



# Foundational learning for all

EDUCATION  
STRATEGY

2024





# Introduction

For the past two decades, great advances have been made towards ensuring access to education for all children both boys and girls. But far too many children are attending school without ever achieving minimum proficiency in literacy and numeracy, which forms the basis for all subsequent learning.

This widespread lack of ability to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10 is what the World Bank has defined as learning poverty, which undermines the ability of many least developed countries to end poverty and achieve a sustainable social and economic development.

In Africa, it is estimated that 4 out of 5 children are unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10 – revealing an extraordinary level of learning poverty.

These high levels of learning poverty have prompted an urgent need for education systems to accelerate children's foundational learning as a key component of achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on universal quality education by 2030. This requires delivery of learning interventions that are cost effective, applicable for scale and with a proven potential for delivering impact at scale.



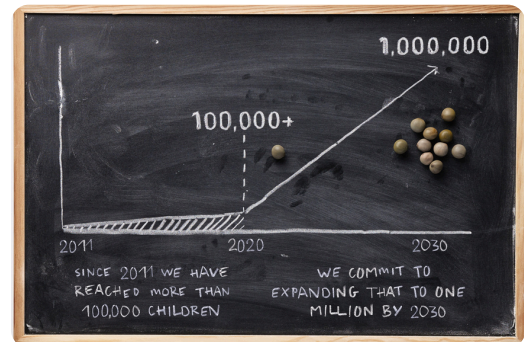
Photo: UNICEF, Madagascar



# OUR 2030 COMMITMENT

To inspire others and to serve as an overarching goalpost for our work, in 2021 we made a commitment **to reach one million children by the end of 2030** with learning interventions that enable the achievement of foundational learning.

This commitment marks the scale of our ambition, but we will continue to be driven by quality and therefore hold ourselves accountable, not only to the number of children we reach, but also to the results we help deliver in terms of improving learning outcomes.







## OUR APPROACH



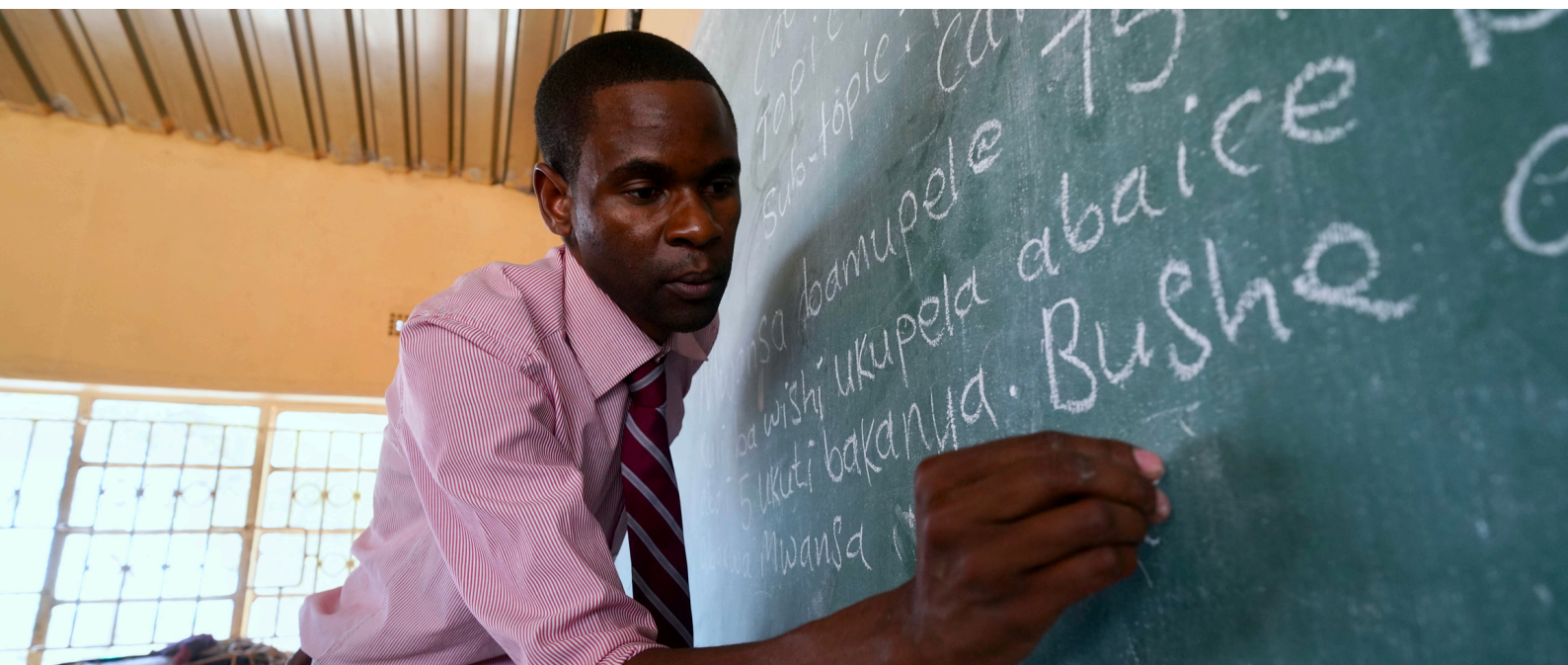
The Hempel Foundation supports organisations in accelerating delivery of learning approaches at country level and initiatives at regional/global level that strengthen the knowledge and capacity of governments to advance policy and effectively invest in foundational learning.

This twofold approach builds on the assumption, that:

1. Non-governmental organisations play a pivotal role in driving continuous improvements in public education systems of low- and middle-income countries but
2. Governments face resource constraints and limited capacity to assess, adapt and scale evidence-based innovative learning interventions within their education systems.

Hence, while high performing organisations are delivering effectful learning approaches at smaller scale, they need support in accelerating their work e.g. through further refinement and expansion of their approach, adaptation to context, strong evidence and access to government. At the same time, scaling and long-term sustainability of any learning approach, depends on the knowledge and capacity of governments to improve delivery of foundational learning.

So, while we aim to strengthen the supply of high-quality, cost-efficient learning approaches, we also support initiatives aimed at strengthening the demand for such approaches from governments.







## AT COUNTRY LEVEL

our engagement is guided by government priorities for advancing foundational learning.

- We identify and assess interventions and organisations based on their impact potential, our added value, scalability of intervention (including cost-effectiveness) as well as organisational capacity and strategy for delivering on government priorities.
- We prioritize supporting organisations that are either rooted in local context or have a proven strong understanding and presence in the country/region in which they work.
- We know that our partner organisations are the experts in their area and we do our best to listen, learn and proactively leverage our financial resources, network, capacity and knowledge to help them accelerate the development and scaling of their learning approaches.
- We believe that government decisions on scaling learning approaches should be evidenced based, hence we place strong emphasis on data and evidence as well as documenting learnings.
- We do not support standalone EdTech interventions, but we consider EdTech as a tool for supporting learning as well as administration at all levels and which should always be considered and applied through an integrated approach.

### COUNTRIES WE WORK IN:

- Tanzania
- Rwanda
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Madagascar
- Sierra Leone
- Bangladesh
- Nepal





## AT REGIONAL / GLOBAL LEVEL

our engagement is guided by opportunities to strengthen governments' ability to ensure system wide improvements in the delivery of foundational learning.

We prioritize initiatives where our support catalyzes collaboration, knowledge sharing, and awareness-raising to mobilize and sustain efforts to combat learning poverty.

By leveraging and communicating lessons learned and evidence from both successful and less successful learning approaches, governments can allocate scarce resources more effectively.

We believe this can be further supported through the development and sharing of knowledge, guidance, and tools to assist organisations and governments in planning, designing, and implementing foundational learning approaches.







## OUR FOCUS

To guide our prioritization and allocation of resources, we focus on strengthening foundational learning for children in public primary schools located in rural areas in the world's least developed countries.

### **Foundational learning**

In line with the Commitment to Action on Foundational learning, we believe that literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional skills provide the essential building blocks for all other learning, knowledge and higher-order skills. Children who cannot read and understand a simple text will struggle to learn anything else in school. They are more likely to repeat a grade and more likely to drop out of school. They are less likely to benefit from further training and skills programs. At a national level, this will lead to worse health outcomes, greater youth unemployment and deeper levels of poverty.

### **Children living in least developed countries**

While learning poverty is not limited to the world's least developed countries, it is most prevalent in these regions, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Therefore, our efforts are primarily focused on these countries, with a specific emphasis on Madagascar, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Bangladesh, and Nepal as our current priority countries.

### **Government education systems**

While private low-fee schools can play a significant role in providing education and early childhood development services, we primarily support interventions that can be implemented through government-led education systems.

### **Primary Schools**

millions of children are advancing through school without gaining basic skills in literacy and numeracy. While our primary focus is on primary schools, we acknowledge the crucial role of families, communities, religious institutions, and others in supporting education.



## Children in rural areas

Children raised in impoverished rural areas have limited opportunities to improve their lives through education. Disparities between urban and rural areas persist, and we prioritize reaching children in these rural regions, who are often harder to access. These areas present significant challenges in terms of teacher retention, access to education, and infrastructure.

## Girls

Girls continue to face limited educational opportunities in many countries and regions, hindering both individual and societal progress. Through our work, we advocate for equality, aiming to directly benefit girls through our programs and indirectly through the impact girls and women have on their children by imparting key life skills. We hope to create a lasting impact by empowering girls to build a better world for future generations, thereby fostering positive change in their communities and society as a whole.

