa alone will double to 2 billion and include a billion young people. If countries do not prepare young people for these changes, the consequences could be severe and spread around the world.

At a time when education is more important than ever, much of the world is falling behind. Today, 263 million children and young people are out of school and the number of out-of-school primary-age children is increasing. In low-income countries, only an estimated 67 percent of all children are completing primary school. In low- and middle-income countries, only half of primary-school children and little more than a quarter of secondary-school children are learning basic skills.

## **What is the "Learning Generation"?**

The Learning Generation idea laid out in the Commission's report envisions getting all young people into school and learning within a generation. Through a combination of reforms, innovation, and financial investment, all children in low- and middle-income countries could have access to quality pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, and a child in a low-income country would be on track to achieve learning levels and access to post-secondary education on par with children in rich countries today.

## **How does the Learning Generation initiative differ from other global education efforts?**

The Commission makes a strong case for why the world must invest in education as the key driver of economic growth, of all the Sustainable Development Goals, and of future stability. The Commission's Learning Generation vision represents the largest expansion of educational opportunity in modern history. It puts forward four transformations in education performance, innovation, inclusion, and financing to ensure both more investment in education and improved outcomes. And it calls for a Financing Compact, under which the international community will join forces with and provide increased financing to those countries committing to reform and investing more in education. The Compact will create a virtuous circle in investment, reform, and results. Finally, the Commission proposes new accountability mechanisms that will empower citizens, leaders, and institutions around the world to hold governments to account for their progress or inaction.

## **The Learning Generation would represent the largest expansion of educational opportunity in modern history. Is that realistic?**

We know that the Learning Generation goals are achievable because some countries are already achiev-

ing them. If all countries accelerated progress to the rate of the world's top 25 percent of countries improving education the fastest, the goal of getting all children on track to achieve learning levels and access to post-secondary education on par with children in rich countries today would be possible within a generation.

The Commission's financing plan is certainly ambitious, but it is realistic if education is given a higher priority in spending and if resources are spent as efficiently as possible. The Commission's report includes recommendations to cut waste and invest in interventions that deliver the best learning outcomes. Implementing these recommendations would reduce the unit cost per student reaching learning benchmarks by an estimated 50 percent or more on average.

### **How will the Learning Generation be paid for?**

The Learning Generation vision will require total spending on education – from domestic and international expenditures combined – to rise steadily from \$1.2 trillion per year today to \$3 trillion by 2030 across all low- and middle-income countries. Most of the increase will come from domestic spending; low- and middle-income countries will need 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.

#### **To raise these sums, the Commission proposes:**

- Mobilizing more domestic resources for education. Low- and middle-income countries should give education a priority in allocating new revenue from economic growth, reallocate overall government spending priorities toward education and away from less productive areas like energy subsidies, and explore measures to reform tax systems to enhance revenue.
- Increase the volume and effectiveness of international financing for education and scale finance from new sources. To support national efforts, international financing for education will need to increase from today's \$16 billion per year to \$89 billion by 2030. Countries undertaking reforms and committing their own money to invest in education will have priority in access to international finance, as will fragile states and countries most in need.

- Establish a Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) investment mechanism for education. The Commission estimates that MDB education financing could increase to \$20 billion annually – up from \$3.5 billion today – by smartly leveraging the MDBs capital base. Seizing this unprecedented opportunity would both encourage the MDBs to play a much bigger role in education and at the same time enhance coordination and reduce duplication of effort.

### **How can the world be sure that the envisioned increase in spending on education will really make a difference?**

The Learning Generation vision outlines four “transformations” in education. One involves increasing financing, but the others involve broad reforms to improve the quality of education, to make education spending and delivery more efficient, and to ensure that all children – especially the disadvantaged – have access to education. These four transformations – performance, innovation, inclusion, and finance – are intended as a holistic approach to extending and improving learning, rather than a list of discrete actions to select from. Each depends on the other.

Under the Commission's proposed “Financing Compact,” countries that commit to undertake and invest in transforming their education systems can expect financial and other support from the international community.

### **Is there any way to measure the return on investment on the Learning Generation's increased spending?**

Investment in education has been shown to have a tremendous impact – at the individual and national levels. A dollar invested in an additional year of schooling, particularly for girls, generates earnings and health benefits of \$10 in low-income countries and nearly \$4 in lower middle-income countries.

The Commission projects that if the Learning Generation is achieved, per capita GDP in low-income countries will be almost 15 percent higher by 2050 than it would be if current trends continued. Extreme poverty rates would be 20 percent lower. Average life expectancy would be 1.3 years higher, and population growth in low-income countries could be 13 percent lower.

**How can we be sure that governments and the international community will adopt and follow through on the Learning Generation's recommendations?**

Accountability will be key. The Commission proposes development of a transparent framework to hold governments to account for their commitments and responsibilities every year through independent reporting to the highest levels of world leadership and the UN so we all know who is keeping the promise of education. Success will depend on strong leadership and advocacy and galvanizing a global movement of young people and families, teachers and faith leaders, communities, civil society, business leaders, and others to inspire change and advocate for education. "Pioneer" partner countries will be encouraged to lead the way on adopting the Commission's recommendations. Where feasible, the Commission will encourage the acceleration of progress by building on up-and-running initiatives and will create links with health and other sectors to show the value of joint action beyond education. The Commission will structure new partnerships between businesses, innovators, and philanthropists to harness new resources and thinking on how to tackle the pressing global challenges of migration and exclusion. One year after the report's September 2016 launch, we will report back on what transformations we have collectively achieved, what are underway, and what more is planned to get all children learning within a generation.

**The report mentions the problem of corruption in education spending -- but doesn't make specific recommendations for addressing it. Is this something that just has to be left to individual countries? Why should donor countries trust them to do so?**

Political leadership is key to cracking down on corruption. A first step is to enforce the standards and procedures that many countries have in place already, from unannounced inspection visits, to tracking resources through financial audits and implementing transparent recruitment policies. A second powerful step is to generate and publicize new and regular data on whether students are learning and whether teachers are in

school and teaching. Evidence from different countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America shows that parents, school leaders, and civil society can play a vital role in putting in place measures to manage resources better and get the best out of teachers when they have real-time information on what the problems are, how extensive they are, and can track progress.

**Technology is obviously a key driver in how classrooms will change. Have the major technology actors in this space been involved in any of the solutions outlined in the report?**

Technology has untapped potential to transform learning. The Commission is working with a range of companies to support innovation for learning. Over the next year, priorities include getting every school online, generating and spreading good practice on what works to boost teaching and learning to teachers, policy makers, employers, and leaders, and establishing common learning platforms and regulation to support high quality innovation and accreditation.

**The report emphasizes the need to ensure the most vulnerable children are educated. What specific and immediate recommendations does the Commission have for children who are caught up in conflict or who are vulnerable to violent extremists?**

Today an estimated 63 million out of school children and youth live in conflict affected areas, the highest global number ever and set to keep rising. The Commission is calling for the international community to finance the recently created Education Cannot Wait Fund, which offers a unique opportunity to leverage new public and private financing for education in emergencies and bridge critical gaps in humanitarian and development responses. The Commission is also calling on all Ministries of Education, political leaders, businesses, and civil society to prioritize youth employment opportunities and include tolerance as part of education curricula, acting on evidence that shows the risks of participation in extremism are reduced when education combines with both measures. Every additional year of schooling reduces an adolescent boy's risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20 percent.

**The report says that the top 25 percent of countries improving their education systems the fastest show that the Learning Generation vision is achievable. What are some of countries making the fastest progress in education?**

Countries like Vietnam, Tanzania, and Korea show what is possible when strong political leadership combines with sound education policies, a focus on results, and the effective use of adequate resources. We know it is possible to get all young people learning in a generation. Vietnam's educational progress over the last 20 years is remarkable. Vietnam surprised the world in its first participation in PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) in 2012, scoring higher than the OECD average and outperforming many developed countries. Ingredients for this progress include high levels of political and parental commitment to education, rising education financing (growing from 7 percent of the national budget in 1986 to 20 percent in 2008), early investments in school and teacher quality, a focus on poor children, remote areas, and preschools, and a strong focus on steering standards and assessing numeracy and literacy.

**The U.S. and other donor countries are experiencing problems with their own educational systems. Why should they provide more resources overseas for education, when they could spend those funds at home?**

The case for funding overseas education is strong. In today's globalized world, fragile economies, greater inequality, and higher poverty levels growing from a lack of education are all potential drivers of conflict, instability, and extremism that can affect all countries. Investing in education, especially for girls, also delivers returns in areas of global concern like health and climate change. All countries clearly have an interest to contribute to stable societies, shared prosperity, and new economic opportunities.

**The UN Secretary-General supports the Commission's recommendations, but there will be a new Secretary-General in December. Can his or her support be counted on?**

Education is a UN priority and transcends who is in the Secretary-General seat. Ban Ki Moon has been a champion for education and we are confident the new Secretary-General will retain education as a priority to achieve all the SDGS and to set young people and countries on a path to prosperity, shared growth, stability, and increased equality.

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