



2026 Yidan Prize Conference

Unleashing Africa's potential: the role of education in a new era of development



Join a community of changemakers shaping the future of education in Africa

The Yidan Prize Foundation will hold the [2026 Yidan Prize Conference](#), its inaugural Africa conference, in Dakar, Senegal on 29 June–1 July 2026. It is co-convened with **ARED** (Associates in Research and Education for Development), the organization of Mamadou Amadou Ly, 2025 Yidan Prize for Education Development Laureate, and with **ADEA** (Association for the Development of Education in Africa), under the auspices of the **Ministry of National Education of Senegal**.

With the overarching theme of “**Unleashing Africa's potential**”, the Conference will celebrate the possibilities ahead for creating a better world through education, centered in Africa, which has the fastest growing, youngest population of any continent. It will spotlight research and practice emerging from Africa on ‘what works’ to improve education outcomes, showcasing success stories which point to the promise of large-scale system transformation, including ARED's work*, and that of ADEA and other education stakeholders, as examples of this promise taking shape. A focus will be on the importance of **multilingual foundational learning**, and how language acts as “a gateway to learning and dignity”¹: When young people learn in familiar languages, they engage more deeply, relate learning to their world, and grow in confidence and agency, ultimately enhancing their potential to secure future livelihoods.

¹ Akyeampong, K. and Higgins, S. (2025). *Reconceptualizing the Learning Crisis in Africa*. London: Routledge.



*ARED has developed a multilingual approach to foundational learning that, delivered in partnership with the Ministry of National Education in Senegal, has led to dramatic improvements in learning outcomes and in the progression of young people through school. ARED is supporting similar initiatives in other countries in the region, including The Gambia and Mauritania. It is a transformative approach that offers multilingual regions around the world a valuable model.

The Conference aligns with the African Union's [Decade of Accelerated Action](#) for the Transformation of Education and Skills Development in Africa (2025-2034), and the [Continental Education Strategy for Africa](#) (CESA). This emphasizes the acquisition of foundational, socio-emotional and labor market ready skills, reaffirms the central role of teachers and school leadership, and recognizes the value of education in addressing broad challenges to development, e.g. climate and conflict.

Building on the outcomes of the [2025 ADEA Triennale](#), the Conference will explore how countries are prioritizing investment in improving education outcomes. It will provide a platform to highlight new collaborations in Africa to finance innovation and fuel system-wide transformation in education, and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)'s campaign to [Multiply Possibility](#) through education.

Objectives

- Showcase leading-edge approaches at national and regional level — both research and practice — that have the potential to be catalytic in transforming education systems, bringing recognition to upcoming researchers, practitioners, and innovators in education in Africa.²
- Promote the importance of country ownership and engagement in education — as highlighted by ADEA's work — and the value of cross-sectoral collaboration to scale evidence-based interventions: ARED's work is an example of collaboration with the Ministry of National Education to scale best practice.
- Spotlight the link between education and other issue areas, including jobs and the economy, health, and climate, to underline education's fundamental role in driving inclusive and sustainable development.
- Foster connections across the continent and globally to explore new partnerships and financing models to support research and practice in education in Africa.

Delegates

The Conference will bring together around 200 high-level delegates by invitation, including local, regional and international policymakers, government officials, researchers, practitioners, donors, and private sector representatives.

Together, they represent a community of changemakers shaping the future of education in Africa.

² Including individuals/organizations who have the potential to be future laureates of the Yidan Prize.



Conference program

Day 1: 29 June 2026 (Monday)	
10:00	Registration opens
11:00 – 12:45	<p>Closed-door roundtable hosted by IIEFG</p> <p>A private discussion among national and international foundations to explore strategic collaboration and funding priorities on the continent</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Guitele Nicoleau, international education specialist
13:00 – 14:30	Welcome lunch hosted with Imaginable Futures
14:30 – 17:00	<p>Roundtables</p> <p>Interactive lightning talks and roundtables to showcase groundbreaking work in education on the continent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable 1: Led by Mamadou Amadou Ly of ARED (2025 Yidan Prize laureate) and Armando Ali of PAL Network, concluding with a spotlight on language of instruction by Manos Antoninis of the GEM Report, UNESCO • Roundtable 2: Led by Dr Rukmini Banerji (2021 Yidan Prize laureate) of Pratham Education Foundation and Titus Syengo of TaRL Africa • Roundtable 3: Led by Angeline Murimirwa of CAMFED (2020 Yidan Prize laureate) and Simi Nwogugu of Junior Achievement Africa • Roundtable 4: Led by Professor Eric Hanushek of AFEP (2021 Yidan Prize laureate) and Professor Wolfgang Lutz collaborating with the Southern Africa Labor and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town (2024 Yidan Prize laureate)
18:00	<p>Reception and dinner</p> <p>A celebration of Mamadou Amadou Ly's Yidan Prize for Education Development</p>
Day 2: 30 June 2026 (Tuesday)	
09:00 – 09:45	<p>High-level opening</p> <p>Welcome remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honorable Moustapha Mamba Guirassy, Minister of National Education, Senegal • Dr Charles CHEN Yidan, Founder, Yidan Prize • Albert Nsengiyumva, Executive Secretary, ADEA • Professor Madougou Saidou, Director of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union
09:45 – 10:45	<p>Keynote conversation on the value of education for development</p> <p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Obiageli Ezekwesili, economic policy expert, Founder and President of Human Capital Africa, former World Bank Vice President, and former Minister of Education, Nigeria <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angeline Murimirwa, CEO, CAMFED • Mamadou Amadou Ly, Executive Director, ARED
10:45 – 11:15	Tea and coffee break
11:15 – 12:45	<p>Getting the basics right: High-level plenary on multilingual foundational learning</p> <p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Kwame Akyeampong, Professor of International Education and Development, Open University



	<p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honorable Moustapha Mamba Guirassy, Minister of National Education, Senegal Honorable Dr Habibatu Drammeh, Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, The Gambia Honorable Haruna Iddrisu, Minister for Education, Republic of Ghana (to be confirmed) <p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albert Nsengiyumva, Executive Secretary, ADEA <p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Piper, Director of Global Education Program, Gates Foundation
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<p>Working groups</p> <p>Moderated working groups across key thematic areas in education</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Foundational learning (partnered with Gates Foundation) Secondary education and transition to livelihoods (partnered with Mastercard Foundation) Education research for impact (partnered with Imaginable Futures and Echidna Giving) School leadership and teacher professional development (partnered with UNESCO IIEP) AI and edtech (partnered with Gates Foundation)
15:15 – 15:45	Tea and coffee break
15:45 – 17:00	Working groups continue
18:00 – 21:00	Reception & dinner hosted by the Gates Foundation (offsite)

Day 3: 1 July 2026 (Wednesday)

09:00 – 09:50	Working groups presentations
09:50 – 10:30	Working groups outcomes discussions
10:30 – 11:00	Tea and coffee break
11:00 – 12:00	<p>Collaboration for impact: High-level panel on cross-sectoral partnerships for education</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr Peter Materu, Chief Program Officer, Mastercard Foundation Serigne Mbaye Thiam, High-Level Envoy, Global Partnership for Education Faustina Fynn-Nyame, Executive Director - Africa, Children's Investment Fund Foundation Bruce Au, Secretary-General, Yidan Prize Foundation <p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruth Kagia, Advisor, Yidan Prize Foundation; Board Director of Equity Group Foundation; Board Director of Equity Bank Kenya; High-Level Envoy, GPE
12:00 – 12:45	High level closing and announcements
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00	<p>Closed-door roundtable hosted by GPE</p> <p>A private dialogue with government and partners to align on strategic priorities and future collaborations</p> <p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr Guitele Nicoleau, international education specialist