Ensuring All Children Learn: Lessons on Equity and Inclusion from the South

5th- 6th March 2019| Islamabad, Pakistan

BACKGROUND

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) sets bold and ambitious new targets that emphasize the quality and equity of education, a shift from the previous focus of access. SDG4 requires that ‘no education target should be considered met unless met by all’. To ensure that no child is left behind, active efforts are needed to identify the ‘furthest behind first’. Identifying these children requires an understanding of where they are most likely to be found. Across the developing world, the hardest to reach children are often found in the hardest to reach areas, and are not likely to be in school. Even when children are enrolled in school, they may attend irregularly or are enrolled in unregistered facilities that are rarely included in sample lists. Crucially, even for those children who are attending school regularly, millions are still unable to read or do simple mathematics calculations despite having spent at least four years in school.

THE CHALLENGE

Two major challenges exist. Firstly, as many more children attend school than ever before, the assumption has been that sending children to school will automatically lead to learning. The majority of existing approaches to obtain learning data focus on regionally and globally comparable school-based assessments. In contexts where a significant proportion of children are out-of-school or attending irregularly, school-based assessments suffer from selection bias. An absence of inclusive learning assessments has meant that millions of children are excluded from official sources of data tracking progress towards achieving SDG4. Secondly, using evidence on learning outcomes to inform policy, planning or implementation is not yet an entrenched practice in many developing countries. With national and international acceptance of the global learning crisis, learning assessment data needs to be relevant and appropriate not just for monitoring, but for providing information that is actionable for improving children’s learning. Only when evidence is relatively straightforward to generate and comprehend can it lend itself to action. Learning assessment data needs to be easily understood by those who must act – whether policymakers, governments, teachers, or parents - and used to inform actions to improve learning, particularly for those children most likely to be left behind.

THE OPPORTUNITY

It is time to look at the actions for the global learning crisis. We know that millions of children are not learning, despite many attending school. We also know that those children most likely to be left behind are found in the hardest-to-reach places and are subject to multiple and inter-generational disadvantage. In order to ensure that SDG4 is achieved by 2030, actionable programs are under way for those children excluded and most vulnerable; these include growing global solutions of ‘teaching at the right level (TARL)’ and other powerful innovations for accelerated learning informed by evidence to measure impact.
The People’s Action for Learning Network (PAL Network) is a south-south partnership whose member countries work across three continents to assess the basic reading and numeracy competencies of children through citizen-led assessments, in order to provide inclusive and equitable data to inform citizen-led action to improve learning. As national and global level conversations about learning shift from wide acceptance of the global learning crisis to evidence-based and contextually relevant solutions to ensure that no child is left behind, members of the PAL Network will hold a two-day biennial conference in March 2019 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The conference will:
- **Explore known data gaps** and under-researched equity and inclusion issues for invisible and vulnerable populations across the global South, to build a strong knowledge and evidence base on the dimensions and magnitude of the challenge;
- **Share data-driven implementation programs and initiatives**, using learning data to identify and promote promising, evidence-based, equity-oriented pedagogical solutions to ensure all children are in school and learning;
- **Provide an active learning forum** that connects key researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and civil society actors across the global South, catalyzing learning, sharing and knowledge exchange.

The conference invites:
- **Partners** to frame the challenge, using equitable data that includes those children most likely to be left behind through interactive roundtable discussions and presentations.
- **Practitioners** to present solutions to improving learning outcomes, using evidence-based pedagogical interventions through breakout sessions, 10-minute innovation lightning talks and practical workshops.
- **Participants** to catalyze sharing and learning across countries through interactive roundtables, and panel discussions.

**SEEKING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PAL NETWORK 2019 CONFERENCE**

PAL Network is calling upon strategic partners to support the conference through the following sponsorship options:

- Funding participation of three graduate student presenters, winners of a graduate students’ competition using citizen led assessment data for their research; technical assistance for the competition is being extended by the REAL Centre University of Cambridge – (US $ 10,000)
- Bursaries for full participation (travel/accommodation) to practitioners, speakers and government officials (15 and 10 Pakistan) (US $ 50,000)
- A peer reviewed conference publication (US $ 20,000)
- Hosting reception and dinner for the conference participants (US $ 5000)

All sponsors shall be provided formal visibility through their institutional Logos and acknowledgement at the opening and closing sessions.