



**International Conference on
Girls' and Women's Literacy and Education:
“Foundations for Sustainable Development”**
on the occasion of International Literacy Day
in support of



8 September 2014, Dhaka, Bangladesh



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Dhaka Declaration

Preamble

We, the Ministers, senior officials of various countries, representatives of United Nations Organizations, bilateral donors, regional organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and individual experts, have gathered here in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the International Conference on Girls' and Women's Literacy and Education: “Foundations for Sustainable Development” on 8 September 2014 on the occasion of International Literacy Day;

We acknowledge that in nearly five decades, since UNESCO proclaimed 8 September as International Literacy Day, the global literacy rate has increased from around 60 % (1960) to 84% (2012). However, the progress has been uneven across countries;

We are deeply concerned that 781 million adults, *and two thirds of these are women*, are excluded from fuller participation in the development activities of today's world because they cannot read and write.

We further want to note that 121 million children do not complete the full cycle of basic education and nearly 130 million children attending schools are not learning even the basics of reading, writing and mathematics.

We are more deeply concerned that women continue to constitute a major proportion of the total illiterate population. It is distressing that this proportion has remained unchanged for over more than two decades. They tend to be excluded from the development processes and with limited freedom to improve their lives.

A defining moment to set the education agenda

1. We urge that literacy and lifelong education should be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. Relevant, good quality, inclusive, equitable education must be at the centre of the sustainable, just, equitable and inclusive world we want to create. We, therefore, urge the world community to put literacy and education first, as key levers of sustainable development as we move into the reshaping of the development agenda in 2015.
3. We need to create an enabling policy and legal environment that effectively embeds literacy and education in the developmental context of the country and fosters quality learning opportunities across all age groups within a lifelong learning perspective;

4. We must ensure adequate, sustainable funding to implement the programmes through higher allocations from domestic budgets, external support and mobilizing private sector investments;
5. We have to facilitate inter-sectoral collaboration at various levels and translate policy intent into contextually-relevant, learner-centred programmes that specifically address the learning needs of the marginalized and disadvantaged populations, in particular girls and women, people in rural areas, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities as well as persons with disabilities;
6. We shall have to develop a more holistic approach to literacy for sustainable development which promotes greater cross-sectoral interaction. It should prioritize gender equality by integrating literacy and education programmes with income-generating opportunities. This would be a system of learning that promotes social inclusion and heighten environmental awareness and connect with the Global Action Programme of Education for Sustainable Development;
7. We need to work towards instituting a credible, affordable, literacy assessment and monitoring system that helps deepen knowledge about learners' profiles and to enhance learner motivation, teaching and learning, and policy-making. Such a system will help, wherever possible, bridge pathways of informal, non-formal and formal learning through recognizing learners' prior and obtained knowledge;
8. We must ensure effective multi-stakeholder partnerships are in place at national and sub-national levels proactively involving the civil society partners, the private sector, academia and the local communities.

We need to act NOW to realize the future we want

9. We believe we have no time to lose. To create the sustainable world we look forward to, we have to lay a strong foundation with emphasis on quality education, literacy and effective learning at its core;
10. We must acknowledge the centrality of girls' and women's literacy and education to sustainable development, and it must be the non-negotiable priority for concrete action by all governments;
11. We call upon all Governments and development partners to reinforce their commitment through urgent action to make a difference in the lives of our people. We should work towards making our schools safer and enabling our girls to pursue their education without any fear and intimidation;
12. We further give a call to all Governments and partners to seek innovative solutions, using appropriate information and communication technology and adopt an effectively holistic approach to literacy for sustainable development by integrating literacy and education programmes;
13. We call upon UNESCO to step up its key role through initiatives like the Global Learning Cities Network, the Capacity Development for Education for All (Cap EFA) Programme as well as the Global Coalition for Literacy;
14. From this International Conference in Dhaka, we shall take these messages of commitment to international forums at Nagoya in November 2014, Incheon in 2015 and the UN General Assembly in late 2015.

Let us act together to make a difference where it matters most.

Let us write the future by putting learning, literacy and education first.