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**Lack of Literacy Is a Problem We Can No Longer Ignore**

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In summer 2019, the world celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. That giant leap of technology and bravery is an iconic moment in the history of the capabilities of humankind.

**But back home**

And yet, five decades on, there are still 750 million people globally who cannot read my opening statement. Two-thirds of them are female. More than 100 million children around the world do not complete elementary school and so do not learn to read and write.

This is totally unacceptable.

Literacy is a fundamental human right — one that we collectively are not doing nearly enough to ensure.

**Literacy matters**

The ability to read and write truly represents the difference between inclusion in and exclusion from society. It helps people to function and participate fully in their communities and as global citizens.

Teaching a child to read and write matters. These skills allow a child to build knowledge of the world, fostering their creativity, imagination, and critical thinking. It grows their capacity to respond with empathy and compassion towards others.

**In the classroom**

Research-based quality instruction, delivered by knowledgeable professionals in classrooms, matters. Yet, the latest numbers from UNESCO indicate that as many as one out of every five children between the ages of 6 and 17 does not go to school. Who, then, ensures that those 262 million youth can read and write?

Educators are part of a complex ecological system of stakeholders that impacts a child’s education. They are joined by families and caregivers working in mutually respectful partnership towards the same goal.

**Back to policy**

Finally, and arguably most importantly, we have policymakers who, informed by research in the field of literacy education, must fight for well-funded and well-resourced classroom. It is in these classrooms that highly qualified, highly prepared teachers can grow children who can read and write, who do read and write, and who love to read and write.

That’s what’s at the heart of the International Literacy Association’s Children’s Rights to Read initiative: ensuring equity, equality of opportunity, and social justice for all children regardless of geographical location, race, or social circumstance, and demanding that we all work together to break this destructive cycle.

When 750 million citizens of the world are unable to read and write, we must all be held responsible. We all must do more, and we all must do better.

Their futures depend upon it.

* **Using evidence from this article, explain what literacy is:**
* **According to this article, who are the stakeholders responsible for your education?**
* **What role do you play in your education?**
* **Using evidence from this article, explain your answer to this question: Why does your future depend upon your ability to read and write?**