

SOUTH ASIA LEADERS MEET IN NEPAL TO RADICALLY IMPROVE EDUCATION IN THE REGION

30 million children aged 5-14 are currently left out of school

KATHMANDU, May 7, 2018 – Facing an urgent need to tackle the learning crisis across South Asia, Ministers of Education, senior officials from finance and planning, international education experts, development partners, and civil society are gathering in Kathmandu this week to discuss what can be done to accelerate progress towards giving all children the opportunity to go to school and receive a quality education. Co-hosted by the United Nations Children’s Fund

(UNICEF) and the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity ([the Education Commission](#)), the three-day high-level conference will include participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Many countries in South Asia have prioritized education and have achieved commendable gains in getting children into school, but significant challenges remain. The region is currently home to more than 10 million out-of-school children who should be attending primary level and 20 million out-of-school children at secondary level.

“While impressive strides have been made in achieving universal primary education, we have a learning crisis in South Asia with only about half of primary-aged children receiving education with minimum learning standards. We need much greater investment and increased quality education for girls and boys alike if we hope to see the next generation reach their full potential,” said Jean Gough, Regional Director for UNICEF South Asia.

Only 69% of children have access to early childhood education and only a quarter of young people leave school with the secondary skills they need. The growing skills gap will stunt economic growth, with far-reaching social and political repercussions. Unless urgent action is taken, the region will fall short of meeting the education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) and ensuring quality learning for millions of children and youth by 2030.

UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Education Commission Chair Gordon Brown said, “The Education Commission is proud to co-host this important gathering of countries in South Asia to share experiences of education reform and learn together about new ways to tackle the shared challenge. It’s time to make education a priority and it’s encouraging to see leaders committing to champion education through increased investment and reform. It is possible to get all young people in school and learning within a generation. Let’s work together to make this a reality.”

In 2016, the Education Commission launched *The Learning Generation: Investing in education for a changing world* report with an action plan for the largest expansion of educational opportunity in history. Drawing on new research from more than 300 partners in 105 countries,

the report highlights an ever-worsening learning crisis that, 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.

UNICEF is joining hands with the Commission and working with governments and partners to accelerate progress in education and increase financing for the sector – giving priority to those children most at risk of being excluded from learning.

“There is no better path to stronger economies – more peaceful countries – than investment in every child's right to an education,” said Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF.

-ENDS-

BACKGROUND FOR EDITORS

The Education Commission

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

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.



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