

Completion Report

Africa Foundational Learning Exchange in the Year of Education 2024

Moving Together from Commitments to Impact at Scale

Kigali, Rwanda || November 11-13, 2024



Overview. One of the largest platforms for country-to-country exchange around foundational learning in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024 (FLEX 2024) brought together **over 500** distinguished policymakers, thought leaders, development partners, implementers, and other education actors from **34 countries** across Sub-Saharan Africa to Kigali, Rwanda from November 11-13, 2024. Over the course of 22 sessions, participants engaged in dialogue focusing on ways to catalyze the scaling of successful interventions that enhance foundational learning on the continent. Countries exchanged progress made on commitments in foundational learning at the 2023 FLEX gathering in Sierra Leone, the 2023 Heads of State Human Capital Exchange in Dar es Salam, and the 2024 ADEA High Level Policy Dialogue in Zambia. Through a series of presentations, panels, round table discussions, formal and informal dialogue over three days in Kigali, participants shared knowledge derived from foundational learning efforts on the continent and jointly planned the way forward towards meeting targets. The event resulted in the drafting of a joint Declaration for Action in Foundational Learning-signatures on the Declaration are being finalized at the time of this report.

The World Bank Education team played a key financing and coordinating role for the event, working closely with the Rwanda Ministry of Education as host and African Union (AU), Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Hempel Foundation, UNICEF, and USAID as organizing partners. This report provides an overview of the event, including the concept note, agenda, program, speaker bios and outcome declaration document. Session recordings are linked.

Introduction. The African Union (AU) declared Education as the Theme of the Year 2024 and called upon all partners to coalesce towards the achievement of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2024, as well as other global, regional, and national commitments on ensuring education for all children in Africa. The AU, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Hempel Foundation, UNICEF, USAID, FCDO, the Mastercard Foundation and other key development partners recognized the importance of foundational learning and focused efforts on supporting governments on the continent to tackle the challenges of poor learning outcomes at the foundational learning level by working with Ministries of Education and providing opportunities to share and learn from each other on what works to improve foundational learning.

African nations-committed and ready to focus on improving learning outcomes. Previous national and regional convenings highlighted the urgent need to enhance learning outcomes for children in Africa as a human right, and as a pre-requisite for achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063. In 2023, the Government of Tanzania and the World Bank along with AU, BMGF, Master Card Foundation, and other partners brought together eighteen heads of state, and high-level representatives of 43 African governments at the [African Heads of State Human Capital Exchange](#), to elevate the discussion on the importance of investing in people. Participating countries committed to achieve the following by 2030: (i) Increasing accessibility, affordability and ensuring quality education as well as reducing learning poverty by at least a quarter; (ii) Improving adult literacy rates to reach 75%; (iii) Providing training on skills to an additional 19 million to acquire digital skills for jobs; and (iv) Achieving a Gross Enrollment Ratio of 20% in tertiary education. In the same year, ADEA's [High Level Policy Dialogue Forum \(HLPDF\)](#) in Zambia (2023) brought together ministers from eleven countries and ministerial representatives from ten countries and culminated in a [ministerial communiqué affirming the importance of foundational skills and urging intentional efforts by governments to safeguard children's access to high quality education](#). Africa [Foundational Learning Exchange \(FLEX\) 2023](#), a regional forum for sharing technical strategies and experiences in the delivery of education on the continent, resulted in a joint declaration that re-emphasized the governments' commitment to foundational learning. In 2024, a [Pre-AU Exchange High Level Round Table on Foundational Learning](#), organized by Human Capital Africa in collaboration with ADEA, UNICEF, and the Dangote Foundation articulated a [Call to Action](#) on foundational learning.

Taking Stock Together. As the Year of Education 2024 drew to a close, the AU, ADEA, World Bank, Hempel Foundation, UNICEF, and other key partners collaborated with the Government of Rwanda to bring together education actors across the continent for the **Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024**. The largest platform for country-to-country exchange around education on the continent, the Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024 brought together distinguished policymakers, thought leaders, development partners, implementers, and other education actors from across Sub-Saharan Africa to catalyze the scaling of successful interventions that enhance foundational learning. Countries exchanged progress made on commitments in foundational learning at various fora including the 2023 FLEX gathering in Sierra Leone, the 2023 Heads of State Human Capital Exchange in Dar es Salam, and the 2024 ADEA High Level Policy Dialogue in Zambia. Through a series of presentations, panels, round table discussions, formal and informal dialogue over three days in Kigali, participants shared knowledge derived from foundational learning efforts on the continent and jointly planned the way forward towards meeting targets.

Regional Participation. More than **20 African Ministers of Education** and **12 Heads of Ministerial Delegations** from **34 countries** in Africa joined the **over 500 delegates** and online participants that included the President of Zambia, His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, at this seminal event. The First Lady of Rwanda, Her Excellency Jeannette Kagame officially opened the meeting. This followed welcome remarks by the Rwanda Minister of Education, Hon. Joseph Nsengimana, the recorded video message from the President of Zambia who is also the Champion of Foundational Learning, and remarks from the ADEA Executive Secretary, Albert Nsengiyumva, and the World Bank's Regional Vice President for Eastern and Southern Africa, Victoria Kwakwa.

Twelve partner sharing sessions on the first day preceded the main event. The sessions showcased some of the partner initiatives supporting African countries to achieve improved foundational learning. Ministers and senior government officials in attendance provided great insights on what is working amid some challenges. Participants agreed on the key lessons that framed the recommendations from these sessions.

The next two days focused on plenary discussions, Ministerial roundtables, parallel sessions as well as exhibitions and partner side meetings. The official opening and policy discussions on the second day, informed by evidence from research and studies, helped to frame subsequent discussions in the breakout sessions. The closed-door Ministerial discussions provided a special moment of interaction between the policymakers and partners on pertinent issues that included funding and accountability. Rounding off the discussions was the visit to schools by Ministers, heads of delegations, and partners – moving from the “boardroom” discussions to experience the classroom environment.

World Bank Role. The World Bank Education team played a key financing and coordinating role for the event, working closely with the Rwanda Ministry of Education as the event host and African Union (AU), Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Hempel Foundation, UNICEF, and USAID as organizing partners. World Bank Education task teams from participating countries worked closely with their Ministry of Education counterparts leading up to the event, supporting Ministry speakers with technical input regarding foundational learning to enhance the quality of the dialogue. World Bank Senior Management team members participated in key discussions, from providing Opening Remarks to participating on an Education Leadership panel discussing the role of development institutions in partnering with governments to strengthen foundational learning outcomes in Africa.

Ministerial Close Door Dialogue. On day 1 of the FLEX, the World Bank organized a high-level discussion between Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Education from across the continent. This event was designed to help chart the course for better learning outcomes for Africa’s children by bringing together expertise and experience from across the continent—and around the world. Jointly hosted by the World Bank and the Honorable Ministers of Education and Finance of Rwanda, a distinguished collection of finance and education ministers discussed progress, challenges, and opportunities to meet national and international commitments—notably the declaration made by Presidents at the 2023 Human Capital Summit in Dar es Salaam, to cut learning poverty by a quarter by 2030.

The event had three key objectives:

1. Highlighting promising, practical, and bold policy actions—and investments—that are improving foundational learning in several countries.
2. Building growing consensus about key actions—including transforming educational spaces, improving teacher performance, monitoring learning outcomes rigorously—that can form a blueprint for change.
3. Examining how existing and new partnerships—with National, Regional, and Global development institutions—can more effectively come together in a common effort.

The roundtable presented participants with the chance to shape larger and more sustained investment in this agenda towards a “Decade of Renewal and Transformation in Education”. The dialogue allowed Ministers to share their experience in key aspects of foundational learning including **Teacher Management, Quality of Instruction, Access through Infrastructure and Technology, and Education Financing**.

Event Outcome. The event culminated in the drafting of the *FLEX 2024 Declaration for Action*:

Moving from Commitment to Action in Foundational Learning Across Africa. This Declaration provides a roadmap for action following FLEX 2024, in the form of renewed collective commitments and actions in key areas by the Ministers and heads of delegations present, supported by partners and education stakeholders, to improve foundational learning in Africa.

FLEX 2024 Declaration for Action: Moving from Commitment to Action in Foundational Learning Across Africa

We, the Ministers of Education from Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe and Heads of Delegations from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Somalia, and Togo, present at the 2024 Africa Foundational Learning Exchange (FLEX 2024) in Kigali, Rwanda, hereby collectively commit to ending learning poverty in Africa by 2035.

We further reaffirm our commitment to improving foundational learning for every child on the continent, together with the African Union, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the World Bank, UNICEF, Hempel Foundation, USAID, and all development partners represented at FLEX 2024.

Foundational learning is the basis for all future learning and economic empowerment. It ensures that our children are equipped with the literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills to develop, learn, and contribute to the social and economic development of the continent.

Therefore, it is critical to position foundational learning as a pivotal strategy for long-term prosperity, peace and security across Africa, thereby contributing to universal quality education, a key aspect of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.

We acknowledge the commitments that African countries have made through policy reforms, increased budget allocation, and implementation of evidence-based approaches that support foundational learning since the 2023 Human Capital Heads of State Summing in Dar es Salam, the 2023 ADEA High-Level Policy Dialogue Forum on Foundational Learning in Lusaka, the 2023 Foundational Learning Exchange in Sierra Leone and the African Union Mid-Year Summit in Accra, Ghana in July 2024.

The World Bank's estimate of USD21 trillion in global lost productivity if we do not improve learning outcomes compels us to act now. We know that for every year of education we provide a child, we enhance their future earning potential by 8-10 percent and contribute to future global productivity gains of up to USD6.5 trillion.

To build on the progress made thus far and continue the momentum from the FLEX 2024, we commit to undertake the following actions:

1. Enhance inter-country collaboration on foundational learning. This will be done by: (a) expanding and strengthening the leadership role of the Africa Foundational Learning Ministerial Coalition to include technical Ministry personnel and developing a clear strategy to engage political leaders; (b) fostering cross-border collaboration, building stronger partnerships, facilitating collaborative research and adapting shared practices to individual country contexts.
2. Adapt, integrate, and scale evidence-based approaches to improve foundational learning outcomes including provision of high-quality Early Childhood Education; Structured Pedagogy; Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL); and Learning Through Play. These will be accompanied by investment in school governance and systems, teacher

training, mentoring and coaching, adequate teaching and learning materials, and strong country-level monitoring and assessment structures.

3. Enhance the production and utilisation of quality data, evidence, assessment, and accountability mechanisms. It is important to: (i) strengthen Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) to leverage evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence, (ii) implement systemic reforms to ensure foundational learning is prioritised at the system level and links to practices at the classroom level, (iii) develop an African common assessment framework to enable countries to implement proficiency standards for monitoring foundational learning outcomes. (iv) improve learning assessment processes at the foundational level to include literacy, numeracy, language, and social and emotional skills; (v) strengthen country, regional, and continental accountability mechanisms using available accountability tools.

4. Accelerate impact through intentional and efficient spending of country resources on evidence-based approaches with a focus on scalable and cost-effective interventions.

5. Increase coordination and integration of partner initiatives in foundational learning at the country level to eliminate duplication and maximise efficiency in resource utilisation.

We collectively endorse the African Union’s call to declare a decade of education for the continent. Foundational learning needs to be prioritised and embedded within the continent’s development strategy over the long term. To support this, we confirm that the Africa Foundational Learning Exchange will be held annually. We will strive to integrate African Heads of State in the dialogue to ensure strong leadership towards improving the salience of foundational learning across Africa.

Made on this 13th day of November 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda.

Next Steps. At the Closing of FLEX 2024, the Minister of Education, Malawi announced that **Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2025** would take place in Malawi. At the time of this report, a task team consisting of Malawi Ministry of Education colleagues and partner institutions has been set up and the World Bank team in charge of organizing FLEX 2024 has engaged with members of that team for to share learning from FLEX 2024. Key learning from organization and implementation of the event has been compiled into a resource for other teams planning similar events in the future.

Annexures.

The following annexures provide a detailed overview of the event proceedings, including session summaries and recordings.

Annex 1. [Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024 Agenda](#)

Annex 2. [Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024 Full Program](#)

Annex 3. [Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024 Speaker Profiles](#)

Annex 4. [Africa Foundational Learning Exchange Session Recordings](#)

Annex 5. [Africa Foundational Learning Exchange Logistics Note for Participants](#)

Annex 6. [World Bank Closed Door Ministerial Dialogue Run of Show](#)

Annex 7. [Planning Team Learning Two Pager](#)