

Business leaders gather in New York to advance literacy skills in 50 cities around the globe

The World Literacy Taskforce was launched today (September 14) during the 77th UN General Assembly in New York City.

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The new round table is part of a corporation-led initiative to eradicate illiteracy by 2030 with young people in 10 cities in the United States and 40 cities internationally.

Corporate leaders from multinational companies working in the sectors of technology, publishing, education, media, and retail gathered today for the first meeting of the World Literacy Taskforce.

A global NGO, the World Literacy Foundation facilitated the event to accelerate the UN Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on addressing high rates of illiteracy of young people from low-income backgrounds.

The leaders heard about the lifelong economic cost and social impact of illiteracy linked to people who are marginalized in society. There are more likely to incur long term unemployment, low productivity, poor health outcomes, inequality, and crime.

Andrew Kay, the CEO of the World Literacy Foundation, said “a person who can’t read or write is dramatically limited in future opportunities and reaching their full potential. A simple task like reading a sign, filling out a form or understanding a medicine label is often a huge barrier. Although with effective early intervention in the development of literacy skills, life can take a new and more positive pathway”.

The World Literacy Taskforce will use collective corporate brainpower, resources, and human capital to eradicate illiteracy in these 50 cities in partnership with local communities and governments.

During today’s Taskforce meeting, 20 participants discussed the selection of the 50 cities, the use of new technologies with traditional methods in their literacy action plan. The new members will be invited to bring other along companies and engage with the workforce.

Joseph Ghali, Secretary-General of the World Literacy Taskforce said, “We have turned the corner of illiteracy when we bring together the corporate and the community to link arms with the literacy sector, local communities, and government: all focused on making real and meaningful impact by 2030.

“Our ambition is to accelerate and scale up the global collective impact to lift literacy outcomes for the benefit of the future workforce of tomorrow” .Globally, almost 770 million people can’t

read a single word and another 2 billion people struggle to read a sentence.

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