

## Pioneer Country Initiative

### **The Education Commission**

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (the Education Commission) is a major global initiative co-convened by the Prime Minister of Norway, the Presidents of Malawi, Indonesia, and Chile, and the Director-General of UNESCO. Chaired by UN Special Envoy for Global Education and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the Commission's members include former heads of state, Nobel Laureates, and leaders from education, business, economics, development, health, and security. The Commission is working to develop a compelling investment case for securing every child's right to a quality education – the civil rights struggle of our generation. In September 2016, the Commission presented its *Learning Generation* report to the UN Secretary-General calling for the largest expansion of educational opportunity in history as the pathway to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.”

The Commission proposes a Financing Compact between developing countries and the international community to create the **Learning Generation** – a vision for getting all young people learning within a generation. The Commission believes it is possible to ensure quality education for the world's children and youth if countries transform the performance of education systems, unleash innovation, prioritize inclusion, expand financing, and are supported to accelerate progress to match the world's top 25 percent fastest education improvers. Under the Financing Compact, countries committed to investing and reforming their education systems will be supported by the international community with financing and other forms of support. In entering this partnership, countries and the international community are held accountable for their joint commitments.

### **Pioneer Country Initiative**

The Pioneer Country Initiative was launched in November 2016 to help turn the Commission's report recommendations into action. The initiative aims to inspire leadership in countries to become education champions and go further in implementing education reforms, increasing domestic investment in education, and enhancing delivery.

Under the leadership of Commissioner and former President of Tanzania HE Jakaya Kikwete, the Commission has led high-level delegation visits to meet with heads of state and government across Africa to share the Commission's recommendations, learn from the countries' own experiences, and discuss how further reforms and investment can transform learning results for children and youth. As part of the visits, the Commission delegation has held meetings with Presidents, Prime Ministers, cabinet officials, and when possible, development partners, private sector, and civil society leaders. Fourteen countries in Africa, representing low- and middle-income countries and a cross-section of regional and linguistic zones, were selected for the initial wave of visits: Botswana, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria,

Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda. The Commission is considering countries in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean for the next stage of the initiative.

As part of the visits, President Kikwete has shared the Tanzanian experience of using a results-based transformative “lab” approach to identify priorities for reform and develop focused, inclusive, and realistic implementation plans that support disciplined execution with clear lines of accountability. The labs bring together players from all levels of the education system and include public and private actors. Other sectors are also invited. The approach has been used successfully in multiple sectors and countries, including Tanzania and Malaysia. The Pioneer Country Initiative aims to help countries adopt a similar transformative *Learning Generation Lab* approach to stimulate faster progress on delivering existing and new plans to enhance education reform and resource efficiency. Where strong sector plans already exist, the lab will strive to clarify implementation and monitoring responsibilities for delivery of the plan.

To date, all heads of state and governments visited have expressed great interest in becoming *pioneer countries*. The Commission will support ongoing work with this initial group of countries by catalyzing a results-first approach and brokering engagement with the international community. The Commission is working closely with donor partners to embed the approach in existing sector planning processes (such as the education sector planning supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and its implementing partners) and to develop a sound institutional basis for future work.

### **Next Steps**

- **One-week *Learning Generation Lab* Workshop for Pioneer Countries, in Nairobi, May 2017.** The workshop will introduce senior government officials and civil society leaders from the initial wave of countries to the *Learning Generation Lab* methodology and action plan. The workshop will include tools to assess a country’s readiness to undertake the lab process.
- **Selected countries implement an intensive six-week *Learning Generation Lab*** with national education policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to generate a detailed implementation plan and accountability structure, building on existing education plans.
- **The Commission will connect with donors and international organizations to bring in additional assistance, including through the Commission’s proposed International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)** – a partnership between developing countries, multilateral development banks, and public and private donors dedicated to mobilizing and multiplying new resources for education in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Promoting a *Learning Generation Network*.** The Commission will work with others to share lessons from the *Learning Generation Lab* approach and create momentum for other countries to join a *Learning Generation Network* of pioneer countries committed to education reform.