

Concept Note for Policy Focus Session:

“Empowering Tomorrow: Women Leaders Driving Foundational Learning”

Details

Date: Wednesday, March 20th

Duration: 60 minutes

Type: Policy Focus Session

Location: NJV Athens Plaza Hotel

Time: 13:00 - 14:00

Co-host: Human Capital Africa (HCA)

Participants: Open to all attendees of the WPL Summit

Summary

Nine out of ten children in Sub-Saharan Africa are unable to read a simple sentence by the age of 10 or even 12, when many of them are tested. Even in Low- and middle-income countries, on average, half the children that are born can read by this age. Moreover, this is seven times worse than the rate of children who are unable to read in Europe and Central Asia.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, Human Capital Africa (HCA) leveraged significant platforms such as the Transforming Education Summit (TES), ADEA Triennale, and UNGA, orchestrating influential side events aimed at mobilising support and raising awareness among Ministers, Heads of State, and the global educational community about the pressing educational crisis. More recently, in 2024, HCA organised a strategic Pre-Summit Roundtable in Addis Ababa before the African Union Summit, which successfully gathered African leaders and community to underscore and amplify the critical importance of foundational learning.

The Women Political Leaders (WPL) Summit, as one of the foremost global assemblies of women leaders, policymakers, and Heads of State, presents an unparalleled opportunity for HCA. By engaging this influential audience, the Summit

serves as an ideal platform to continue the momentum on foundational learning and to harness the significant influence of these leaders to address this urgent and vital issue.

Overview of HCA

Led by Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, HCA is an accountability and advocacy organisation that aims to bridge the gap between evidence and action on improving learning for children under the age of 10, across Sub-Saharan Africa.

We expect country leaders, Ministers, key influencers in the government, and external partners and leaders to be the main audience for our work and engagement.

We raise awareness about the need to focus on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), help governments adopt the right set of policies and actions to fix it, and use data to help country leaders take action.

We do this by using three key tools:

- Advocacy and awareness: Raise awareness about education system performance and make country leaders care, particularly about foundational learning and numeracy (FLN) and the FLN goal in the first few years.
 - A key tool to do this is through HCA's board of advisors, composed of some of the most influential leaders across the continent, which provides HCA the platform necessary to amplify its message in a noticeable way
- Data: Amplify existing data on learning outcomes to raise awareness and make country leaders care, particularly about foundational learning and numeracy, through our Foundational Learning Scorecard, Micro Learning Indicators, and Adoption Tracker Tool
- Information: Broker partnerships between governments and partners to provide information on what works to help country leaders take the actions needed to improve FLN outcomes

HCA believes in the strength and value of working in collaboration with a broad set of actors and aspires to bring these various parts together for collective action. HCA also strongly believes that the right set of tools, knowledge, and guidance is already available to do something about this learning crisis.

It is a fundamental right for all children to be given the opportunity to learn, contribute to society, and have productive, meaningful futures. Ensuring that this right is provided must be high on the agenda of all government leaders, policymakers, civil society actors, the private sector, and all key global and regional partners.

Outline of this event

HCA proposes to hold an event at the margins of the WPL summit centred around the pivotal role of women leaders in advancing and shaping the critical agenda of foundational learning in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This event will make the linkage between education and democracy, and how foundational learning is the basis for a successful and productive future. Additionally, this event will also discuss the pervasive gender disparity within those dynamics, which further contribute to the meagre numbers of women leaders.

Objectives

1. Raise awareness among global leaders about the importance of foundational learning in SSA and its impact on sustainable development and democracy
2. Foster goodwill, collaboration and partnerships between governments, development agencies, international organisations, among others, to rally behind local actors working to improve the learning crisis in SSA
3. To emphasise the importance of foundational learning as a tool for empowering girls and young women, leading to improved health, economic, and social outcomes in SSA

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