Africa Foundational Learning Exchange

Lilongwe * Malawi | 15 - 17 July, 2026

FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING EXCHANGE · FLEX2026

FLEX2026 Outcomes Synthesis

Key Highlights & Recommendations Across the Six Unified Areas

Lilongwe, Malawi | 15–17 July 2026

From Commitment to Results

34+

African countries represented — Ministers of Education & Finance, the African Union, and development partners

2023	2024	2026
Freetown	**Kigali**	**Malawi**
Commitment	*Action*	*Results*

Newly elevated cross-cutting threats: climate change and the digital divide are widening existing inequities.

> *"We are not asking for more declarations. We are waiting for us to return to our capitals to chart, review, and execute with fidelity."*
> **— Hon. Bright Msaka SC, Minister of Education, Malawi**

New Financing Commitments on the Table

21%

Sierra Leone national budget to education

25.4%

The Gambia's education budget directed to domestic foundational learning financing

$35M

Gates Foundation FLIGHT initiative mobilized from philanthropy partners

$37M

GPE pledge to unlock multiplier financing for Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

$1.5B

World Bank AIM4Learning regional initiative

$16B

World Bank's total education portfolio across Africa

Where Data Systems Stand Today

2.7

out of 4 — average FLAT rating across 52 African countries

Most countries sit at the "established" level, not yet "championing" — strong policy formulation, but delivery at scale still needs improvement.

Improved participation and engagement in the African Foundational Learning Ministerial Coalition quarterly meetings –more focused discussions on specific issues required.

Outcomes-based financing is emerging faster than the data systems needed to verify what it pays for.

Proof Points from Across the Continent

Kenya

Tusome Program — sustained reading gains at national scale

Zambia

Catch-Up Program raising foundational skills for over-age learners

Nigeria

Teaching at the Right Level adopted in 12,000 schools

Malawi

Structured Pedagogy Program scaling from 500 to all primary schools

Senegal & South Africa

Mother-tongue bilingual education across 12,000 schools

Côte d'Ivoire

Blended financing model for foundational learning

Six Unified Areas Guide This Synthesis

1. Political Leadership & Ownership
2. Financing & Equitable Resourcing
3. Data, Assessment & Accountability
4. Scaling Evidence-Based Pedagogy
5. Partner Coordination & Alignment
6. Whole-Child Access & Transitions

AREA 1

Political Leadership & Ownership

KEY FINDINGS

- School leadership is being institutionalized in national bodies — Kenya's KEMI, Zimbabwe's MOPSE, Rwanda's FL Delivery Unit — moving beyond one-off partner projects.
- AU Learn Policy Dashboard: School leaders in 87% of member states require CPD, 70% require performance assessment, 69% embed professional standards in law.
- Middle-tier officers (district/ward/zonal) are framed as the "engine of the system," translating policy into classroom reality.
- Community structures — school committees, parent assemblies, with a focus on women — are being empowered as a legitimate accountability layer.

CRITICAL GAP

30% of school leaders do not have induction training and only 13% receive CPD.

TOP RECOMMENDATION

Engage Parliament directly and continuously in FL funding and oversight — parliamentary continuity outlasts changes in government administration.

AREA 2

Financing & Equitable Resourcing

KEY FINDINGS

- Most African governments have no dedicated FL budget line; available financing goes overwhelmingly to salaries.
- Innovative mechanisms emerging: Ghana's GET Fund (2% VAT-based trust), Zimbabwe's Basic Education Fund, blended financing, education bonds, diaspora endowments.
- Mozambique cut textbook costs ~50% by decentralizing production to government-managed printing and regional distribution.
- Outcomes-based financing (paying for verified results) is active in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Comoros.

CRITICAL GAP

Outcomes-based financing depends on credible, verifiable data — but countries average just 2.7/4 on assessment-system maturity. The financing model risks scaling faster than the data needed to verify it.

TOP RECOMMENDATION

Diversify FL financing beyond national budgets, which are structurally biased toward salary spending — and tie disbursement to schools' own improvement plans (Ghana model).

AREA 3

Data, Assessment & Accountability

KEY FINDINGS

- Senegal's MIRADOR/GRIM platform tracks the entire teacher workforce, including language profiles, to match teachers to schools.
- Namibia is moving to "Open EMIS," integrating classroom assessment data for real-time dashboards that support teacher coaching.
- Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Madagascar are institutionalizing national learning assessments (NASU, NST, ENAH) rather than one-off projects.
- Rwanda's "clustering" model links community ECD centers to formal school EMIS for capitation grants and qualified teachers.

CRITICAL GAP

At least three continental data/tracking tools are now in play — CAF-Africa, FLAT, and AFLAI — with a real risk of reproducing fragmentation at the continental level even as countries solve it nationally.

TOP RECOMMENDATION

Operationalize the Continental Assessment Framework (CAF-Africa) as one shared, harmonized tool across all African Union member states.

AREA 4

Scaling Evidence-Based Pedagogy

KEY FINDINGS

- Tanzania's MEWAKA coaching program lifted FL proficiency from 63.7% (2021) to 89.9% (2025).
- Zambia's TIEEZ School Improvement Cycle achieved a 66–88% improvement in learning outcomes.
- Malawi's BEFIT program has reached 889,782 students and trained 17,900 teachers on tablet-based learning.
- Coaching-based models are replacing cascade training: direct instructional feedback rose from 24% to 49%; data-informed teaching decisions rose from 19% to 48%.

CRITICAL GAP

Kenya's own data shows 80% of lesson time remains teacher-centered despite materials being present — the materials ⟶ training ⟶ practice-change pipeline is still broken at the final step.

TOP RECOMMENDATION

Scale bottom-up, school-based coaching and CPD models (MEWAKA, BOFO) over top-down cascade training, given their measurably stronger outcomes.

AREA 5

Partner Coordination & Alignment

KEY FINDINGS

- Zambia formed a FL Technical Committee and Steering Committee, government-led with partner membership, to reduce fragmentation.
- Partners are explicitly committing to align behind government priorities — "we must not build multiple systems over governments."
- Blended financing is formalizing co-funding, e.g., Rwanda's ECCE Outcomes Fund with the LEGO Foundation and EU.

CRITICAL GAP

Partner-coordination is strong at the political level, but ground-level sessions still report active "operational fatigue" from duplication — accountability mechanisms among partners remain weak.

TOP RECOMMENDATION

Establish national-level FL technical/steering committees and adopt Partnership-Compact-style agreements where governments set priorities and partners align funding behind them.

AREA 6

Whole-Child Access & Transition Pathways

KEY FINDINGS

- Community-led, flexible re-entry frameworks — including maternal-led safeguarding and tracing — are helping Out-of-School Children return to formal education.
- In South Sudan, a shortage of qualified teachers means many community schools cannot open grades beyond Primary 5, capping progression.
- South Africa reported deep inequality and inconsistent Grade 1 admission ages — a persistent gap between ECE policy intent and classroom implementation.

CRITICAL GAP

The Sahel OOSC crisis (10.6 million children) and South Sudan's Primary-5 ceiling point to conflict-affected states falling further behind — none of the highlighted success stories come from a conflict-affected context.

TOP RECOMMENDATION

Target resources and teacher deployment specifically at hard-to-reach and conflict-affected areas to remove access bottlenecks like the Primary-5 ceiling.

Three Structural Tensions to Watch

Fragmentation Risk

Nearly every country is building its own data platform. Solving fragmentation nationally risks re-creating it continentally — three tools (CAF-Africa, FLAT, AFLAI) now compete for the same space.

There is a need to operationalize the Continental Assessment Framework.

External Partner Dependency

The strongest-performing coaching and TPD models (MEWAKA, BOFO, TIEEZ) depend on external donor funding for initial scale-up.

Their sustainability beyond the funding cycle remains untested.

Representation Gap

Success stories cluster in relatively stable systems (e.g., Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria, Malawi, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal South Africa).

None come from a conflict-affected context — raising the question of whether the evidence base fits the hardest cases.

From Malawi Back to the Capitals

1	**Institutionalize, move from pilots**	Give national assessment agencies and coaching systems dedicated funding and legal mandates so they outlive individual champions or project cycles.
2	**Diversify financing, with efficiency**	Move beyond salary-biased national budgets through blended, outcomes-based, and levy financing — combined, not single-source.
3	**Harmonize and use quality data**	Operationalize CAF-Africa as the shared continental backbone before national platforms multiply further.
4	**Protect the furthest behind**	Direct resources and teacher deployment to conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas — the Sahel and South Sudan cannot be an afterthought.
5	**Coordinate, avoid duplicating**	Stand up government-led technical/steering committees and Partnership-Compact agreements to end operational fatigue.

Commitment. Action. Results.

“Anything we can think of trying has been tried in Africa by somebody else. We must focus on scaling and producing outcomes rather than running more pilots.”
— Hon. Joseph Nsengimana, Minister of Education, Rwanda

“The children don’t want us to bring any commitments again. We need to do what works at scale. If we don’t, we are wasting the time of the children.”
— Dr. Obi Ezekwesili, Human Capital Africa

Source: FLEX2026 Rapporteur Synthesis — Lilongwe, Malawi, 15–17 July 2026