



Enhancing Collaboration in Pursuit of SDG 4: Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Reflections from a roundtable held in London on 30th March 2017



In January 2016 the world started working towards a new set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to make our world more prosperous, inclusive, sustainable and resilient. In light of these Goals, KPMG's Global Board set a new corporate citizenship ambition: 'To inspire confidence and empower change through a global commitment to promoting and enabling lifelong learning' in pursuit of SDG 4.

When we convened a roundtable discussion on literacy and lifelong learning alongside the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos, together with Pearson, we identified a high level of interest and energy to work more closely together. We therefore took this opportunity to again bring together organisations which we already partner with on this agenda, together with others we know are doing great things, to generate practical ideas for enhanced collaboration to increase our collective impact on SDG 4.



“ We need operational partnerships including businesses and not-for-profit organisations so that the next generation of workers are literate, numerate, engaged, capable and skilled to take on the jobs of the future”.

Lord Dr Michael Hastings, Global Head of Corporate Citizenship, KPMG International

Key areas of consensus

- Organisations are leading and participating in a wide array of impactful projects, campaigns and initiatives. The challenge is how to secure synergies with other stakeholders' activities in order to optimise resource allocation and impact.
- Efforts to increase school enrolment have seen significant progress, although 57 million children of primary school age remain out of schoolⁱ. There is growing recognition that access to school does not guarantee learning; an estimated 130 million children worldwide have completed four years of school but do not have basic reading skillsⁱⁱ.
- Increased investment is required in pre-primary education and development (importantly including good nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life to prevent stunting) and to ensure pupils complete their schooling equipped with the skills to secure jobs.
- The SDGs commit to 'leave no-one behind' so effective approaches are required to reach the most vulnerable children, including the 30 million childrenⁱⁱⁱ on the move as refugees or migrants, and the 180 million children outside of mainstream education.
- All children and adults should be able to access books and learning materials. This requires a blended (context appropriate) approach to scale up access to physical paper books, as well as to digital content. Key building blocks include developing appropriate content in all local languages – including educational texts and stories – as well as taking out telecommunication connection costs for downloading of digital educational content.
- There needs to be more investment in educators – importantly including teachers and parents.
- An ecosystem approach is required which overcomes all barriers to effective learning, for example including: access for girls to toilets at school and menstrual hygiene solutions, access to adequate nutrition, and safe learning spaces.



Who came to the roundtable?

Lord Michael Hastings (KPMG's Global Head of Corporate Citizenship) and Serena Brown (Director, Sustainable Development) convened a select number of senior representatives from the Global Book Alliance, IICF, KPMG, Pearson and Project Literacy, Save the Children, UNICEF, Vodafone Foundation, Worldreader and Young Enterprise.

Ideas for collaboration to advance literacy:

1. A book in every home

- **Issue:** In order to develop effective emergent literacy skills – which are critical aspects of school readiness and the foundation of a love for reading – children need access to age appropriate reading material. However, across 54 mostly low and middle income countries only 1 in 5 households has at least 3 books^v.
- **Idea:** Businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charitable foundations could collaborate in pursuit of the simple goal of achieving 'a book in every home' through book gifting. KPMG's Family for Literacy has distributed over 3 million books and many other organisations have resources, expertise, distribution networks and community relationships which could together deliver this bold universal vision. (An early planning step would include documenting and analysing current international efforts including those by Book Start, Reach Out and Read, First Book and many others.) This would complement broader activities which are striving to (inter alia): develop relevant content for all languages and contexts, increase access to paper and digital books through schools and libraries, and increase the ability of children and educators to enjoy and effectively use books.

2. Empowering parents and carers to develop children's literacy skills

- **Issue:** Parental support is a key enabler of children's language and literacy development yet many parents do not read to - or read with - their children, nor undertake other activities which help to stimulate learning. This has a particularly acute impact if not undertaken in the foundational pre-primary years because it impairs children's school readiness and foundation for literacy; yet it is particularly challenging to reach parents at scale before their children enter formal childcare or education. Further, this parental support is particularly important in developing contexts where children often spend only 11% of their waking time in a school classroom^{vi}.
- **Idea:** Leverage businesses' extensive workforces and networks to empower parents and carers to develop children's literacy, both through: (i) educating employees who are parents or carers on best practice in supporting their children's learning; and (ii) encouraging and equipping employees to cascade messages across the company's value chain and through personal networks such as extended families, friends and faith communities.

3. Innovations in preschool foundational literacy and education

- **Issue:** According to the World Bank, investing in early childhood development is one of the smartest investments to ensure school readiness, break the cycle of poverty, address inequality, and boost productivity later in life. However, in less developed contexts pre-primary education is vastly underdeveloped, and formal pre-school structures prevalent in developed contexts are not necessarily an effective transferable model. As this is an emergent focus area, there is not yet an expansive body of evidence on what works.
- **Idea:** Identify the 'Top 10 Innovations in Preschool Education' in order to inspire and inform effective approaches in a variety of contexts, including some of the hardest to reach communities. Seek to offer grants to the winners for replication or scaling.

4. Crowd in more private sector action to achieve universal literacy

- **Issue:** Governments, not-for-profit organisations and the UN have been tackling illiteracy for many years, yet 758 million adults^{vi} and 250 million children^{vii} are illiterate. Whilst some companies have shown great leadership, such as Pearson which founded Project Literacy, the private sector remains underrepresented in collective efforts to eradicate illiteracy.
- **Idea:** Private sector companies actively tackling illiteracy can help to crowd in more support from other private sector actors. This could be optimised and coordinated by securing commitments to global multi-stakeholder collaborations such as Project Literacy, the Global Alliance for Literacy and the Global Book Alliance.

Contact



**Lord Dr Hastings
of Scarisbrick CBE**
Global Head of Corporate
Citizenship, KPMG International



Serena Brown
Director, Sustainable Development,
KPMG International
E: serena.brown@kpmg.co.uk

kpmg.com/globalgoals

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. Although we endeavour to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future. No one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.

© 2017 KPMG International Cooperative ("KPMG International"), a Swiss entity. Member firms of the KPMG network of independent member firms are affiliated with KPMG International. KPMG International provides no client services. No member firm has any authority to obligate or bind KPMG International or any other member firm vis-à-vis third parties, nor does KPMG International have any such authority to obligate or bind any member firm. All rights reserved. Printed in the United Kingdom.

The KPMG name and logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of KPMG International.
CREATE | CRT046599AD

i UNESCO (2014), Institute of Statistics database, accessed 3 April 2017
ii UNESCO (2014), 'Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All', EFA Global Monitoring Report
iii UNICEF (2015), 'Protecting Children on the Move: No matter here they are or where they come from, all children have the same rights', Refugee and Migrant Crisis Briefing Note, November 2015
iv UNESCO (2016), '2016 Global Education Monitoring Report' 'Save the Children (2016), 'Lessons in Literacy'
v UNESCO (2016), '50th Anniversary of International Literacy Day: Literacy Rates are on the Rise but Millions Remain Illiterate',
vi UNESCO Institute of Statistics Factsheet No. 38, September 2016
vii UNESCO (2014), 'The Global Learning Crisis: Why Every Child Deserves a Quality Education'