



## **Annual Report 2023**

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## 2023 in review by David Edwards

Dear colleagues,

In 2023 the education union movement worked together across borders to mobilize and organize for public education and educators everywhere, to support colleagues in need, and to strengthen our unions.

We started the year with the launch of our global campaign Go Public! Fund Education. Our urgent call for governments to fully fund public education and invest in teachers rang out across the world and drove our advocacy throughout the year.

We put the Go Public! message on the global center stage, from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women to the International Labour Conference, from the International Summit on the Teaching Profession to the Global Refugee Forum and beyond.

Our advocacy was transformative. The United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession began its work in 2023, developing a set of progressive and ambitious recommendations to end the global teacher shortage and ensure our profession is respected and valued. Education International was represented on the Panel by our President Susan Hopgood and by our colleagues Manal Hdaife, Chair of the Education International Arab Countries Cross Regional Structure Committee, and Mike Thiruman, General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union.

In July we came together for our very first online World Congress. Education International's 9th World Congress focused on the theme of 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy' and allowed us to make important decisions for our union federations. The 10th World Congress will be hosted in person in Buenos Aires, Argentina in July 2024.

Our Teach for the Planet campaign also gained momentum in 2023. We launched new research and briefings on a just transition in education and divesting from fossil fuels, we continued to advocate for quality climate education for all and forge alliances. We organized the very first climate conference in Asia Pacific, and we strategized together through the Climate Network.

All Education International networks thrived this year, meeting online and in person and working together to advance our mission. In addition to the Climate Network, the Research Network, the Communicators' Network, and the Development Cooperation Network all came together in 2023.

We also had the opportunity to meet in person for two global conferences – the 2nd Education International Education Support Personnel Conference in May, in Portugal and the 12th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference in October, in Mexico, in addition to regional conferences in Africa and Asia-Pacific.

Throughout the year, we mobilized to support our colleagues in crisis in Turkiye and Syria, Myanmar, Palestine and Israel, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Morocco, Eswatini, Iran, Argentina, Brazil, and the Philippines and many more.

To find out more about our work in 2023, please explore the timeline below and visit the rest of the website for even more examples of the solidarity, resilience and transformative power of our movement.

In solidarity,

David Edwards

General Secretary | Education International

# January

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## Highlights

### 1. Go Public! Fund Education

Launched on 24 January 2023, the International Day of Education, Go Public! Fund Education is an urgent call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education. This means guaranteeing labour rights and ensuring good working conditions, as well as manageable workloads and competitive salaries for teachers and education workers. It also means valuing teachers, respecting teachers, ensuring they are central to decision-making, and trusting their pedagogical expertise.

#### Related Items

#### **Go public! Fund Education: Education International launches new global campaign**

On 24 January 2023, International Day of Education, Education International is launching a new global campaign to fund public education and the teaching profession. The campaign **Go public! Fund Education** will support Education International's member organisations in their fight against budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation, and as they mobilise to build inclusive, quality public education for all.

"Go Public! Fund education will support the efforts of education unions everywhere to improve pay, working conditions, and ensure the respect our 32 million members deserve. We will stand united and mobilise to pressure governments to fully fund public education and invest in the teaching profession," explained David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International.

The alarming global teacher shortage is threatening the right to education everywhere. The world needs 69 million more teachers to achieve universal primary and secondary education, according to [UNESCO estimates](#), with sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia most affected by the worldwide shortage. [Research](#) by Education International points to an overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession. Resignation rates are skyrocketing, new teachers are leaving the profession, and the number of people who want to join the teaching profession is in dramatic decline.

However, most governments have failed to make the necessary investments to provide the support teachers and education personnel desperately need. [Education budgets have fallen](#) in 65 per cent of low- and middle-income countries, and in 33 per cent of upper-middle- and high-income countries.

The United Nations Transforming Education Summit of 2022 was a first step towards building political will to prioritise education, increase education financing, and invest in teachers. The Summit called on governments to invest more and more equitably in education. At the Summit, the creation of a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession was announced. This High-Level Expert Group will give recommendations to address the global teacher shortage, amongst other issues.

In this context, Education International is launching a new campaign to mobilise at the local, national, regional, and global level, so that governments commit to the education funding necessary to implement the Commission's recommendations, to guarantee every student's right to have a well-supported qualified teacher and a quality learning environment.

### Moving together: one union, one voice

Go Public! Fund Education is an urgent and needed call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, key to pandemic recovery, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education. This means guaranteeing labour rights and ensuring good working conditions, as well as manageable workloads and competitive salaries. It also means valuing teachers, ensuring they are central to decision-making and trusting their pedagogical expertise.

Edwards encouraged all member organisations to join the campaign as they mobilise in their local context.

"We know that only by strengthening our profession, our union movement, will we achieve democratic, inclusive, just and sustainable societies. Let's act together in solidarity to go public and fund education. We are Education International."

To access the Go Public! Fund Education campaign hub please [click here](#).

### **Go public! Fund education: Campaign toolkit**

Go Public! Fund education is Education International's new campaign to mobilise funding for public education around the world.

Funding public education improves pay, working conditions, and empowers teachers and education personnel to stay and thrive in the profession they love and the world needs.

Join our campaign and raise your voice for public education everywhere!

Use and share the resources below as we mobilise to go public and fund education!

#### 1. Speak up on social media

Use the suggested post and image below and don't forget to tag Education International so we can amplify your message:

- [@eduint on Twitter](#)
- [@EducationInternational on Facebook](#)
- [@eduint on Instagram](#)

? Educators demand full and equitable funding for #PublicEducation!

We are rallying to

? create the future our students deserve

? ensure the pay, working conditions, and respect teachers and education workers deserve.

?? Join us!

#GoPublic #FundEducation

[Click here to download the image](#) above and don't forget to add it to your post

## 2. Share Education International messages

Spread the word by sharing the post below on Twitter and Facebook.

## 3. Print and display the campaign posters

[Click here to download the campaign posters](#) to print and display them in your union or school.

## 4. Download the backgrounds and use them for your online meetings

[Click here to download the background below](#)

[Click here to download the background below](#)

## 5. Download and produce the campaign materials

### Tote bag

- [Click here to download the black tote design](#)
- [Click here to download the red tote design](#)

### Notebook

- [Click here to download the red notebook design](#)
- [Click here to download the black notebook design](#)
- [Click here to download the white notebook design](#)

## Senegal: Strong action needed for inclusive quality public education

Is Senegal, the good student, cited as an example, a giant with feet of clay? With 25% of its budget allocated to education, i.e. more than 6% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), significant efforts are certainly being made, but for what result? There are more than 1,500,000 children out of school, huge deficits in teaching staff (around 45,000), and a shortage of infrastructure (temporary classrooms that are becoming permanent) with a low completion rate. Strong action, in terms of financing, is needed for an Inclusive Quality Public Education (IQPE) that promotes social justice and development.

Senegal signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, it has committed to the Continental Strategy on Education for Africa (CESA 2016-2025), and during the 2022 Transforming Education Summit it reiterated and strengthened these commitments, which figure prominently in the Plan for an Emerging Senegal (PES) [1].

The good intentions are welcome, but there are questions that must be asked.

Given the many and complex needs, the dissatisfaction of stakeholders - parents, teachers and even the government - is the funding adequate? How is the allocated budget managed? How much of this budget reaches the students? Why is the performance of public sector schools so poor that we are seeing the commercialisation of education?

These issues need to be addressed with the actors, especially the teaching profession, through its unions.

SYPROS and the other EI-affiliated unions in Senegal, united in the *Union Syndicale pour une Education de Qualité*, USEQ, are working together to ensure that public education is restored to its former position, that it is effective and accessible to all, and that private schooling remains just an adjunct form of education and not a source of profit for capitalists.

The unions are committed to advocating for consistent domestic funding of education through fair mechanisms such as taxation, but also for good governance of the education system. The [TaxEd alliance project](#) and the new EI campaign [Go Public! Fund education](#) are key elements of this strategy.

"It is the sum of the successes of education unions at country level that will make this important campaign [Go Public! Fund education](#) a success."

Education is priceless, it is an absolute priority because it is the solution to other development problems, and it is therefore unacceptable to compare its budget to those of other ministries as our rulers do.

Investing in public education is about reducing disparities, giving equal opportunities to all children, rich, poor, disabled, urban and rural, with qualified teachers and a safe and healthy learning environment; it is about equity and social justice.

We are committed to ensuring that no child is left behind, that no one is deprived of this basic human right and we welcome Education International's ongoing quest to promote it and this new flagship campaign on the financing and privatisation of education being launched on International Education Day.

SYPROS, within the framework of USEQ, will use this campaign to raise awareness among teaching staff and engage them in mobilising for the funding and promotion of IPQE.

This major undertaking will require alliances with other trade unions, parents' associations, student associations and civil society if we are to produce the desired results.

Thus, EI's campaign, in supporting the strengthening of trade union unity, knowledge, and particularly the mastering of the issues and challenges, the means of researching reliable data, advocacy techniques and funding mechanisms, will make a significant contribution to the work of trade unions at the national level, not to mention the effect that the international dimension of this campaign could have on governments.

It is the sum of the successes of trade unions at country level that will make this important campaign [Go Public! Fund education](#) a success.

Education is a community affair, so let us all, trade unions, parents, civil society, mobilise for Inclusive, Public, Quality Education and against the commodification of Education.

A policy framework aimed at getting Senegal onto the road to development by 2035.

### **Uruguay: The importance of a global campaign to defend public education**

Latin America is the most unequal region in the world, with one of the highest rates of wealth concentration and the associated poverty and marginalisation affecting the majority of the region's population. It also suffers from unequal income distribution, be it direct, through active or passive income, or indirect, through states' underinvestment in public social spending.

Added to this is the fact that state budgets for the implementation of rights-based public policies (education, health, housing, etc.) in the region are subject to economic cycles, with the first reaction to any negative economic signs being to reduce the budgets in these areas, which has a clearly negative impact on the protection of rights.

At the same time, this is the region most affected by the commercialisation and privatisation of education, as shown by the research carried out by EI as part of the [Global Response Campaign against the privatisation of education](#). The contest within the profit-driven private sector for public funds for education is another key element to be considered.

Education trade union organisations have systematically taken up the fight for public and state education funding. During the late 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, under the leadership of people-centred, democratic and progressive governments, several countries in the region saw their education budgets grow, with government policies and programmes aimed at realising and expanding protection of the right to education and recognising the state's responsibility for it.

Uruguay, although later than other countries, increased its investment in public education, which accounts for 84% of enrolment at all levels, from 2.7% of GDP in 2005 to 4.9% of GDP in 2019. And it did so in spite of the heavy attack on public education being waged by pro-market education think tanks, backed by the mass media.

Since March 2020, with the establishment of a neoliberal and conservative coalition government of the right and extreme right in the country:

- the education budget has been cut by 0.6% of GDP (about US\$150 million);
- institutional changes have concentrated and privatised public education policymaking;

- transformation of the education system has followed policies of the World Bank, the OECD and the Inter-American Development Bank; and
- teachers, their organisations and leaders have become the targets of systematic media attacks and judicial persecution.

It is against this backdrop that FENAPES (National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers) has been waging an intense campaign to stop the budget cuts and demand greater investment, to highlight and denounce the commercialisation and privatisation of education. It has opposed the aims of the educational transformation promoted by the current administration, which threatens the quality of education for future generations, especially democratic access to knowledge. The union has fought back against the attacks on teachers, their working conditions and professional development, and their exclusion from public education policy making.

“Our organisation has become a valid social interlocutor in the educational debate and in the promotion of a movement defending public education.”

We have called for information and denunciation campaigns taking an innovative approach through cultural activities such as carnival and music festivals; sporting activities such as football and cycling; conducting and disseminating research that provides evidence of commodification and privatisation processes; and printing and distributing visual materials aimed at students and families.

We have also organised training activities for teachers; open discussions with workers from different sectors, families and students; a communication campaign on radio and television; an intense social media campaign, as well as the holding of a pedagogical congress from which a set of proposals have emerged that will be promoted by the union.

These initiatives have enabled us to circumvent the media blackout benefitting the government and its reform programme, to reach the large portion of our society that has shown support for the trade union perspective. They have also ensured that our organisation has not been isolated and has become a valid social interlocutor in the educational debate and in the promotion of a movement defending public education.

The development of these actions has also been made possible by EI's contribution and support within the framework of the [Global Response Campaign against the privatisation of education](#). It is essential that such contributions and support be maintained in the immediate future, as part of this new campaign [Go Public! Fund education](#), so that we can continue to engage in the battle for the meaning of education, its funding, to defend the teaching profession, and to counter the commodification and commercialisation of education.

### **Education unions across the world mobilise to Go Public and Fund Education**

On 24 January, Education International marked the International Day of Education by launching its new global campaign: **Go Public! Fund Education**. The campaign is an urgent call for governments to fully fund public education and to value, respect, and pay teachers and education workers as the indispensable professionals at the heart of education.

Education International members gathered for the launch of the [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign in an online event led by its Deputy General Secretary, Haldis Holst. Participants had the opportunity to reflect on how to articulate a global narrative in support of quality public education, as well as sharing union strategies and campaign approaches from different countries to increase investment in education and the teaching profession.

### **Strengthening the narrative for quality public education**

Education International's President, Susan Hopgood, and vice president for Africa, Mugwena Maluleke, set the stage for the campaign with a conversation about why it is imperative, and urgent, to fully fund public education systems.

Hopgood stated that the Go Public! Fund Education will elevate the voices of education unions to influence international policies for well-resourced equitable public education systems that invest in, and value, teachers and education support personnel.

Maluleke highlighted that the current pro-privatisation hegemonic narrative is a threat to the just, sustainable, and inclusive future we are building with our students. He emphasised the need for articulating a new global narrative that lays out where the resources for enhanced public investment in education are, which in many cases are going to destructive sources, and where they should go instead for the development of just, sustainable, equitable and prosperous societies. "Ultimately, it is not a lack of resources. It is a lack of political will to make education a priority", he stated.

Leonardo Garnier, Special Adviser to the United Nations for the Transforming Education Summit, and a former minister of education of Costa Rica, conveyed a strong message in favour of increased public investment in education and reducing inequalities. "All children around the world must have access to quality public education", Garnier stated.

### **A campaign for education unions**

Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards, explained how the Go Public! Fund Education campaign goals reflected the main priorities of education unions across the world and, therefore, will serve to advance their policy objectives and empower the teaching profession. "This campaign is for you and your members", he stated.

Edwards highlighted the opportunity arising from the recent announcement of the creation of a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession, a high-level expert group that will give recommendations to address the global teacher shortage and its consequences: "Education International will be the voice of the profession, your voice, to make sure teachers and education workers are at the table every step of the way. We need to mobilise at the local, national, regional, and global level so that all governments commit to funding public education to make sure we have the working conditions we need to teach and our students have the environment they need to learn. "

### **Testimonies from the struggle**

The webinar also provided a space for Education International's member organisations to support and learn from each other, by sharing strategies and campaigning approaches that have been successful, as well as encouraging them to campaign for increased investment in education and the teaching profession within their own contexts.

Eva Zsuzsa, President of PSZ-SEH, Hungary, and vice-president of the Trade Union Cooperation Forum, made presented how Hungarian teachers engaged in industrial action with strong public support, for a year now, urging authorities to meet their demands to improve educators' working and living conditions.

In the Philippines, Raymond D. Basilio, general secretary of the ACT, has been leading a national campaign to increase public education funding to, at least, 6 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Public funding is crucial to safely return to face-to-face teaching after more than two years of a [failed distance education program](#).

Marième Sakho Dansokho, General Secretary of SYPROS, Senegal, highlighted the importance of unity and solidarity within the union movement, as well as broader alliances with civil society organisations. Education International's member organisations in Senegal have joined forces in the USEQ (Union Syndicale pour une Education de Qualité), to [advocate for more consistent domestic education funding](#) and confront the growing privatisation and commercialisation of education. "The [TaxEd alliance](#) project and the new EI campaign Go Public! Fund education are key elements of this strategy", she said.

Alfonso Cepeda, General Secretary of SNTE, Mexico, gave some insights on the campaign "Todos y todas a la escuela", aiming at addressing the main educational challenges in the wake of the pandemic including school dropouts, as well as tackling teachers' precarious employment and bargaining for wage increases in the face of inflation.

José Olivera, president of FENAPES, Uruguay, emphasised that education budgets clearly reflect political choices. The union has been waging an intense campaign to stop current budget cuts and demand greater investment, as well as denouncing the commercialisation and privatisation of education. Olivera explained how thanks to a [broad union mobilisation](#) and an innovative communication campaign, 52 per cent of the country's population is now demanding more public funding for education.

Education International reiterated its call on the world's governments to fulfil their obligation to free quality public education and encouraged all member organisations to join the campaign as they mobilise in their local context.

### **UK: Educators deserve a pay rise now!**

Education International and member organisations fully support the National Education Union (NEU), organising a one-day strike in England and Wales on February 1st to demand a fully funded, above inflation pay rise for educators.

The education union has planned a total of seven strike dates in the framework of the “Pay Up! Save our schools” action.

### Huge union members’ involvement

NEU members – representing teacher, support staff and leader members in 23,400 schools throughout England and Wales – voted in overwhelming numbers to take strike action for a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise.

Of teachers in England, 90.44 per cent of members taking part in the ballot voted YES to taking industrial action on a turnout of 53.27 per cent.

Teachers in Wales voted by 92 per cent for strike action on a turnout of 58.07 per cent. Support staff in Wales voted 88 per cent for strike action on a turnout of 51.30 per cent.

The union also announced that 32,000 new members have joined its ranks since it announced the strike action.

NEU Joint General Secretary Kevin Courtney highlighted: “Our ballot of teacher, support staff and leader members in 23,400 schools throughout England and Wales is the largest vote for strike action achieved by any union ever in the UK. It sends a resounding message to the Government: we won’t stand by and watch the destruction of education without taking a stand. This was a really hard decision for our members to take. They do not want to be on strike. They want to be in the classroom, doing what they do best – teaching and supporting our children and young people. But it’s a last resort.”

NEU further launched a petition for activists and concerned citizens to support the national day of strike action: <http://Payupsos.com>.

You will find more information about the NEU labour action [here](#).

### Link to Go Public! campaign

This industrial action led by UK education unionists is aligned with the newly launched [Education International Go public! Fund Education campaign](#). This campaign aims to support member organisations in their fight against budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation, and as they mobilise for fully funded, inclusive, quality public education for all.

Members of NASUWT -The Teachers’ Union are also demanding a [Better Deal for Teachers](#) because of the failure of governments and employers to give teachers an improved, fully funded pay award. They are also highlighting the multiple attacks they face on their pay, their workload and their wellbeing, as well as the damage that falling real pay risks to children’s and young people’s education.

### **We are education! Successful trade union strategies in Mexico**

*The Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE) is one of the biggest education unions in the world. It currently represents more than 1.5 million active members at all levels of*

*education and 700,000 retired teachers. Its mission is to defend public education and protect the rights of education workers in Mexico. In this article, its General Secretary, Alfonso Cepeda Salas, shares the union's achievements and challenges in recent years.*

The Coronavirus pandemic highlighted the profound changes we are undergoing and exacerbated the many challenges in the field of education.

### Energising the education community: Lessons from the pandemic

The biggest challenge for our union was to keep public education alive. With the forced closure of schools, some took the opportunity to raise the old arguments of free marketeers and privatisation advocates, claiming that new technologies would replace schools and teachers.

On that front, we helped each teacher stay in touch with their students and families. We used various strategies to maintain contact:

- Collection campaigns for the donation of equipment to the most disadvantaged students.
- Design of support materials that we disseminated through our website, social networks, and the media.
- Calling on our membership to document good and innovative teaching practices applied during the pandemic. These valuable experiences have also been used to highlight the professionalism and dedication of teaching staff: From walking the streets using loudspeakers to inform students about their homework, to improvising mobile classrooms from their cars; from using school walls to post homework assignments, to transforming their homes into classrooms with the quick, very quick, introduction of electronic devices for interactive lesson design.

### Post-pandemic: Strengthening trade union action

Back in our classrooms, we conducted a new campaign called "Everyone in school", with the aim of reducing school dropout rates resulting from the pandemic and catching up on learning. We have been running a census to identify those students who did not return to school and to bring them back.

In addition, in the aftermath of the pandemic it was essential for us to promote job stability, which entails guaranteeing job security, salaries, benefits and rights. This has been one of the most important actions since I began my mandate: To date, more than 787,000 education workers who were previously on temporary contracts have received their permanent employment certificates.

The health crisis was compounded by the economic crisis. How did we ensure that during these years no workers were laid off, and that wage increases kept up with rising inflation? In the face of vaccine shortages, how did we convince authorities to consider teachers a priority group in the fight against COVID?

We achieved this by making the heroic work of every teacher visible, by strengthening our capacity for dialogue and negotiation with the authorities, and by keeping up our tireless efforts that won the support of the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

### Living our values

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the deep democratisation of the SNTE, which is fundamental to strengthening the organisational capacity of our trade unions. We continue to diversify the mechanisms that allow us to stay closely in touch with all our members, developing more horizontal decision-making processes, including through universal suffrage in leadership elections.

For the fifth consecutive year, we have organised a consultation to draw up the National Statement of Demands that we present annually to the authorities. We received more than 1.3 million responses in each exercise.

Our greatest achievement is the strength of our unity and solidarity. With deep respect for the diversity that enriches us.

**For education in service of the people.**

### **Educators united to fully fund public education**

David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, raised the alarm on the growing global teacher shortage and called for increased public education funding in his speech at the launch event of Education International's new global campaign, [\*Go Public! Fund Education\*](#).

"The alarming and growing global teacher shortage is threatening the right to education everywhere. This shortage denies our students their right to learn, it denies them the bright futures they deserve", Edwards stated. "The causes are well known to us. The teacher shortage is a direct consequence of the imposition of failed neoliberal policies: austerity measures, a lack of investment in teachers, and the privatization of education."

For Edwards, the solution to the worldwide shortage of teachers is clear: increasing public education funding, investing in teachers, guaranteeing labour rights and ensuring good working conditions. "We need manageable workloads and competitive salaries. We need to value teachers, respect teachers, we need to ensure they are central to decision-making, and we need to trust their pedagogical expertise."

Edwards went on to explain that the ***Go Public! Fund Education*** campaign will support the efforts of education unions everywhere to improve pay, working conditions, and ensure the respect educators deserve. "We will stand united and mobilise to pressure governments to fully fund public education and invest in the teaching profession."

In this respect, the creation of a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession, a High-Level Expert Group to address the global teacher shortage, announced at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit of 2022, represents "a key opportunity to organize and mobilize as unions and as a profession to advance our policy objectives and empower our profession."

"Education International will be the voice of the profession, your voice, to make sure teachers and education workers are at the table every step of the way."

Edwards called on all Education International's member organisations to join the campaign as they mobilise in their local context. "We need to mobilize at the local, national, regional, and

global level so that all governments commit to funding public education to make sure we have the working conditions we need to teach and our students have the environment they need to learn.”

See David Edward’s full message below.

### **Portugal: massive demonstration demands respect for the teaching profession**

A hundred and fifty thousand teachers joined in a demonstration led by education unions in Lisbon demanding respect for the teaching profession.

“It was probably the largest teachers' demonstration ever held in Portugal,” according to *Federação Nacional da Educação* (FNE) National Secretary Joaquim Santos.

The demonstration, held on February 11th in the capital city Lisbon, brought together all Portuguese education unions. When the front banner of the demonstration reached the main stage, thousands of teachers had not yet left the starting point, Santos noted.

#### International education union solidarity

Susan Flocken, Director of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) – Education International (EI) European region –, took part in the demonstration at the invitation of the ETUCE Portuguese member organisations and encouraged the demonstrators to continue to fight to demand that education and its professionals be valued.

Manuela Mendonça, member of the EI Executive Board for Europe, read the solidarity message sent by EI General Secretary David Edwards stressing that the demands of the Portuguese teachers and those of EI new campaign [“Go Public, Fund Education!”](#) could not be more in tune.

The Secretary General of the Trade Union Confederation for Education of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP-SE), José Augusto Cardoso, also addressed demonstrators, emphasising the relevant role of education and teachers.

#### Portuguese education policy

The demonstration took place in the middle of a negotiation process between the trade unions and the Ministry of Education, which is not bearing the desired results.

Issues affecting teachers’ working and living conditions are endangering the future of the profession and the quality of public schools in Portugal, the FNE leader said.

He added that Portuguese teachers have reached the limit of their discontent, and their demands are centred around respect, improvement of living and working conditions of education professionals and a salary increase, which is increasingly urgent at a time of high inflation.

Santos explained: “For unions and teachers, support for mobility, performance evaluation without quotas and vacancies, the end of precariousness, the respect of working time limitations, the end

of excessive bureaucracy, the rejuvenation of the teaching profession, a dignified retirement and a valued and recognised profession are urgently needed.”

There is one demand that teachers will not give up, he warned, namely “the fair recovery for career purposes of 6 years, 6 months and 23 days of service time frozen during the time of the Troika” – the financial rescue programme that Portugal was subjected to between May 2011 and May 2014.

Santos went on to state that the continued lack of recognition and the devaluation of the teaching profession is having a very negative effect on young people in Portugal who, for the most part, do not see any attraction in becoming teachers. He also mentioned that, due to the age factor, a high percentage of teachers will retire in the next ten years. “From this, we assume that the danger of hiring unqualified teachers – which is already occurring today – could become extremely acute in the coming years,” he said.

As a form of pressure, between 13 and 17 February, the trade unions promoted a Week of Struggle and Mourning in schools, with daily protests. Black banners were posted on walls and railings, with teachers gathering themselves in front of their schools to highlight the demands and the multiple reasons for discontent.

On February 15th and 17th, a new round of negotiations between unions and the Ministry of Education about the new Rule for Recruiting Teachers was organised.

The unions are ready to call for another two days of strike and demonstrations: the first one on 2 March 2nd, impacting northern Portugal (demonstration in Porto), and the second one on March 3th, concentrated in southern Portugal (demonstration in Lisbon).

Santos concluded: “Here is one of the messages giving the reasons for these protests, which have stirred the public debate in the media and Portuguese society: ‘If you want better education, take care of teachers’ well-being’.”

## **Mexico: together we school**

Job security has become one of the main achievements of the SNTE education workers union in Mexico. Thanks to the permanent programme for granting tenure to teachers agreed on with the federal government over 800,000 teaching positions have been regularised throughout the country in recent months.

Under the programme, education workers will be eligible for permanent contracts after six months on the job. Over 55,000 tenure certificates are set to be issued by the end of March, which will provide stable employment for teachers who entered the profession in August and September last year.

To speed up the process, the union has been working in tandem with the Ministry of Education to identify teachers that meet the legal requirements for tenure. The information is passed on to the federal education institutions concerned, which are then able to issue the corresponding certificates within their area of competence.

The general secretary of the SNTE, Alfonso Cepeda, described the granting of tenure as “an act of justice”, enabling education workers to enjoy guaranteed rights. “That wellbeing is reflected in their performance in the classroom. What we have achieved not only benefits teachers, it also benefits our public schools and our society,” said Cepeda.

## **Quality inclusive education must be guaranteed, and publicly funded, top African education unionists say**

At its latest meeting, the Education International Africa Regional Committee (EIARC) has taken stock of current and upcoming activities and challenges for educators and their unions in the region and called on member organisations to join the EI Go Public! Fund Education campaign.

Opening the meeting held from 20-22 March in Johannesburg, South Africa, EIARC Chairperson Christian Addai-Poku stressed that “it has been eight years since our governments adopted the global education goal, the sustainable development goal (SDG) 4, committing to ensure equitable inclusive quality education and lifelong-learning opportunities for all. In the framework of the African Union (AU)’s Development blueprint, Agenda 2063, AU Member States adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016 -2025), committing to revitalise the teaching profession and deliver on the quality education for all promise.”

He, however, regretted that more than half-way to 2030, the deadline for achieving the global education goal, and two-years to that of CESA, many children, youth and adults in Africa remain excluded from education.

He recalled that UNESCO data shows that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion, as over one-fifth of children between the ages of 6 and 11 are out of school, while one-third of youth between the ages of 12 and 14 are excluded from education. Almost 60% of youth between the ages of 15 and 17 are not in school.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated education challenges on the African continent. This, coupled with conflict and climate change, has seriously impacted countries, education systems and communities. The COVID-19 pandemic is believed to have wiped out two decades of education gains in Africa,” Addai-Poku also noted, adding that “there is no quality education without highly trained, qualified and motivated teachers and education support personnel. However, UNESCO data indicates that in Sub-Saharan Africa, only 67% of primary school teachers and 61% of secondary school teachers are trained to national standards.”

Regretting that the African region is often confronted with numerous violations of human and trade union rights, he also expressed the EIARC’s profound solidarity and support to colleagues in Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zambia and Zimbabwe following the [devastating impact of Cyclone Freddy in the region](#).

Stressing that poor salaries and working conditions continue to discourage young people from choosing teaching as a career and to force many experienced educators to leave the profession, he was also convinced that “the right to quality education for all in Africa cannot be achieved without adequate investment in education, teachers and infrastructure.”

That is why, he explained, African educators “welcome EI’s decision to launch the [Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#) and hope there will be resources for member organisations in the region to implement the campaign”.

### Go Public! Fund Education campaign

In his address, EI General Secretary, David Edwards, gave more details on the EI campaign, highlighting that “this is our opportunity to take the lead, to place our profession at the vanguard of real change in our nations and our communities”.

He went on to deplore that “today, around the world, education financing is in crisis. Education systems in many countries have fewer resources than at any time in history. We know that a national budget is an expression of the priorities of the government reflected in how it allocates its resources.”

Our campaign demands accountability, he also said, noting that governments must invest in public education by both increasing the size of national budgets and increasing the share of finance going to education. Millions of new, professional and well-supported teachers are needed each year, he recalled.

He also said that financing quality education is a special challenge in Africa. And he recalled that, according to a United Nations Development Programme report, 24 of the 54 lower-income countries at high risk of debt distress are in Africa. Yet the International Monetary Fund continues to advise governments to cut or freeze public wages, meaning that teacher wages suffer and/or much needed teacher recruitment is blocked.

### Need to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG4

Stressing that the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) calls on countries to ensure that by 2030, every student has access to a quality education, Edwards warned that “that goal is seriously off track. Halfway to the 2030 deadline, many children are still dropping out of school. Hundreds of millions of the most vulnerable children, young people, and adults remain excluded from education. Millions more are in school but not learning. Predictions are that by 2030, only six out of ten young people will be completing secondary education.”

He argued that global progress towards achievement of SDG4 requires comprehensive solutions – qualified teachers, classrooms, and teaching and learning resources, manageable class sizes and education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Edwards went on to insist that “quality education requires quality teaching, for all students, in all circumstances, which means employing qualified teachers with the right standards and competencies”.

“I want to commend you for your leadership at the crucial intersection of so many interdependent issues. Together, we are building a movement. There is only one way to make inclusive quality education a universal human right and priority; there is only one way to get the public’s resources

for the public good; there is only one way forward to create a sustainable world. That one way is to mobilize. United, we are stronger,” he concluded.

## GPE: Improving domestic education financing and mobilising external resources

In her presentation on “Investing in education and teachers in Africa: The role of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), GPE Partnerships Team Manager Margarita Focas Licht said that her organisation aims to achieve quality education for every child and seeks to improve domestic education financing.

“In addition to distributing the \$4 billion committed by donors to the GPE fund from 2021-25, GPE mobilises external resources to advance education goals and employs innovative financing mechanisms to leverage additional funding from partners. GPE’s work is underpinned by key aid effectiveness principles for resource use: external financing is aligned with country plans and systems, and donors work towards harmonization of interventions,” she also said.

The education union leaders also discussed progress towards the achievement of SDG 4 and CESA objectives in Africa, and EI Regional Director, Dennis Sinyolo, presented the activities undertaken and planned by the EI Africa office, tackling all four EI strategic directions – System, Status Democracy and Renewal.

He further laid out the [EIRAF proposals for the post-2025 Education Strategy for Africa](#), calling on African governments to invest in education and teachers. Welcoming the African Union (AU) decision to designate 2024 the Year of Education, Sinyolo said EIRAF would carry out an assessment of progress towards the achievement of CESA objectives and submit its proposals for the post-2025 education strategy for Africa to the AU.

## Report on women’s participation and leadership in education unions

The findings and recommendations of the EI Region Africa/African Women in Education Network (AWEN) [Report on “Women’s participation and leadership in education unions: Investigating barriers and identifying solutions”](#) were also presented at the Regional Committee meeting.

The findings of the research involving seventeen unions in five African countries highlight the different barriers (social factors, cultural and structural barriers in the trade unions, and those related to women's individual characteristics) that prevent women from actively participating in union activities and from assuming union leadership positions. The study also identifies possible solutions to these barriers.

## EIARC resolutions

The EIARC members also adopted resolutions on:

- [The regular payment of teacher salaries.](#)
- [Angola.](#)
- [Eswatini.](#)
- [The Central African Republic.](#)

They also prepared for the 10th EI Africa Regional Conference, to be held November 19th-24th 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

## Go Public, Grow Public: Mobilize to Finance the Public Good

Today, at the midpoint of the unanimous commitment of the United Nations to set the world on a course of sustainable development by 2030, those Sustainable Development Goals are almost irretrievably off track.

Goal Four – an inclusive quality education for every student – is an urgent example. Hundreds of millions of the most vulnerable children, young people, and adults remain excluded from education. Millions more are in school but without adequate environments, trained teachers, educational resources and hence, learning opportunities. Predictions are that by 2030, only six in ten young people will be completing secondary education. Meanwhile, in the wake of the worst of Covid globally, the estimated annual financing gap to reach the ambitions of Goal Four [has grown to nearly US\\$200 billion](#).

Education status is a national bellwether. It tells us most precisely the prospects for children, the health status of the population, the income and civil rights of women, the likelihood of innovation and entrepreneurship, and its ability to respond and adapt to crises including conflict, climate change and natural disaster, what [UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed](#) called recently "multiple interconnected, cascading crises" that demand immediate action.

One especially stark example came in a report last month by the US-based [Brookings Institution](#), which said, "Sub-Saharan African countries face twin challenges that are slowing growth and eroding decades of developmental gains: Rising debt levels and an increasing frequency and severity of climate shocks. The compounding nature of these challenges has left countries with deteriorated public finances, poor resilience to climate shocks, and limited capacity to finance adaptation."

Today, the resources necessary for a functioning public sector to meet the fundamental needs of the people are scarce and declining. Education financing has fallen in 65 percent of low- and middle-income countries and in 33 percent of upper-middle and high-income countries since the start of the pandemic.

One reason is clearly the national debt taken on by many countries. Too often as a condition of borrowing, states are required to starve the public sector, including defunding education, health and other public services. This comes at a time when we know that tens of millions of new teachers need to be hired globally. By [deliberately constraining](#) what is called the "teacher wage bill" global financing agencies block teacher recruitment and salaries, further depleting the corps of professional educators.

The solution to the shortage is clear. We need to mobilize ourselves, our colleagues and our communities to connect the crisis in funding to the sustainable world we want to create.

"Billions in uncollected taxes must be marshalled for the extensive investments in the public good like public education and build economies that provide sustainable and broad-based growth."

That mobilization is well underway in the [Go Public! – Fund Education](#) campaign launched earlier this year by Education International. Our global campaign to fund public education and the

teaching profession unites our 383 member organizations in 178 countries and their 32 million members in the fight for publicly funded education and resourcing the public sector to build inclusive, quality public education for all.

The next inflection point of our global fight against budget cuts, austerity, and privatization comes this month at the spring meetings of the [World Bank](#), where unions globally will call upon the Bank and the International Monetary Fund to help fulfill the ambitions of the SDGs through expanded public investment to create decent work – including in the teaching profession – enable equitable growth, and build a more resilient economy.

To get there, [the financing decisionmakers will need to align with global democratic demands to begin embracing the new social contract that lays at the heart of our campaign](#). Large corporations and wealthy individuals can no longer be allowed to leverage the financial system for speculation and short-term profitmaking while raising prices, hiding assets, and undermining state revenue collection.

Billions in uncollected taxes must be marshalled for the extensive investments in the public good like public education and build economies that provide sustainable and broad-based growth.

Our campaign has a special focus on government accountability. In addition to uncovering and recovering the billions in corporate tax avoidance, governments need to take responsibility for a range of predator behavior in the marketplace.

You shouldn't have to engage in abusive and deceptive practices like [New Globe/Bridge](#) as reported in the Intercept to earn effective regulation and monitoring as a private school speculator, even those that, like Bridge, have been lodged in the eminent portfolios of naïve and bloated foundations like [Gates and Chan-Zuckerberg](#). While EI [advocated and supported](#) the World Bank's decision to stop funding private-for-profit schools, we remain concerned about the Bank's continued investments in privatization, including education technology companies.

Too many of those technology companies have spent their investor monies overwhelming governments and their school systems with pitches and promotions while chalking up [underwhelming results](#) and racking up costs to education systems into the billions of dollars.

In fact, as [EI President Susan Hopgood](#) said at the UN Secretary General's Transforming Education Summit last fall, "education technology at scale remains largely untested, unregulated and unproven." What is proven, she added, is "that where digital tools are put in the hands of teachers as a matter of pedagogical choice and the teacher is the prime decisionmaker in what tool to choose there is a better chance of student success."

It was that Summit where Secretary General António Guterres prioritized education funding, the [UN announced](#) formation of a High-Level Experts Panel to support the teaching profession and nations committed to investing more and more equitably in education.

Our campaign is underway, and our movement is growing. We now have a key opportunity to organize and mobilize at the local, national, regional and global levels so that governments and global institutions are accountable to maintain quality public education as a fundamental human right and a public good.

Our mandate from our members and the teaching profession is clear. But we can't be successful unless we mobilize and unite with the communities where we work and live. [Start here](#). Together we will build the movement to fund public education.

## **Mongolia: FMESU demand just and fair salaries for teachers and education support personnel**

Thousands of education workers answered the call of the Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Unions (FMESU) and peacefully demonstrated on April 6th in Mongolia's capital Ulaanbaatar to demand increased salaries for teachers and education support personnel.

More than 5,000 FMESU members from preschool to secondary school, from scientific institutions to vocational education facilities, and universities gathered at the Sukhbaatar Square to demand fair and better implementation of the collective agreement on the salary increase agreed in 2022.

Education International (EI) member organisation in Mongolia FMESU submitted a threefold demand to the Parliament, to the Ministry of Education and Science, to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and to the Ministry of Finance:

1. Implement Article 2.1 of the collective agreement and increase the basic salary of employees in the education and science sector by at least 50 percent from April 1st, 2023.
2. Change the classifications and ranks of positions, increase the rates and number of allowances and additional wages by considering the specificities of positions and working conditions of the employees of the education and scientific sectors.
3. Implement Clause 2.3.14 of the Government's 2020-2024 Action Programme and provide State-owned universities with fixed expenses.

FMESU requested that the government respond to the demands by April 10th, 2023, and announced that they were ready to go on strike until the demands are met.

According to the governmental resolution 488 regarding the update of the salary range and minimum range of specific civil officers, education support personnel salary is only increased by 15,000 Mongolian Tugrik (5 USD), the public authorities said.

The Government insisted that, according to its Resolution 491 on the additional salary of the public administration employees and the increase in the length of service of the public service employees, the education workers' pay is linked to the number of years in service. However, this salary increase is not applicable to teachers with more than 25 years of teaching.

FMESU criticised the fact that this decision had been made solely by the Government without consultation with the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions (CMTU), which represents one of the parties to the tripartite agreement of the social council.

The union also deplored that the rising cost of commodities, inflation, big class sizes, increasing workload, and shortage of education personnel, mean that the current salaries that teachers and education support personnel receive are deeply insufficient. It also recalled that the basic minimum salary for ESP in Mongolia is of 565,000 Mongolian Tugrik equivalent (161 USD)/month

as of January 2023.

### EI campaign “Go Public! Fund Education”

FMESU is joining the Education International (EI) recently launched “[Go Public! Fund Education](#)” campaign, an urgent call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

EI brings its full supports FMESU and education workers of Mongolia in demanding better salaries and working conditions.

We urge the government of Mongolia to respect the collective agreement signed with FMESU, stressed EI General Secretary David Edwards.

Deploing that teachers are overworked and overburdened and many of our colleagues are leaving the professions as a result, he, adding: “Teachers stood behind governments and their students during the pandemic and ensured that teaching and learning continued. It is high time governments acknowledge and guarantee that the teachers and education support personnel have decent working conditions, decent and fair wages, as well as adequate professional support and development.”

### **Go Public! Fund Education: Global campaign launched in Latin America**

Education International affiliates from across the region came together to coordinate their work on the new global campaign and to urge governments to invest more in public education in their countries.

Education International’s [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign was launched in Latin America during an event held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 17 to 19 April. Participating education unions learned about the initiative and proposed opportunities for its implementation in their respective countries.?

The event was opened by Comberty Rodriguez, the senior coordinator of Education International Latin America (EILA), and the Argentinian affiliates hosting the event. Yamile Sokolovsky from CONADU, Fabián Felman from CEA and Sonia Alesso from CTERA welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of developing joint initiatives against the privatisation and commercialisation of education.

EI Global vice president Roberto Leão stressed that this is “one of the most important moments in the fight to defend public education on our continent”

The event was attended by Angelo Gavrielatos, representing AEU-Australia, who highlighted that other countries see Latin America and its fight against the commercialisation of education as a benchmark and an inspiration.

“It’s time to invest in education workers, time to invest in public education. That is the demand we must make. Without teachers, there is no public education,” he emphasised.?

In his address, Hugo Yasky, president of the EILA Regional Committee, spoke of the various battles that the affiliates have waged against the privatisation of education, stressing the importance of keeping up the fight: “We are discussing the commercialisation of education once again because it continues to be a matter of dispute, and it continues to be a matter of dispute because they haven’t been able to defeat us.”

### **Go Public! Fund Education?**

Following the opening addresses, David Edwards, EI General Secretary, presented the campaign, explaining the context that gave rise to the initiative, as well as its core aims and actions.

“We need a campaign that talks about the importance of public education, the importance of the teaching profession, and what policies can be implemented,” he explained.

Referring more specifically to the regional launch, he said that “in Latin America, people understand the importance of public education. Communities value their public schools and we have to build on this narrative.”

Following the presentation of the initiative, aimed at organising the world’s education unions to call for increased state funding for public education, participants shared their thoughts on the campaign and how it can be implemented in their respective countries.

Fátima da Silva, Vice President of the EILA Regional Committee, said: “Not only do we need more funding for public education, we also need to stop existing public resources being diverted towards private initiatives.”

José Oliveira of FENAPES also emphasised the importance of incorporating the issue of teachers’ persecution and stigmatisation into the campaign. “If we do not denounce the criminalisation of the teaching profession that is being driven by governments and the media, we are unlikely to have the conditions needed to make headway with the campaign,” he explained.

Other issues raised by participants included the need to adapt the campaign for higher education organisations, to discuss teachers’ working conditions that have led to staff shortages, and the advance of fiscal policies that limit resources for public education.

### **Commercialisation trend ?**

The first day of the meeting ended with a presentation by Gabriela Bonilla, researcher at the [Education Policy Observatory of Latin America \(OLPE\)](#), on the main trends in the process of privatising and commercialising education in Latin America.?

Bonilla highlighted some key points for discussion such as “who is doing business with the right to education” by going down the route of loans from International Financial Institutions, which end up interfering in the design of our countries’ education policies.

She also called for “a questioning of the experiments that have indebted our countries for three decades and have us replicating a model that has failed and has resulted in educational exclusion. The formula imposed on us does not work”.

The campaign materials available for use in each country were also presented during the event hosted by CTERA, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

### **Romania: Public authorities must finance education now!**

Around 20,000 education unionists, educators, and concerned citizens protested on May 10th in the Romanian capital city of Bucharest to demand increased investment in education, joining the Education International (EI) “Go Public! Fund Education” campaign.

Affiliates from EI member organisations – *Federa?ia sindicatelor libere din învă?mânt* - FSLI (Federation of Free Trade Unions in Education) and *Federa?ia Sindicatelor din Educa?ie “Spiru Haret”* - FSE Spiru Haret (Federation of Trade Unions in Education Spiru Haret) mobilised and joined the action. They protested the austerity measures imposed by the government, the wage freeze, the freezing of positions, and the lack of real reforms.

### Real solutions to the main issues of the Romanian education system

FSLI Board member Adrian Voica reiterated the following key union demands:

- The increase of salaries and their indexation to the rate of inflation.
- The payment of overtime teaching hours.
- The recognition of occupational diseases.
- The allocation of 6% of gross domestic product to education, in accordance with the National Education Law.

Voica stressed: “As education unions, we organised this demonstration to raise awareness of the issues the Romanian education system is facing. We urge the government to increase annual investment in education, improve educators’ material conditions, and enhance education infrastructure.”

Education bills are on the agenda of the Chamber of Deputies and will be submitted to a first vote in Parliament.

### “Go Public! Fund Education”

This industrial action organised by Romanian education unions is in line with the [EI new campaign “Go Public! Fund Education”](#).

The campaign is an urgent call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

“This means guaranteeing labour rights and ensuring good working conditions, as well as manageable workloads and competitive salaries for teachers and education workers. It also means valuing teachers, respecting teachers, ensuring they are central to decision-making, and trusting their pedagogical expertise,” stated EI General Secretary Davis Edwards. “We fully support our Romanian colleagues.”

EI's European region, the European Trade Union Committee for Education, also stands in solidarity with FSLI and FSE Spiru Haret.

Romanian unions have also launched a call for a general strike in education throughout Romania for May 22nd. EI will continue to monitor the situation of educators and unions in the country.

### **The voice of teachers rings out at the 111th International Labour Conference**

Education International (EI) is the voice of teachers and education support personnel worldwide. As such, EI advocates for quality education for all, social justice, democracy, and professional rights and freedoms. From 5 to 16 June 2023, an Education International delegation is in Geneva to represent teachers everywhere at the 111th International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization.

The International Labour Conference is the annual meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the tripartite agency of the United Nations that brings together governments, employers, and workers to set and monitor international labour standards.

The conference is a unique opportunity for Education International and its affiliated trade unions to influence the global agenda on the working conditions of teachers and on human rights.

A large number of representatives of EI affiliates are participating in the Conference as part of national delegations from the workers' sector, expanding opportunities to deliver EI's messages on the rights of education workers. Education unions are also calling for increased global financing for public education, the key demand of EI's new global campaign Go Public! Fund education.

### **Gender equality at work and in education**

Dominique Marlet, EI Senior Coordinator for Human and Trade Union Rights, spoke to the report on Achieving Gender Equality at Work at the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations on 6 June. Marlet highlighted the strong measures contained in the report to promote the participation of women in the labour market and in positions of responsibility.

"Selection criteria and quotas can be adopted, and financial support measures and distance learning services can be implemented to facilitate women's participation. It is also important to develop quality childcare services to support parents and encourage women's participation in education, vocational training, and employment," she added.

The EI Senior Coordinator also expressed solidarity with the more than 4 million Afghan girls who have been deprived of access to school and higher education, as well as the more than 20,000 Iranian students who were injured during the gas poisoning incidents.

"These poisonings affected 325 schools in 29 of Iran's 31 provinces. Many parents have withdrawn their daughters from school, which will have serious consequences on their

education," she concluded.

Furthermore, Marlet coordinated the strategic involvement of and support for Education International affiliates in cases of violations of standards and conventions in specific countries, and presented Education International's position.

### Promoting quality learning in an international labour standard

Martin Henry, EI Research, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, is a member of the drafting committee and is coordinating the input from the workers' sector in the second discussion of the Commission on Quality Apprenticeships towards the development of a new international labour standard in the form of a Recommendation.

"This Recommendation not only ensures strong educational support for apprentices by qualified professionals, proper certification processes, and good vocational guidance and vocational support, but, thanks to amendments proposed by workers, the committee moreover managed to remove superfluous mentions with regard to national circumstances, which is an important change in the ILO. This recommendation provides an inspirational normative instrument for apprentices, including protection for the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as other collective and labour rights of workers," the Coordinator said.

The discussion sessions of the Commission on Quality Apprenticeships are being held from Monday 5 June to Wednesday 14 June. The discussion will produce the final recommendation.

"Education International has been involved in the development of this recommendation at the request of the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) because of our expertise in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the need for qualified teachers and educators, and the importance of ensuring a strong educational foundation for learning. The recommendation team has succeeded in providing strong educational support for apprentices, as well as ensuring adequate labour protections," Henry concluded.

### Education International's address to the ILO

The work of education union representatives at the 111th International Labour Conference will continue until 16 June.

José Olivera, President of the Federación Nacional de Profesores de Educación Secundaria (FENAPES) [National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers] of Uruguay, will take the floor on 9 June at 3:45 pm (Geneva time) at the International Labour Conference, speaking on behalf of Education International on the importance of social dialogue in the development of effective and equitable education systems.

We invite you to listen to the speech live, send the link to your colleagues, and share the broadcast on your social media: [ILC Plenary Discussions, 09 June 2023 – Afternoon Session](#)

### **International Labour Conference: EI calls for social dialogue with teachers to strengthen quality public education**

Education is a fundamental human right and a key factor in achieving sustainable development. But to ensure quality education for all, the teaching profession must be recognised and

supported.

This was the message delivered by José Olivera, president of Uruguay's National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers (Fenapes), in his address to the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 9 June 2023, during the International Labour Conference (ILC), on behalf of Education International.

The International Labour Conference is the annual meeting of the International Labour Organization, the tripartite agency of the United Nations that brings together governments, employers, and workers to establish and supervise international labour standards.

Olivera referred to the [report of the ILO Director-General](#), in which the word "education" is mentioned 20 times, while the word "teacher" is barely given a mention. "You know as well as I do that without teachers there is no education, let alone quality education," said Olivera, recalling the crucial role played by teachers during the pandemic.

Olivera stressed the importance of social dialogue and the participation of social partners in the development of effective and equitable education systems. He welcomed, in this respect, the creation of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, announced at the [United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022](#). "This first step reflects the much-needed political will to prioritise public education by increasing education funding and investing in the teaching profession," Olivera highlighted.

Finally, Olivera called on the ILO to play an active role in the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession and to continue to defend the professional and labour rights of teachers around the world while ensuring the right of all students to qualified teachers, a comprehensive curriculum, and appropriate learning environments.

"To achieve these objectives, the ILO must take on a leading role in ensuring, within the framework of social dialogue, spaces for meaningful trade union involvement in shaping public education policy, as well as ensuring respect for and the full exercise of trade union freedoms, which are currently being violated in a growing number of countries," Olivera concluded.

### **ComNet: Communicators working together to change the narrative around public education**

Around 100 communicators working in education unions gathered online on June 1st as part of Education International (EI) Communicators' Network (ComNet). They reconnected, exchanged experiences and ideas, and got ready to bring the [EI "Go Public! Fund Education" campaign](#) forward.

#### **Fighting fake news and strengthening educators' solidarity across borders**

"You are our movement's storytellers and so much of our world is shaped by the stories we tell. You bring to life the stories our people, their struggles, their victories and you make the world aware of the amazing work our educators do for their students in every corner of the world," expressed EI President Susan Hopgood addressing participants in the first session.

She also mentioned fake news as a key challenge, “actively warping people’s perception of reality, ‘alternative truths’ are eating away at the very fabric of our communities, with constant attacks on democracy, on journalists and of course, on our unions. This is what you counter every day by lifting up the voices of educators everywhere, by telling our stories.”

She added: “Through you, our movement tells stories of hope, dedication, and solidarity. The hope of children lifted out of poverty and exclusion through free quality public education. The commitment of teachers and education support personnel to their students and communities. The solidarity between educators across the world coming together to support each other and build a better future for us all.”

Opening the second session, EI General Secretary David Edwards emphasised that “from Afghanistan, to Myanmar, to Iran, to Ukraine, from Türkiye to Sudan, you tell the stories of tragedy and solidarity. You make sure the world knows we don’t look away and never turn our backs to our colleagues and students. We live by our values. From South Africa to Argentina to the Philippines, you lift the voices of teachers and honor their work and commitment to education.”

He went on to note that “every day you help our movement speak truth to power. You counter lies and disinformation with the truth of what we do. You defend the right to education from ruthless profiteers. You protect educators’ right to decent work from cuts and austerity. You champion democracy and social justice.”

Edwards concluded by saying that this ComNet meeting “comes at a very important time for our global movement. Our Go Public! Fund Education campaign is gaining momentum and communicators are leading the way. Our success will depend on our capacity to tell the real story of public education and the educators who make it happen. I know you are all doing this work in your own contexts but this is a great opportunity to put our heads together, share insights, and strategise as a global movement.”

### EI “Go Public! Fund Education” Campaign

During both sessions, [this campaign was further highlighted through a presentation](#) and participants were urged to relay in their country this call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

The union communicators network, ComNet, was created in 2002, the first EI network ever set up. From its outset, it has aimed to increase solidarity among communicators and exchange valuable information. In a conversation between Dominique Marlet, former head of the EI Communications unit, Francine Fillion, former Head of Campaigns and Communications at the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, and Gemma Tuffy of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland, who participated in the first EI ComNet meetings, they explained the origins and purpose of the group.

Participants also received updated information about the upcoming EI 9th World Congress, to be held online in July, and were invited to send contributions to EI’s magazine, [Worlds of Education](#).

Sharing diverse union campaign and communication experiences

During the first session, Ruby Bernardo, President of the National Capital Region branch of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers/The Philippines, presented the many diverse and festive activities, such as a Zumba contest, her union organises to raise awareness about the need to raise salaries, respect educators, and unionists' rights.

Nicolas Anoto, Editorial Coordination Officer of the National Union of Autonomous Trade Unions-Education, also talked about his union communication around the Barometer of Education Professions, a survey of French educators allowing them to talk about their working conditions, their aspirations, and their vision of their profession.

The Zimbabwe Teachers' Association Communications and International Relations Officer, Daisy Zambuko, explained how her union developed a campaign around the increase of teachers' salaries, and Gaëtan Kponoukon, General Secretary of National Union of Pre-Primary School Teachers/Benin, stressed how the union website helped spread information among the membership and made the collection of unions fees easier.

José Olivera, from the National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers/Uruguay started the second session presenting his union's campaign to transform education and increase education financing.

Nilka Julio, Organisational Specialist at the National Education Association/USA, advised participants that when planning and making decisions for a campaign, to ask selected questions to intentionally combat implicit or explicit bias.

Julien Farges, International Affairs Officer of the National Union of Secondary School Teachers-Unitary Trade Union Federation/France, also detailed the month-long campaign his union led with other union confederations to fight off the governmental pension reform.

In Morocco, the activities of the National Union of Education-Democratic Confederation of Labour to improve the living and working conditions of Moroccan educators, as well as its work towards a comprehensive reform of the country's education system to put an end to inequalities who persist there, were presented by the union's General Secretary, Younes Firachine.

Sylvie Lemieux, the Government Relations Advisor of the Union Confederation of Quebec/Canada, also underlined her union's major campaigns in recent years, focusing on pay equity and political involvement, saying they were successful campaigns by determining the right target audiences and multiplying communication platforms and strategies (for example, ads posted on key national media, radio, television, websites, etc. followed by decision-makers, or on billboards in big cities).

Participants were also able to exchange experiences. They will be working to organise future ComNet events to highlight the voice of communicators in telling union stories and promoting adequate financing for quality, inclusive public education systems, as well as good working and living standards for teachers and education support personnel at all education levels.

### **Educators in South Asia go public to fund education**

Over 140 union delegates from South Asian countries including India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal came together to reflect and learn from each other to play an active role in transforming

education in South Asia.

The delegates were part of Education International's South Asia Teachers Conference, held from 11-13 June in Kathmandu, Nepal, under the theme: *Go Public! Fund Education*.

The delegates discussed the financing of education-including the challenges posed by the growing privatisation and commercialisation- the rights of teachers, the increasing casualisation of the profession and issues of pay, pension, and social security.

"There is a teacher shortage emergency. A shortfall of nearly 70 million teachers worldwide, including more than 1 million teachers in primary schools just in India alone, and 65,000 in Nepal. Hundreds of millions of the most vulnerable children remain excluded from education. Girls are disproportionately affected," stated EI's President Susan Hopgood. She also highlighted the crisis in education funding and the teacher shortage —hand in hand with short-term contractual employment— as some of the main challenges to achieve quality public education for all.

In addition, Hopgood explained that austerity policies and public wage bill constraints in the region, imposed by International Financing Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), exacerbate teacher shortages and decrease the attractiveness of the profession: "By deliberately constraining the 'teacher wage bill', global financing agencies block teacher recruitment and salaries, further depleting the corps of professional educators. "

To address these challenges, Hopgood went on to say, "it is time for teachers to, once again, mobilise and raise our voices for a new social contract. That mobilisation is well underway in the [Go Public, Fund Education](#) campaign launched earlier this year by Education International".

The campaign is an urgent call for governments to prioritise public education and invest in the teaching profession to ensure a brighter future for all. "Governments must invest in public education by both increasing the size of national budgets and increasing the share of finance going to education. We call on all governments to invest in teachers, invest in education", Hopgood concluded.

On the last day, the Conference issued a statement with four key demands addressed to leaders of South Asian countries:

1. Governments must recruit and retain more teachers;
2. More professional training for teachers is needed;
3. Teachers must have job security and pension, medical benefits;
4. Invest in public education.

To read the full statement of the 2023 Education International's South Asia Teachers Conference [please go here](#)

**High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession launches to address the global teacher shortage and status of the profession**

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, brings together key stakeholders in the education sector to help tackle the growing teacher shortage around the world. Education International brings the voice of the teaching profession to the High-Level Panel.

“Teachers are leading the transformation. As a member of the High-Level Panel and as President of Education International, I will work to ensure the recommendations put forward elevate our profession, improve the status of teachers around the world, and help build the next generation of educators.”

Susan Hopgood | Education International President

[Established by the United Nations' Secretary General António Guterres](#), the Panel is tasked with producing a new vision and set of recommendations on the teaching profession for the benefit of teachers, students, parents, and education systems worldwide.

The High-Level Panel aims to produce a set of evidence-informed recommendations on how to deliver on the commitment that every learner has a professionally trained, qualified, and well-supported teacher and can flourish in a transformed education system.

The Panel will map out relevant research and evidence to formulate action-oriented recommendations for governments, policymakers, employers' and workers' organisations, and other stakeholders to promote better conditions of work for teachers and educators. The recommendations will be in line with existing international labour standards and international standards on education and teaching personnel.

“The establishment of the UN's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession is a great victory for teachers everywhere. The world recognizes both the irreplaceable role of teachers and the scale and depth of the global teacher shortage and why urgent solutions must be found. As the global voice of the teaching profession, EI will make sure that the analysis and recommendations are informed by the wisdom and experience of those working at the grassroots level. We will collect insights from classrooms and unions around the world and bring those voices to the Panel. Together we can effect real change for millions of teachers and students everywhere.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

### Six imperatives for the future of the teaching profession

The High-Level Panel will consider six imperatives for the future of the teaching profession:

- Quality - transformative role, standards, data, qualifications, teacher development as well as learning (professional learning and development), evaluation, accountability, career development, leadership, agency, and professionalism;
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion - composition, identity, networks, community, place-based responsibility, non-discrimination, and gender equality;

- Humanity - wellbeing, quality of life, human rights, commitment, moral purpose, passion, status and recognition, trust, voice and empowerment, and learning to be and to live together;
- Sustainability – long-term planning, efficacious systems, generational succession, collective autonomy, and diversity;
- Dignity – terms and conditions of employment and working conditions, salaries, social dialogue including collective bargaining, labour rights, and academic freedom (professional autonomy);
- Innovation and leadership – commitment to transformative changes, scaling up micro-innovations, technological tools, teacher-led research, and development hubs.

The scope will cover educators from early childhood through tertiary education, including technical and vocational education and training.

## Members of the High-Level Panel

### Co-Chairpersons

- H.E. Ms. Kersti Kaljulaid | Former President, Republic of Estonia
- H.E. Ms. Paula-Mae Weekes | Former President, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

### Members

- Ligia Deca | Minister of Education, Romania
- Ida Fauziyah | Minister of Manpower, Indonesia
- Matsie Angelina Motshekga | Minister of Basic Education, South Africa
- Jaime Perczyk | Minister of Education, Argentina
- Jutta Urpilainen | Commissioner for International Partnerships, European Commission
- Sebastien Berger | Executive Director, Global Student Forum
- Gerhard F. Braun | Chair, German Employers Association's Education Committee
- Mamadou Cellou Souare | La Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Guinée
- Linda Darling-Hammond | President and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute and Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University
- Susan Hopgood | President, Education International
- Gorgui Sow | Independent Education Policy and Advocacy Specialist
- Manal Hdaife | Primary School Principal, Lebanon, and Chair of the Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure of Education International
- Mike Thiruman | General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union
- Tiago Pitta e Cunha | CEO of Oceano Azul Foundation
- Denise Vaillant | Academic Director, Institute of Education, ORT University (Uruguay) and Chair of the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel
- Andria Zafirakou | Winner of 2018 Global Teacher Prize, United Kingdom

### Ex-Officio members:

- Gilbert F. Hounbo | Director-General, International Labour Organization
- Audrey Azoulay | Director-General, UNESCO
- Leonardo Garnier Rimolo | Special Adviser for the Transforming Education Summit

The High-Level Panel will be supported by a joint ILO-UNESCO Secretariat, administered by the International Labour Organization. [Click here to access the website.](#)

Education International will continue to work with its member organisations across the world to ensure that the voices and realities of teachers are represented at all levels. Teachers everywhere will also continue to mobilise in the framework of EI's [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign, an urgent call for governments to fully fund public education and to invest in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

### **Go Public! Finance quality, equitable, and inclusive education in Africa**

Top education union leaders from Cameroon, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia took stock of gains in their fight against education privatisation through the Education International (EI) Global Response campaign and committed to continue these efforts through EI's [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign to mobilise to fully fund public education systems and invest more in teachers and education support personnel.

#### **African countries off track on education goals**

In his opening remarks for the virtual meeting held on 15 June, EI Region Africa (EIRAF) Director Dennis Sinyolo told participants that “in 2015, the United Nations reaffirmed its commitment to the right to education by adopting the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4 on quality education](#). Through SDG 4, our governments committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

While SDG 4 aims to provide children and young people with quality and easy access to education plus other learning opportunities, one of its targets being to achieve universal literacy and numeracy, Sinyolo however that at the current rate, SDG 4 targets will be widely missed, citing three major bottlenecks accounting for the slow progress towards the achievement of SDG 4 in Africa and Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) objectives: Not enough money is being invested in education systems; Governments are not recruiting enough trained teachers and not paying them well; Infrastructure, teaching and learning resources remain grossly inadequate and poor.

African countries are not meeting the minimum education financing benchmarks of at least 20% of the national budget and/or at least 6% of GDP for developing countries agreed through the UN system, Sinyolo pointed out.

He added: “Teachers matter! Every child has the right to a well-trained, qualified and motivated teacher with decent salaries and working conditions. But this is not yet the case in many African countries. Sub-Saharan African countries need to recruit at least 16 million new teachers to replace those lost due to attrition and to reduce class size to 1:40 at primary and 1:25 at secondary school level.”

For him, “failure by our governments to invest sufficiently in public education has created a vacuum and an environment for for-profit private providers of education to thrive. We have seen a proliferation of various forms of for-profit private providers, ranging from the so-called low-cost private schools, which are actually costly to poor parents, to elitist private schools, not accessible to the vast majority, and international school chains such as [Bridge International Academies](#).”

On 24 January, the International Day of Education, [EI launched a new education financing campaign known as Go Public! Fund Education](#). “Through this campaign, we are calling on

African governments to invest in education and teachers. We will be calling for a quality public school for every African child. A public school where every child is taught by a highly trained, qualified, motivated and supported teacher and learns in a well-resourced, safe and healthy classroom. Furthermore, we will also be calling for the protection of the rights of teachers and education support personnel in private schools.”

Sinyolo concluded: “Let us remember that education is a basic human right and a public good. Therefore, join us in saying no to the privatisation, commercialisation, marketisation and commodification of this fundamental right. Join us in saying yes to quality public education in your country, in Africa and everywhere.”

## Changing the narrative with Go Public! Fund Education

Through the Go Public! Fund Education campaign, EI and its affiliates want to change the narrative, “this means not only a change of words and symbols, but also a change of who is speaking and under which authority, and who has the power to speak with authority,” EI Director of Campaigns and Communications, Rebeca Logan stated in her presentation.

“It is a global campaign to mobilise more funding for public education. The campaign is driven by education unions organising as the voice of teachers and education workers. Funding public education systems improves pay and working conditions and empowers teachers and education support personnel to stay and thrive in the profession they love. It inspires a new generation to join the professions the world desperately needs.”

At the crossroad of the [Unite for Quality Education](#) campaign, the [Global Response to the Privatisation and Commercialisation of and in Education](#) campaign, and the [Teach for the Planet](#) campaign, this new campaign contends that there is sufficient funding for sustainable investment in education and in educators to achieve quality education for all, she also stressed. We are claiming for example the money evaded by tax abuse, she said.

## Decolonising education financing

Logan further pointed out that the decolonisation of financing at a global level is key to funding public education systems. She cited the recently launched [Transforming education financing: A toolkit for activists](#) which shows how “Illicit financial flows out of Africa far exceed the revenues arriving in aid. Aid is another instrument for wealthy countries to use to shape the economies and societies of lower income countries, especially in education. The interests of a handful of powerful donors, behind closed doors without transparency or accountability define national priorities. Decolonisation of education financing is about challenging all these distorted power dynamics.”

Our narrative is the following, she reasserted: “We believe in the public, we believe education is a human right and a public good. We believe that fully funding public education systems, and the teachers and education support personnel at the heart of our schools, is the key to a sustainable future for all.”

## The situation of education privatisation in various African countries

Thanks to the testimonies of member organisations' leaders, EIRAF Coordinator Richard Etonu presented the state of education financing and privatisation and commercialisation of and in education in the following African countries: Malawi, Cameroon, Rwanda and Zambia.

In too many countries, governments fail to meet commitments made and international financing standards in the education sector, and do not allocate enough or disburse proper funding for public education, giving education an opportunity to flourish.

### Outcomes of the EI Global Response campaign

EIRAF Coordinator Lucy Njura Barimbui later gave a summary of the EI Global Response to the privatisation and commercialisation in and of education campaign led from 2015 until 2023 in Africa.

She highlighted that this campaign is rooted in the [2015 EI World Congress Resolution on privatisation and commercialisation in and of education](#), which mandated the EI Executive Board “to develop a global response strategy to ensure governments fulfil their obligation to free, quality public education and counter the influence of private actors in education, especially where their activities in education have a negative impact on access and exacerbates inequities within education systems.”

The campaign was about ensuring that we have quality public education for all, and that we put students before profit, Barimbui also said.

She also reminded that the first group of African countries was Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and EIRAF is gearing up for the Global Response campaign to go on alongside the Go Public! Fund Education campaign, with a second group of countries: Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda and Cameroon.

The campaign was also about changing the narrative and counter false ideas, such as “There is no money for education”, “Private education is better than public education”, or “Low fee private schools help expand education access”.

“We build the capacity of our members. We also carry out research, we use the findings, and we use our numbers. It is unity in action! Our goal is to target the entire Africa,” Barimbui added.

She also explained that the COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of private schools and inhuman treatment of education sector personnel, underlining that it intensified remote learning – discrimination towards the already marginalised in society – and brought about a change of school business into other forms of business disregarding the notion of accessibility of education.

She concluded: “Africa is the continent most threatened by education privatisation, we have the greatest number of out-of-school children. But at the same time, we have the greatest number of youths who are the future. If these youths are not protected against education privatisation, the future of the continent will be threatened.”

### Various studies on privatisation trends in the education sector in Africa

EIRAF Coordinator Pedi Anawi also presented findings of studies on privatisation trends in education in diverse African countries, i.e. Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco and Uganda.

The privatisation on the continent in general was also evaluated, he said, citing the study Education 'Privatisation in Africa: Current trends, evolving trajectories' by Curtis Riep, as well as findings from the Africa regional research 'Process/formative evaluation of the project Global Response to the privatisation and commercialisation of education for EI Africa', by Dr. Limbani Eliya Nsapato.

The latter assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the Global Response project, as well as strengthening the capacity of EI member organisations in Africa to campaign for quality public education.

Anawi underlined that "overall, research indicates that private school enrolment has become part of what is now known as the Global Education Industry, where education is subject to commercialisation."

### Next steps to mobilise for increased financing for public education

To move the new education financing agenda forward, Sinyolo invited member organisations to carry out a rapid assessment to identify current issues, trends impacts and drivers of privatisation, as well as the government's commitment to the financing of education; organise a national event around the campaign.

### **Strengthening education in Africa: uniting for tax justice and increased public funding**

Educators in Africa came together for the Education Financing Forum: Go Public! Fund Education in Accra, Ghana from 21-22 June. The event, held in collaboration with the TaxEd Alliance, aimed to strengthen education unions' capacity in advocating for fair and just taxation to fully fund public education systems.

With a focus on Education International's global campaign: "[Go Public! Fund Education](#)," the Forum brought together Education International member organisations from Ghana, Senegal, and Zambia to share knowledge, strategise, and amplify the call for increased public funding of education.

### **Addressing challenges through advocacy for equitable funding**

On 21st June, participants received an overview of the current state of education financing worldwide and identified challenges and opportunities to articulate union strategies for equitable education financing. In its opening remarks, EI's Africa Regional Committee President, Dr Christian Addai-Poku, stated: "According to UNESCO, there is a US\$100 billion annual education financing gap to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 globally. Many sub-Saharan African countries will need to double their education budgets to achieve SDG 4 by 2030. This low share of public investment in education acts as a catalyst for privatisation and commercialisation of education. "

The Forum shed light on one of the primary obstacles in attaining quality public education for all: the global teacher shortage, which amounts to a shortfall of nearly 70 million teachers worldwide. This shortage has had a particularly detrimental impact in Africa, as evidenced by UNESCO staggering statistics:

- Sub-Saharan African countries need to recruit at least 16 million teachers to replace those lost due to attrition and to reduce class size to 1:40 (primary) and 1:25 (secondary), from 1:56 (primary) and 1:34 (secondary) in 2020. ?
- Central African Republic, Chad, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger, will need to increase the number of secondary teachers by, at least, 15 percent every year; South Africa by 3.7 percent annually.
- Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest percentage of qualified teachers: 57 percent in pre-primary, 67 percent in primary and 61 percent in secondary education.

Austerity policies and constraints on public wage bills in Africa, imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are considered major obstacles to enhance the teaching profession. Education International has [consistently called on the IMF](#) to stop advising countries to cut, or freeze, public wage bills which, [research shows](#), has devastating consequences on the education sector, hindering the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and undermining efforts to strengthen public education systems.

Against this backdrop, participants explored ways to support and actively engage with the Go Public! campaign at the national level, as well as further strengthening collective efforts to assess, monitor, and advocate for consistent and increased public funding for education in the African region.

The Forum emphasised the importance of advocating for governments to increase domestic financing of public education through fair taxation practices. In this respect, [the Tax and Education \(TaxEd\) Alliance](#) plays a pivotal role in raising awareness and fostering understanding regarding the direct connection between taxation and education financing.

### **Go Public: a joint call to fully fund public education in Africa**

On 22nd June, Education International hosted a high-profile event attended by key politicians and stakeholders including the Minister of Education from Ghana, Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum. The EI Africa Statement on Education Financing took center stage as a unified call by education unions from Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Zambia, highlighting key recommendations and priorities for sustainable education financing in the region.

The statement urged African governments to prioritise public education, commit adequate funds and invest in the teaching profession by “increasing domestic financing of education, including through fair and progressive taxation”.

The statement also called on International Financial Institutions, in particular the IMF and the World Bank, to “desist from imposing austerity measures and harmful loan conditionalities on African governments”. Also, it urged the United Nations, as well as international and regional financial institutions and development partners, “to grant debt forgiveness to African countries”.

To read the EI’s Africa Statement on Education Financing please [click here](#).

This event is part of a series of engagements around the *Go Public! Fund Education* campaign in line with other activities in the African region including a recent [workshop on commercialisation and privatisation of education](#). For more information and campaign updates [please go here](#).

## Teachers Go Public to Transform Education in India

Under the theme – *Teachers at the heart of transforming education in India*, more than 25 thousand members of the All-India Primary Teachers' Federation (AIPTF) attended their 29th Biennial Conference held on 12 – 13 May at Gandhi Nagar (Gujarat).

Commissioned by Education International, [research](#) launched at the Conference revealed that the country score on Sustainable Development 4, i.e., Quality Education For All, had declined since 2019 due to poor learning proficiency at school level, and high drop-out rate at secondary level.

In addition, a large number of teacher vacancies remained unfulfilled, while many schools failed to meet the recommended student-teacher ratio norm. Moreover, as of 2021, around 11 percent of teachers both at the primary and upper primary level were without the required training in India.

Insufficient public funding for education, which currently falls below the recommended 6 percent of Gross Domestic Product, was highlighted as one of the underlying causes of the teacher shortage. Currently, both Union and State Governments combined spend less than 4 percent of GDP on education, with a scarce 2.56 percent allocated to school education.

### Go Public: quality education needs quality teachers

To address these challenges, the conference stressed the importance of increasing government funding for education, with a call to join Education International's global campaign Go Public! Fund Education.

The recruitment of qualified teachers, coupled with opportunities for in-service training, was identified as a crucial step towards improving students' learning outcomes. Furthermore, providing well-trained and well-paid teachers, with secure tenure and social security, would help address the issue of teacher shortage and enhance the attractiveness of the profession.

The Conference also highlighted the importance of making education more inclusive, non-discriminatory, and resilient. It emphasised the need for improved working conditions, salaries, and basic rights for teachers, with a focus on reducing their non-teaching duties. Gender equality in the teaching profession was another area of concern, calling for equal pay, promotions, and opportunities for career advancement for female teachers.

Addressing the Conference, Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards, summarised the urgent need for change, stating: " The very name of our campaign – Go Public! Fund Education – reminds me of AIPTF. To be public is to be loud. To be public about something is to be unmistakable. To be public about something that you feel passionately means organizing and mobilizing. We are not just talking amongst ourselves now; we are going public – invest in teachers and students for a better future."

The Conference concluded with a resounding call to action for participants to Go Public! Fund Education, acknowledging the transformative power of public education and the responsibility of teachers to unlock students' full potential and guide them towards a brighter future.

## **Go Public! Advocating for progressive taxation to fund public education in Nepal**

Education leaders and representatives from civil society came together at a three-day capacity building workshop in Nepal with a pressing agenda: to address the urgent need for increased domestic funding in the country's public education system. Their primary objective was to strengthen public education financing and advocate for the implementation of progressive taxation measures.

The EOL/TaxEd Alliance capacity building workshop, held in Kathmandu from April 29th to May 1st, was a collaborative effort between Education International, Action Aid International, and the Alliance for Tax and Fiscal Justice, as part of the TaxEd Alliance project. The workshop provided a platform for Education International member organisations in Nepal and representatives from civil society organisations such as Action Aid Nepal, National Coalition for Education Nepal, and Tax and Fiscal Justice Alliance to voice their concerns and share their insights.

During the workshop, participants discussed the alarming decrease in education funding in Nepal, which has dropped from 16 per cent to 11.5 per cent of the national budget over the past decade. They stressed the importance of proper allocation and utilization of funds to address the education system's critical needs.

### **Strengthening Education Funding and Promoting Gender Equality**

On the second day, Illam Bahadur Shahi, senior deputy chairman of EI's affiliate, the Nepal Teachers' Association, shared successful agreements with four local governments to increase funding for education and ensure substitute teachers for those on maternity leave. Discussions also delved into promoting gender equality, by exploring the need for meaningful participation of women at all levels of the education system.

Pravesh Acharya, of the Tax and Fiscal Justice Alliance, presented opportunities to increase funding for public education through fair and just taxation. Participants acknowledged the existence of loopholes in the tax system and recognised the potential for generating substantial public funds by addressing these issues.

Highlighting the challenges posed by the global economic crisis, economist Dilli Raj Khanal emphasised the need for increased funding and taxation policies to support public services and teachers. He recommended the creation of a new fund at the United Nations and the allocation of 1.2-2 trillion USD in Special Drawing Rights to assist highly affected countries.

### **In Nepal and beyond: Go Public! Fund Education**

Education International's Regional Director, Anand Singh, stressed the significance of the "Go Public! Fund Education" global campaign, addressing pressing issues such as teacher shortages, poor learning outcomes, public funding constraints, and the critical role of fair taxation in the education sector. The campaign seeks to highlight education as a fundamental human right and calls for the government to prioritise direct taxation as a means of ensuring equitable and inclusive education funding.

To support and actively engage with the campaign, participants outlined a year-long campaign plan focusing on relevant issues at the national level. These include increasing the number of teachers, raising student lunch meal allowances, ensuring substitute teachers for those on

maternity leave, enrolling private school teachers in the Social Security Fund, and enhancing awareness of human and trade union rights among union activists.

At the conclusion of the workshop, a press conference was held to publicly announce the Go Public! Fund Education campaign objectives and plans. Education International member organizations in Nepal, including the Nepal National Teachers Association (NNTA), the Nepal Teachers Association (NTA) and the Institutional Schools' Teachers' Union (ISTU), expressed their deep concern over Nepal's ability to attain inclusive high-quality public education by 2030, as outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. They also emphasised the importance of state responsibility in providing quality education to all citizens and urged greater investment in public education systems.

During the press conference, Education International member organizations in Nepal, together with their partners, highlighted the significance of the Go Public! Fund Education campaign and stated that the campaign seeks to build a strong and sustainable Tax and Education Alliance at the national level, with a unified commitment to advocating for education and tax justice. "As the campaign gains momentum, it is hoped that increased public financing for education will become a reality, fostering a brighter future for Nepal's education system and its students," stated Anand Singh.

For more information on the current state of education in Nepal, you can access Education International's Go Public Fact Sheet [here](#).

## **Empowering Women Education Workers: Summary of the EILA Regional Network Meeting**

The meeting provided an opportunity for analysis of the current situation, workshops and discussions between colleagues from all over the region.

Initiatives such as the campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 and the launch of the [Network's Observatory: Sumemos Igualdad \(Let's Ad Equality\)](#).

On 24, 25 and 26 July, more than a hundred teachers gathered in San José, Costa Rica, for the Regional Meeting of the Network of Women Education workers of the [Internacional de la Educación para América Latina](#) (IEAL) [Education International for Latin America].

This meeting was part of the dynamics of the Network and was the second to be held after the pandemic and the resumption of face-to-face events. On this occasion, more than 100 teachers from all over the region, mostly women, and representatives of 18 organisations affiliated to IEAL, actively participated.

The event was moderated by Fátima Silva, General Secretary of the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE) [National Confederation of Education Workers of Brazil] (CNTE) and Vice-President of the Regional Committee of the IEAL; Sonia Alesso, General Secretary of the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (CTERA) [Confederation of Education Workers of the Republic of Argentina] and member of the Education International (EI) Global Executive Committee; and Gabriela Sancho, Coordinator of the EILA Regional Office. In addition, the event was attended by two congresswomen from Brazil in a guest capacity.

This year, the meeting was divided into three days in which the participants shared the situation of their countries and organisations learned about the most recent initiatives of the network and participated in two training sessions.

The first day began with a presentation on Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work by Larraitz Lexartza, ILO Gender Officer for Central America, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The ratification of this convention was promoted by the IEAL through a campaign that was also on the agenda of the event. During the rest of the day, participants from each organisation had the opportunity to present the political situation in their countries and the situation regarding women's rights and gender equality.

The second day began with a plenary session in which the group of Brazilian congresswomen shared their experiences with the participants. This was followed by the presentation of the Network's Observatory: Sumemos Igualdad [Let's Add Equality], a new website where people can find information and stay abreast of issues relating to gender equality in the world of work and specifically for the education sector.

The rest of the day was dedicated to two workshops. One of them was called "Public opinion is also ours: communication for women trade unionists", which focused on providing participants with basic communication tools to enable them to position their issues and agendas inside and outside their organisations and to generate a reflection on the need to make women's work in organisations more visible.

Entitled "Playing, dancing and singing in a unionist key with Tocá el Tambó", the other workshop sought to explore the potential of music in spaces of social protest and enabled the participants to come up with a slogan that was shared with the rest of the plenary session at the end of the day.

Finally, on the last day, there was a presentation on EI's campaign "Por la Pública! Creamos Escuela" [ [Go Public! Fund Education](#)], which opposes the privatisation of education and the education trade and seeks to demand more state funding for public education. The presentation was given by the Observatorio Latinoamericano de Políticas Educativas (OLPE) [ [Latin American Observatory of Educational Policies](#)].

Before the closing of the activity, the Regional Office officially launched Volume 9 of the [RED Magazine](#) [Network periodical] dedicated to women's work overload and the challenges of reconciling work, trade union and family life.

[Click here](#) to see the pictures of the meeting.

The Network of Women Education Workers is a joint work structure that was set up by the IEAL Regional Committee in 2005 to bolster unions by implementing union policies that promote and guarantee the effective and politicised participation and activism of women teachers. This initiative is based on the recognition that at least 70% of education unions are made up of women.

## **The UN High Panel on the Teaching Profession: Panelists discuss strategies to end the teacher shortage**

On 1 August, the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession convened its second virtual meeting bringing together leading experts, policymakers, and representatives from education organizations to address crucial issues within the teaching profession. Education International, as the voice of the profession at the global level, plays a central role in the Panel.??

The objective of the UN High-Level Panel is to develop actionable recommendations to ensure that every learner has a professionally trained, qualified and supported teacher, who can flourish within a transformed education system.

Their first meeting on 18 July served to ensure panelists had a clear overview of the working methods of the Panel, which is co-chaired by Paula Weekes of Trinidad and Tobago and Kersti Kaljulaid of Estonia and supported by a UNESCO-ILO Secretariat.

In the second meeting, the Panelists discussed three core imperatives for the teaching profession:

- Dignity, broadly framed to imply a focus on positive, supportive and decent working conditions that create and sustain a dignified professional environment.
- Humanity, broadly framed to imply teacher wellbeing, including attention to teacher job satisfaction, sense of efficacy, sense of belonging within the profession which promote a sense of well-being.
- Equity, broadly framed to imply a focus on ensuring that all learners have equitable access to diverse and high-quality teachers, and teachers promote inclusive teaching and learning experiences.

Key issues discussed included: raising the status of the profession and making teaching an attractive career for young people; improving teacher working conditions; ensuring a diverse and inclusive workforce; and guaranteeing human and trade union rights.

Education International (EI) is represented on the panel by Susan Hopgood, President of Education International, Manal Hdaife, school leader in Lebanon and chair of the Education International Arab countries cross-regional structure (ACCRS); and Mike Thiruman, General secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union.

EI called for the Panel to seize the opportunity to make bold Recommendations that will address teachers' challenges and ensure that the teaching profession is valued and respected.

Susan Hopgood reports on her experience as part of the Panel:

The Panel will meet again on 15 August, when they will discuss three further imperatives for the teaching profession: quality, innovation and leadership, and sustainability. They will then have an in-person meeting in September 2023 in New York, where the Panel Recommendations will be adopted.

The Recommendations will serve as a key input into the preparations for the UN Summit of the Future and will be published on World Teachers Day. The full report on the outcomes of the Panel will be made available in 2024.

## **The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession: how to recruit, prepare and retain quality teachers**

The UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession convened its third virtual meeting on 15 August.

The Panel discussed three core imperatives for the teaching profession:

- **Teacher quality**, broadly framed to imply a focus on preparing and supporting high-quality teachers and quality teaching.
- **Innovation and leadership**, broadly framed to focus on teachers' ability to lead innovations in educational practices, within and beyond the classrooms.
- **Sustainability**, broadly framed to focus on ensuring a sustained supply of well-trained, diverse, quality teachers distributed equitably, and teachers educating to support system resilience to mitigate impacts of climate disasters.

Panelists noted the interconnected nature of these three imperatives and the need to ensure comprehensive national teacher policies.

Quality initial teacher training and professional development were highlighted as important for both quality and sustainability, as good preparation gives teachers a sense of self-efficacy and reduces turnover. Panelists also noted that well-prepared, highly qualified teachers take the lead with innovation, as long as they have the enabling conditions to do so, including tools, time and trust.

During the meeting Education International and others were clear that the Panel must have a strong position on ending the use of under-qualified contract teachers. Instead, governments must invest in ensuring qualified, high-status teachers who have secure employment contracts and decent working conditions.

Investment in the profession was also high on the agenda of the Panel, as a crucial prerequisite for sustainably improving teacher quality and enabling innovation.

EI President Susan Hopgood stressed the need to invest in raising the status of the profession, noting that austerity policies and public sector wage bill constraints take us in the wrong direction and must end. She also emphasised the necessity of an international monitoring mechanism to hold governments accountable for implementing recommended policy measures.

In the video below, Susan Hopgood, EI President and member of the Panel provides her perspective on this latest meeting of the Panel.

Teacher union representative on the panel and General Secretary of the Singapore Teacher Union, Mike Thiruman, underscored the need for governments to engage in forward-looking, intentional workforce planning to ensure a strong public system, tackle teacher shortages and ensure teacher diversity.

Teacher union representative on the panel, school leader in Lebanon and Chair of the Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (ACCRS) Manal Hdaife called for governments to take concrete steps to close the gender gap in school leadership positions by breaking down barriers which stop their access to promotion.

The next meeting will be in-person in New York in mid-September. Panelists will discuss draft recommendations and agree on a final set of recommendations, which will input into the preparations of the UN Summit of the Future.

Education International will hold a consultation for its member organisations prior to the face-to-face meeting in New York. The consultation will enable EI member organisations to share their perspectives on priority national and international actions that should be taken to end teacher shortages and uplift the profession.

The consultation will be held twice to enable EI members to join at the time zone most appropriate for them.

[Click here](#) to register for the consultation at 09.00-10.30 CEST (interpretation in English and French).

[Click here](#) to register for the consultation at 16.00-17.30 CEST (interpretation in Spanish and English).

For more information about the consultation [click here](#).

### **India: Unionists march to demand a respected and valued teaching profession**

Teachers from the All-India Primary Teachers' Federation (AIPTF) took to the streets and launched the 'Bharat Yatra' campaign on National Teachers' Day, September 5th, demanding the re-instatement of pension benefits of all teachers and government employees. They will continue their march until October 5th, World Teachers Day.

AIPTF has been relentlessly advocating for over 10 years for the re-instatement of pension benefits, especially for teachers appointed after 2004. The organization also adopted a resolution during its 29th Biennial Conference in Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat, to launch this campaign on September 5th, explained AIPTF Senior Vice-President, Dr. R.C. Dabas.

“Because there were no decisive measures or reply from the government, teachers, as well as other employees' associations like the ones for railways, postal services came together and staged a big rally with thousands of employees on August 10th in New Delhi,” AIPTF General Secretary Kamala Kanta Tripathy also explained to the media.

Acknowledging that this was “a landmark rally”, he added that, teachers being part of this joint forum, AIPTF supports other unions and seeks support for its 'Bharat Yatra' campaign.

At the pre-launch campaign press briefing, AIPTF Vice-President Sh. P. Harigovindan also stressed that this campaign will be made of “four Yatras (journeys or pilgrimages) coming from the country’s four corners to raise awareness, sensitize and gain support about the fact that valued and motivated teachers are the pillars of effective and inclusive education systems. Their working conditions should be decent, and we call on governments is to invest in teachers.”

The campaign will involve 25 AIPTF state affiliates, and more than 200 meetings and roadshows are being planned during the various phases of ‘Bharat Yatra’.

### **Iraq: Arab educators demand increased investment in public education and teachers**

A delegation from Education International (EI) travelled to Baghdad, Iraq, where they met with the president and prime minister and along with the Iraqi Teachers’ Union and member organisations in Arab countries launched the EI flagship campaign [Go Public! Fund Education](#).

The launch, organised with support from the Iraq Teachers’ Union (ITU), representing 1.2 million educators in the country, was attended by Iraq’s Education Minister Ibrahim Names al-Jubouri, who emphasised that “making a profit off children’s right to education is unacceptable. Public education in Iraq is expanding and teachers are the main investment.”

Iraq’s Education Minister Ibrahim Names al-Jubouri.

The campaign supports education unions to push back against austerity and privatisation, challenge education budget cuts, and advocate for quality, inclusive public education systems.

The delegation, led by EI General Secretary David Edwards, EI Vice-President Mugwena Maluleke, and the chairperson of the EI Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure, Manal Hdaife, met with the President of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Abdul Latif Rashid, and the Prime Minister, Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani.

#### **"Fund education not war"**

The EI delegation made the case for investing in public education and in a trained, motivated and respected teaching profession, in Iraq and across the Arab World. It presented research supporting union efforts to develop teachers’ professional capacities via an enhanced curriculum.

During the meeting, President Rashid stated that “we need to fund education not war,” adding that “overspending on defence equals underspending on education and other vital sectors,” he also said that in fragile and conflict affected countries like Iraq, governments tend to spend nearly twice as much on their militaries than as on education and health.

He concluded: “In the Arab region where so many children are denied access to education, allocating scarce funding to anything but public education is totally unacceptable”.

“On behalf of Iraq, we want EI to convey our voice to the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession in New York and underscore that international aid and parts of international financial institutions’ loans should be used to fund the provision of public education,” he added.

Prime Minister Al-Sudani also underlined the importance of reforming the education system, and noted that Iraq was one of the first one to establish an advanced education system, “which places a high responsibility upon us”.

He also highlighted governmental efforts to implement the Education Strategy (2022-2031) in cooperation with UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. This strategy aims to develop education structures in Iraq.

He further emphasised updates made to the educational curriculum, as well as the cooperation between unions and governmental institutions involved in the education sector, and the ongoing search for better ways to develop this sector.

At this high-level meeting, EI General Secretary David Edwards highlighted that the global economic architecture, with institutions like International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, massively influence the financing that governments can dedicate to education and teachers.

“These institutions should change their policies to loosen restraints on education expenditure and reduce debt burdens. Therefore, we need to decolonise the education financing if we are serious about our commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 which calls for equitable, inclusive quality education for all,” he added.

### Go Public! Fund Education

The delegation also met with education unions belonging to the EI Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (ACCRS), representing teachers and education support personnel in 11 countries in the region, to launch the [Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#) in the region.

“EI stands firmly behind the Iraq Teachers’ Union and all ACCRS education unions in their efforts to advance public education financing in the Arab region. Education trade unions globally and in the Arab region, need to be consulted and included to successfully achieve those goals. The neglect of education and the impact of crises that have caused so much suffering and injustice, have made saving public education and supporting the professionals at its heart, critical and urgent!” stated David Edwards during the event held on September 1st.

Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards.

“Teachers can lead the education community to ensure that every teacher is valued, supported, and equipped to help shape a brighter future for all. The EI campaign Go Public! Fund Education aims to support Iraqi teachers and their unions in Iraq and Arab countries do just that.”

Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards.

For EI Vice-President, Mugwena Maluleke, “The Go Public! Fund Education campaign calls for a transformative investment in teachers and support staff, essential for empowering the next generation to build a better, fairer, and freer society.”

Manal Hdaife, Chairperson of EI ACCRS, explained that “we need to build a well-resourced equitable education system that empowers, respects, and values teachers and education professionals in Iraq and globally. The status of education funding in the Arab region is far from sufficient. Most countries allocate less than 6 per cent of their GDP to education. In countries suffering instability and states of emergency, international funds granted by donors for education barely cover 3.5 per cent of the total budget.” Therefore, “investing in education in those countries is a moral imperative”, she insisted.

Right to left: EI ACCRS Chairperson Manal Hdaife and EI's Dalila El Barhmi.

ITU President Abbas Al Sudani said: “The Go Public! Fund Education campaign comes at a critical time for the Arab region, where education funding is highly inadequate, and many countries are grappling with instability and emergencies. As the president of the Iraq Teachers' Union, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by our educators and the dire need for increased investment in public education and the education workforce. This campaign represents a united effort to confront and reverse privatisation and commercialisation, advocate for quality and inclusive public education, and strengthen quality public education. Together, with the support of Education International and its member organisations, we can make a difference in the lives of our educators and, ultimately, our students.”

EI ACCRS member organisations therefore adopted the [statement “Funding the Future: A Call to Action for Public Education in Arab Countries”](#), where they demand enhanced investment in public education and the education workforce.

## **Elevating Teachers' Voices to the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession**

Educators from around the world expressed their concerns about the global teacher shortage, sharing firsthand experiences which highlight the detrimental implications for their classrooms and school communities. Their testimonies were part of consultations organised by Education International to bring the voices of educators to the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession.

Educators from various regions also addressed the need for comprehensive support to early-career teachers, affordable housing, teacher well-being, and mental health. There was also a call to acknowledge internal country disparities, with shortages often more pronounced in disadvantaged regions. Concerns surrounding gender pay inequity, teacher migration, and the climate crisis's impact on educators were also part of the discussion.

In his opening remarks, EI's General Secretary, David Edwards, emphasized the significance of the Panel's draft recommendations, noting their alignment with EI's global efforts, particularly the Go Public! Fund Education campaign. “These recommendations will empower our unions during national negotiations, ensuring governments remain accountable. We're building upon the foundation set by the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. Through this consultation, we're channeling the collective voice of our educators to the High-Level Panel, with our president, Susan Hopgood, leading the charge,” Edwards explained.

“We must understand the real cost of quick fixes to the global teacher shortage, like turning to untrained teachers,” he continued. “As we approach the Summit of the Future, a new vision for education will emerge. It's vital that our unions are not just witnesses but active contributors to shaping this new vision.”

Reflecting on members' inputs, EI president Susan Hopgood noted that the key themes highlighted very much aligned with the concerns she has emphasised in the Panel discussions so far and committed to bring additional emerging issues expressed by members to the table at the next Panel meeting at the U.N. She further stressed the importance of holding governments to account to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

## From the Transforming Education Summit to the upcoming summit of the future

The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession was a direct outcome of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit (TES). The TES identified the urgent need for a dedicated forum to discuss the multifaceted challenges faced by educators worldwide. Notably, Susan Hopgood, EI's President, serves as a distinguished member of this Panel. With the upcoming [Summit of the Future](#) in 2024, the recommendations from the Panel are expected to contribute significantly to the discussions.

Mike Thiruman, General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union and a member of the Panel, shared his perspective on the Panel's work. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the recommendations are followed through with concrete actions for implementation. He also expressed the aspiration to eventually elevate these recommendations to a status similar to a UN Convention, aiming to set a global standard for the teaching profession.

The panel will meet in person in New York this week to deliberate and adopt a set of recommendations. EI's president, Susan Hopgood, will bring educators' perspectives to the meeting and call for bold, ambitious recommendations to be adopted.

## Teachers' experiences: a global overview

Vivid narratives emerged from countries like Brazil, South Africa, and India, painting a picture of classrooms grappling with overwhelming student numbers due to teacher shortages. An educator from South Africa highlighted the cascading effects of this issue, with burnout rates climbing and fewer individuals considering teaching as a viable career. A Brazilian trade unionist also shed light on the challenges of ensuring quality education in crowded classrooms.

Educators from France outlined the challenges of retaining and attracting teachers, highlighting the impact of under-investment and the decline in purchasing power. A participant from Australia described the specific issues faced in rural and remote areas, such as STEM teacher shortages and the prohibitive housing costs for educators. In Finland, the lack of comprehensive data on qualified teachers and the impact of population decrease were brought to the forefront.

The conversation also spanned other systemic issues, with insights from countries like Thailand and Nigeria, detailing challenges ranging from inadequate infrastructure to the diminishing autonomy of educators in their own classrooms.

A significant part of the consultation was dedicated to solution-oriented discussions. Participants explored potential strategies to address systemic challenges and enhance the status of the teaching profession. In this context, the importance of increased public funding for education was

emphasized by several participants as a foundation for improving teachers working conditions and salaries and address the global teacher shortage, in line with [EI's flagship campaign Go Public! Fund Education](#). The campaign calls on governments to fully fund public education systems and invest in the teaching profession as a prerequisite to achieve quality education for all and a sustainable future.

## **Panel on the Teaching Profession convenes at United Nations**

Continuing on the fast-track process set by United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession opened its in-person sessions Thursday with urgent calls to recruit, retain and support professionally trained teachers worldwide.

After weeks of evidence-fueled discussions and consultations, the 18-member global panel advanced what panelist and EI President Susan Hopgood called “clear, concise, concrete and actionable recommendations to guide governments towards transformation of education systems.”

The HLP was formed at Guterres' direction of as an outcome of the 2022 Transforming Education Summit. More than 100 countries submitted Statements of National Commitment on subjects including elevating the teaching profession, financing education, and digital learning. The Panel will produce a set of recommendations towards ensuring every learner has a professionally trained, qualified, and well-supported teacher who can flourish in a transformed education system. The recommendations, expected to be a significant contributor to the UN's Summit of the Future in 2024, are due to be finalized by the end of 2023.

The Panel is co-chaired by two former Heads of State, with representatives from member states, employers' organizations, teachers' unions, civil society, academia, and youth. The union representatives include Hopgood, Manal Hdaife, Primary School Principal and Chair of the Arab Cross Country Regional Structure (ACCRS) of EI, Lebanon, and Mike Thiruman, General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union.

“The success of our education systems is directly tied to the success of the teaching profession. When we focus on transforming education systems, we can transform conditions in our schools, transform the practice of teaching, transform learning and transform lives.”

Susan Hopgood | Education International President

Since mid-July when the Panel structure was established, EI has reached out repeatedly to member organizations for information, opinions and other input. In an August call, General Secretary David Edwards called the Panel's work “a once in a lifetime opportunity”.

“Because of you, because of the lead-up and the work we did at the Transforming Education Summit, the Secretary General heard our call for this High-Level Panel. This work is critical to our movement, critical to our Go Public-Fund Education campaign, and touches everything we do to support our members, in terms of education financing and teacher pay, well-being and working conditions.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed opened the two-day session with a strong endorsement of education funding, specifically to advance the transformative role teachers must play to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

“The ‘T’ in Transformation stands for teachers and it requires that we invest for the long haul. This message will infuse everything we say,” said Mohammed. She noted that too often, education systems and unions do not collaborate and interactions between them occur only at times of conflict. “We need to see the value of investment and representation; they are two sides of the same coin,” she said. “But this investment comes with the understanding that there must be accountability.”

Throughout the written work and discussions, the need to elevate teacher pay and protect public-sector financing of quality education has been prominent. The financing situation was brought into sharp focus in July when the United Nations released the latest totals for the global debt crisis, now at a record \$92 trillion. Some 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt interest payments than on education or health.

As the panel worked through a draft of 55 recommendations, Hopgood said that the notion of transformation should be viewed as a series of interlocking activities, beginning with transforming education systems: “The success of our education systems is directly tied to the success of the teaching profession. When we focus on transforming education systems, we can transform conditions in our schools, transform the practice of teaching, transform learning and transform lives.”

### **United Nations High Level Panel forwards urgent solutions to address the global shortage of teachers**

Governments worldwide must act decisively to address the global education crisis by elevating and transforming the role, status, and future of the teaching profession according to recommendations from a United Nations High Level Panel.

The UN High-level Panel on the Teaching Profession moved on September 15th toward finalizing a set of more than 50 recommendations to be presented to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

“What we are seeing here today is historic,” said Education International President and UN panelist Susan Hopgood, “and that is an unprecedented agreement not only about the challenges facing education systems and the teaching profession, but about the specific steps all of us can take in concert to make real progress.”

Included in the draft recommendations are a series of urgent calls for government action, including ensuring that teachers and their organizations can engage in social dialogue with governments, including collective bargaining, and policy dialogue on all matters affecting their profession and that this same collaborative framework be the principle means for developing policies on education, teaching, and the teaching profession.

The Panel also called for governments to establish national commissions with relevant financial authorities, representatives of teachers' organizations and others to immediately tackle shortages of adequately trained teachers.

The Panel also called on teachers' organizations to develop, implement, and monitor professional standards for teachers to hold the profession accountable to the highest standards, while urging governments to begin phasing out the use of contract teachers and the hiring of unqualified teachers to fill teacher shortages.

Responding to growing global crises on education, the Panel called for the establishment of a Global Fund for Teachers in Emergencies to provide payment of salaries of teachers working in crisis-affected contexts and urged that international financial institutions end all public sector wage bill constraints and austerity measures that have severely depressed education spending globally.

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, brings together key stakeholders in the education sector to help tackle the growing teacher shortage around the world.

### **African educators demand increased funding for education and express solidarity with colleagues in crisis**

Education unions in Africa demand increased funding for public education systems and teachers, as they prepare the upcoming regional conference, and show full solidarity with teachers and education support personnel across the continent. These are the key messages conveyed by the Education International Africa Regional Committee (EIARC) during its 20 September's online meeting.

#### **Go Public! Fund Education**

EI's Lucy Njura Barimbui also reported about progress made by African member organisations towards implementing the [EI Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#).

"What we are saying with this campaign," she said, "is that education financing is crucial if we are to achieve quality education if we are to address the issue of teachers, and more generally if we are to address the education crisis that is currently affecting our members and the general provision of education."

She added that, to reverse this trend and achieve equitable public education, education unions need to push governments to invest more in education, value teachers, and invest in teachers.

Explaining that this campaign draws on the Global Response campaign against the privatisation and the commercialisation in and of education and on the Unite for Quality Education campaign, she underlined that African education unions have been very involved in both campaigns.

Njura Barimbui also mentioned the Go Public! Fund Education campaign's three areas:

1. Scaling up EI Africa work in challenging the privatisation and commercialisation of education, i.e. the Global Response campaign.

2. Launching and scaling up the Go Public! Fund Education campaign.
3. Strengthening the narrative for public education.

The EI regional coordinator went on to say that research and activities were launched in Cameroon, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia; national follow-up Go Public! Fund Education/Global Response activities are planned in Kenya, Liberia, and Uganda; and advocacy activities continue in Ghana and Nigeria.

### Union solidarity

EIARC members adopted a resolution on military coups in Africa and a statement on the earthquake in Morocco.

In a Resolution on the respect for democratic principles and institutions during and after coups d'état, the EIARC reaffirmed that "the fundamental rights and freedoms of all individuals must be respected and the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association must be upheld at all times."

Among other, it calls on African governments to uphold democracy and respect the will of the people as expressed through free, transparent, and credible elections; calls for the protection of democracy, the rule of law, and the rights and freedoms of all citizens, including educators, students and children; and urges the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and governments to respect the right to learn and to teach in safety and peace, ensuring that teachers enjoy basic freedoms such as academic freedom and freedom to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively.

The EIARC also expressed serious concerns about the impact of the [earthquake that erupted in the Kingdom of Morocco](#) on 8 September 2023 affecting more than 100,000 children, killing more than 2,800 people, including educators, learners and members of their families, as well as leaving thousands more injured and homeless.

It reaffirmed in a statement its solidarity with Moroccan education unions, educators, students and the affected families and communities; expressed its deepest condolences to all the educators, students and families that have lost loved ones, and called on the Moroccan authorities and humanitarian agencies to continue to prioritise education, educators and students, including the provision of shelter, food, clothing and psychosocial support.

The Committee also expressed solidarity with the educators, students and communities of Libya affected by the devastating floods caused by storm Daniel on 12 September. More than 5,000 people are presumed dead and at least 10,000 missing after heavy rains in northeastern Libya caused two dams to collapse, surging more water into already inundated areas.

### Preparation for the 10th EI Africa Regional Conference

Members from different African members of Education International came together as they prepare for the 10th EI Africa Regional Conference, to be held 19-24 November in Johannesburg, South Africa. The event chaired by EIARC Vice-President Mariama Chipkaou. During the meeting the EIARC adopted a EI Africa Regional Conference Declaration related to the conference's theme, "Standing together for resilient education systems in times of crisis." This resolution will be shared with EI member organisations ahead of the Conference and put for

adoption during the event.

## **Nepal: Massive mobilisation of teachers denounce education law which aims to restrict their rights**

Education International fully supports the thousands of teachers and members of its affiliates in Nepal demonstrating to demand a respected and valued teaching profession in the face of a new law that seeks to curb their trade union rights.

EI member organisations in Nepal, the Nepal Teachers' Association, the Nepal National Teachers' Association and Institutional Schools' Teachers' Union have joined hands with 12 other teacher organisations to protest the New Education Act.

More than 50,000 teachers gathered in Kathmandu from all over the country to protest the New Education Act. The new Education Act severely restricts the trade union rights of the teachers, making it illegal to organize, protest and demonstrate.

The unions call the Act draconian and in direct contradiction with the constitution of the country, which provides trade union rights to all working people.

"We fully support our colleagues in Nepal as they mobilise to defend quality education for their students and stand up for the right of education workers to organise as a collective voice. Their voice must be heard! We urge governmental authorities, in Nepal and around the globe, to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education," stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International. "This includes ensuring teachers are paid, respected, and valued as professionals, and that their expertise and experience are brought to the table when creating education policies."

The law also decentralizes appointment of teachers to the local governments. The unions assert that the move will destroy the quality of education and breed nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism in the appointment process. There will be no uniformity in quality, working conditions and salaries of teachers in Nepal which will destroy national unity and quality of education.

The unions are demanding that the Act make provisions to end temporary and contract appointment of teachers and establish a system in which all teachers are permanent and licensed teachers.

The unions are also worried that all local governments may not have enough resources and end up terminating teachers' contracts. Among other issues raised by the unions are social security for all teachers, a reasonable time bound count of service years for promotions and social security.

## World Teachers' Day 2023: Growing teacher shortage puts the right to education at risk

World Teachers' Day is celebrated on October 5th every year. This year's event is marked by increased global concern about the scale and impact of the teacher shortage around the world. According to UNESCO, the world needs 69 million more teachers by 2030 to achieve universal basic education yet current trends see this deficit increasing, with many teachers leaving the profession. New research from Education International and partners points to the main factors driving this exodus and the solutions to turn the tide.

### Overworked, undervalued, and underpaid

Convened by Education International, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF, the 2023 edition of World Teachers' Day highlights the global teacher shortage under the theme "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage".

"Today, teachers are overworked, undervalued, and underpaid, and more and more are forced to leave the profession they love and the world needs. At the same time, fewer young people aspire to be teachers. It's easy to see why. Working conditions have deteriorated, pay has not kept up with inflation, workloads have skyrocketed, and professional autonomy has been steadily replaced with never-ending controls and bureaucracy. Urgent action is imperative because the right to quality education is at stake," explained David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

EI's General Secretary will speak at the opening ceremony of World Teachers' Day celebrations hosted by UNESCO in Paris on October 5th, from 14:30 CEST. [Click here to register](#) for the event and tune in online.

The upcoming 2023 International Barometer of Education Staff sheds further light on the conditions driving teachers out of the profession. Based on a survey of over 26,000 educators including teachers, school principals, and support staff from 11 countries across 4 continents, the Barometer findings reveal a concerning rise of workplace violence, coupled with insufficient psychological and medical support for educators, and significant issues related to work-life balance. A vast majority of educators surveyed reported that they didn't feel their profession was valued by society at large. Despite these challenges, the majority of teachers would choose teaching again as a profession. The 2023 edition of the International Barometer of Education Staff will be released on October 10. [Click here to register](#) for the online launch event and tune in on October 10, from 14:00 CEST.

### Teachers call on governments to Go Public! Fund Education

Teachers everywhere are mobilising for change through Education International and its [Go Public! Fund Education](#) global campaign. The campaign emphasises the urgent need for governments to fully fund public education systems and invest in the teaching profession to end the teacher shortage and guarantee every student's right to have a well-supported qualified teacher and a quality learning environment.

The call has been echoed at the highest international level. In 2022, in the context of the Transforming Education Summit, the United Nations General Secretary drew the world's

attention to the teacher shortage and the critical danger it poses. The [United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#) was created to address this crisis and to put forward clear recommendations for governments to implement.

“To reverse the global teacher shortage, decisive political action is needed: it is imperative to fund public education, invest in teachers, guarantee their labour rights, and ensure they have good working conditions. Investing in education is not only about funding; it is about respecting, valuing pedagogical expertise, and involving teachers in decision-making processes,” stressed Susan Hopgood, Education International President and member of the United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession.

The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession has drafted over 50 recommendations that governments must implement in order to reverse the teacher shortage and ensure the right to quality education for all.

### **Africa honors its teachers, key transformation agents of education and the continent**

Several events were organised in different parts of Africa on World Teachers’ Day (WTD), October 5th, acknowledging the crucial role of teachers who provide the youth of the continent quality education and a peaceful, sustainable future. African Governments must invest in teachers, motivate, and support them.

At the Regional/African WTD's commemoration event in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, co-organised with UNESCO, the African Union (AU) and UNICEF, Dr. Dennis Sinyolo, Director of the Education International Africa Regional Office (EIRAF) stated that “poor salaries and working conditions have impaled the dignity of the African teacher. We welcome the recommendations of the United Nations' High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession calling on governments to address the global teacher shortage and to restore the dignity of the teaching profession by providing long-term funding for well-qualified and well-supported teachers.”

### **EIRAF’s five-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa**

He went on to propose a five-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa, calling on African governments to:

1. Train and recruit enough qualified teachers. Every student has the right to a highly trained, professionally qualified, supported, and motivated teacher.
2. Trust and respect teachers by giving them the professional autonomy and freedom they need to teach creatively, collaborate, and carry out research.
3. Make teaching an attractive and a first choice profession by ensuring decent salaries and working conditions of teachers.
4. Involve teachers in genuine and institutionalised social and policy dialogue through their unions.
5. Invest in education and teachers by meeting the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks of allocating at least 20% of the national budget or at least 6% of Gross Domestic Product to education.

Stressing that, through the ongoing [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign, EI will continue to press on African governments to provide quality public education for all, Dr. Sinyolo reiterated: “A quality education delivered by highly trained, professionally qualified, trusted, valued, supported, and motivated teachers.”

### African Union’s continental teacher award ceremony

[Eight teachers](#) hailing from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa were recognised during the African Union’s (AU) continental teacher award ceremony and webinar on teaching profession.

AU Monica Idinoba, on behalf of Professor Mohammed Belhocine, the AU Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI), started her welcome remarks by reminding that “the transformation of education begins with teachers,” and “every profession is developed through the teaching profession.”

Teacher development, she said, is a key priority of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-25.

She also said that while Africa has made significant progress in terms of access to education, there are still gaps within and among African countries: “If nothing is done to transform education, the targets set by CESA, the AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, and UN sustainable development goals won’t be met, with a long-term impact on children’s learning and on different aspects of human development on the continent.”

For the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Ethiopia, Roland Kobia, a former teacher himself, “teachers are at the heart of education systems” and “COVID showed how resilient and adaptative education systems are.”

He added that when they renewed their partnership, the EU and the AU reaffirmed that education was a joint priority.

“The imprint teachers leave on children’s minds has no prize, makes a lasting impact on their lives,” he concluded.

The UNESCO-International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) Director, Quentin Wodon, also underlined that his organisation released on October 5th a [Regional Training Guide](#) to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for pre- and in-service teachers in Africa.

The training guide he said, shows that the outbreak of COVID-19 negatively impacted teachers, teacher educators, and learners and the entire education system was impacted and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, frustration, and stress were exacerbated.

“As an institute whose mission is to empower teachers for all learners to thrive, we remain committed to strengthening teachers’ mental health and psychosocial well-being on the African continent. Teachers are undoubtedly at the heart of the realisation of quality education; therefore, their well-being is key to improved learning outcomes,” he agreed.

## India: Nationwide Yatra campaign for better conditions for teachers culminates on World Teachers' Day

"We are all inspired by the Yatra you have undertaken and your commitment to the future of teachers and education in India." On World Teachers' Day, October 5th, Education International (EI) President Susan Hopgood addressed Indian education unionists in Delhi as they successfully concluded their [month-long 'Bharat Yatra' campaign](#), demanding the re-instatement of pension benefits for all teachers and government employees.

As she addressed the gathering, Hopgood paid [tribute to All-India Primary Teachers' Federation \(AIPTF\) President Ram Pal Singh Ji](#) who recently passed away for "dedicating his life to upholding the rights of teachers and fighting for quality education for all."

"As we gather today, let us remind ourselves of the significance of World Teachers' Day. A day that calls us to recognise and honour the dedication of our teachers. But we must also recognise the challenges we face," she continued. "I am privileged to visit our brothers and sisters in member organisations worldwide, and I can tell you that we are all navigating similar challenges: insufficient funding in education, growing privatisation, the erosion of teachers' professional rights and autonomy, the increasing casualisation of the profession and vital matters concerning fair salaries, pensions, and social security."

[Education unionists participating in the AIPTF led Yatra](#) crossed 11 states, held more than 150 meetings, met with over two hundred thousand people, and travelled 8,278 km. "It spread awareness among union members. Everywhere I went, they celebrated the yatra as if it were a family event. No doubt, this yatra will bring change among teachers and among unions in future," expressed AIPTF National Women Network Secretary, Seema Mathur.

"We are all inspired by the Yatra you have undertaken and your commitment to the future of teachers and education in India," Hopgood remarked as she addressed the participants. "You have traveled thousands of kilometers to be here today. You have visited local leaders, government officials, schools, neighborhoods. From early mornings to late at night, in small towns and big cities, you carried the voice of teachers across India. We are here to support you as you fight for your pensions and the respect you have earned by dedicating your life to teaching. We stand with you, as you stand for contract teachers and demand permanent contracts and stable salaries."

### Go Public! Fund Education campaign

Hopgood remarked on the connection between the Yatra and the ['Go Public! – Fund Education'](#) campaign, by Education International, "a global call to address the dire need for public funding in the education sector."

She also reaffirmed that "quality education requires fully funded public education systems and the teaching profession. We need to rally together, ensuring that every child, irrespective of their background, has access to quality education."

The yatra, an inspiration for the education movement worldwide

Hopgood concluded: “As we mark World Teachers’ Day, let’s remember that our strength lies in unity. Our voices, when raised together, can bring about the change we so desperately seek. It's not just about celebrating one day but about working collectively every single day to ensure a brighter, more inclusive future for all.”

## **Mongolia: Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Unions demands investments in education and teachers**

The demand of the Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Unions (FMESU) is clear: invest in teachers, invest in education.

On 13 and 14 October, the Education International Asia Pacific Regional Office (EIAP) held meetings with the leadership of FMESU exploring how to better support the union in its ongoing efforts to improve salaries and working conditions for all education workers.

These campaign efforts continue in the context of a growing teacher shortage in the country. With a workforce of 38,000 teachers, Mongolia currently has around 3,000 vacancies.

Stressing that the teacher shortage is fueled by uncompetitive salaries and unattractive working conditions, the FMESU is seeking a 50% salary increase over three years 2024 -26 and to build on improvements to working conditions, such as enhanced leave conditions and teacher housing, secured and embedded in the new education law in July 2023. The government is only offering a 10% increase in salaries in 2024.

The FMESU knows it has a fight on its hands and that the outcome of their campaign will be commensurate to their strength on the ground as "politicians take notice of how many teachers are in the street". The union’s strategic plan 2024 -26 is therefore very clear on the importance of growing union power and has set a membership growth target of 11% per year over the next three years.

The EI-FMESU meeting took place immediately after the 10-11 October meeting of the EI Asia Pacific Regional Committee which unanimously resolved the following in support of the [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign:

*The global teacher shortage is greater than at any time in our living memories.*

*Of the 44 million more teachers UNESCO reports are necessary to achieve universal primary and secondary education, a significant number are required across the Asia Pacific region if the promise of quality public education for all to be realised.*

*Go Public! Fund Education is an urgent, and needed, call for governments, along with intergovernmental agencies and International Financing Institutions, to invest in teachers and invest in public education.*

*The EI Asia Pacific Regional Committee is united in our determination to ensure that every learner, no matter where they live, is taught by a qualified teacher, every day, every lesson.*

*We commit to organise and mobilise at the local, national, regional and global level to hold governments, intergovernmental organisations, and International Financing Institutions to account for their policy failures and demand the necessary policy settings to attract and retain the*

*teachers we need.*

## **Portugal: Massive educators' strike to demand respect for the profession and an end to government disregard of teachers**

Following a joint call to action from their unions, Portuguese teachers and education support personnel went on strike on October 6th to urge their government to engage in social dialogue with their representatives organisations and discuss ways to recognise and value their professions.

The strike was called by the *Associação Sindical de Professores Licenciados* (ASPL), the *Federação Nacional dos Professores* (FENPROF), the *Federação Nacional da Educação* (FNE), the *Pró-Ordem dos Professores* (PRÓ-ORDEM), the *Sindicato dos Educadores e Professores Licenciados pelas Escolas Superiores de Educação e Universidades* (SEPLEU), the *Sindicato Nacional dos Profissionais da Educação* (SINAPE), the *Sindicato Nacional e Democrático dos Professores* (SINDEP), the *Sindicato Independente de Professores e Educadores* (SIPE) and the *Sindicato Nacional dos Professores Licenciados pelos Politécnicos e Universidades* (SPLIU)

According to a union joint press release, “teachers and educators do not tolerate the way in which they are mistreated by the Prime Minister António Costa, the government in general and the Ministers of Finance and Education in particular, as well as by the absolute majority of the PS which, on the eve of World Teachers' Day, decided to express its ‘recognition’ for the teaching profession by rejecting all parliamentary initiatives that aimed to value a profession that, if not valued, will lose even more professionals and will not attract young people.”

The education organisations warned that the consequence of this lack of recognition for the education professionals “will be a growing lack of qualified teachers in schools, which will have an impact on student learning. This is why the fight that teachers are fighting is not just theirs, but the fight of all Portuguese people who, in a significant majority, have supported the fair demands of their teachers.”

They underlined that, “if there is willingness to begin, progressively and in phases, solving problems that are dragging on and worsening due to the lack of solutions, the Ministry of Education will be able to count on the full availability of teachers and their representative organisations to dialogue and negotiate.”

However, if public authorities continue to ignore the dire situation of the public education sector, the problems of schools and teachers, “the fight will continue, as strong or stronger than in the previous school year. It is up to the Ministry of Education and the government to choose.”

They concluded: “Teachers do not tolerate the disregard and disrespect they are being treated with, and will continue to fight for the profession, for public schools and for quality education.”

World Teachers' Day, an opportunity to mobilise for decent work conditions and quality public education

In his message for World Teachers' Day, October 5th, FENPROF General Secretary Mário Nogueira, stressed that “this World Teachers' Day is observed in Portugal too, not in celebration,

but concern and protest.”

He also mentioned that there is a shortage of teachers in many schools, “because governments have devalued the profession and, over the years, degraded the working conditions. Many have left the profession.”

Nogueira concluded: “Fighting to solve the problems is the only alternative to abandonment, which would jeopardize schools and students even more. Because they know this, parents have been on teachers’ side, supportive of their struggle. A struggle that will continue because we stand up for quality teaching and education and a better future for public education.”

### **Top Asia-Pacific education unionists advocate for increased investment in public education systems and educators, and call for gender equity, and sustainable, democratic and peaceful societies**

The Education International Asia-Pacific (EIAP) Regional Committee called for a greater investment in public education and educators, more for gender equity within unions, urgent action on climate change and expressed solidarity with colleagues across the region and the world who are facing violations of their human and trade union rights.

The meeting, held in-person in Bangkok, Thailand, from October 10th-11th, began with members of the EIAP Regional Committee meeting observing a minute of silence, honouring the memories of Mr. Ram Pal Singh, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, and Mr. P Ramanathan, former Committee member, who recently passed away, the members also extended condolences to their families.

Takimoto Tsukasa, Chairperson of the EIAP Regional Committee, paid tribute to Singh and Ramanathan, describing them as “two great leaders of the region who dedicated their lives to education, teachers and unions,” adding that “they inspired countless teachers, including us, and their work will continue to inspire all of us.”

EI President Susan Hopgood reflected on their passing and expressed how “we all have fond memories of them. They fought for the rights of teachers, unions, and children’s education. Ram Pal’s life was his work. I remember him as a towering man who inspired thousands of members. Rama was a very dedicated person and always wanted us to focus on human and trade union rights. We will miss both badly.”

“A couple of months ago I was with Ram Pal in India talking before the Prime Minister Modi on the negative impact of the government pension scheme,” EI General Secretary David Edwards recalled, stressing that he was “towering and persuasive.” As for Ramanathan, he said he was “a friend who encouraged on professional development and rights. He wanted us to take research. I value his mentorship and guidance. We in EI will continue to march along their footsteps.”

The Committee’s Vice-Chairperson and Australian Education Union’s Federal President Correna Haythorpe also noted Ram Pal Singh’s contribution to the increased number of women in leadership position in his union, the All India Primary Teachers Federation.

**Gearing up for the EI Campaign “Go Public! Fund Education”**

In the opening remarks to the committee, the Chairperson Takimoto Tsukasa highlighted the need for the governments to address the teacher shortage by investing more in teachers and valuing the profession. He insisted that “teachers are the foundation of quality education.”

Introducing the EI ‘[Go Public! Fund Education](#)’ campaign, EI General Secretary David Edwards said: “This campaign grows out of the work we have been doing. It arises out of our earlier campaigns and provides continuity to our work.”

The EIAP Regional Committee went on adopting a resolution on the ‘Go Public! Fund Education’ campaign, expressing unity and determination to ensure that every learner, no matter where he or she lives, is taught by a qualified teacher, every day, for every lesson.

The resolution further commits to organise and mobilise at the local, national, regional and global level to hold governments, intergovernmental organisations and IFIs to account for their policy failures and demands that the necessary policy frameworks be set up to attract and retain the teachers we need.

Angelo Gavrielatos, representing EI's Go Public! Fund Education campaign, underlined teacher shortages across the region and urged member organisations to take up the cause with their respective governments. He was confident that “the UN high-level panel on the teaching profession’s views and recommendations on teacher shortage provides us with an opportunity to push for more investment in education and in teachers.”

### Reactivating the sub-regional women’s networks

Committee members also decided that the women’s networks in the Asia-Pacific region will be supported “as to be more inclusive, accessible, and diverse,” and “a sister-with-sister model for union leadership development will be started, including emerging and experienced leaders.”

Meeting a day prior to the committee meeting, the Women’s Network Steering Committee agreed to hold frequent meetings and develop a four-year strategy to build women leaders’ capacity, so that the network becomes effective and contributes to the development of female leadership.

It further planned to hold sub-regional networks’ initial meetings to establish their purpose, ground rules, and roles. These sub-regional networks’ key activities would be to map current processes and ideas, as well as to come up with ideas on leadership development and sister-to-sister union leadership development.

“The Women’s Network Steering Committee agreed to meet before each Regional Committee meeting. We want more women active in decision making of the unions. Multiple languages is a challenge, but it will not be a barrier in the sub regional structures,” Corrina Haythrope, Vice-Chairperson of the EIAP Regional Committee, explained.

### Taking urgent action on climate change education

The EIAP Regional Committee acknowledged the threat of climate change in the region and highlighted the need for climate change education to equip future generations with the means to face the challenges of climate change.

EIAP Regional Committee Chairperson Takimoto Tsukasa expressed that “climate change is linked to our concerns in terms of climate justice. Education for sustainable development is vital for future generations to be prepared for climate catastrophes and able to undertake sustainable practices.”

EI President, Susan Hopgood went on to mention the climate challenges in the Pacific, warning: “Island nations in the Pacific are disappearing. Kiribati is buying land in Fiji. All of us are going to be affected. We want governments to agree that climate change education should be the norm. We need to make sure that governments act.”

Earlier this year, EI member organisations in the Pacific had come together in Fiji for the [EI/COPE Climate Conference](#) – the first ever of its kind in the region – and examined why teachers and teachers’ unions should be concerned about climate change. The conference concluded that students need to be active on climate change issues and there is a need to include climate change education in the curriculum. Climate change also affects work, working conditions and future of work. Just transition is therefore a fundamental issue for unions.

### Raising concerns for peace, human and trade union rights and justice

Committee members also discussed the Israel-Palestine conflict and drafted a statement urging all “to cease hostilities and ensure that people in Gaza are able to receive humanitarian support.”

“Peace is very important. As unions we must work to build peaceful societies for our children to have a better future. Our responsibilities regarding peace are immense. A peace conference has been initiated between Chinese, Korean and Japanese teachers, so that all of us could learn how to keep peace alive,” the committee chairperson Takamoto reminded.

He added that “colleagues from the Korean Teachers’ Union, the National Teachers’ Union of Taiwan and the Japan Teachers’ Union came together to protest the Japanese government dumping radioactive water waste in the Pacific Ocean. This is grave violation of the rights of the people using these waters and bears an immense environmental impact. We are resolved to end such practices.”

“In Bahrain, Cambodia, Iran, Kurdistan, Myanmar, Philippines, and in too many other countries, teachers are victims of human rights violations. Democracy is attacked. We also see an increasing number of natural disasters. Teachers need support,” EI General Secretary David Edwards also said.

### Visiting the new EIAP office

EIAP Regional Committee members also visited the new regional office which was previously in Malaysia, commended the Kuala Lumpur’s office staff for the work done on behalf and for EI member organisations in the Asia-Pacific region, and wished the current Bangkok’s staff continued success.

They also thanked EI affiliates in Malaysia – the Malaysian Association for Education (MAE), the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) and the Sarawak Teachers' Union (STU) – for their support and cooperation to the EIAP regional office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, since its inception in 1997.

EIAP Regional Director Anand Singh stressed: “It is with a heavy heart that we leave Malaysia. A long history of cooperation, valued staff, and genuine support from the NUTP, MAE and STU helped the EIAP regional office very much. However, we had to move out due to many other difficulties. The EIAP regional office is now relocated in Bangkok, and we look forward to continuing working for all EI affiliates in the region from this office, helping them build their capacity and strength.”

## **EI's Research Network: Critical dialogues on teacher status and artificial intelligence in education**

The profound implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and the status of teachers globally were at the forefront of discussions during Education International's (EI) 18th annual Research Network (ResNet) meeting. Held virtually on 19 October, the event continued the tradition of fostering global solidarity and research-driven strategies among education unionists worldwide.

### **A global perspective on teacher status and rights**

The morning session featured a presentation by Mark Rahimi and Ben Arnold from Deakin University, Australia. Rahimi and Arnold delved into the findings of the upcoming edition of EI's triennial report on the Global Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession, to be launched at EI's World Congress in July 2024.

Based on an extensive survey of EI member organisations from all regions, the report collects data on various aspects of teacher policy and serves as a reference for unions' advocacy work. It also provides a basis for EI's Report to the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART).

The 2023 survey's results shed light on several critical areas affecting teachers worldwide.

- **Teacher shortages** : One of the key findings is the severe teacher shortage across educational levels globally. This deficiency is most pronounced within special education sectors, followed by secondary education, early childhood education, and primary education. The geographical breakdown of the data points to particularly acute shortages in Africa and Europe, underscoring a universal challenge that transcends borders.
- **Underlying factors**: The survey delved into the reasons behind these shortages, with low salaries, excessive workloads, poor career progression, and a diminished perception of professional status emerging as universal grievances among educators. These factors varied in intensity across regions, hinting at the necessity for region-specific solutions. Notably, in the contexts of Europe, North America, the Caribbean, and the Asia Pacific, career progression deficiencies were especially prominent. In contrast, Latin America highlighted workload, and Africa pointed to the low societal valuation of the teaching profession.
- **Perception of authorities' response**: The responses from the survey participants painted a picture of educational authorities' perceived apathy or ineffective strategies in addressing these shortages. There was a global sense of dissatisfaction among educators regarding the efforts—or lack thereof—by authorities to promote teaching as a high-status career or

to engage in meaningful strategies to retain teaching professionals. This sentiment was especially strong regarding authorities' lack of interest in listening to teacher organisations on why teachers leave the profession.

- **Gender disparities:** An interesting dimension that the survey explored was the highly gendered nature of the teaching profession. Questions arose about whether this aspect played a role in the challenges faced, particularly concerning remuneration and professional status. The discussion hinted at a deeper, systemic issue that needed addressing within the educational ecosystem.
- **The need for targeted, informed solutions:** The survey presentation concluded with a call to action for the development of strategies informed by the rich, ground-level data provided by educators themselves. These strategies would not only address the symptoms, such as shortages, but also the underlying systemic issues that the educational sector grapples with. The need for nuanced, context-specific policies and initiatives was clear, pointing to a way forward defined by collaborative, informed, and decisive action.

### **Navigating AI in education**

The afternoon focused on technology, with Dr. Wayne Holmes from University College London, UK, presenting the new research commissioned by EI: "[Unintended consequences of Artificial Intelligence and education](#)". Holmes' comprehensive analysis debunks common misconceptions about AI, emphasising that these tools should complement the work of educators, not replace them. The report advocates for Ethics by Design in AI tools, a concept underlining transparency, privacy, fairness, and human agency.

Furthermore, the report proposes the following strategic recommendations for integrating AI into education systems ethically and effectively:

- **Democratic oversight:** Establish comprehensive regulations, ensuring AI adherence to human rights standards, and involve various stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- **Transparency in AI:** Implement mechanisms that make AI systems' operations understandable to users, fostering trust and accountability.
- **Safeguarding data:** Enforce robust data privacy measures to protect sensitive information of educators and students alike.
- **Teacher autonomy:** Ensure AI supports educators' instructional strategies, not replace them, affirming the professional discretion of teachers.
- **Training for educators:** Advocate for thorough professional development programmes that enable educators to harness AI effectively in their teaching practices.
- **Equity and inclusivity:** Mandate fairness in AI tools by eliminating biases and facilitating equal access for all students, inclusive of those with disabilities.
- **Continuous assessment:** Adopt regular monitoring and evaluation of AI's educational impact, refining its application for better outcomes.
- **Global collaboration:** Encourage international cooperation for sharing insights, research, and effective practices concerning AI in education.

The presentation was followed by a discussion where ResNet members explored the ethical questions at the intersection of AI and education. EI members emphasised the imperative need for educators' voices to guide AI integration into classrooms, ensuring alignment with educational values and objectives.

The discussion touched on a wide range of issues, from concerns over tech sector unionisation to AI's role in standardising education. These reflections, from diverse geographical and professional backgrounds, underscored the need for a united front in advocating for education policies that respect the teaching profession and prioritise the right to education.

### **Advocacy brief on teachers and technology**

During the last segment of the meeting, Manos Antoninis, Director of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, delivered an important presentation on the findings of the 2023 GEM report: *Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?* Antoninis stressed the need for technology that resonates with the pedagogical foundations of education, cautioning against solutions that disregard the role of educators. The presentation outlined the pitfalls of a one-size-fits-all approach to EdTech, advocating instead for technology that is responsive to the diverse and dynamic needs of both educators and learners.

The GEM Report and EI have recently published a [new advocacy brief](#) on the main findings of the 2023 GEM Report, highlighting the nuanced challenges and opportunities presented by technology in education, and also offering tangible recommendations for teachers and education support personnel, emphasising the human aspect in technology integration.

### **Go Public! Moving forward with collective resolve**

The 18th EI ResNet Meeting concluded on a note of global solidarity. Participants reaffirmed Education International's commitment to forge the way forward with collective responsibility, advocating for educational environments where technology meets ethical pedagogy, and technological advancements serve the fundamental right to education.

### **Go Public! Leading further and higher education and research for the common good**

The 12th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference, co-hosted by Education International and its member organisation Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), is taking place in Mexico City from October 24 to the 26.

The Conference provides a space for member organisations in further and higher education and research to exchange experiences, analyse key issues and emerging trends impacting the workforce in the sector, and discuss ways to address these.

Against the backdrop of post-pandemic recovery, the event sheds light on the current landscape of public financing for further and higher education and research, and the impact of privatisation and commercialisation in the sector. The Conference explores the ongoing and emerging trends specifically impacting teachers, researchers, and other personnel in further and higher education and research and examines the obstacles preventing staff and communities from fully delivering on their public mission.

Running over three full days, the Conference offers a mix of plenary and group discussions, allowing participants to share and discuss union strategies to respond to these challenges through collective action, including in the framework of the EI [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign.

[Watch the livestream here!](#)

Opening ceremony

## **Go Public! Advancing Further and Higher Education and Research for the Common Good**

*On 24-26 October, Education International (EI) member organisations convened in Mexico City for EI's 12th Further and Higher Education and Research Conference. Together, they adopted the following statement:*

### **Go Public! Advancing Further and Higher Education and Research for the Common Good**

The landscape of further and higher education and research is complex, shaped by national specificities and diverse funding models. Every system presents its unique challenges and there are huge disparities between systems; however, chronic underfunding, increasing privatisation, precarity and inequalities are universal concerns. Addressing these challenges and achieving equal access to quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 4.3, requires a unified approach rooted in core principles, ensuring that higher and further education, along with research, serve their true purpose: the common good.

#### **Principles We Stand For:**

- **A Human Right, the State's Responsibility:**

Further and higher education and research is a human right, integral to the advancement of society. It serves the collective good by preserving and advancing knowledge and culture. As such, it is the duty of the State to guarantee robust public funding, allowing these sectors to fulfil their public mission.

Yet, alarmingly, many countries are not allocating adequate public spending to further and higher education and research. Furthermore, the allocation of funds is increasingly driven by a narrow approach, often focusing on serving labour market needs. Some countries are cutting funding to particular subjects such as arts and humanities, thereby undermining education's broader purpose. To truly uphold the principle that knowledge should be freely and universally available, governments must shoulder their responsibility towards well-funded further and higher education and research, and fund all subjects, recognising the sector's broad societal benefits beyond preparation for the labour market.

- **Public Funding to Fight Inequalities:**

The introduction and escalation of tuition fees pose significant threats to equitable access to further and higher education. They create financial barriers and often result in crippling student debt, disproportionately impacting women, minorities, indigenous communities, disabled persons,

migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, international students, and economically marginalised groups. In some countries, financial support for students is becoming more selective and harder to access. Increasingly, inadequate public funding also obliges teachers and researchers to bear costs related to publishing, accessing research and teaching material, and participating in academic conferences.

Further exacerbating inequalities is the growing trend of privatisation and commercialisation, particularly through the rise of ed-tech industries and public-private partnerships, that threaten the public nature of education and research. Governments must actively work to counter privatisation and marketisation trends in the sector and ensure that public funding is used for the public good and not to bolster business profits. A human rights-based approach to further and higher education and research is best upheld through increased public funding, allocated equitably.

#### ■ **Quality Terms of Employment and Working Conditions:**

The quality of further and higher education and research depends on quality terms of employment and decent working conditions for all workers in the sector. These should be determined through collective bargaining. Many countries face staffing shortages leading to high faculty-to-student ratios, while evolving funding models in the sector promote employment casualisation and the outsourcing of certain roles. The development of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence threatens some functions within the sector and may result in positions being cut.

The shift towards performance-based and external funding threatens the quality and breadth of education and research, and undermines the academic freedom, rights, and status of teachers and researchers. It also contributes to skyrocketing workloads, leading to burnout, and low salaries. All these factors are pushing many out of the profession, further exacerbating the challenges faced by the sector, with women and equality-seeking groups disproportionately affected.

To achieve quality further and higher education and research, governments must ensure security of employment including tenure or its functional equivalent, decent work, academic freedom, quality professional development and training opportunities, collegial and democratic governance and institutional autonomy. Further and higher education and research institutions must be free from discrimination. Pay equity as well as targeted measures to support and retain staff from equity-seeking groups are crucial to ensure a diverse workforce.

## Conclusion

Central to these principles is a profound conviction: quality public further and higher education and research, accessible to all, requires sustainable public financing. Funding of the sector must be predictable, recurrent and unconditional. Progressive tax reforms, ending austerity, and debt relief initiatives are key steps forward. Fostering international cooperation, decolonising further and higher education and research systems, and ensuring open access to resources and knowledge is essential.

We urge governments to recognise the magnitude of these challenges and to respond decisively. It is crucial that they commit to engaging with unions in the sector through meaningful social dialogue and collective bargaining. Only through such collaborative efforts can we truly ensure

inclusive, sustainable, democratic and peaceful futures for humanity.

### **Senegal: Unions unite and mobilise for more public education funding**

“An education system based on public institutions is the best option to fully realise the right to education. That is why the State must consolidate education as being a real public good, promoting education as a bearer of not only individual and collective emancipation but of social justice as well.” This was one of the salient points from the final report on the study on the privatisation and commodification of education and training in Senegal, commissioned and presented by the *Union Syndicale pour une Éducation de Qualité*, USEQ (Trade Union for Quality Education), which brings together Education International’s affiliated unions in the country.

The USEQ comprises the *Syndicat Autonome de l’Enseignement Supérieur*, SAES (Autonomous Union for Higher Education), *Syndicat National de l’Enseignement Élémentaire*, SNEEL-CNTS (National Union for Primary Education), *Syndicat des Enseignants Libres du Sénégal*, SELS (Senegalese Union for Independent Teachers), *Syndicat des Professeurs du Sénégal*, SYPROS (Senegalese Union of Teachers), *Syndicat unitaire et démocratique des enseignants du Sénégal*, SUDES (Unified and Democratic Union of Teachers in Senegal) and *Union Démocratique des Enseignantes et des Enseignants du Sénégal*, UDEN (Senegalese Democratic Union of Teachers).

This diagnostic study on the privatisation of education in Senegal was financially supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, supervised by EI’s Office for the African Region and undertaken by EDUFORE’s office specialising in education, training and assessment. It aimed to take stock of the privatisation of education in order to gain a better understanding of the problem, find the most well-suited strategies to fight against the many abuses being regularly denounced by the education community and provide effective advocacy tools in order to develop education and training in the public sector.

#### **Context**

The study was commissioned by the USEQ in a context marked by an increased demand for education in an economic crisis and where the State has given more space to private education and training through strong liberalisation measures. This has been done despite different international and national commitments made by the country which focus on developing quality, inclusive and free-of-charge public education.

According to Abdourahmane Gueye, national general secretary of the UDEN and USEQ coordinator, it is “possible to achieve the goals of having significant, domestic and sustainable public funding for education and training using the expertise of unions through creating the most relevant arguments, union mobilisation, awareness-raising at the national level and extending this to the public authorities, as well as strong, intensive and sustained advocacy carried out through different means of union protest .”

Abdourahmane Gueye, USEQ coordinator

Emphasising the point that “it is the State’s sovereign duty to jealously guard the most strategic sphere of the nation’s future: the education and training of its citizens”, he also noted that “currently in the private education sector, there are several education systems being developed that were created abroad. They have different missions, concepts and visions. Different bilingual schools -American, Turkish, Iranian, Middle Eastern, North African, amongst others – belong to this category.

## Recommendations

It is in this context that the study’s report recommends, inter alia:

- An education system based on public institutions is the best option to fully realise the right to education. That is why States must consolidate education as being a real public good, promoting education as a bearer of not only individual and collective emancipation but of social justice as well;
- The fight against excessive privatisation and commodification. This is a major challenge faced by stakeholders and advocates for lifelong education for all.

## Go public! Fund Education

The results of the USEQ study are perfectly aligned with the demands made in the EI campaign: [Go public! Fund Education](#).

This campaign is an urgent call to governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, who are the most important element to achieving quality education.

## Conclusions shared

The USEQ also created a leaflet on the study report’s conclusions which will be used in their awareness-raising activities. These conclusions were also presented to the national media on the 16th and 17th of November. On the 30th of November an exchange forum on the study will be held with the participation of key education stakeholders. Finally, in December, meetings will be organised with the minister in charge of Education and Training, the Economy and Finance minister, the committees responsible for Education/Training at the National Assembly in Senegal, the High Council of Local Authorities and the High Council of Social Dialogue.

## Headlines

### 1. Africa: Education unions benefit from South-South development cooperation and solidarity

The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) has undertaken a series of development cooperation activities with other education unions affiliated to Education International in neighbouring countries. It has especially supported the Zambia National Union of Teachers (ZNUT) in its efforts to recover from the damaging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector.

In its latest development cooperation information, SADTU gives an overview of several cooperation efforts in which it is involved in to show solidarity, encourage trade unionism, promote non-racial and non-sexist union membership and advocate for quality public education throughout the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

“SADTU’s interest in development cooperation work is based on the premise that, as a country and within SADTU in particular, we are the true beneficiaries of solidarity,” stressed SADTU General Secretary and Education International’s Vice-President for Africa, Mugwena Maluleke.

In the SADC region, he said, SADTU focuses on building relationships with sister organisations, namely the Botswana Teachers' Union, the Lesotho Association of Teachers, the Organização Nacional dos Professores of Mozambique, the Swaziland National Association of Teachers, the Namibia National Teachers' Union, ZNUT of Zambia and the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association.

Maluleke added: “As per our national cooperation, we have allocated each province to work with these organisations based on proximity. The focus of our cooperation mainly revolves around trade union education, teacher unity and capacity building.”

He recalled that SADTU has been partnering with ZNUT on numerous projects for more than a decade. “We did this through our Tripartite Agreement between ZNUT, the Union of Education Norway and us. Since the agreement came to an end, we decided to assess the impact of cooperation.”

That is why SADTU visited ZNUT in August to take stock of how the Zambian union is coping with the aftermath of COVID-19.

Discussions were centered around the following topics:

1. State of the organisation. ZNUT reported its drastic decline of membership between 2019 and the current year, a decline they attribute mainly to the retirement of ZNUT membership and recruitment by rival unions having governmental support.
2. Recruitment and retention strategy. ZNUT reported that the employer recruited over 30,000 new educators in the public sector, and ZNUT intends to engage in a recruitment campaign. SADTU suggested that ZNUT try to organise sports and youth events as a strategy to recruit young educators.
3. Gender equity and equality. ZNUT amended its constitution so that it becomes gender sensitive, including supporting women’s access to union leadership positions.
4. Trade union education/capacity building. ZNUT currently has financial challenges undermining their ability to train new leaders as well as develop the capacity of their representatives in

structures at the base.

5. Organising and campaigning. ZNUT leadership acknowledged the need to use digital technology to recruit and keep records of their membership. They aim to increase their union membership by a minimum of 10,000, out of newly recruited teachers.
6. Finances. ZNUT is going through financial challenges due to loans taken, as well as the decline in membership. Their leadership welcomed the decision by SADTU to write off the loan allocated to ZNUT in 2018. The Zambian union has committed itself to work on measures ensuring that they account for all money that they receive and to adopt financial policies promoting a healthy financial position.
7. Teacher unity in Zambia. The ZNUT leadership deplored that Zambian unions are no longer discussing merger or unity amongst themselves and explained that, while their union is focusing on unity, other unions continue to compete to grow their membership.
8. Administration of the union through ICT. ZNUT recorded a decline in ICT usage within the union, which they believe is mostly because ZNUT cannot financially afford the latest technologies.

Maluleke also pledged that SADTU will “mobilise resources as well as involve other partners who may share the same vision to assist in recruitment and capacity building activities”.

Recalling that SADTU agreed to provide ZNUT with branded shirts it can use to recruit members, he concluded that his union would continue to monitor ZNUT progress and developments.

## 2. Education International condemns the attack on democracy in Brazil

Education International condemns the attack on Brazilian democracy carried out on January 8 by violent mobs incited by defeated former President Jair Bolsonaro.

Even though Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is the democratically elected President of Brazil and is recognised by the international community as result of a fair electoral process, right wing forces continue to deny the result of the elections and to incite riots. This resulted in a series of violent attacks on the executive, legislative, and the judicial branch of the Brazilian government generating chaos, infrastructure damage, and injuries to journalists and security personnel. President Lula has also condemned the “incompetence, bad faith or malice” of some elements of the security forces that stood by or even encouraged rioters.

In 2019, Education International warned about authoritarian forces gaining ground and eroding the very foundations of free societies around the world, even in countries with deeply rooted democratic traditions. As teachers, we believe in the vital role of education in enabling youth to understand, embrace and exercise human rights, and become active participants in their communities. Human rights education can be a defense against the rise of violence, xenophobia, racism, and all forms of discrimination.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: “We cannot tolerate attacks on democracy, we cannot keep giving a platform to fascism, manipulation and lies. Latin America remembers the bloody era of military dictatorships and it is not willing to reverse course on workers’ rights, it is not willing to go back to those times of terrible pain and fear, of thousands of lives taken whose loss is still being felt to this day.”

Education International denounces antidemocratic attacks in Brazil and everywhere in the world. EI calls on the authorities to identify all the material and intellectual authors of the violence and prosecute them to the full extent of the law.

The will of the people must be respected.

# February

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## Highlights

### 1. Solidarity with colleagues affected by the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria

On February 6th, Türkiye and Syria were struck by a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake that left tens of thousands dead and injured, including hundreds of teachers, support staff, academics and other education workers. Education International and its members mobilised to support affected communities.

#### Related Items

#### **Education International stands in solidarity with communities devastated by the earthquake in Syria and Türkiye**

As the death toll rises beyond 22,000 with tens of thousands injured after a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Türkiye and Syria on 6 February, Education International has issued an urgent action appeal calling member organisations to show solidarity and financial support to education unions engaged in relief actions on the ground.

Recent estimates from the World Health Organization state that up to 23 million people could be affected by the disaster.

“We are in contact with our members in Syria and Türkiye who have reported terrible devastation, countless loss of lives, and serious damage to schools and neighbourhoods. We have shared our condolences and firm commitment. We assured them that Education International and its members are mobilizing to show solidarity now and as they rebuild their lives, schools, and communities,” said Education International General Secretary David Edwards.

In Syria, the Union of Teachers in Northeast Syria (UTNES) affiliated to Education International reported that many union offices in the northern and eastern Syrian regions are severely damaged, with some destroyed and now out of service, as is the case for union branch offices in Aleppo, Shahba, Kobani, Manbij and Tabqa. These buildings need reconstruction or support to be functional again – need for furniture and basic requirements such as laptops or printers.

UTNES also informed that 28 schools have been destroyed and many teachers have lost their homes in the areas of Aleppo and Al-Shahba.

In Türkiye, Education International member organisation Eğitim Sen, together with the national trade union confederation KESK, set up a crisis desk shortly after the devastating earthquakes and started an aid campaign for members affected by the earthquake.

Eğitim Sen branches are collecting items needed in case of humanitarian emergency, such as tents, heating, hygiene materials and basic food products, sending them to and distributing them in areas affected by the earthquake.

The European Trade Union Committee for Education, Education International, also issued a statement in solidarity with Eğitim Sen, KESK and all the people affected by this catastrophe.

Education International will continue to liaise and support members as they work to rebuild their communities.

### **Cyprus mourns the loss of a school sports team in the Turkish earthquake**

Among the hundreds of thousands of stories of death and tragedy from the earthquake which hit Türkiye and Syria, the loss of a school volleyball team from Northern Cyprus has brought great sorrow to the education community.

On 6 February, a 7.8 magnitude [earthquake struck the border region between Türkiye and Syria](#) with devastating consequences. Tens of thousands of people died, many more were injured or lost their home, their workplace, their school. The earthquakes have also affected communities outside of Syria and Türkiye. Education unions from Northern Cyprus reported the tragic story of a school sport team – students, teachers, trainers and parents – who lost their lives in Adiyaman, Türkiye.

In a joint letter, the Eastern Mediterranean University Union of Academic Staff (DAÜ-SEN), the Cyprus Turkish Secondary Education Teachers' Union (KTOEOS) and the Cyprus Turkish Teachers' Trade Union (KTÖS) informed EI of the tragic death of 24 Turkish Cypriot students from the girls' and boys' school volleyball teams of the Gazima?usa Turkish Maarif College from Famagusta, Northern Cyprus. All were 11 to 14 years old. Four teachers, members of KTOEOS, two trainers and five parents who were supervising the school group also died in the earthquake.

They were all in the city of Adiyaman to take part in a school volleyball tournament. The hotel they were staying in completely collapsed when the earthquake hit. Out of the 39 adults and children in the group, only one teacher and three parents were rescued.

Everyone in the small coastal town of Famagusta was affected by the losses. Thousands of people attended the funerals of the students and their parents and teachers. But it's the whole island, Turkish and Greek communities all together, that mourns the lives lost in the tragedy.

Four people, including the hotel owner, were arrested as part of the investigations on the collapse of the hotel. Preliminary reports showed evidence of faulty design, poor quality materials and non-compliance with safety standards. The education unions joined the calls for justice.

Other Turkish Cypriot school volleyball teams – the boys' volleyball teams from Canbulat Özgürlük Secondary School and Namık Kemal Highschool, and the girls' high school volleyball team from Gazima?usa Turkish Maarif College – present in Türkiye to take part in the same tournament survived the earthquake.

In total 49 Turkish Cypriots died in the earthquake. Many members of DAÜ-SEN, KTOEOS and KTÖS have lost children, cousins, and family members in the earthquake. Thousands of university students studying in Northern Cyprus were also present in the regions struck by the earthquake to visit their families during the semester break.

### **The crucial role of solidarity**

From the first hours after the tragedy, the education unions in Northern Cyprus launched aid campaigns in support of earthquake victims and deploy efforts to secure the return of their students to the country, provide them with the much needed support to heal physical and psychological wounds, and assist them in resuming their education in the best conditions.

International solidarity and local solidarity played a crucial role in responding to the disaster. Education International's member organisations in Syria (Union of Teachers of Northeast Syria) and Türkiye (Eğitim Sen) mobilized to help their members and the affected communities. [Education International has launched an Urgent Action Appeal](#) to call on all its membership contributing to the EI Solidarity Fund in order to assist our sister organisations in their recovery and humanitarian efforts.

### **Executive Board Resolution on the Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria**

On February 6th, Türkiye and Syria were struck by a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake that left tens of thousands dead and injured, including hundreds of teachers, support staff, academics and other education workers. Hundreds of schools were destroyed, as well as several education union buildings in both countries, and the education of millions of students has been severely disrupted. People living in the affected areas struggle to meet their most basic needs, such as food, water, and hygiene. Legal support, health, and psychosocial support are sorely needed.

International solidarity and local solidarity played a crucial role in responding to this tragedy. Education International's member organisations in Syria (Union of Teachers of Northeast Syria) and Türkiye (Eğitim Sen) have been present from the first hours of the crisis to help their members and the affected communities.

In response to the earthquakes, the government of Türkiye declared a state of emergency but unfortunately, they also used these powers to suspend in-person education in the most affected areas, going against the recommendation of educators and education unions. They also made it compulsory to channel any humanitarian aid through a special government institution, which severely impedes the actions of the trade unions.

In the case of Syria, the earthquake had a devastating impact in an area ravaged by war. This situation complicated and delayed the arrival and distribution of humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the area's infrastructure, hospitals, and first response capabilities have been decimated by 12 years of bombings and attacks.

The Executive Board of Education International, meeting on 14-16 March 2023:

- Expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria and stands in solidarity with education workers and unionists who

continue to suffer from its consequences.;

- Calls for international solidarity with the people of Türkiye and Syria to help in the recovery efforts;
- Calls on EI member organisations to express their solidarity with our sister organisations in Türkiye and Syria and continue to help them respond to the devastation and as they rebuild.

The Executive Board further urges the Government of Türkiye to:

- Recognise and support the role of public services as first responders, and work with education unions and other public service unions as they respond to the disaster;
- Ensure the right to education of all students by reopening schools and universities without delay and give priority to education in the recovery and reconstruction efforts;
- Engage in meaningful dialogue with teachers, academics, and all education workers through their representative organisations, and consult them when making decisions on education issues;
- Refrain from using the 'emergency powers' to suspend the right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and peaceful assembly;
- Ensure payment of the salaries and benefits of teachers and education workers.
- Take the necessary measures to meet the psychosocial needs of students and teachers affected by the catastrophe.

The Executive Board urges the Government of Syria to:

- Facilitate the arrival and distribution of humanitarian aid to the affected areas without delay.

The Executive Board also reiterates its call to peace in the area as a humanitarian crisis cannot be fully addressed without conflict resolution.

*E?itim Sen's Osman I?çi on his union's actions after the earthquakes:*

### **Türkiye: International solidarity brings relief to educators, students, and populations affected by the earthquake**

In a conversation with Education International Osman I?çi, of the Turkish union E?itim Sen, shared the experience of educators on the ground and stressed the importance of international solidarity in responding to the devastation.

On February 6th, Türkiye was struck by a devastating earthquake that left thousands dead and injured, destroyed hundreds of schools, and disrupted education for millions of students. Education International ('EI) and its members worldwide responded to the devastation by sending messages of solidarity and through an Urgent Action Appeal mobilised to assist member organisations in Türkiye and Syria.

“When this huge tragedy happened, I personally was in Ankara. It was six in the morning when I got the first call from a friend of mine informing me about the earthquake. I was safe, but my family lives in the affected region and I lost 11 members of my family in the city of Adiyaman,” I?çi recounted.

E?itim Sen has offices in all affected provinces and “we lost hundreds of our members. We are still trying to verify their names and also whether they are alive, because some people were rescued from the ruins and wreckage. We are trying to find out where our members are now.”

One of the first things the union did in response to the earthquake, was to set up a response committee, with representatives from unions in all sectors, to provide emergency aid and plan for post-disaster recovery. The union also sent out a circular to international organisations, including EI, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

E?itim Sen members on the ground immediately checked for safe places to stay and helped meet humanitarian and basic needs. They also monitored education policies in the country and opposed the government's suspension of education, stating that education is a basic need and fundamental public service. The government suspended in-person education in the ten affected cities, but E?itim Sen believes this was not the appropriate response, especially given that the Ministry of National Education has adopted policies that affect the whole country and took this decision without consulting or involving education unions and teachers on the ground.

E?itim Sen is advocating for dialogue with teachers, administrative staff, support staff, and civil society organizations, as they are best suited to make decisions about education in the affected areas. The union is also working to provide aid and support to members affected by the earthquake, and has set up a solidarity fund to help members and the larger community.

I?çi explained that right after the earthquake they sent out a circular to colleagues at the international level, particularly EI, the ETUCE, the ITUC and the European Trade Union Confederation ETUC and similar other global confederations, such as Public Services International or the International Transport Workers' Federation.

On the second day, E?itim Sen sent colleagues to the field to collect firsthand information: “We asked our teacher members to see what is happening on the ground and to report back if schools are safe, if students are safe, or if our colleagues are safe, and what is happening regarding public services”.

### Sustaining the education system

When the government announced that there would be no education in-person in the ten affected cities, E?itim Sen was adamant that “you cannot put aside education. Education is a basic need and also a fundamental public service.”

The union is concerned that these measures may be motivated to curtail any dissent or protest that may come from students or teachers as the criticism to the government's response mounts. “The Minister of National Education organised a meeting which E?itim Sen attended. We shared our concerns with the Minister directly. Unfortunately, he did not pay attention to our recommendations This concern also extends to the state of emergency declared by the government which among other things limits the activities of organisations responding to the tragedy.

### Governmental decisions made overnight, without proper consultation

For I?çi, the issue here is that “the government made such decisions overnight without consulting trade unions, without consulting civil society organisations, without consulting teachers or, for example, preliminary education experts, or finance or infrastructure experts”.

I?çi insisted that “there should be options, and all these decisions should be made through dialogue, because we are the teachers, we are the administrative staff, we are the supporting staff, we know best what is happening on the ground. This is the only way.”

### Next solidarity actions

I?çi explained that in addition to the emergency first response, the trauma of the surviving communities also needs to be addressed and rebuilding should be done with a sustainable and comprehensive approach. Stressing the need to think about how to rebuild the education sector in a more resilient way, I?çi agreed that “we can learn from Education International or the ETUCE based on experiences in other countries. We can learn from the international community to see what we should do. This can be achieved through solidarity, because no public institution can share experience and exchange views as we do.”

I?çi concluded “We are volunteers to do our best for our communities, no matter where they are, because we belong to the same family. This is the labour union family.. This tragedy is too big for us to respond to it alone as a union, but the term union itself means we stand together. We have been experiencing the solidarity that is in the DNA of the trade union movement thanks to the efforts of our colleagues from the International trade union movement, particularly Education International and the ETUCE.”

### **EI solidarity mission to Türkiye: Educators and unionists on the frontlines**

An Education International delegation visited the earthquake-affected area in Türkiye, meeting with teachers, unionists, volunteers, and local leaders to deliver a message of solidarity and convey condolences for the terrible losses suffered, but also to take stock of the scale of the destruction and the needs on the ground in order to inform continuing solidarity work.

The solidarity mission in support of EI member E?itim Sen and trade union confederation KESK was led by EI General Secretary David Edwards, EI Vice-President for Europe Johanna Jaara Åstrand, and Maike Finnern, member of the EI Executive Board and President of GEW, Germany.

From April 1st to the 3rd, the EI delegation travelled to Ad?yaman, Gölba??, Pazarc?k, Antakya, Samanda?, and Iskenderun, visiting union coordination centres, schools, and the camps where the displaced are housed.

“Nothing can prepare you for the sheer scale of destruction and tragedy”, expressed David Edwards. “The sense of loss is immense but there is also an invincible sense of hope, with so many brave and dedicated people determined to rebuild their communities and help each other get through this.”

“What we heard from community after community was that the government response came far too late,” Edwards stressed. “The mobilization of educators and unionists has been absolutely outstanding. Eğitim Sen and KESK have been on the ground since day one, providing emergency support to their members and communities. The crisis is still in the acute phase. Our solidarity across the world is essential right now, for immediate relief, and in the future, when the huge task of rebuilding must begin.”

Welcoming the delegation, Osman Işçi, KESK International Officer, thanked “Education International for its continuing support and solidarity since the very first day. Solidarity is extremely important in these difficult conditions in Türkiye and Syria and EI’s presence shows that solidarity is much more than a word. Your presence means a lot to us and helps us to overcome these challenges.”

### Inadequate government response to the worst earthquake in 100 years

The two powerful earthquakes that struck the south-eastern region of Türkiye and northern Syria on 6 February 2023 left behind immense tragedy and devastation. According to official figures, an estimated 50,000 people were killed and tens of millions were affected, including 1.7 million Syrian refugees. The real numbers are much higher according to union estimates. According to UNICEF, more than 850,000 children have been displaced. Al Jazeera reports that in Türkiye, the disruption of education has impacted 4 million children and 200,000 teachers in affected areas. 47,000 buildings have been completely destroyed, including schools, and many more have been severely damaged.

Many of the local teachers and union leaders who met the EI delegation reported that the search and rescue operations started as late as five days after the disaster in some areas. Many deaths could have been avoided. “This natural disaster became a man-made disaster,” noted İkrâm Atabay, General Secretary of Eğitim Sen.

The government response has been completely inadequate, leaving many without support to meet basic needs. Despite the official narrative that the situation is under control, major concerns remain. The housing situation is critical. Recent floods have destroyed the tents survivors used for shelter. While containers are better suited, very few are available. In a few months’ time, the very high temperatures typical for summer in the area will bring additional challenges in terms of providing safe shelter. Furthermore, limited access to hygiene facilities, drinkable water, and healthcare is fueling fears of epidemics, in a context where health infrastructure has also been severely impacted.

The government response also failed to engage stakeholders and communities on the ground. EI affiliates reported the absence of social dialogue which would allow for better coordination and a more effective crisis response. “We are making every effort to help and support our members and their communities, but our resources are limited. There needs to be better coordination between authorities and civil society organisations, including unions. It has been extremely challenging to engage in consultations on the crisis response so far,” the General Secretary of Eğitim Sen stressed.

This latest tragedy further exacerbates inequalities resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, in a region inhabited by different minority groups that already experience structural discrimination

(mostly Kurdish, Alevi and Christian minorities).

## The impact on education and school communities

School communities in the area have been devastated. Thousands of teachers and students were lost, schools were destroyed, and many people were forced to relocate. For those left behind, the challenges are immense.

Educators are particularly worried about the impact of the disaster on their students. Many have moved away or dropped out, all have suffered trauma or bereavement. Access to psychosocial support is a major need in the medium to long term for both students and teachers.

As the government moves to re-open schools, educators and students expressed concern about the lack of transparency around building safety. After brief inspections, damaged buildings were quickly declared safe, but teachers and students are afraid to enter.

Ikram Atabay, General Secretary of E?itim Sen, stated: “Our union is in favour of in-person education. Distance education presents a number of challenges. But we need to make sure that students and teachers are provided with a safe and healthy environment to teach and learn”.

Teachers also have no place to stay with their families. In many instances, the government offers dormitories which are segregated by gender, which means families must live separately.

Financial concerns are also at the forefront. While many teachers lost their homes and belongings, they have only been receiving their basic salary, without the supplements for extra hours which formed the bulk of their income. They now have less money to support their families amid a terrible situation.

Educators are particularly worried about the impact of the disaster on their students. Many have moved away or dropped out, all have suffered trauma or bereavement. Access to psychosocial support is a major need in the medium to long term for both students and teachers.

Ignoring the terrible impact of the earthquake on students in the area, the government insists on making no amendments to the national examinations that take place at the end of grades 8 and 12 and determine access to a limited number of prestigious high schools and bachelor’s programmes. The exams will run as always, placing students affected by the earthquake at a clear and unfair disadvantage.

## Unions step up

The response and mobilisation of organisations across civil society has been much more effective, stepping into the gaps left by the government.

From the first day, the education union E?itim Sen together with the trade union confederation KESK mobilised members from across the country to reach the affected communities and

provide vital support.

Supplies being collected at the E?itim Sen branch in Samanda?

KESK set up coordination centres, bringing together all sectoral local branches in the 11 provinces affected by the earthquake. Support activities kicked off on the second day, with unionists reaching hundreds of villages and thousands of families in the affected area. Medical centres and activities for children were soon made available.

Medical centre set up by KESK in Antakya

In Ad?yaman, in collaboration with local authorities from Izmir and a small publisher, unionists have opened a library with books and textbooks for children. Housed in a container, the library provides a safe space for children to learn. Unionists hope they will find a way to create more libraries, but containers and books are scarce.

Union members from different regions of the country are travelling to the affected areas and working as volunteers a few days at a time, on a rotating basis. In this way, support services are made available to those who need them.

**Social dialogue and solidarity are imperative**

The need for the government to work with unions and communities is acute. Those present in the most affected areas are best placed to inform the government response and help direct resources where they are most urgently needed.

“Teachers on the ground know best what needs to happen for education. The health workers on the ground know best what needs to happen for nutrition, health, and sanitation. They need to be part of the process through social dialogue between government and unions,” Edwards stressed, adding that Education International “will put pressure on the government, we will tell the world what is happening, and we will continue to build solidarity and raise the requisite support.”

Education International member organisations have shown great generosity in contributing to the EI Solidarity Fund and are encouraged to continue to do so to support colleagues in Türkiye and Syria in their crisis response and massive reconstruction efforts. For further information and to contribute to the EI Solidarity Fund, contact the EI Secretariat at [solidarity@ei-ie.org](mailto:solidarity@ei-ie.org).

**Türkiye: Solidarity is in unions’ DNA**

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and strong aftershocks that hit Southern Türkiye and Northern Syria on 6th February 2023, Education International (EI) has launched an [urgent action appeal](#) to respond to the impacts of this disaster and support its Turkish affiliate E?itim Sen in its efforts to help affected educators, students and population.

According to latest estimates, the death toll in Türkiye stands at over 39,600, with some 264,000 apartments destroyed and many people still missing in the country's worst modern disaster. The scale of the catastrophe will not be known to its full extent, as the affected region includes many

unregistered refugees.

Relying on its local affiliates' experience in the region, EI supported humanitarian action in the first weeks after the tragedy struck, bringing immediate emergency relief to help union member victims, as well as recovery aid in a second phase (such as livelihood and psychological support and relocation).

On February 22nd, E?itim Sen's Osman I?çi visited EI and provided a first account of the losses for teachers and union members.

[Solidarity from the global labour movement](#) has been astounding, he reported, and union members were assisted financially, and other forms of support. E?itim Sen was able to set up a lifeline for communities in need of support and hosted displaced people in facilities. In the first hours after the disaster, E?itim Sen delivered emergency aid: food, water, blankets, tents, and containers to serve as shelters. The solidarity aid EI sent contributed to this emergency humanitarian aid. The union also organised the relocation of families who had lost their homes.

The government closed the whole national education system for two weeks, I?çi added. This resulted in children throughout Türkiye being constantly exposed to the tragedy unfolding. E?itim Sen expressed concerns about children's mental health due to what they have had to endure.

In the affected region, hundreds of schools have been destroyed, and trade union offices must also be rebuilt.

In the EI Urgent Action Appeal sent on 9 February, EI General Secretary David Edwards stressed that "EI stands in solidarity with our members affected by this catastrophe. An initial EI financial contribution has been earmarked. Our thoughts and condolences go out to the families of those who have tragically passed, are recovering from injuries, or have lost their homes."

EI also provided direct financial assistance to its new member in Northern Syria. Four local union branches of this union have been destroyed and the union leaders are assessing their members' immediate needs.

EI therefore invites member organisations to support their sister organisations in Türkiye and Syria by contributing to the EI Solidarity Fund.

## **Türkiye: Education International demands an immediate halt to the attacks on Northern and Eastern Syria and Iraq**

Education International (EI) called upon the Turkish authorities to immediately cease cross border airstrikes in Kurdish-controlled locations.

In his protest letter dated 13 October addressed to the President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, EI General Secretary David Edwards condemned the recent military actions by Turkey. The Kurdistan Teachers Union and the Union of Teachers in North and East Syria are EI member organisations in the region.

According to the Union of Teachers in North and East Syria, to date, 26 civilians in North and East Syria have been directly affected, leading to the loss of 11 lives, including two children. Tragically, in the city of Ain Issa, young schoolgirls Nadia and Ali Ayyash, both elementary school students, were killed in a bomb attack.

In the self-governing region of Northern and Eastern Syria, over 224 attacks have struck multiple cities, with profound impact on civilian infrastructure. Vital services such as water supplies, schools, and hospitals have been targeted. Forty-eight schools have been rendered inoperative, leaving 8,458 students unable to receive education. In the mountainous areas in the Iraqi Kurdistan, the military strikes have led to the displacement many civilians.

“This is a grave injustice and a direct violation of international law,” Edwards highlighted, adding that “humanitarian and human rights laws provide protections for civilian infrastructure related to education and health during times of armed conflict or violence. These protections apply to attacks carried out by both state authorities and non-state actors. The Fourth Geneva Convention focuses on the protection of civilians, including those in educational facilities. The International Criminal Court includes provisions for prosecuting individuals for war crimes for intentional attack on civilian objects, which can be educational facilities.”

EI is also concerned about the potential resurgence of the Islamic State (IS) due to the deteriorating security situation, as these attacks may provide IS with an opportunity to recruit new members and intensify terrorist activities in the region. For Edwards, “the absence of education and prevailing despair are fostering conditions conducive to extremism, posing a significant threat to global peace and security.”

Edwards added in the letter to the Turkish leader that “we believe in your country's commitment to human rights, peace and education, and therefore ask you to act swiftly and decisively to put an end to the suffering and destruction. We appreciate your attention to this urgent issue and remain hopeful that your efforts will contribute to a safer and more democratic future for the region.”

EI and its affiliates will continue to monitor and document violations and will report to the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

## 2. Education International launches Afghan Teachers' Rights Observatory

The Observatory gathers data and testimonies on rights' violations, amplifies the voice of Afghan teachers, and works to restore girls' right to education.

### **Education International launches Afghan Teachers' Rights Observatory to elevate the voice of teachers and defend the right to education**

*The Observatory will gather data and testimonies on rights' violations, amplify the voice of Afghan teachers, and work to restore girls' right to education.*

The Taliban regime's rise to power in August 2021 marked a major setback for Afghan society, particularly for the rights of Afghan women and girls.

Education International member organisations on the ground warned that many of their members feared for their lives. In many regions controlled by the Taliban, girls' schools shut their doors and women were no longer allowed to teach. Women teachers and their families were also threatened. In some provinces, education unionists who had been actively supporting girls' education and women teachers were directly targeted by the Taliban. Human rights, including the right to education for girls, labour and freedom of association rights, and women's rights were severely curtailed.

"We salute those teachers, both men and women, who continue to advocate for girls' and women's rights, despite the risks to their own lives."

Susan Hopgood | Education International President

Global education community stands with Afghan teachers and students

To respond to this situation, Education International has created its [Afghan Teachers' Rights Observatory](#). The platform will collect and feature data and testimonies on rights' violations, highlighting the voice of Afghan teachers and informing advocacy at all levels to restore Afghan girls' right to education.

"We salute teachers and their unions in these harsh circumstances, for their resilience, bravery and determination to continue to fight for the right to education in Afghanistan, especially for girls. We salute those teachers, both men and women, who continue to advocate for girls' and women's rights, despite the risks to their own lives," stated Susan Hopgood, Education International President.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, added: "As Education International we are standing with our members in Afghanistan. The global community must come together to make sure Afghan voices are heard and the full right of girls to learn and teachers to teach is respected."

Pakistani education activist Ziauddin Yousafzai of the Malala Fund welcomed the initiative, recognising that "the [Education International Afghan Teachers' Rights Observatory](#) is a vital tool to shed light on the Taliban's repressive actions. It provides critical, real-time insights into abuses of teachers' rights and the wider climate of fear surrounding girls' education."

Visit the [Observatory](#) and join us as we mobilise to defend the fundamental right to education, students' and teachers' rights in Afghanistan.

### **The unseen struggle and challenges of Afghan teachers**

During the last four decades, Afghanistan has witnessed a series of destructive wars, and it is a fact that war causes deaths, destroys infrastructures, and severely impacts various aspects of people's lives. Throughout these times, Afghan teachers have always served the youth of the country, with honesty and dedication.

In the last 20 years, while the international community provided generous financial assistance to the country, systemic corruption and mismanagement of the funds by past governments resulted

in the waste of resources and pushed Afghan teachers to the edge of poverty.

Most recently, the ascent of the Taliban to power exacerbated difficulties, with teachers facing unprecedented challenges and restrictions in their work. The establishment of strict rules in the work environment, enforced transfers, and the ban on girls' education further added to the psychological and economic pressures on them, making teachers more vulnerable.

The Taliban's decision to ban girls from attending education beyond the sixth grade and to separate schools and teachers based on gender was not without consequence on teachers. From one day to the next, large numbers of female teachers were forced to stay at home. Others were forced to work in schools far away from their homes. They now have to spend part of their livelihood on transportation costs, thus significantly reducing their purchasing power.

In the aftermath of the change of government, teachers did not receive their salaries for four consecutive months. As of today, although salary payments have returned to normal, it does not mean that the teachers' economic conditions have improved.

The current salary doesn't meet the minimum monthly needs of a teacher because of the devaluation of the Afghani (AFN) currency against the USD. A teacher who used to receive a monthly salary of \$100 is currently receiving \$70, further reducing their purchasing power. This has forced a number of teachers to leave their profession or spend their free time doing physical hard work to support their families, which has a negative impact on the quality of education.

The payment of salaries has its own problems that are yet to be solved. The lack of cash in most banks both in the capital and the provinces forces teachers to visit the bank several times, bearing additional transportation costs and waiting for days to be paid. In remote areas, where salaries are paid in cash, teachers can't receive regular monthly salaries and sometimes payments are delayed for two to three months. In addition, pension payments are also not made to retired teachers, due to the current government policies and financial difficulties.

Our organization, the National Teacher Elected Council (NTEC), makes every effort to support Afghan teachers who are experiencing the most difficult days in their lives and face an uncertain future. We are determined to continue our advocacy and raise our voice for a positive change and a bright future for Afghan teachers and education communities. Afghan teachers should not be a victim of the current political situation. I call on the international community to help raise our voice, and share our story with the world. Together, we can improve the lives of Afghan teachers and the quality of education in Afghanistan.

### **Shining a light on the right to education in Afghanistan**

*Today, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations will discuss the desperate situation of human rights in Afghanistan, at the International Labour Conference, in Geneva. Through the [Afghan Teachers' Rights Observatory](#), Education International collects testimonies and calls attention to the terrible conditions facing teachers and the severe limitations placed on girls' right to education by the Taliban regime.*

Since the Taliban took power in August 2021 the rights of Afghanistan's citizens, especially the country's women and girls, have been under constant attack.

Almost every day brings further evidence that the Taliban are implementing a massive rollback of rights.

One of the first and most high profile rights violations was the decision not to allow secondary schools for girls to reopen. Despite announcements that adolescent girls' would be allowed to return to school that never happened and instead more and more restrictions on education in general and on women and girls have been enacted.

Since then tertiary institutions have been closed to female students and staff. More recently the ability of women and girls to leave their homes without a male chaperone, to work or in fact to participate in any aspect of life outside the home has been denied.

Whilst Taliban policies on education since August 2021 have been fragmented and often incoherent, it is clear that the situation has got worse not better.

However, a comprehensive and accurate picture has been difficult to piece together, with little effective and systematic monitoring.

Most embassies have closed, so member states have little ability to have their own staff monitor developments in the education sector. The Taliban has muzzled and [censored](#) the Afghan media, and the international media has mostly moved on.

"Teachers have been paid partially and intermittently or not at all since August 2021. Most have gone months without their salaries."

### Observatory will fill critical information gaps

This is why the launch of the [Afghan Teachers' Rights Observatory](#) is so welcome.

Information provided by teachers and shared by the observatory will fill critical gaps in what we know about the state of the education sector and the right to education in Afghanistan.

The right to education is about much more than whether schools are open. The working conditions and payment of teachers, dress codes and conduct rules, access to teaching and learning materials, changes to the curriculum, gender segregation of classes and staff and how schools are monitored are all critical issues which directly influence the ability to exercise the right to education.

### The payment of teachers

The payment of teacher's salaries is a case in point.

Teachers have been paid partially and intermittently or not at all since August 2021. Most have gone months without their salaries but because of regional differences and arbitrary decision making it has been very difficult to collate a comprehensive picture regarding the payment of teachers across the entire country.

This is a critical issue both because of its direct impact on the education system but also the wider effect on the personal and familial wellbeing of teachers.

A school principal interviewed by Human Rights Watch said “One of the biggest problems we face in the education sector is that teachers’ salaries have not been paid. The teachers are also economically vulnerable, and for most of them, their salary is the only source of income. They have rents to pay and bills to take care of with the small amount they receive per month.”

The irregular payment of teachers is exacerbating one of the world's most extensive and severe hunger crises, pushing teachers and their families to the edge of survival.

Another principal told Human Rights Watch her teachers, “can’t feed their children. One told us she buys one kilogram of cold, dry, and unusable bread for 10 Afs [\$0.11] and makes something with them to feed her children. Hearing this made me cry.”

In addition to the devastating impact that these hardships have on teachers themselves they also affect the ability of the education system to function and the quality of education provided.

### Observatory will support the vital work of teacher representatives

It is just one of the issues that the information collected through the Afghan Teachers’ Rights Observatory will illuminate. And illuminate it and the myriad of other violations of the right to education in Afghanistan we must.

Accurate information on what’s happening in Afghanistan is critical if we are to have any chance of influencing policy and practice in the country.

A comprehensive and up to date picture will be key in informing the international community but even more importantly it will support the National Teacher Education Council (NTEC), Education International’s Afghan affiliate, perform their vital work.

I had the opportunity to meet NTEC on a visit to Afghanistan in February 2022 and saw firsthand the important work that it does, representing the interests of teachers in discussions with international agencies, non-government organizations and the Afghan authorities.

Being able to share the experience of their members will enhance the vital advocacy and representation that NTEC are already doing.

I look forward to working with NTEC, Education International and advocates worldwide to amplify the information collected via the Observatory in order to protect and promote the right to education in Afghanistan.

### **Analysing the Challenges Faced by Afghan Teachers**

In 2022, Education International (EI) took a significant step to champion the rights of Afghan teachers with the launch of the [Afghan Teacher's Rights Observatory](#). This dedicated platform was created to document the situation of education in Afghanistan, addressing critical aspects such as teachers' salaries, working conditions, human rights violations, gender equity, girls' access to education, restrictions on women teachers, safety, and curriculum adherence to international human rights standards.

In order to make this happen, EI developed an online platform with one of its member organisations in the country, the National Teacher Elected Council (NTEC), to collect

impressions from Afghan teachers. Leveraging interviews, surveys, and testimonials, this storytelling initiative reveals the real-life experiences and challenges faced by educators on the ground.

Education International will now analyse the testimonials from teachers gathered by the Afghan teacher union NTEC in 23 provinces. This collection of firsthand accounts sheds light on the multifaceted challenges experienced by educators across Afghanistan.

NTEC focal points gathered online testimonials across diverse provinces in 2023. Despite obstacles, including school closures due to winter conditions and, significantly, concerns for participants' safety, the initiative pressed forward. Meaningful insights emerged from the interviews. Unfortunately, in nine provinces, fewer than ten surveys were collected, particularly in the Southeast, where some focal points encountered harassment and detention, or were forced to resign due to security issues and fear of prosecution.

Six provinces (namely Herat, Samangan, Balkh, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, and Kabul), constituting 84% of all responses, displayed high survey numbers, with high numbers of female respondents in those provinces, reflecting over 70% of the total respondents.

Despite the pressure on closing girls' schools by the Taliban authorities, over 44% of testimonials originated from educators in girls' schools. Over 94% of total respondents asserted that the right to education for girls should be fully protected and implemented. Only 33 respondents (including 22 female teachers) stated girls should "never be educated". The majority however (70%) expressed the belief that women should be able to teach in boys' secondary schools, with 1,220 respondents stating they should "always" be allowed.

One-third of respondents had been teaching for 10 to 15 years, with a balanced gender distribution. Satisfaction with working conditions was relatively low, as only 15% of respondents claimed to be very satisfied, while 34% were "satisfied." Notably, 603 indicated happiness with their teaching experience, whereas 557 expressed unhappiness, with the majority (39%) describing themselves as "somewhat happy."

A significant finding relates to the perception of Afghan society towards the teaching profession. While 17% felt society "never" holds the teaching profession in high regard, 20% believed it always does.

The raw data collected will undergo thorough research, incorporating a deliberate gender lens, with the results expected to be presented in 2024. Despite facing challenges, this initiative has provided critical insights into the experiences of Afghan teachers, contributing to ongoing advocacy efforts for their rights and well-being.

## Headlines

### 1. Myanmar : Global Action Day and solidarity for the return of democracy

On the second anniversary of the military coup in Myanmar, Education International (EI) joined the Global Day of Action called by the Confederation of Trade Unions, Myanmar (CTUM) to demand for the formal diplomatic recognition of the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate representatives of the people of Myanmar, and the release of all political prisoners.

The [Council of Global Unions \(CGU\) released a statement](#) calling for renewed global solidarity and efforts to restore democracy in the country. All CGU affiliated unions were asked to call on their national governments to recognize the NUG, and to put pressure on multinational companies to cut all ties that benefit the junta directly or indirectly.

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military overthrew the country's democratically elected parliament, installing an illegitimate government. The coup was widely resisted by the people of Myanmar, who had massively voted for democracy in the 2020 election. They formed the peaceful Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) to oppose the new military dictatorship. Democratically elected politicians established a government called the NUG.

The response from the junta was brutal. In the last two years, the regime has held onto power by force, fear, intimidation, and terror. They have attacked demonstrators, killing hundreds and injuring thousands. They detained legitimate elected leaders and thousands of protestors, many of whom were tortured. Most unions were banned, making the exercise of freedom of association impossible.

#### Violations of education workers' rights

In a [new report](#) released in January 2023, the Dutch organisation FNV Mondiaal documented workers' rights violations in Myanmar under the new military regime. According to the report, at least 24 teachers were killed by the military in the last two years; around 234 teachers have been arrested; at least 20.000 university lecturers and school teachers were fired; and more than 120.000 teachers were blacklisted and targeted for arrest for joining the CDM. According to [Amnesty International](#), 7.8 million children are currently out of school in the country.

FNV Mondiaal also reported the case of U Kaung Kyaw, a teacher from My Aung Township (Hintada, Ayerawaddy Division) who was charged under Counter Terrorism Act and sentenced to death on 30 December 2022. The Myanmar Federation of Teachers and other education unions in the country issued a statement to condemn the death sentence and the escalation of violence against education workers.

Dr U Arkhar Moe, President of the University Teacher Association and Professor at the Yangon University was released from prison on 4 January 2023. He had been arrested on 3 March 2021 and sentenced to three-year prison by a military tribunal on 20 January 2022.

#### Renewed solidarity with Myanmar workers

Education International has been working closely with the Myanmar Federation of Teachers and the NUG Education Ministry to support democratic values and practices through education.

On this second anniversary of the military coup, the global labour movement remains resolute in its solidarity with the people and workers of Myanmar. Education International joins the Global Unions and calls on its affiliates to demand that their national governments recognize the NUG, and to put pressure on multinational companies they work with to cut all ties that benefit the junta directly or indirectly.

A major demand of the Myanmar unions is for formal diplomatic recognition of the NUG. The junta is seeking to normalize its control by seeking diplomatic recognition as the de facto government of Myanmar. Despite being the legitimate, democratically elected representative of the people of Myanmar, formal diplomatic recognition of the NUG is not universal.

In 2021, the Global Unions demanded that multinationals observe enhanced due diligence and cut direct and associated business ties with the Myanmar military. Although some companies have stopped doing business in Myanmar, the military has been able to access a global supply chain from companies in the USA, Europe and Asia to manufacture weapons.

## 2. Canada and Ireland ratify ILO Convention 190, others must join to eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work

Education International welcomes the recent ratifications by Canada and Ireland of the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Convention 190 \(C190\)](#) on violence and harassment in the world of work.

Adopted in June 2019, this international norm has now been ratified by 25 countries around the globe. It establishes the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. It is the first international law to do so.

The Convention recognises that violence and harassment in the world of work “can constitute a human rights violation or abuse...is a threat to equal opportunities, is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work.” It defines “violence and harassment” as behaviours, practices or threats “that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm.” It reminds member States that they have a responsibility to promote a “general environment of zero tolerance”.

With other global union confederations, [Education International has been supporting the ratification of C190](#) and the [ILO Recommendation 206](#), the first international labour standards to provide a common framework to prevent, remedy and eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work. It considers that these instruments represent a victory for the trade union and labour movement. Their adoption was the culmination of years of campaigning and lobbying by trade unions, and in particular women trade unionists, built on the narratives and experiences of discrimination and violence from women workers globally.

### **Urge your government to #RatifyC190**

To realise a world of work free from violence and harassment, the wide ratification of C190 is a must!

Education International calls on member organisations and concerned activists to join the [campaign for the ratification and application of C190](#) and lobby governments.

Campaign materials can be downloaded [here](#).

## 3. Uruguay: Trade unions denounce espionage of teachers and students

Fenapes, an education union affiliated to Education International, has denounced the practice of spying on union members and school pupils, as revealed by an investigative journalism report.

Fenapes, together with Uruguayan trade union centre PIT-CNT, has requested urgent meetings with the heads of the INAU [Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents], the ANEP [National Board of Public Education], the Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and the Court Prosecutor, to voice their concern over these serious incidents.

These practices have been described by Fenapes as another example of the long list of abuses and persecution suffered at the hands of the government by workers and civil society activists, especially those linked to public education. The persecution of minors is deemed to be a violation of individual rights and a threat to the rule of law.

This is not the first time the union has had to denounce the government for acts of persecution and attacks on the right to education, trade union rights, and academic freedom, among other human and labour rights abuses.

Fenapes vice president, Marcela Da Col, has expressed her concern about the conspicuous silence about these abuses by some legislators who have, until now, been very active and vocal on social media against action taken by education unions.

The case has led to the investigation of several senior police officers for irregularities and offences, including the deputy police directors. The leadership appointed by the current government has been removed, including the director of the National Police, Diego Fernández, and deputy executive director, Jorge Berriel. Six senior police officers are being investigated in total, but the identities of two of them have not yet been revealed.

The PIT-CNT executive secretariat has expressed its total condemnation of these practices and has announced that it will be on constant alert in light of these incidents and has not ruled out further action. The fact that surveillance operations are being encouraged within educational establishments is particularly disconcerting.

Education International recognises the seriousness of the complaints and wholeheartedly supports the Uruguayan trade union organisations in their quest for justice. The Education International Latin America Regional Committee has published a statement on the matter and is actively engaged in bringing it to the attention of international authorities in charge of protecting human rights.

#### 4. Education in Lebanon – a crisis with no end in sight

Year after year, Lebanese people cannot live in peace, security, and prosperity, as crises overwhelm them, destroying everything except the hope for a better tomorrow.

Amid the political and economic crises that had already exhausted Lebanon, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the vertical collapse of all public services. It has had a terrible impact on a public education sector already weakened by the bad policies of successive governments, bringing it to the verge of total collapse. Instead of supporting public education, government policies undermined the

system, choosing to prioritize the private sector.

"350,000 Lebanese students and 170,000 Syrian students are left without education. 60,000 teachers are in the streets demanding their rights but no one is listening."

### **Teachers in survival mode**

Since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2019, teachers have been committed to delivering education despite the wide range of challenges, from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic to the deterioration of the Lebanese Lira. In fact, education unions were the first to help teachers to acquire the skills for distance teaching and learning, when the Lebanese government did not have the means nor the strategy to cope with the situation. It was only much later that teachers finally received training organized by the government. Despite all these efforts, we could not compensate for the huge impact of the economic and living crises. Neither parents nor teachers had the means to secure the technology required for distance learning.

The situation worsened day by day, until the national currency deteriorated dramatically. One dollar became equal to 60,000 Lebanese Lira, meaning that a teacher's monthly salary was \$40 or even less. The government made small contributions, but they were all eroded by the continued rise in the exchange rate. The Lebanese Lira has fallen to its lowest level in decades. Donors have also helped, but aid has not been able to match the outrageous inflation. Teachers have been in survival mode all along.

### **Taking action for change**

Lebanese teachers decided to go on strike on December 15 and the strike continues to this day . It is impossible for teachers to keep working when salaries are not enough, without any insurance nor hospital coverage. Teachers are completely neglected by a government that failed to adopt timely solutions and that has pushed ahead with its privatization plan.

350,000 Lebanese students and 170,000 Syrian students are left without education. 60,000 teachers are in the streets demanding their rights but no one is listening.

The unions that represent public education teachers in Lebanon (primary - vocational - secondary) continue their struggle to restore the rights and defend the dignity of teachers.

The teaching profession needs donors to live up to their promises. We need the international community to help rebuild our education system and denounce the policies of the Lebanese government which been destroying our public education and supporting the privatization of the sector. Despite the egregious failures of successive governments, we continue to hope and we will cross into a new future.

## **5. Haiti: Society and education communities in the grip of chaos**

After the earthquake of 12 January 2010, that marked a painful turning point in the history of the Haitian people, the Republic of Haiti has experienced a succession of crises due to both natural and man-made disasters.

Following the 2011 presidential elections that brought to power the controversial musician Michel Joseph Martelly, whose songs promote banditry and gender-based violence against women, the country became mired in governmental instability [1] and systemic violence. The arrival of his successor, Mr Jovenel Moise, failed to reverse the trend of using corruption and criminality as political and economic strategies to hold onto power.

### **The reasons behind the Haitian crisis**

To understand the nature of the current crisis, it is important to separate its chronic dimension from its cyclical dimension. Indeed, while the chronic Haitian crisis is based on the weak social structure of the Haitian nation rooted in divisions of colour (black versus mulatto), ownership (landowner versus landless peasants), monopoly (monopolisation of the state apparatus) and deprivation, the current crisis is a form of metastasis of the Haitian social body. This could be seen as the outcome of a long process of social disorder maintained by Haitian elites trying to carve out an identity for themselves and which is grafted onto the effects of the chronic squandering of funds from the petro-caribe programme.

### ***Haitian society in an era of corruption and organised crime***

In ten years of bad governance (2011-2021), Haiti's rulers oversaw the worst corruption and squandering of public funds in the history of the country, through the misappropriation of funds from the cooperation programme developed by the Venezuelan government in the Caribbean region [2]. Two reports published by the anti-corruption commission of the Senate of the Republic show how more than 2.3 billion US dollars have been pilfered. Thanks to a large, historic mobilisation called the "petro-challengers movement", the High Court of Accounts and Administrative Disputes (CSC/CA) has published two reports attesting to the misappropriation of more than 4.2 billion US dollars in the period 2011-2020.

While this squandering has caused upheaval on Haiti's political, economic and social scene, it was not the only case of serious theft and embezzlement of public funds orchestrated by the ruling du Tèt Kale Haitian Party [3](PHTK). In the education sector, the government has set up a National Education Fund (FNE), created using deductions from telephone calls and transfers from or to foreign countries. The first disbursements from this fund were wasted on a bogus programme called the Free and Compulsory Universal Schooling Programme (Programme de Scolarisation Universelle Gratuite et Obligatoire - PSUGO).

Before the fund had even been voted into law, the Martelly government launched the PSUGO at the National Palace, bypassing the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP), responsible for the education sector in Haiti. After a highly publicised propaganda campaign, scandals about the schemes used to squander the money raised for the FNE came to light. To date, the country still does not know how much money has been embezzled from the public treasury through this programme. However, one thing is clear: the PSUGO has disappeared, but the provision and quality of public education have not improved.

### ***Unprecedented security, economic and social damage***

Over the last ten years, overshadowed by the decay of the political class, the country has entered an era of organised crime or terrorism. Being surrounded by armed gangs, massacres in working-class neighbourhoods, kidnapping, and illegal trafficking in arms and drugs are the daily lot of the Haitian population. To establish this reign of terror, the perpetrators - those in political power and, by

extension, economic and social power - have set up a whole communication system involving traditional media, social networks and criminal groups that terrorise the population. In this system, criminal groups commit the most heinous crimes (murder, rape, kidnapping, massacres in populated areas, arson), the media give them a voice and rehabilitate them as community leaders, and social networks are used as a weapon of psychological warfare to disseminate their terrorist demands, impacting the psychological well-being of the population, creating fear and even paranoia.

The setting up of this infernal machine to kill the body and mind of the Haitian people is aimed at dissuading the manifest will of the population to demand the restitution of the funds squandered by the Martelly regime and the corrupt and mafia-like elements of the bourgeoisie that has dominated the country's economy for over 150 years.

The impacts of this multi-faceted crisis on Haitian society are visible. It does not take a lot of analysis to realise that the country is in a state of decline at all levels. During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the country recorded a record inflation rate of over 40%, which led to a devaluation of salaries and a weakening of household purchasing power. The activities of criminal gangs have impeded the free movement of agricultural products and goods, blocking commercial activities. As a result, approximately 65% of the Haitian population is currently food insecure [4].

Nevertheless, while it is true that the crisis has led to the impoverishment of certain sections of the population, this is not the case for other categories who have, on the contrary, benefited from the situation: The financial sector, which manipulates the dollar rate and the prices of products on the Haitian market, already hostage to monopolistic practices; the oil sector; the assembly industry, which benefits greatly from the exponential rise of the dollar in relation to the gourde in terms of workers' salaries; and the energy and communication sectors. It seems, therefore, that these business circles have an interest in creating and maintaining a mafia-like environment favourable to a corrupt, crisis-ridden economy.

### **Education facing challenges in the crisis**

The Education Ministry struggled to complete the 2020-2021 school year due to the earthquake that devastated the southern part of Haiti, causing enormous damage to school infrastructure, and to the occupation of certain urban areas of Port-au-Prince by armed gangs, forcing some schools to close their doors.

The start of the 2022-2023 academic year was also marked by the crisis. It was initially scheduled for 5 September 2022, but had to be postponed to 3 October. However, this new date was not respected either because of protests in certain sectors, in reaction to the Haitian government's decision to cancel the subsidy on petroleum products. As part of this mobilisation, protestors targeted symbols of education, particularly in Gonaïves, Cap-Haitien, Fort-Liberté, Les Cayes, Jacmel and Jérémie. Speeches shaming any attempt to make schools function were added to violent attacks on school infrastructure.

### **Difficulties of access and educational challenges**

In this context, access to education in Haiti is becoming a major challenge, including for the wealthiest sections of Haitian society. Moreover, the data published by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training are very alarming in this respect. It took until 7 November to record a rate of 7% of schools that had started the academic year and until December to reach a figure of 73% of schools open. This means that at the beginning of 2023, 27% of schools were still

not active, and it was not possible to determine, on the basis of these data, the exact proportion of pupils concerned.

Even when schools are 100% operational, the Haitian school system is so deficient it leaves 500,000 children out of the classroom.

The impact of the crisis on the education system must also be looked at from a pedagogical point of view. If we consider the postponement of the start of the school year to 3 October 2022, pupils would lose around 20 school days. However, the worsening of the crisis has increased the number of school days lost to more than 40 for those who were able to return to school on 7 November 2022 - a rate of only 7% of schools - and to more than 70 days for the rest of the pupils who had not yet returned to school by 1 January 2023 (27% of schools).

These data raise the question of the mechanisms to be put in place to avoid an even greater accumulation of failings, bearing in mind the gap between the set curriculum and what has actually been achieved. This includes considering the nature and type of assessment to be used, as well as the validity of an assessment, in such a context.

### ***The issue of school fees in a predominantly privatised sector***

The financing of education in Haiti has always been a much talked about issue. With less than 20% of the state budget over the last four fiscal years, public intervention in this sector only covers around 15% of education provision. This is in complete contradiction to the principle enshrined in all of Haiti's constitutions that education is a responsibility of the state and local authorities. This financial reality explains the privatisation and commercialisation of educational services in Haiti and places a heavy burden on households to pay for their children's education.

In the current crisis, education funding is becoming a more complex issue. Indeed, since the publication of the first calendar scheduling the start of the school year for 5 September 2022, some parents have already made great sacrifices to meet their financial obligations for the schooling of their children. Since the promulgation of the Bastien law on school fees in Haiti, the directors of private schools have imposed an obligation on parents to pay the annual school fees in three instalments, with a first instalment of 50% before the start of the school year and two other instalments of 25% between January and April. However, the 2022-2023 school year only started on 7 November 2022 for some schools, in December for others and even later for 27% of schools. This reality poses many challenges. Following the first payment equivalent to 50% of the annual schooling, can parents be asked to make the other two payments for this school year which started very late? Should the state impose arbitration to protect the interests of each party in this time of crisis?

### ***Delayed or no pay for teachers***

The issue of salaries for education workers in the private sector has also always been a thorny issue. With no social protection or job security, workers in the private education sector are constantly in a precarious situation. On top of this, the absence of a collective labour agreement and the absence of a trade union movement in this sub-sector make them increasingly vulnerable, with no recourse to defend their interests with employers. In this situation, the owners of the schools take advantage to exploit the teachers in an outrageous manner.

Some of these colleagues have been without pay for six months for some categories and three months for others [5]. With no mechanism to defend their interests and negotiate changes in their employment contracts in a crisis situation, they are at the mercy of their employers' goodwill. In addition to this, the government has not seen fit to engage in a tripartite dialogue between the state, employers and education unions, which could have contributed to mitigating the impact of the crisis on the status of teachers in state schools in Haiti. Such conditions are bound to lead to a deterioration in the motivation of teachers, who are already facing the impacts of the crisis on an economic, security and psychological level. Thus, risks for the quality of teaching and learning in the 2022-2023 academic year are clear: an acceleration of the decline in quality and poor academic performance.

### **Prospects for ending the crisis: Social movements and international solidarity**

As the Haitian crisis progressed, social movements of demand and protest had reached a level unprecedented in Haiti's history. Protests initially broke out in several sectors including education, health, the textile industry, public services and transport. Then, faced with the repressive response of the authorities to the demands of social organisations, this mobilisation was transformed into a political movement, in the form of resistance to repression and an attempt to counterbalance the domination imposed by those involved in violence, crime and corruption. Following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, there was a disconcerting decline in social and political movements as each clan tried to seize power to satisfy their desire for control.

This loss of momentum came about in several ways. On the one hand, the pace of mobilisation has undoubtedly slowed:

- Strikes, street demonstrations and popular gatherings are becoming increasingly rare. On the other hand, the actors are unable to agree on the nature and form of the transition, demonstrating an inability to formulate solutions that will meet the challenges facing the country and, in so doing, plunging the vast majority of the population into fatalistic despair.
- The extent of the criminal activities of armed gangs and the fear this created, as well as the changing nature of social movements - due to the manifest desire of certain groups to seize power and steer the eventual transition in the direction of their clan-based project and perpetuate their rule - have only exacerbated the harmful effects of the crisis on the most affected social groups. This has led them to lose all confidence in the leaders of civil society, the government and the opposition, which is in a crisis of both credibility and representativeness.

On the other hand, the duplicity of some leaders of social and political movements who claim to be opponents while at the same time supporting their cronies in power has created a feeling of mistrust among the population and is holding back efforts to rally any support. Their actions have led to a loss of legitimacy among the country's leaders, creating a vacuum in the political arena that will be difficult to fill.

### ***Call for action and solidarity***

Faced with this chaotic situation, that is plunging the population into disarray, social organisations that remain faithful to their commitments and convictions are called upon to take action to mobilise and resist. The Union Nationale des Normaliens/Normaliennes et Educateurs/Educatrices d'Haïti (UNNOEH) has begun its resistance by organising its 4th congress on 22 and 23 August 2023 and

launching its organising campaign. It is making the best use of all that technology has to offer, having built up its mobilising capacity thanks to the solidarity of Education International (EI), the Canadian Education Federation (CEF), the Fédération Nationale des Enseignantes et Enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ) and the Confédération Syndicale du Québec (CSQ). Today, the constructive forces in the Haitian population need to combine their mobilisation efforts and pool their means to better organise resistance actions capable of countering the criminal and mafia-like activities that afflict the Haitian population on a daily basis. Today, more than ever, the resistance movements are calling for national and international solidarity to give a glimmer of hope and life to the Haitian people.

The presidency of Joseph Michel Martelly was strongly marked by governmental instability: during this five-year period, the country experienced about three prime ministers and over four governments.

Through this programme, Venezuela sells its petroleum products on credit to certain countries in the region at a very low interest rate, with repayment spread over a 25-year period. Under the terms of this cooperation, the countries concerned are expected use the funds generated to implement development plans.

The PHTK is a political party created by Michel Joseph Martelly during his presidential term (2011-2015).

Data provided by the World Food Programme (WFP).

In a study commissioned by UNNOEH and FENATEC, financed by Education International (EI) and carried out by Dr. Pierre Enocque Francois entitled "Study on working conditions in the private education sector in Haiti" published in January 2018, it was shown that the payment of salaries is very irregular in Haiti. This irregularity can be explained by the fact that some employers were late in paying salaries while others decided to pay salaries only for the ten months of work in the classroom, while holidays were not paid.

## 6. Philippines: Educators submit recommendations to ILO to ensure the protection of trade union rights

Education International (EI) has welcomed the recent International Labour Organization High Level Tripartite Mission (ILO HLTM) to the Philippines. This mission is the result of longstanding advocacy by human and trade union activists in this country, and EI national member organisations – the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), the Federation of Free Workers-Trade Federation VIII (FFW), the National Alliance of Teachers and Office Workers (SMP-NATOW) and the Teachers' Organisation of the Philippine Public Sector (TOPPS).

After more than three years of campaigning and delays by the government, the ILO HLTM to the Philippines was finally held from January 23rd to 26th.

The mission investigated union complaints of extra-judicial killings, red-tagging and other trade union harassment in the Philippines. One of its key recommendations to the Filipino public authorities is to

establish “a single presidentially mandated body empowered to comprehensively identify and address through a specified plan of action, including time frames, resources and accountability, all outstanding cases of alleged labour-related, extra-judicial killings and abductions.” The Filipino Government is expected report back on progress to the ILO before the 2023 International Labour Conference, which will begin on June 5th.

### **ACT recommendations**

On the last day of the mission, ACT, one of the organisations having lodged the greatest number of cases to the ILO, submitted recommendations to protect trade union rights in the Philippines.

Its recommendations include the following:

1. Effectively deliver justice to all victims of violations of freedom of association through immediate investigation, prosecution, conviction, and punishment of the perpetrators, and grant appropriate reparation to victims and their families.
2. Rescind all legislation and executive orders that enable violations of the rights to organise and of free association of teachers and working Filipinos, such as Executive Order 70 and the Anti-Terrorism Act. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict must also be abolished.
3. Halt the implementation of counter-insurgency campaigns from where attacks on unions and unionists emanate, such as illegal profiling, red-tagging, harassment, manufactured charges, forced disappearance, and extra-judicial killings.
4. Stop the interference of police, military, and civilian government agencies in union processes, such as certification elections, negotiation of collective agreements, union organising as well as other union activities.
5. Adopt legislation to achieve public sector teachers and workers’ rights to collective bargaining and peaceful concerted activities, including the right to strike.
6. Criminalise red tagging through legislation.
7. Provide victims of attacks on teachers’ and union rights with legal assistance and protection from retaliation, including in remote areas.
8. Invite the United Nations Human Rights Council and the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Education and on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression to carry out independent investigations about teachers and educators in the Philippines.

### **No positive action from the new government to improve workers’ lives**

“The mission’s four-day investigation in the Philippines hopefully gave its members a clear picture of the prevalent state-sponsored attacks on workers and their unions. Our teachers expect that the ILO mission will compel the Philippines government to finally end the systemic and systematic violations of freedom of association,” stressed ACT General Secretary and EI Executive Board member Raymond Basilio.

He concluded: “Seven months in office and the Marcos administration has not done a single positive move to improve the fate of our workers struggling with low wages and high prices, while attacks on our union rights continue after the former Duterte regime. While we intensify our defense of workers’ rights locally and nationally, we hope to get the support of international bodies to make the government accountable for its violation of labour rights and neglect of workers’ welfare.”

### **International solidarity**

“Education International and education unions around the globe stand in full solidarity with their Filipino colleagues,” Education International General Secretary David Edwards stated, adding: “We are supporting and will continue to support their struggle until they see their trade union rights fully respected and implemented. We urge the government to guarantee human and trade union rights and to put an immediate halt to shocking attacks against the people – in particular, Indigenous peoples students, human rights defenders, journalists, and peace advocates.”

Education International will continue to closely monitor the situations of education activists and their unions in The Philippines.

## **7. Development cooperation backs up Arab education unions’ actions for democracy, gender equality and quality education**

Many development cooperation (DC) partners participated in the Education International (EI) Café at the EI Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (ACCRS). They received information on recent challenges and progress of education unions in the region.

EI Coordinator Dalila El Barhmi took the floor to highlight activities undertaken in and planned for member organisations in Arab countries, which correspond with EI strategic directions:

- Rights and democracy.
- Union renewal.
- Status of the teaching profession.
- Promoting and protecting equitable, inclusive free quality public education for all.
- Partnerships.
- Internal and external communication.

### **6th Biennial Conference of the EI ACCRS**

Reporting on the [6th Biennial Conference of the EI ACCRS](#), held from 14 to 15 December in Amman, Jordan, she highlighted that it was preceded by pre-conference events, including the Equity Caucus, a session on Education in Emergencies in the Arab region and the Higher Education Caucus.

The Conference adopted a framing [Resolution on transforming unions to transform education](#).

This document describes conditions that have damaged education systems, the teaching profession, and education unions, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic and social crises, austerity programmes with budget cuts and the failure to have fair taxation.

It highlighted the additional burden on education systems of the influx of refugee and migrant children. The document also discusses the attacks on democracy and human rights in the region, including worker rights.

The resolution goes on:

- Urging governments to protect human rights and respect international labour standards.
- Recognising the value of education to sustainable development and to building decent, prosperous, and fair societies.
- Asking education unions and governments to participate in and contribute to UN efforts to transform education.
- Calling on governments to fully fund quality public education, improve the status of teachers and ensure that there is quality teacher training and professional development.
- Calling on governments to ensure that teachers and the education community are involved in policy making.

### **Focus on gender equality**

Citing the gender equality caucus held at the 6th Biennial Conference of the EI ACCRS, El Barhmi said caucus participants reflected on results of a survey to understand the level of women's participation in leadership in Education International member organisations.

They addressed questions such as:

- Where do we stand as education unions in the ACCRS region regarding gender equality work?
- What are the main challenges related to gender equality and education at national and sub-regional levels?
- What are the priorities and recommendations of education unions on gender equality/equity?

The caucus also stressed the need to advance the promotion of women's participation and leadership in education unions, women's economic empowerment, ratification by Arab countries of the [International Labour Organization's Convention 190](#), and girls' access to quality public education.

El Barhmi was emphatic that "building the relationships with union leadership- still very much male-dominated - is crucial for DC work in that area. Only then will we open the door to women as DC partners. Without dialogue and trust, this work will be met with resistance and looked upon as part of funding and women-only issues."

The EI coordinator went on to welcome the election of Manal Hdaife from the Public Primary Schools Teachers League in Lebanon as the first women chairperson of the EI ACCRS.

### **Regional DC work**

El Barhmi said that DC projects on social and policy dialogue in education are being undertaken in Morocco and Tunisia and should be expanded.

DC activities are also being organised in Palestine, where a small union in the early childhood education sector is under development and needs to recruit more members. "They need support to build their union and have the right structures. The project was agreed and must now be kicked-off, despite setbacks encountered with COVID and the change of leadership. We are planning the next workshops activities," El Barhmi noted.

She added that the General Union of Palestinian Teachers is involved in DC activities on transforming the union through gender equality and the use of IT and professional development. Phase one of the project is over, and the programme was adopted by the Ministry of Education, she

said.

“The Higher Education Caucus held during the ACCRS conference has convinced us that we need more unions in the higher education sector as part of union renewal, and they are ready to engage in DC work. A large union from Algeria with many young people joined Education International at Education International’s most recent Executive Board meeting, and an Egyptian higher education union is in a good position to be accepted as an Education International’s affiliate at the next Executive Board meeting.”

### **Education in emergency situations**

EI Barhmi reported that, especially In Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, teachers are doing their outmost to provide education in crisis situations, something that was clear in the session on Education in Emergencies in the Arab region organised at the ACCRS conference.

During a [mission to Lebanon](#), EI Barhmi recalled, EI expressed solidarity with educators and students who face extreme conditions which deny children their right to education and impact teachers and their unions.

In Lebanon, teachers work with refugees, and they need to work more with UN agencies like UNICEF, and build alliances at national and regional levels, she said, also recognising that in Yemen, teachers have not received their salaries for three years, “but they are still extremely committed, because they do not want to lose future generations for their country”.

### **Status of the teaching profession**

EI Barhmi also reported on progress achieved on the status of the teaching profession, as shown in [Morocco, where social dialogue has led to the signing of an agreement between the Moroccan government and education unions](#) on issues such as a unified employment status for national education employees. This new status will replace all pre-existing employment arrangements, which means a fresh start for all, contract teachers included, based on new foundations.

### **Joining the Go Public! campaign**

Some unions already showed interest in participating in the new Education International campaign, [Go Public! Fund Education](#) during the Conference. This is the case of Lebanese unions, focusing on fighting the privatisation of education, on reversing the narrative and on policies of international financing institutions.

The campaign is an urgent call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

## **8. Malawi: Education union action rescues children from forced labour and keeps them in schools**

Education International member organisations in Malawi, the Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM) and the Private Schools Employees Union of Malawi (PSEUM), were able to bring over 1,000 children back to school and prevent 1,200 others from dropping out.

TUM National Programmes Coordinator Pilirani Kamaliza highlighted: “It is deeply important for our teacher union to be involved in the fight against child labour and have all children of school going age in schools. Besides enhancing the union's visibility and positive image and promoting good working relationships between the government and the union, it also a source of motivation for our members, as child labour negatively affects the academic performances of children, especially those combining school and work) and therefore undermines teachers' hard work. And one thing that motivates our teachers is precisely the improvement of our children's academic performances.”

He also acknowledged that “ensuring that all children are in school automatically creates a need and demand for additional teacher recruitment by the government to meet the recommended pupil-teacher ratio. These additional teachers represent potential new union members, leading to increased union membership and finances.”

Kamaliza went on to stress that “above all, our involvement in the fight against child labour brings about change in teachers' behaviour towards their pupils, making schools safer spaces attractive to learners”.

Since July 2021 TUM and PSEUM have been developing a child labour free zone in Chigudu, an education zone hosting 15 schools in the Dowa district in Malawi. Child labour in this region is mostly found in agriculture (tobacco, among others), animal herding, domestic work, and child vending. Before the project started, out of 11,291 school-age children, 9,579 were enrolled, whereas 1,591 (790 boys and 801 girls) were out of school in the Chigudu education zone.

In four of the five schools visited by Education International and the [GEW Fair Childhood Foundation](#) from 14-18 November 2022, village chiefs/school directors/focal point teachers have ensured that nearly all school age children living in their school areas are attending school.

Some school directors also noted an improvement of school results thanks to the momentum for education created by this union project leading to the creation of a child labour free zone.

TUM and PSEUM are planning on developing a child labour free zone in a fishing area. As of now, they have developed projects in areas where most child labour is related to exported products, like tobacco or tea. They would like to develop such a project in a zone badly affected by child labour but related to a product consumed locally like fish.

### **Key factors for positive changes**

TUM and PSEUM identified the following reasons for the positive results achieved by the child labour free zone:

- **The change of mindset in the villages regarding child labour and the importance of education.** Unions are raising awareness among community leaders and parents about the importance of education and spell out the risks associated with child labour. Also, children's clubs contributed to the attractiveness of schools via sport, entertainment, theatre activities, etc.
- **By-laws adopted and enforced by chiefs and village leaders.** The chiefs received a specific session on child labour during the project training, which appears to have been very productive. As of June 2022, they had adopted 31 by-laws. These led to penalties being imposed on

parents who do not send their children to school.

- **Remedial/catch up classes for ex-child labourers brought back to school that are given by teachers in the afternoon.**
- **The attitude of school directors/teachers when a child is dropping out.** School leaders better monitor the absence of children and react promptly to know why the child is not at school.
- **Improved pedagogy.** For instance, through union trainings provided in the framework of the child labour free zone project, teachers have learned or were reminded how to avoid corporal punishment.
- **The training of members of school management committees and parents-teachers associations.** Once trained, they also play an important role to sensitise the parents, through parents' meetings or assemblies organised by the chiefs.
- **The involvement of mothers' associations.** Such association exist in each and every school. Focusing more on the girls, they visit parents who do not send their children to school, provide girls with menstrual hygiene support, and help teen mothers to stay in school during and after pregnancy.

### **The child labour free zone benefits the education unions**

PSEUM General Secretary Falison Lemani deplored that “the Government of Malawi has a bad record due to child labour” and underlined that “when the unions implement such projects against child labour, it is of great interest to the ministries concerned, such as the Ministry of Labour. It helps us to have a better image and to be associated with discussions/issues related to the teaching profession.”

TUM's Kamaliza added that “this was the case for instance in January 2022 for the adoption of the National Teacher's Code of Conduct by the Government: our views were considered. We insist that the definition of child labour is: ‘Any work likely to be hazardous, interfere with child's education or harmful to child's health, physical, mental, spiritual or social development’.”

Education International's consultant Samuel Grumiau also welcomed the “excellent cooperation in this project between TUM and PSEUM”. Both unions are making sure that all their staff are aware of what is going on in the projects.

### **Challenges**

TUM and PSEUM also recognised a series of outstanding challenges encountered in the implementation of the child labour free zone project, such as:

- **The shortage of teachers.** School directors and teachers alike stressed that the pupils-teachers ratio is much too high. TUM secretary general Charles Kumchenga noted that, while the Government would be ready to hire thousands of trained teachers, it is prevented to do so by International Monetary Fund (IMF) restrictions. This is confirmed by the April 2022 Education International's research [“Teacher Wage Bill Constrains: Perspectives from the Classroom”](#): “In Malawi, there is an acute teacher shortage. According to researcher estimates, in 2020, at least 3,305 teachers in primary education were unqualified. With a primary pupils-teacher ratio of 65:1 in 2019/20, Malawi needs to recruit 52,459 primary school teachers to achieve a ratio of 40:1 by 2030.”

- **The lack of motivation due to the difficult access to secondary school.** Union leaders of TUM and PSEUM, school directors, teachers and parents highlighted that the difficult access to secondary education, due to the lack of secondary schools, represents a major source of demotivation for children and parents. Only those who obtain the best marks are selected. The costs of secondary education (school fees) are also a barrier.
- **School infrastructures/material.** In some areas, access to school is not possible when it rains, as the river becomes too high. Also, schools lack schoolbooks, chalk, etc.
- **Hunger.** As of now, only 4 of the 15 Chigudu schools run a feeding programme. It is organised by the schools and supported by the chiefs of the villages surrounding the schools. Thanks to the union project, a fifth school is setting up its own feeding programme.
- **Important family issues, such as divorces or children losing their parents.** Local solutions may sometimes be found, with the support of chiefs, local solidarity groups or NGOs.
- **Behaviour of ex-child labourers returning to school.** Some of these children can bring serious challenges to schools and educators. For example, students who used to look after cattle (sometimes beating the cattle) started to beat or be rude other students. In such situations, through dialogue and counselling, teachers try and solve these issues. However, they call for caution. Children brought back to school can influence others, leading them to drop out, which is one reason for the importance of the remedial classes.

### **Link to the Education International Go public! campaign**

This project led by Malawi's education unionists is aligned with the newly launched [Education International Go public! Fund Education campaign](#). This campaign aims to support member organisations in their fight against budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation, and as they mobilise for fully funded, inclusive, quality public education for all.

# March

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## Highlights

### 1. Advocating for gender-transformative quality public education at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The sixty-seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations, in New York, from 6 to 17 March 2023. The Education International delegation called on all governments to Go Public and Fund Education, so that all women and girls have meaningful access to technology.

#### Related Items

#### **Teachers raise their voice for gender-responsive and empowering public education at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

The sixty-seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women takes place at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, from 6 to 17 March 2023. The Education International delegation is there to call on all governments to [Go Public and Fund Education](#), so that all women and girls have meaningful access to technology.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will consider the priority theme of Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

In her statement marking International Women's Day, Education International President Susan Hopgood warned that "as much as technology is changing the world, millions of women and girls are being left behind". Welcoming the 67th Session's focus on education, Hopgood called on governments to "fully fund quality public education that gives all women and girls the skills and confidence they need to navigate an increasingly digital world".

#### From teachers everywhere to the United Nations

The Education International delegation brings the voice of teachers and education support personnel, professions dominated by women, to the United Nations.

Speaking from New York, Haldis Holst, Education International Deputy General Secretary, stated: "The UN Commission on the Status of Women is a unique opportunity to influence global policy making on gender equality. As women educators and unionists, it is our mission to push forward the agenda on gender equality and to speak up for gender-transformative quality public education. We are here for our colleagues and our students everywhere."

The delegation is calling on all governments to uphold labour rights as the world of work enters the digital age, with a particular focus on women and marginalised populations with disproportionately low access to technology.

Quality public education is key to achieving gender equality online and offline. Women education unionists are highlighting four main areas of action:

### **1. Increase women and girls' meaningful access to technology and digital tools**

69% of men are using the internet, compared to only 63% of women. This means that 259 million more men than women are online. Quality public education is imperative to ending the gender digital divide.

Governments must:

- Fully fund quality public education systems that reinforce digital and media literacy and social-emotional skills in the curricula and pedagogy.
- Ensure sufficient public investments in technology infrastructure and equipment in schools.
- Promote women's participation in the design, application, monitoring, and evaluation of technologies.

### **2. Promote teachers' participation in the design and implementation of technology in education**

As highlighted in the outcomes of the Transforming Education Summit, many teachers lack the infrastructure, equipment, and professional development opportunities to deliver quality education in the digital age.

Teachers and their trade unions are often not consulted in the implementation or assessment of digital technologies in schools. Without the involvement of the teaching profession, the technology introduced in classrooms risks not meeting the real needs of teachers and students.

Furthermore, the exponential growth of for-profit online teaching and learning platforms and the involvement of corporate actors in curriculum development limit teachers' professional autonomy and undermine equity and quality.

Governments must:

- Support teachers to equally participate in and facilitate digital innovation in their education institutions.
- Increase public investment in school ICT infrastructure and ensure that teachers have access to the required tools and internet.
- Ensure open-source, safe, accessible, and quality public digital learning tools in schools.
- Ensure that both initial training and continuous professional development support teachers in using technology in the classroom, developing digital and media literacy, and using gender-responsive pedagogy.
- Engage in social dialogue with education unions around technology and digital innovation in terms of policy making and implementation at national, regional, and school level.

### **3. Address online and offline school-related gender-based violence**

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence has a severe impact on achieving universal and gender-responsive quality education for all. It affects the physical and psychological well-being of women and girls, and prevents students from enjoying their fundamental right to education.

Governments must:

- Create and enforce a well-defined legal and policy framework and include teachers, education support personnel, and their trade unions in the planning and implementation of programmes and measures to eliminate school-related gender-based violence.
- Act to enable a violence-free digital environment and world of work for all women. Ratify and fully implement the International Labour Organization Convention 190, which establishes the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment.

#### **4. Close the gender divide in STEM fields**

Women are underrepresented in various positions in the innovation, communications, and technology labour market. Oftentimes this gender divide is perpetuated in education systems: in secondary school, girls already display lower levels of participation in advanced STEM courses. Female teachers are also underrepresented in teaching STEM courses.

Governments must:

- Ensure quality education at all levels, with a broad-based curriculum where students in all their diversity are encouraged and supported to learn and develop their competences across subjects and domains.
- Increase the number of female teachers teaching STEM subjects and invest in their initial and continuous professional development and training.
- Promote mentoring programs and exchange of best practices where female STEM teachers can guide and support female students in STEM.

Women power education. Women power unions.

Education International together with other Global Unions have jointly prepared and submitted a Statement to the UN CSW67. Global Unions call on governments to engage in social dialogue for the adoption and implementation of gender-transformative plans to ensure equitable access to technology for all; equitable access to quality public education, training and lifelong learning; jobs, wages, rights and protection in the world of work.

[Click here to read the full statement](#) from the Global Unions to the CSW67.

#### **UN Conference on the Status of Women: We need action to make gender equality in the digital age a reality**

The 67th session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women (CSW67) held in New York, March 6 to 17 adopted conclusions that acknowledge the critical role of technology and innovation in achieving gender equality and recognise the challenges to gender equality in the digital age.

##### **Agreed conclusions**

The 31-page text was finalized late at night on the final day after more than a week of intensive negotiations. The document focuses on this year's theme "innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls." It reaffirms previously agreed upon policy messages, refers to established international policy instruments, and moves policy forward with new language on bridging the digital gender divide.

Strong oppositional forces within the negotiations pushed to water down language on labour rights for women, but thanks to progressive governments and advocacy by the union movement, with support from the ILO, the Commission's final text calls for labour policies that respect ILO standards, decent work and quality jobs for women, equal pay for work of equal value, the right to organise and bargain collectively, and the elimination of sexual harassment and discriminatory practices in career advancement.

## Education is key

The text includes important language on education. It reaffirms the need to ensure access to inclusive and equitable quality education, including digital literacy, and highlights the multiple gender-specific barriers to girls' equal enjoyment of the right to education.

Importantly, and in line with EI's Go Public: Fund Education campaign, the conclusions call for "investing in public education and infrastructure". They highlight the provision of universal access to free and compulsory primary and secondary education and encourage government to strive for universal completion of early childhood, primary, and secondary education and the expansion of technical and vocational training for all women and girls. They further call for investment in accessible digital public learning resources and gender-sensitive, safe and inclusive digital environments for all.

The document acknowledges that negative social norms, gender stereotypes and systemic and structural barriers are among the root causes of the persistent gender gap in science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, and that policy makers have a responsibility to drive change to create supportive education settings.

On teaching, the document makes clear that digital technologies should not replace in-person education but rather be used to enhance and supplement it. The critical role of teachers and educators is recognized and "the importance of strengthening their capacities, skills and competencies in online and digital learning by providing support, including through the necessary trainings, devices, materials and technological infrastructure" is noted, as is the importance of encouraging gender-responsive teaching strategies.

## Next steps

The outcome text provides guidance to governments and other stakeholders who seek to advance gender equality in the context of technological change, including through education. Yet finalizing the text is only the first step – now these conclusions must be translated into reality through implementation. Education unions have an important role to play in advocating for gender equality in and through education at the local, national, and global level.

## Are new technologies feminist?

Surprisingly, while most teachers (70% of teachers in France are women) are in favour of equality between girls and boys, as soon as the words "feminist pedagogy" are uttered, they are met with confusion and even rejection. It is like claiming to be in favour of equality without

promoting the conditions for it.

A feminist approach to teaching is not about educational diktats, it is the repeated questioning of what produces inequalities in the classroom. It refers to the micro context-specific strategies developed to deconstruct inequalities, in order to build real emancipation for all. How do feminist teaching methods fare in the world of new digital and communication technologies?

I lead the training on feminist pedagogy for the CGT-affiliated Fédération de l'Éducation, de la Recherche et de la Culture in France. The theme of the [67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women](#), "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" invites us to address this specific issue.

Two key considerations must be taken into account in the trade union context: new technologies are not an end in themselves and are not necessarily synonymous with educational progress. They must always be measured against the educational objectives, which should be examined in light of our values. Furthermore, feminist education should not be a pretext for offloading our political responsibilities in terms of gender equality onto future generations. Educating young people for equality does not solve the current societal problems of inequality.

That said, if we can educate young people in values other than those of the patriarchy, that is a very exciting mission!

### Raising awareness

Strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*", feminist teaching methods allow time for the awareness-raising phase. In the south of France, where I live, the Occitania region provides each student with a laptop when they start secondary school. Enabling students to share their experience (in the sense of the women's discussion groups of the 1970s) of using this tool and its purposes helps to raise awareness. Gender inequalities can be deconstructed by bringing three groups - two single-sex groups and one mixed group – together to discuss their use of the digital tool and then comparing the results in the classroom. Students report very concrete experiences, sometimes even forms of addiction or models that produce a bad self-image, and then together they become aware of stereotypical gender representations and examine them in order to deconstruct them. Roles can be shared, and roles can be rotated in terms of the distribution and regulation of speaking time, following a gendered alternation of speakers... In short, it is a debate regulated in a non-sexist framework.

### Building critical thinking skills

Digital support is also useful for working on the geographical position of pupils according to their gender. Micro-geography studies show that the strategic places of communication or avoidance in the classroom are occupied by boys. Suggesting that pupils reflect on these issues and adopt a geography of occupation of space that allows for everyone to express themselves, using an evolving class map in digital format is effective. Pupils fill it in with their initial observations, then we reflect together to find a (modifiable) organisation in the classroom that reinforces everyone's involvement and chance to speak.

But it is mainly when analysing resources and web sites that awareness-raising is productive. In what way are gendered representations stereotyped? What implicit norms creep into the materials? As with paper materials, digital materials must be read with our gender glasses on. The French spellchecker requires the use of non-inclusive spelling. How does language convey these gender stereotypes? bell hooks, although heavily influenced by Freire, questioned the way in which he conveyed certain patriarchal prejudices. She encourages us to be wary of ourselves and our internalised prejudices: the digital environment is not free of them. Who do we call to fix a technical problem in the classroom? Why are boys unconsciously called upon as if they have an extra computer gene or innate skill?

## Cooperation

It is an illusion to believe that exchanges between students are free of sexist bias. On the contrary, during childhood and adolescence when we are looking for our bearings, positions can even be caricatured. It is about building relationships between students based on reflective analysis: the way knowledge is appropriated and shared is just as important as what is produced. For example, the online Padlet on which students upload images of an imaginary museum is not the goal in itself, it is the gendered analysis of what is uploaded that matters. Indeed, when pupils comment on the objects they choose, we can look at the criteria that motivate their choice, and measure together what comes under gendered social representations. We also know that the phenomenon of identification with the work requires us, from a feminist pedagogical perspective, to give priority to cultural or scientific contributions produced by female artists, female experts, given the androcentric nature of our societies. Allowing boys to project themselves onto thoughts and observations made by women also means getting them to respect them, and therefore deconstruct and fight against the continuum of sexist and sexual violence.

“There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes.”

bell hooks

## Emancipation and creativity

Shared individual experience enriches collective experience and vice versa. Finding strategies together, developing collective productions of which we can be proud, choosing together and discussing your interpretations, taking yourself seriously... these are all didactic situations that enable progress. A shared digital document is very effective for this purpose. Pupils carry out individual research on an issue and collect it online in a shared document that constitutes the course. This is known as the flipped classroom because it is the students who 'make' the course (with the requirement that the research is done in class to minimise social inequalities). But who has the power? Who expresses themselves? Who shapes it? Who are the reference experts? These are the questions that reflective analysis must allow in the preparatory phase, as the work is being done, and later, in order to regulate relations in the classroom.

What is valued? The management of emotions is very often ignored or denigrated in the classroom. And this mental and emotional load is not recognised in the feminised professions in France. [The CGT is fighting for the recognition of and better pay for skills in the care and relationship-centred professions.](#) In the classroom, we must value these skills: quality of listening,

analysis, interpretation and acceptance of the discourse of others. These skills are enhanced when students invest in them and develop them in creative activities. Digital tools enable the easy creation of short videos that reflect diverse world views and encourage individual expression.

Feminist pedagogy will definitely benefit from investing in the tools of new technologies, with, as always, the need to constantly re-examine the vision they offer us.

## **Understanding and taking action for gender equality in science and technology**

On February 11, the world marked the International Day of Women and Girls in Science with the aim of raising awareness of the barriers that prevent women from accessing the world of science and technology, as well as promoting their full and equal participation in the sector.

What are these barriers and how do we dismantle them?

As the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women discusses "innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", let's look at some data on the gender divide in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and reflect on opportunities for action to promote gender equality.

### **The glass ceiling: a perennial reality in the world of science**

According to a Princeton University publication [1], the productivity of women in science has been increasing over the years, although the gender gap is also growing (73% men - 27% women). The statistics vary across regions and areas of knowledge.

In Argentina, productivity and participation is 50-50 for men and women. In spite of these statistics, better than the global average, the masculinization of hierarchical positions, or the so-called "scissors effect", is notorious. For example, in the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), the country's main science organization, in the highest category of Senior Researcher, 75% of the positions are occupied by men. In addition, female researchers who direct scientific projects generally request and receive fewer resources than their male colleagues. Some studies show that when gender is known, the approval of research projects favors men. However, when the gender is not known, the approval rate is equal for male and female researchers.

This is pattern is observed worldwide. According to UNESCO data, only 10.5% of the leadership of scientific and technological organizations are women. The "glass ceiling" in science is still intact.

A clear gender pattern also emerges in higher education. While men account for most students in engineering and information and communication technology, a dynamic and well-paid sector, women are dominant in fields related to education and health care, lower paid professional sectors. Traditional gender roles are perpetuated in universities.

The problem is aggravated by the fact that traditional gender roles for women involve household and care work. Women are expected to take care of both productive and reproductive tasks. This

expectation leaves women little time to undertake the training and professional development required for better paid professions and positions.

In the words of Nancy Fraser, "the overwhelming majority of women do not crack any glass ceiling; they are stuck in the basement, they are cleaning up and sweeping up the broken pieces of glass."

## We need to make women in STEM more visible

To understand the structural and historical causes of this gender gap, we cannot underestimate the marked influence of economic and cultural factors, as well as social factors that promote stereotypical gender roles. Both explicit and implicit, these gender roles discourage the participation of girls in STEM, conditioning their self-perception and confidence.

The exclusion of girls, women, and minority groups from STEM education and professions is also reflected in the absence or sidelining of referents of the same gender in certain areas of knowledge, which has a negative impact on peer motivation.

Without a doubt, my professional path was enabled by women who painstakingly paved the way in areas where only men used to tread. Their presence allowed me to visualize a future as a researcher. This vision of myself was particularly influenced by professors and researchers who taught me, as well as by women in my community who promoted growth not in individual terms, but in terms of the needs of our society.

Progress relies on empowering other women along the way, because it is easier for us to see the difficulties of occupying spaces that were previously denied to us. In other words, we must practice sisterhood as a fundamental value also in the spaces of knowledge production.

## The impact of the digital revolution

In contemporary capitalism, STEM is both a requirement and a driving force. A new phase, marked by the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution, is profoundly transforming society. Digitalization, virtualization, and the automation of economic, political and social processes are signaling a drastic change in humanity's way of life.

This can be seen in the growth of active users on social networks and platforms, or in the penetration of the Internet in daily life, a trend that accelerated after the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, 5.1 billion users spend an average of 6 hours 37 minutes on the Internet. This is just one example of the world's digital behaviors. [2]

In this new phase of digitalization, capitalism amplifies and increases the complexity of the power relations established by patriarchy. The pandemic reconfigured social and economic structures and forms of production and consumption. More than ever before, the gender inequalities we inhabit were painfully visible. Women had to shoulder the lion's share of the care work maximized by confinements. Digital divides, structured around pre-existing inequalities that limit access to and adoption of technologies, also widened. This is why as the digitalization of the economy accelerates and consolidates, the negative impact on the poorest women deepens. An inclusive approach to the scientific development that defines this era is imperative.

## Taking action for change

This new economic phase has created a complex crisis on the economic, social and environmental levels. In this context, universities are all the more important in that they provide the space and time for critical, collective, deep thinking. They give us the opportunity to reflect on how the production and flow of knowledge in our spaces can contribute to the construction of a more egalitarian society that promotes the development of a community based on respect for the environment and that enhances new forms of organization to achieve social justice.

Women's limited presence in STEM discourages women and girls from developing digital skills, which are fundamental in this new phase. STEM is the basis of the current economic transformation. As long as STEM is in the hands of hegemonic masculinity, it is simply impossible to put an end to patriarchal dominance and change our culture of dispossession and exploitation.

Therefore, we must de-normalize the absence of women on the frontlines of innovation and science. Proposing and promoting policies that enable the full participation of women in these spaces will be fundamental to reverse historical inequalities, in pursuit of a better future. Of course, these struggles must intersect with all other struggles against injustice. Ending patriarchy must be understood as an essential political proposal in order to advance gender equity and social equality.

Huang, J., Gates, A. J., Sinatra, R., & Barabási, A. L. (2020). Historical comparison of gender inequality in scientific careers across countries and disciplines. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(9), 4609-4616.

<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report>. Accessed on 12 February 2023.

### **Supporting women's participation and leadership through digital technologies: lessons from the experiences of education unions during Covid-19.**

The global Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted women workers. The [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) documented disproportionate job and income losses suffered by women worldwide during the pandemic](#): in 2019-2020 alone, women's employment declined by 4.2% (or 54 million jobs). The situation has put women at greater risk of job loss, poverty, food insecurity, loss of housing, and what is now referred to by UN Women as [the shadow pandemic of domestic violence](#).

Anecdotal evidence suggesting an uptick in women's engagement in global unions' activities in response to the forces unleashed by the pandemic prompted Education International to commission a [research to investigate women's lived experiences of union engagement, participation and leadership in education unions during the pandemic](#) [1].

The research also aimed to examine the effectiveness of education unions' efforts and strategies to advance women's union engagement, participation, and leadership through the use of online

technologies between 2020-2022.

We spoke to 50 women union members across different regions of the world. What they told us is particularly insightful in the context of the ongoing [67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York](#), where representatives of UN Member States, international and non-governmental organisations, including trade unions, gathered to discuss the role of technological change and education in the digital age to achieve gender equality, and empower all women and girls.

### Women's lived experiences

Women educators and members of Education International member organisations across the EI regions shared their stories about how Covid-19 affected their daily lives as well as their participation in their union activities. The stories they shared provide a stark reminder of the inter-relationship between the personal and the professional, bound up in contextually grounded gender norms and the gender division of labour, that affected how they experienced the pandemic as women and as women union members.

“We had to work a lot more than we used to. In our country, in our realities, women are supposed to do everything related to the household chores and the majority of men wouldn't think about helping or about doing anything in the house.”

#### Union member in Latin America

At the same time, the stories revealed the tremendous support offered by unions, specifically women's or gender and equality committees, acts of solidarity and sisterhood, and strategic actions taken by unions to support women's participation despite the pandemic.

“During the pandemic our annual face-to face roundtable activity stopped and so teachers stayed connected only through the social media like WhatsApp groups, posting issues, sharing news, supporting each other emotionally and psychologically, sharing our experiences with each other. This was like a support network where there was mutual support and solidarity.”

#### Union member in Africa

The stories attest to the value of union membership for women members especially during the first year of the pandemic as they struggled to make sense of uncertainty and the rapidly changing situation regarding lockdowns, school closures, and health and safety, not to mention implications for their job security and pay. The union meetings, groups and training became solidarity and support networks with other women members.

### Education Unions stepping up

The study also highlighted **effective strategies** that education unions introduced to support diverse women members to stay involved in union activities during the pandemic.

#### ***Strengthening digital skills and access to online platforms***

“The thing that makes the key difference in terms of participation is access.”

Union member in Europe

Equality and inclusion representatives, gender and women’s committees along with training coordinators immediately stepped up and pivoted to online meetings, training and workshops. This was not easy. They often needed first to provide training on Zoom, and other online platforms and tools, including WhatsApp and Facebook. Many also rallied their unions to offer stipends or credit to union members for data and internet connection.

“I asked the national union Board for money to buy data for women to join because megabits are expensive. When I can give them the data packages, they come forward and participate.”

Union member in Africa

Women union members welcome the hybrid approaches now being adopted by many unions. Unions will need to continue to provide training and access to online spaces especially in countries where networks are not reliable and digital tools are not affordable.

### ***Providing new types of support in response to new challenges***

National union leads for gender equality and inclusion or training responded to the additional challenges women members faced during the pandemic by offering new types of training and support.

“One of the things that the pandemic allowed us to focus on is on issues that perhaps were not considered to be so relevant within the training before... So, we are having more workshops on the topics of mental health, occupational health and safety, LGBTQI rights, racial discrimination, climate change, the menopause and many other issues related to us as women activists.”

Union member in North America

Some unions designed and offered on-line training sessions on topics like understanding violence and how to address it, mental health and wellness, and information about human and legal rights and remedies relevant to the pandemic context. Union members also appreciated that training sessions are now being recorded and made available online to suit their own schedules.

“We’re rethinking our learning models from the equalities perspective to provide asynchronous learning opportunities that are very directly related to the practical problem that the individual groups are trying to solve.”

Union member in Europe

### ***Building the evidence base***

A few unions are investing in research on the impact of the pandemic on educators and other education union members (see, for example, [research activities carried out by the Educational Institute of Scotland](#)). Investing in research on how the pandemic and its ongoing impacts are affecting diverse women educators remains critical for informing union policy and strategic inventions.

“We have seen members creating and doing several types of activities, but we also do not know all their needs, so we suggest having a needs assessment to know what types of activities union members need during this time and also after the pandemic is over.”

Union member in Asia-Pacific

The research makes the case (and provides recommendations) for Education International and education union members to continue to resource and prioritize these three above-mentioned strategies, to enhance women union members' engagement, voice and leadership in a post-COVID world and to contribute to advance the goals and objectives of [Education International's gender equality action plan](#).

*Women's Participation in Education Unions in a Time of Covid-19, Prepared for Education International by Carol Miller and Houda Sabra, October 2022.*

## 2. Teacher-led learning circles for formative assessment

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project provides teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

The project is led by Education International with funding from the Jacobs Foundation.

The project is being developed in seven countries, with the support of Education International member organisations:

- Brazil - Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE)
- Uruguay - Federación Uruguaya de Magisterio - Trabajadores de Educación Primaria (FUM - TEP)
- Côte d'Ivoire - Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Primaire Public de Côte d'Ivoire (SNEPPCI)
- Ghana - Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)
- Malaysia - National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP)
- South Korea - Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU)
- Switzerland - Dachverband Lehrerinnen und Lehrer Schweiz (LCH)

In each country, the project features three learning circles providing professional development for groups of teachers in order to support their leadership of educational development projects, including understanding and use of formative assessment practices.

**Teacher-Led Learning Circles on Formative Assessments: Supporting teachers' professional development and leadership around the globe**

Education International, the global federation of education unions, is launching the Teacher-led Learning Circles on Formative Assessments project with funding from the Jacobs Foundation. The project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

Educational transformation requires professional development and teacher leadership. Teachers are the most important factor influencing student achievement. Teaching is highly complex, requiring expertise, professional judgement, and effective practices to meet the diverse needs of students in a range of contexts. In recent years, the work of teachers has further intensified with the need to support diverse, multicultural, multilingual, and mixed ability student populations and to teach students to learn and be equipped to succeed in a world with rapid development of technologies, geo-political instability, climate crises, and changing global and local economic and employment opportunities.

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic has further changed and challenged teachers' work. Periods of school closure, remote learning, and the mental and physical health impacts of the pandemic have had profound consequences for students' learning, equity, and well-being, with similar impacts on educators as well. In the current global context, it is essential to provide professional development to support teachers' leadership and expert use of formative assessment to identify students' learning needs and to provide feedback to improve their progress.

The Teacher-led Learning Circles project aims to support teachers' professional development, teacher leadership, and an inquiry process for teachers to apply, reflect on, and adapt formative assessment practices in their classrooms.

### Teachers in the lead

The project [research framework](#), supported by a [literature review](#) that contextualises the importance of formative assessment and a student-centered, learning-to-earn approach in the classroom, puts the teacher in the driving seat.

The approach draws heavily on the Education International [Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards](#) and the latest [Global Report on the Status of Teachers](#) that called for a new 'intelligent professionalism' for teachers. Teachers who inhabit their own professional autonomy, assisted by their unions, are able in turn to support their students to develop resilience and enable them to learn for life.

### Identifying and globalising best practices

The Teacher-led Learning Circles project will operate across classroom, national, and international contexts over the next three years. The project will run in seven countries, with the support of Education International member organisations:

- Brazil - Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE)
- Uruguay - Federación Uruguaya de Magisterio - Trabajadores de Educación Primaria (FUM - TEP)

- Côte d'Ivoire - Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Primaire Public de Côte d'Ivoire (SNEPPCI)
- Ghana - Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)
- Malaysia - National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP)
- South Korea - Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU)
- Switzerland - Dachverband Lehrerinnen und Lehrer Schweiz (LCH)

In each country, the project will support three Learning Circles over one school year. Each Learning Circle will be comprised of ten teachers, two local facilitators, and one local union representative. In total, the project will include 21 Learning Circles, 210 teachers, 42 local facilitators, and 21 local union representatives.

At the international level, the Jacobs Foundation and Education International will foster regular exchanges between teachers regionally, nationally, and globally through in-person and virtual sessions, including regional hubs.

The findings and most effective practices identified will inform the work of Education International member organisations operating in 178 countries and territories and organising over 32 million teachers around the world.

### **Côte d'Ivoire: Working together and tracking achievements key to Teacher-led Learning Circles**

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

The Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project is well underway in Côte d'Ivoire. On Wednesday the 25th of January 2023, a second tutorial was held in the different schools hosting the T3LFA project. The aim of the tutorial was to evaluate participating teachers' achievements to date and chart a route forward.

The facilitators opened the tutorial session by welcoming each teacher and sharing a small success story that had occurred during their day.

The teachers were consequently divided into two groups of five. This allowed two facilitators to talk to each group in a private room and under trees in the school yard. Here, the teachers participating in the project were reminded of some of the basic principles agreed upon in previous sessions, including the importance of reflecting on each learning circle's outcomes.

As a part of the T3LFA project, teachers must keep a portfolio that will act as evidence of participation and diligently journal throughout the learning circle project. This journal is crucial as it allows teachers to reflect on the ways in which the project might facilitate the improvement of students' learning outcomes and strengthen professional learning as well as development.

In the second tutorial in Cote d'Ivoire, facilitators emphasised the significance of the journal in order to reflect on the achievements of the learning circle project. This, it was emphasised, should be done through handwritten documentation in journals. Additionally, the facilitators noted the centrality of thinking about how teachers engaged with one or more colleagues to raise

awareness of the project's transformational potential in their notebooks. In doing so, teachers could consider how to collaborate with peers to increase the project's impact locally.

The teachers who took part in the tutorial further allowed the facilitators to check their level of understanding and commitment to the project. The teachers' portfolios were checked by the facilitators, who took this as an opportunity to encourage them to keep them up to date and to add to them using the correctly filled in evidence and the [photos taken during the workshops](#).

**Want to find out more?** Continue to keep up to date with the T3LFA project in Côte d'Ivoire and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

The project is led by Education International with funding from the [Jacobs Foundation](#).

### **South Korea : Co-creating a common purpose through Teacher-led Learning Circles**

The Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project held its first network event in South Korea on 18 and 19 February 2023. The network event provided a central place where project participants from Jeju, Kyungnam and Jeonbuk provinces could come together. This allowed for thirty teachers, six facilitators, two professors, and two Korea Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU) representatives to meet face-to-face and engage in crucial knowledge exchange on the T3LFA project.

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

The first day of the network event began with a group and self-introduction due to a recognition that there was a need for everyone to get to know one another and feel at ease. The participants were then divided into groups based on their region and were given the space to talk about their commitment to the project through co-creating participation rules. This included agreeing to a shared purpose and a yearly plan for each team.

On the second day of the network event, participants gathered for a workshop session. Throughout the workshop, questions that are central to the successful realisation of the project in South Korea were discussed. These broad questions touched on how leadership can be understood and the ways in which participants might best be able to record their participation in the project as to contribute to changing national practice on formative assessment to benefits students across the country.

The participants were passionate and eager to engage in the learning circles and looked forward to continuing to contribute to improving learning outcomes through formative assessment.

Photos of the network event are available [here](#).

**Want to find out more?** Continue to keep up to date with the T3LFA project in South Korea and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

The project is led by Education International with funding from the [Jacobs Foundation](#).

## **Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment: Spotlight on the international research team**

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions. Research is a key part of the project.

The Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project has a dedicated project research team that coordinates the research backbone of the project. It has two core components: international research leads and national level country researchers.

T3LFA's international research leads are Professor Carol Campbell, Professor Christopher DeLuca, and Dr Danielle La-Pointe McEwan. The international researchers have a crucial role in ensuring the success of the project through developing an overarching research methodology, assisting the national researchers, providing continuous research and codification, and assessing the effectiveness of practice.

Already, two important reports authored by T3LFA's international research team have been published to the [project's dedicated webpage](#). The first publication "[Teacher-Led Learning Circles: Developing Teacher Leadership and Teaching Practice for the Use of Formative Assessment to Improve Students' Learning](#)," situates the T3LFA project within the current field of practice. The second, "[Teacher-Led Learning Circles: Research Framework](#)," builds on the findings of the first, outlining the project's research framework.

The dedicated work of Professor Campbell, Professor DeLuca, and Dr La-Pointe McEwan in T3LFA's international research team has most recently been featured in the University of Toronto's Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education (LHAE) [newsletter](#) as well as their [website](#). This demonstrates that in addition to the changes to learning outcomes being observed by those implementing the project on the ground, strong momentum is also being built around the project in the academic sphere.

**Want to find out more?** Continue to keep up to date with the T3LFA project's international research team and developments across our seven other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

## **Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment – First Learning Circles held across Brazil**

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project began in Brazil in early February. The project in Brazil is coordinated by its dedicated national researcher, Professor Dalila Andrade Oliveira.

The project in Brazil consists of three learning circles, named Team A, B and C. These circles are composed of teachers that come from urban and rural areas across Brazil.

Between the 2nd of February and the 7th of March 2023, the circles held their first virtual workshops. These workshops provided a space for teachers to come together in their learning circles to introduce themselves, co-create group norms, discuss the objectives of the Learning

Circles project, and address any concerns that they had regarding the project.

The workshops began with participants introducing themselves and clarifying their motivation for participating in the project. In Team C, teachers noted that their motivation to participate in the project stems from their engagement in pre-existing social movements and additionally derives from a desire to understand how to improve upon conventional teaching models.

Next, teachers in all circles produced a range of important norms that would provide the foundation of their learning circles. These norms provide a common ground for the teachers participating in each circle in Brazil. The norms ensure that the circles are safe environments that lead to a fruitful discussion on effective formative assessment. The norms underscored by Team A included active listening, empathy, cooperation, commitment, and transparency.

Consequently, the facilitators in each team gave the circle participants an overview of the project and outlined the tools developed by HertsCam as part of the project that would be used to help guide the teachers through their professional learning and development journey.

Finally, the teachers in all learning circles noted their concerns regarding the circles. For Team B, the core concern was the limited time for group discussion during the first workshop, indicating that there was further discussion to be had beyond the 2 hours dedicated to the workshop.

The enthusiasm among teachers to engage in the project was noted by all circle facilitators in all teams, reporting that participants demonstrated a keen interest to continue to use the circles to develop work on effective formative assessment practice to improve student outcomes.

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with the project in Brazil and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

### **Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment - Second network event drives project forward in Côte d'Ivoire**

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project has continued to build momentum in Côte d'Ivoire. Thanks to an enthusiastic team, led by a dedicated national researcher Professor Claude Koutou, a second network event took place on the 8th of March 2023.

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

The network event was chaired by SNEPPCI's Secretary General, Andjou Andjou, first Deputy Secretary General, Koutou Brou Ernest and the Director of the Training Institute, Gnelou Paul. The chairs used the event as a platform to galvanise and encourage teachers participating in the T3LFA project; emphasising its importance for improving the education system in Côte d'Ivoire.

During the network event, teachers involved in the Learning Circles were divided into three groups and discussed a wide range of topics related to the project, including identifying core ways of developing formative assessment in classrooms. The event further provided a space for teachers to share challenges they had encountered throughout the project. This led to an

exchange where teachers guided one another on how to complete the action plans that are a core outcome of the project but posed a challenge to complete due to teachers' large workloads.

Whilst the learning circle participants engaged in their dynamic exchange, facilitators spoke of their own experience of the project. Throughout their interaction, facilitators spoke on an equally broad array of subjects. Most significantly, project facilitators noted that the project had made them agents of change through raising teachers' awareness of formative assessment through learning circles to improve student outcomes. In particular, they noted that this had been done through unprecedented means: learning circles facilitated exchanges between teachers with different experiences and created networks with teachers from other schools participating in the project making it possible to learn new evaluation techniques that were previously inaccessible.

The network event concluded by bringing participants and facilitators together to work through the common challenges identified in each constituent session. To ensure that the T3LFA project in Côte d'Ivoire continues to build momentum to enhance student learning outcomes, answers to a broad range of concerns surrounding organisation, workload, familiarity with content, were addressed to create new ways forward.

Photos and videos of the network event are available [here](#).

**Want to find out more?** Continue to keep up to date with the T3LFA project in Côte d'Ivoire and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

### **Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment – First network event held for facilitators in Ghana**

The Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project began in Ghana in early March after months of careful preparation by the country's national researcher Dr. Christopher Yaw Kwaah with the support of Education International and [HertsCam](#).

The process began with the careful selection of learning circle facilitators based on their teaching experience and qualifications. These learning circle facilitators were chosen to lead circles to improve learning outcomes for students across in three geographical regions in Ghana: the Central Region, the Ashanti Region, and the Upper East Region.

Following the selection procedure, the learning circle facilitators came together for the first time at a network event held at the Ghana National Association (GNAT) headquarters in Accra on the 8th of March 2023. The General Secretary of GNAT, the union's two Deputy General Secretaries, and two members of technical staff joined the facilitators and the national researcher at the network event.

The network event began with an address from the General Secretary, Thomas Tanko Musah, and one of the union's Deputy General Secretaries who both touched on the significance of the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project. This address was then followed by an overview of the project from the national researcher, Dr Christopher Yaw Kwaah, who outlined the status of the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project in its six other countries.

Facilitators then had the opportunity to ask questions about their roles. This was followed by a workshop session run by Val Hill and David Frost of HertsCam who provided the space for facilitators to clarify any questions that remained unanswered.

During the last session of the network event, facilitators used the knowledge gained earlier in the day to engage in group work to discuss the different formative assessment strategies that could be used to positively change students' learning outcomes in the facilitator's own classrooms as well as the classrooms that are guided by the teachers who would participate their learning circles.

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with the T3LFA project in Ghana and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

The project is led by Education International with funding from the [Jacobs Foundation](#).

### **Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment – Teachers gather for a fifth workshop in Côte d'Ivoire**

Following the network event held in early March, the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project in Côte d'Ivoire held its fifth workshops in circles across the country on the 29th of March 2023.

Across the three learning circles in Côte d'Ivoire, participants were welcomed before being asked to tell the rest of their circles a small success story from their day. The participants were consequently reminded by facilitators of the common principles they had agreed upon in the previous sessions that had helped the circles build a common ground.

Having started in October 2022, the project is in an advanced phase in Côte d'Ivoire. As a result, the focus of the fifth workshop within the three learning circles was to reflect on what teachers had learnt about formative assessment and leadership through their participation in the project.

The reflection was done by discussing what evidence teachers could include in the portfolios that must be completed as a part of the project. These portfolios provide teachers with a space to express what was learnt as part of the project. The key learnings included in these portfolios can then be discussed among peers. As a result, a further point of reflection in the fifth session was asking teachers to speak about how to network with colleagues to share the knowledge gained through their participation in Learning Circles.

The activities were reported by national researcher, Professor Claude Koutou, to have gone particularly well, with all participants present and engaged in the learning circles.

Photos from Workshop 5 in Côte d'Ivoire are [available here](#).

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with the project in Côte d'Ivoire and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

### **The T3LFA project continues in Malaysia with a welcome and briefing session**

Following a successful briefing session and refresher course for facilitators in mid-April, the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project in Malaysia continues to progress, with the first learning circles having successfully taken place on the 13th of May 2023.

However, before the learning circles began, all participants joined a welcome session where the NUTP President, Aminuddin Awang, gave a speech and officially inducted those present into the T3LFA project in Malaysia. Those who attended the session were NUTP Committee members, the project facilitators, and the teacher participants.

The welcome was followed by a briefing session for facilitators and teacher participants, where the project's aims and objectives were outlined. The explanation was given by the T3LFA Malaysia national researcher, Associate Professor Dr Zuwati Hasim, who once having delivered the presentation, gave individuals the opportunity to voice their concerns.

After all questions were addressed during the briefing session, each participant was given a consent form to ensure that they understood and agreed to the content of the project.

Upon the completion of consent forms, facilitators and teacher participants were next divided into three groups based on their learning circles. These groups aimed to prepare teachers for their first learning circle workshops that were to take place straight after the briefing session.

Reflecting on the day, T3LFA national researcher Dr Zuwati Hasim noted that it was great to see the level of commitment given and the enthusiasm displayed by the teachers participating in the project in Malaysia.

Photos from the welcome and briefing session in Malaysia are available [here](#).

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with the project in Malaysia and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

### **Learning circles as spaces to engage in pedagogical activism**

On June 5th delegates including those from Education International gathered at the [Schools2030 Global Forum 2023](#) in Porto, Portugal.

The 2023 Schools2030 Global Forum was run in collaboration with the [Aga Khan Development Network](#), the Government of Portugal and the Municipality of Porto, in Porto, Portugal. In 2023, the Forum aimed to provide a space for education stakeholders to reflect on how to create more inclusive schools and learning environments for all by 2030.

As part of this year's Forum, Education International ran a workshop entitled "Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment: Inclusion Through Teacher Leadership". The workshop was based on Education International's [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment \(T3LFA\)](#) project. The T3LFA project aims to provide teachers with the tools and support needed to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

Martin Henry opened the workshop by saying "It's not stories that drive change but resources" highlighting the need to fully fund education systems to provide dedicated time for continuous

professional learning and development for teachers to improve outcomes for all students. Martin then gave the floor to three Teacher-led Learning Circle for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project participants and a delegate from [FENPROF](#), a national trade union organisation that represents teachers from all sectors and levels of education in Portugal.

Prof. Dalila Andrade firstly spoke about the complex educational environment in Brazil. Dalila, who is Director for Institutional Cooperation, International and Innovation in the Lula administration in Brazil and a national researcher for the T3LFA project, noted the need to involve teachers' unions in positive change around learning to address the intersecting forms of discrimination that have long marked Brazilian society.

Monika Bieri, the lead facilitator of the learning circles project in Switzerland, next talked of the need for collaboration in education using the analogy of a wooden hamster wheel. Monika stressed the necessity for teachers to have the facilities to reflect on their practices to support their students in becoming subjects of their learning instead of being objects of assessments.

Ana Maria Clementino, who leads one of the Brazilian learning circles, consequently spoke of the learning opportunities that derive from learning circles. Ana detailed how the circles are inclusive spaces of professional learning and development that enable teachers to grow together.

Finally, Manuela Mendonça, executive board member at Education International, spoke of the importance of the work occurring within the Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment Project (T3LFA) to fostering democratic futures and more inclusive societies. Manuela specifically noted that learning circles are an example of pedagogical activism in action.

Overall, workshop participants noted that they were inspired by the models developed in the circles, highlighting that they did not drop, like thunder, from the sky, but grew from teachers on the ground. One Ugandan participant noted the need for the move towards formative assessment in Uganda where summative assessment was the norm. It was widely understood by participants at the end of the workshop that it was necessary to give teachers the space to think about their practice through learning circles to develop the capabilities of all students in their classrooms.

Photos from the event are [available to view here](#) and a blog post from the event written by the project's lead facilitator in Switzerland, Monika Bieri, is available to read in German [here](#).

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with project activities as well as developments across our seven project countries by visiting [our dedicated project page](#).

### **Brazilian teachers highlight that work in learning circles must be supported by policy change**

The Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project continues to progress in Brazil, with the aim of providing teachers with the space to identify, test and develop formative assessment practices that respond to the unique learning needs of students in classrooms across the country.

The promising formative assessment practices identified by teachers in their circles in Brazil, as well as across the project's six other countries, will eventually be shared with the global

professional community in the form of an ALMA course that will help educators across the world improve students' learning outcomes.

In Brazil, the project's three learning circles having met four times and participants have engaged in two individual tutorials. These learning circles and tutorials have taken place remotely since participants reside across the country, teaching in a variety of schools that represent the diversity of the Brazilian context.

Despite the various educational contexts represented by teachers involved in the project's learning circles in Brazil, teachers in all circles have identified a series of common challenges that need to be overcome so that positive and lasting change can occur in classrooms.

The challenges identified by teachers include inadequate working conditions, where excessive workloads limit the opportunities available to plan to deliver innovative formative assessment practices. These challenges also extend to having to meet rigid benchmarks and educational indexes that are based on the results of large-scale summative assessments, detracting from the space available to introduce and experiment with new formative assessment practices.

Despite this confluence of challenges, participants in all three circles in Brazil have found that learning circles can be spaces for discussion that results in the creation of formative assessment practices that are made by teachers, for teachers, to meet the unique needs of each student.

However, for the learning circles to spread more broadly across the country, teachers have expressed a need for a shift in public policy so that they are supported to use their leadership skills to autonomously decide what practices will work best for learners.

The need for policy change highlights the importance of the advocacy strand of the Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project, underscoring the significance of working in close collaboration with our member organisation in Brazil, *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação* (CNTE), to conduct advocacy that will contribute to continuous professional learning and development for teachers across the country and improvements in working conditions.

Teachers' participating in the project in Brazil will have another opportunity to express their hopes and desires for policy change as well as share examples of promising formative assessment practice when they come together for their first face-to-face meeting in Brasilia on the 25th and 26th of July 2023.

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with the project in Brazil and across our six other project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

### **Working with teachers in classrooms to build bottom-up evaluation practices in Brazil**

On the 25th and 26th of July 2023, the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project held an in-person seminar in collaboration with the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação* (CNTE) for all participants based in Brazil. The meeting, held in Brasilia, was a powerful representation of what teachers and unions can do when they come together.

It was clear from the start of the seminar that participants were eager to learn from each other's diverse experiences experimenting with formative assessment practices in classrooms across the country. From indigenous teachers to those teaching in Quilombolo schools, the inclusive reach of the programme across the whole of Brazil was strongly felt and expressed not only at the beginning of the seminar but throughout the two-day meeting.

The first day of the seminar commenced with presentations from a range of individuals. Opening the meeting, Heleno Araújo, President of CNTE, thanked everyone for coming and noted the importance of the opportunity for CNTE to be the first to shape formative assessment “to oppose an external evaluation or an evaluation that comes from the top down” in Brazil and beyond.

The project's national researcher in Brazil and Director for Institutional Cooperation, International and Innovation in the Lula administration, Dr Dalila Andrade Oliviera, next reiterated the sentiments expressed by Heleno, emphasising that the learning circles project allows teachers and unions to shape learning and development from the bottom-up by working “with teachers in the classroom.”

The importance of giving teachers professional autonomy to develop formative assessment practice through the project was later underscored by Professor João Horta, a researcher at INEP, since in his opinion the Basic Education Evaluation System that has been in force since 2018 does not consider the diverse regional realities of Brazil.

Through putting people who have the necessary knowledge in control of processes, Martin Henry, Research, Advocacy and Policy Coordinator at Education International, summarised that the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project was a unique form of pedagogical activism that:

- Allowed unions and teachers to work together to define formative assessment;
- Countered top-down approaches by identifying practice from the bottom-up;
- Acknowledged that teachers work better with their peers;
- Created a space for facilitators to lead and support the reflection process;
- Promoted formative assessment that is focused more on learning than on reporting.

Emphasising the advocacy strand of the project, Guelda Andrade, vice-President of CNTE, underscored that this unique form of continuous professional development must respect teachers' time to overcome the impact of the pandemic on literacy rates. To ensure that learning circles do not become an additional form of unremunerated labour for teachers in Brazil, all levels of government must provide institutional time for continuous professional development. This, Guelda underlined, would have a distinct impact on women, since most teachers in Brazil, as well as in the project, are women.

The speakers' presentations were followed by a series of interventions by teachers as well as training sessions and workshops that gave participants the space to reflect on their learning circle journeys.

Photos from the seminar are available to be accessed [here](#), a second news item on teachers' reflections in the seminar can be read [here](#), and a news item written by CNTE about the event is available to view [here](#).

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with project activities in Brazil as well as developments across our six other project countries by visiting [our dedicated project page](#).

## **Teachers gather in Brasilia to show what is possible when united through learning circles**

On the 25th and 26th of July 2023, the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project held an in-person seminar in collaboration with the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação* (CNTE) for all participants based in Brazil. The meeting, held in Brasilia, was a powerful representation of what teachers can do when they come together, united through their participation in learning circles.

On the first day of the seminar, following [a series of presentations](#) by union officials, national researchers and the education international team, teachers participating in the project explained their wide-ranging expectations for the meeting and the project. Teachers in classrooms based in the northeast expressed that “in this programme you are allowed to respect the cognitive development of individual students” whilst another teacher from Tocantins spoke of the event being the only place they could learn about the reality of indigenous schools and Quilombolo schools.

During the time allocated for discussion, it was made clear that the contrast between rural indigenous and Quilombolo schools, where a significant number of students get up at 5 am to get to school, and urban schools from San Paolo cannot be underestimated. An indigenous teacher during the session asked, “How is it possible that indigenous children who do not speak the Portuguese language go through the same evaluation as native speakers of the language?” emphasising the importance of the project for developing context specific practice that joins together “pedagogical activism and indigenous activism.”

On the second day of the seminar, the activities turned to the work being developed by teachers in their schools to meet the unique needs of learners in their classrooms. The teachers were separated into three rooms according to their circles and were able to present to their colleagues the work they had produced as part of the project. During these sessions, it was noted that teachers were at different stages in their thinking and practice, while some presented their initial ideas, others spoke to how they had consulted peers and created action plans. However, all the teachers were clear on the purpose of their work and how it would be carried out.

At the end of the final day of the seminar, teachers engaged in a final evaluative activity, where they expressed that they had gained companionship, knowledge, growth and understanding from the meeting and their Teacher-led Learning Circle for Formative Assessment experience.

The efforts people made to participate in the two-day seminar were particularly poignant and cannot go unmentioned. Four teachers from Mato Grosso had been docked pay for coming to union delivered Professional Learning and Development by the local administration. However, they pointed out that teacher and student learning were more important and that they would keep fighting. The teachers recognised the unwavering support they had got from the union to continue their participation, and all expressed their commitment to do so despite intersecting challenges.

Photos from the seminar are available to be accessed [here](#), a second news item on the presentations given by researchers, union officials and EI to open the meeting can be read [here](#), and a news item written by CNTE about the event is available to view [here](#).

Want to find out more? Continue to keep up to date with project activities in Brazil as well as developments across our six other project countries by visiting [our dedicated project page](#).

## **Teachers as change agents and knowledge creators**

The [HertsCam Network](#) is currently playing an enabling role in the 'Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment' project led by Educational International and funded by the Jacobs Foundation. At HertsCam, we are committed to 'non-positional teacher leadership' in which any teacher can be empowered and enabled to lead the development of practice in their schools.

At the planning stage, we wanted the outcome of the Learning Circles project to be the sharing of accounts of good practice in relation to formative assessment from all the participating countries – Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, South Korea, Switzerland and Uruguay. In order to achieve this, we wanted to empower the participating teachers and enable them to become agents of change. We wanted them to work with their colleagues to develop practice, tackle the obstacles and embed innovations in the routines of their schools. Then they would be able to tell stories about these promising practices, showing how they can work in different settings.

### **Empowerment through facilitation**

Groups of teachers would be facilitated by experienced teachers in their own countries using the 'teacher-led development work' methodology. Facilitators are provided with a tool kit designed by HertsCam and inducted into the role by experienced facilitators from the HertsCam Network. These 'Link Facilitators' are teachers who have been successful facilitators of teacher leadership groups in the UK and who have also previously provided induction and support for facilitators in many other countries. This was most recently documented for example in a Russian language book '[Teacher Leadership in Kazakhstan](#)' (Qanay et al., 2003).

"The secret to authentic change is to mobilise teachers' human agency; enable them to reconnect with their moral purpose as educators and provide the scaffolding for a process in which they create their own pathways forward."

In my own blog, I have written about a [pedagogy of empowerment](#) which resonates with Paulo Freire's ideas. The empowerment model rests on the concept of facilitation. This is a radical alternative to the more common forms of support for teachers and practice development. Policy statements and reports often include recommendations that teachers be offered training as if this is unproblematic. In HertsCam, teachers talk about their frustrations with programmes which are supposed to lead to professional development and learning but are in fact disempowering and not based on understanding the actual context of the schools concerned. As I have argued in a [previous publication](#), 'training' is based on the assumption that there is a deficit in the teacher that can be fixed by trainers. It is assumed that the trainers have a higher level expertise and knowledge that they can somehow transmit to the teachers. The terms 'professional development' and 'professional learning' may seem more respectful than 'training', but the

problem is that, although we might change the terminology from time to time, actual practice tends to be shaped by the same old values and beliefs. It amounts to teachers having stuff done to them. Of course, teachers will always need to extend their teaching repertoires, develop their pedagogical understanding and improve their classroom practice, but top-down approaches can be counter-productive.

The secret to authentic change is to mobilise teachers' human agency; enable them to reconnect with their moral purpose as educators and provide the scaffolding for a process in which they create their own pathways forward. Facilitators do not instruct; they do not try to tell teachers what they should think or how they should teach; they do not give the teachers tasks which will make them feel belittled by their lack of knowledge. Facilitators do not undermine teachers' confidence. On the contrary, facilitators provide safe spaces for teachers to engage in critical friendship and reflection so that they are able to clarify their own values and identify their personal priorities for change. In Learning Circles, Facilitators use tools in workshop activities which enable every teacher in the group to bring their identity and experience to the discussion. Through this sort of process, the teacher can frame their development goals and plan a process of change in which they work collaboratively with colleagues in their schools to review current practice and embed new practice in their classrooms.

### A global conversation about pedagogy

Colleagues in the Learning Circles in Cote D'Ivoire have almost completed the process and we look forward to finding out about the innovations they have brought about. Colleagues in Switzerland and Brazil will complete in the next few weeks and others are still in the early stages. Early indications are that teachers are embracing this opportunity to be agents of change. They seem to relish the opportunity to support each other in reflecting on their own practice and circumstances in relation to their professional values. They have been able to identify their own priorities under the broad umbrella of formative assessment and have planned processes of development that match their particular contexts.

One of the teachers from Côte d'Ivoire contributed to the recent HertsCam Annual Conference by sending a short video of herself talking, in French, about her project along with a brief written vignette. I was glad that the other teachers at the conference – from different parts of the UK and from other countries including Egypt, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Northern Ireland, Moldova and Romania - were able to hear something about this achievement.

This is just the beginning of a global conversation brokered by Education International about formative assessment practice and non-positional teacher leadership. We hope that teachers all over the world will be able to learn about the practical steps they can take to develop formative assessment practice in their own schools. We also hope that they will be inspired by the achievements of the teachers who have participated in the Learning Circles and will want to become agents of change themselves.

### **Promising formative assessment practices proliferate in Ghana**

Teacher-led learning circles are places of reflection, where teachers come together to discuss and plan how to trial different forms of formative assessment in their classrooms in the hope of ultimately identifying promising practice.

In Ghana, following three workshops held as part of the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment project, teachers in learning circles in Ahafo Ano, Ajumako, Bolga, Bosomtwi, Builsa and Cape Coast have come up with individual formative assessment projects.

The projects that have been put together by teachers in all corners of the country vary from focusing on empowering literacy to developing strategies for improving reading. They are all, however, united by their identification of formative assessment strategies that will be experimented with by each teacher in their classrooms. These strategies include playing a game of pick and act with students, where learners are asked to choose a piece of cardboard with written text and read the text whilst acting out the scene that is being described.

Teachers in their learning circles in Ghana have consequently reflected on whether any of these formative assessment practices have resulted in an improvement in student learning. In Cape Coast, a teacher using a variety of methods of formative assessment such as think pair share, classroom observation, peer teaching, thumbs up and thumbs down, letter and sound games and mini interviews, has identified positive changes in student learning because of using these new strategies. The teacher has excitedly reported that some learners have built such confidence putting together sounds that they quickly raise their hands to try to read or sound out a word, even if they are not completely certain that their response is correct.

With four more workshops to be held in Ghana, teachers will continue to reflect on, discuss and develop promising formative assessment practices in their schools through their learning circles until the end of December. This hopefully indicates that promising practice will continue to proliferate from teachers in circles in Cape Coast, Ahafo Ano and Bolga to facilitate student learning across Ghana and the rest of the world.

See photos from the most recent workshops in Ghana [here](#). Want to find out more about the T3LFA project in Ghana or even learn about the work that is taking place across our six other project countries? Take a look at the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment page](#).

### **Context matters! Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment methodology adapted to spark success in Malaysia**

The teachers and facilitators engaged in the Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project in Malaysia have now participated in four workshop sessions, two tutorials and two network events. The continued progression of the project has led to the development of promising formative assessment practice among participants as facilitators continue to ensure that the circles stimulate deliberation and reflection.

The facilitators participating in the project in Malaysia were guided by the national researcher, Dr Zuwati Hassim, during workshop's one and two as well as throughout network event one. Dr Hassim stepped back after this, empowering the facilitators by giving them the freedom to experiment with different facilitation methods to engage teachers within their assigned circles after the third workshop. "The step-in and step-out role of the researcher in the learning circle is necessary to promote understanding and to set a clear direction towards formative assessment practice" explains Dr Hassim. The 'step-in' referred to by Malaysia's national researcher occurs when the researcher sees the need to intervene and to give feedback to either the facilitators or

the participants during the workshop and the network event session. Whereas on the other hand, 'step-out' is used to avoid overdependence of the participants on the researcher.

Teachers and facilitators in Malaysia have been very committed to achieving and promoting promising formative assessment practices. This was evidenced by teachers' learning circle attendance and reflective practice as well as reports of trailing new formative assessment practice within their classrooms and extending their practice with other teachers within and outside their circles. For example, Teacher Haninah from Circle A indicated in her reflective journal that:

"I need to be more specific on the formative assessment [practice] that is effective to help pupils' learning so that it is more meaningful and helpful for the pupils. Besides, it also should be able to enhance my teaching and provide reflection so that I can improve myself in using the suitable strategy of pedagogy as well as assessment. I also need to have colleague consultation in order to ensure that I am on the right track and having discussion would help to foster my understanding and improve on the assessment I currently practised."

In addition to this, learning circle participants in Malaysia also found that a collaborative network is useful for their knowledge development. For example, Teacher Dave (from Circle B) asserted that he:

"Learned different strategies from other participants... [where he found] some ideas are interesting and could be used as the reference where he "also learned more about formative assessment."

Considering most of the workshop sessions in Malaysia are conducted via an online platform, the willingness to learn is commendable. Teacher Heman (from Circle C) shared his reflection that:

"The virtual meet up had not only given me an opportunity to share my knowledge and experiences on the formative assessment at my school, but it also had been the greatest platform to learn new tools, strategies and techniques shared by many other experienced teachers. The two hours spent in this meeting will surely be useful for years, for me to test and use in my school for the benefits of my students."

See photos from the most recent workshops as well as network events in Malaysia [here](#). Want to find out more about the T3LFA project in Malaysia or even learn about the work that is taking place across our six other project countries? Take a look at the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment page](#).

### **Education International meets with the Ministry of Education in Cote d'Ivoire to fight for formative assessment**

The 25th of September marks the first day of the 2023-2024 school year in Cote d'Ivoire. For the last seven years, the day has been one filled with ceremonies for students, teachers, and parents. This is because since 2016, the Ministry of Education has held official ceremonies in each of the four regions of the country to signify that each child enrolled in primary education would receive a school kit on the first day of the new academic year.

The kits, composed of a backpack, textbook, notebook, and pens, are part of an effort by the government of Cote d'Ivoire to give the most vulnerable students the opportunity to start the school year at ease. This sentiment was one that was reiterated by all speakers throughout the day's central launch ceremony in Songon, Abidjan, where the Prime Minister, Patrick Achi, and the Minister of Education and Literacy, Mariatou Koné, emphasised how the kits symbolise the efforts being made across the country to create equitable learning conditions for all.

Ahead of a two-day learning seminar in Grand Bassam held within the scope of Education International's [Teacher-led Learning Circle for Formative Assessment](#) (T3LFA) project, SNEPPCI, alongside Education International, were present at the central launch ceremony. Together, SNEPPCI and EI had the opportunity to speak with the Minister of Education and Literacy, Mariatou Koné, about how the T3LFA project could contribute to the government's goal of building an education system that creates citizens that can positively transform Cote d'Ivoire.

At the event, Martin Henry, Research, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at EI, explained to Minister Koné that with support from [Jacobs Foundation](#) the project aims to provide teachers in Cote d'Ivoire with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions. Minister Koné agreed that formative assessment is an indispensable tool for evaluating the skills and assets of each student as an individual. The Minister further outlined that she was looking forward to the SNEPPCI and EI delegation meeting with individuals from her office later that day to advocate for the kind of continuous professional learning and development introduced by the project.

Later that afternoon, after visiting the SNEPPCI offices, EI alongside SNEPPCI had productive meetings with Anastasie Kacou Sepou, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Education and Literacy, as well as Coulibaly Adama, General Coordinator of General Inspection at the Ministry of Education and Literacy. Whilst Coulibaly Adama, General Coordinator of General Inspection at the Ministry of Education and Literacy, highlighted that formative assessment would be crucial to complementing current forms of assessment in place in Cote d'Ivoire, Anastasie Kacou Sepou, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Education and Literacy, clarified the concrete steps that the Ministry could take to disseminate the learnings from the T3LFA project across the country. In particular, Deputy Chief of Staff Sepou noted that once the final outputs of the project had been shared, the Ministry will consider how key learnings on developing promising formative assessment practice through teacher-led learning circles could be introduced in its planning meeting ahead of the following academic year.

Both SNEPPCI and EI left the meetings at the Ministry's offices in Abidjan optimistic. Advocacy efforts must continue to ensure that the Ministry of Education and Literacy makes space and dedicated institutional time for continuous professional learning and development to allow teachers to experiment with promising formative assessment practices in Cote d'Ivoire.

[See pictures from the day here!](#) Want to find out more about our learning event in Cote d'Ivoire or even learn about the work that is taking place across our six other project countries? Take a look at the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment page](#).

**Just the beginning: The first cycle of Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment in Côte d'Ivoire comes to an end**

Following the completion of seven workshops, three tutorials and two networking events, on the 26th and 27th of September 2023, Education International in partnership with SNEPPCI brought together all individuals involved in the [Teacher-led Learning Circle for Formative Assessment \(T3LFA\)](#) project in Côte d'Ivoire to exchange on, as well as celebrate, their year-long learning circle experience.

Côte d'Ivoire is one of the seven T3LFA project countries. The project, with the support of the [Jacobs Foundation](#), aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

The first day of the learning event in Grand Bassam began with an opening ceremony, where the Secretary General of SNEPPCI, Andjou Andjou, highlighted the importance of teacher-led learning circles for formative assessment, recognising that they provide teachers with a means of reinforcing their learning whilst simultaneously improving the quality of education. This theme was reiterated by Andre Deloh, the Director of the Ministry of Education and Literacy's Programme Monitoring Department who, having worked closely with SNEPPCI to follow the project in Côte d'Ivoire since its inception, stated that providing this form of continuous professional learning and development to teachers was crucial to enabling student learning.

Deloh also stated that the Programme Monitoring Department were considering the ways in which the project could be rolled out across all of Côte d'Ivoire, emphasising the importance of union-led initiatives that provide solutions to the country's current educational challenges. Education International's Coordinator of the Office of the General Secretary, Undarmaa Batsukh, emphasised that Côte d'Ivoire could not have succeeded in being the first project country to complete the T3LFA programme without SNEPPCI's strong engagement. Batsukh highlighted that this should be seen as just the beginning, as continuing the open dialogue that has been established between SNEPPCI and the Ministry is the only way to ensure the project cascades beyond the classrooms of the thirty teachers originally involved.

Following the official opening and welcome, the project's national researcher in Côte d'Ivoire, Professor Claude Koutou, took up his role as moderator, asking participants to introduce themselves and explain what they had learnt as part of the project. Once everyone had the chance to speak, the learning event moved to a presentation by Dr Cristopher Yaw Kwaah, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Cape Coast and the project's national researcher for Ghana. The day then turned again to centering the experiences of project participants in Côte d'Ivoire, with Education International's Regional Coordinator for Africa, Pedi Anawi moderating a panel discussion where project teachers, alongside Sy Savane Ami Toure, the Director of the Pedagogical Education and Training Centre of Grand Bassam, spoke to the challenges involved in introducing formative assessment in the classroom. The first day concluded with David Frost, the Co-Director of HertsCam, speaking of how learning circles give teachers the opportunity to lead a development project by allowing them to try, fail, and try once again.

Invigorated by the first day's activities, and the commitment expressed by the Ministry of Education and Literacy to consider expanding the project in Côte d'Ivoire, on the second day of the event, teachers went straight into group work. During an hour and a half long session, teachers sat in new circles containing those from regions other than their own and outlined: the promising formative assessment practices they had developed, the change that they had

witnessed in student learning, and the ways they could share their promising formative assessment practices with others.

After teachers outlined their strategies for communicating on how the introduction of promising assessment practices such as think, pair, share had changed their student's confidence with other educators, they engaged in the final activity of the day: a gallery walk exhibiting their project portfolios. Once everyone had the opportunity to appreciate the hard work and dedication that they had all put into the project, the two-day learning event ended with a graduation ceremony. At the ceremony, teachers were handed their certificates and both the Secretary General of SNEPPCI, Andjou Andjou, and the Director of the Ministry of Education and Literacy's Programme Monitoring Department, Andre Deloh, reiterated their commitment to working together to introduce learning circles for formative assessment across Côte d'Ivoire.

Martin Henry, Research, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at Education International closed the ceremony and the event by a similar sentiment: "this is just the beginning" said Henry "the seeds of educational change have been sown, it is now up to SNEPPCI and the Ministry of Education and Literacy to tend to the promising formative assessment practices that are sprouting from teacher-led learning circles in all four corners of the country."

[Take a look at photos from the two-day event here!](#) Want to find out more about our learning event in Côte d'Ivoire or even learn about the work that is taking place across our six other project countries? Take a look at the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment page!](#)

### **Listen to Education International's new "Pedagogies of Possibility" podcast!**

Education International's new "*Pedagogies of Possibility*" podcast series explores how the Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment (T3LFA) project has provided the space for educators to come together across its seven project countries to invent innovative pedagogical practice that improves educational outcomes for all students.

The podcast is being launched in the framework of the "[Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment](#)" project.

The T3LFA project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions. It is implemented in partnership with member organisations in 7 countries (CNTE/Brazil, FUMTEP/Uruguay, GNAT/Ghana, NUTP/Malaysia, LCH/Switzerland, KTU/South Korea and SNEPPCI/Côte d'Ivoire) with support from Jacobs Foundation.

The first two episodes of the podcast, entitled "*Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Pedagogical Activism*" and "*Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Reflective Practice*" were released today!

Listen to the podcast episodes by using the links in the table below and subscribe to the EI podcast channel wherever you get your podcasts to make sure that you keep up to date with the "*Pedagogies of Possibility*" podcast series.

Episode 1: Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Pedagogical Activism

The first episode of the podcast, entitled *“Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Pedagogical Activism”* explores how teachers participating in the T3LFA project in Switzerland have creatively used technology to invent formative assessment practices that meet the distinct needs of each student. The conversation then turns to discussing how having dedicated time to develop and reflect on these promising formative assessment practices in learning circles can be understood as a form of pedagogical activism. [Listen to the first episode here!](#)

### Episode 2: Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Reflective Practice

The second episode of the podcast, entitled *“Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Reflective Practice”* returns to Switzerland to discuss the importance of encouraging reflective practice amongst teachers. It then touches on the ways in which educational systems can make space for this work through the incorporation of teacher-led learning circles into pre-existing continuous professional development. [Listen to the second episode here!](#)

### Episode 3: Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Decolonial Practice

The third episode of the podcast, entitled "Pedagogies of Possibility: Learning Circles & Decolonial Practice" explores how teacher-led learning circles for formative assessment respond to Brazil's distinct colonial history and are spaces for teachers to create critical pedagogies that allow for engagement in educational praxis, where teachers and students engage in a continual process of understanding and acting on the world in order to change it. [Listen to the third episode here!](#)

Want to find out more about the T3LFA project? Continue to keep up to date with project activities across our seven project countries by visiting our [dedicated project page](#).

## **A Pair of Webinars Spark Interest in Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment**

Education International (EI) held two webinars on the 5th of September 2023 and the 3rd of October 2023 in the framework of the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment \(T3LFA\) project](#). The two webinars explored the project's impact on teachers, students, schools, and communities worldwide.

The T3LFA project aims to provide teachers with tools and support to identify and establish effective teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

The project began in the wake of global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, where the international community returned to privileging summative assessment. Education International recognised that in this context, it was necessary to provide professional development to support teachers' leadership and expert use of formative assessment. This would help identify students' learning needs and provide feedback to improve their progress. With support from the [Jacobs Foundation](#), the project began in 2022, and is being implemented in Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, South Korea, Switzerland, and Uruguay.

The two-part webinar series was an important opportunity to give teachers, facilitators, researchers and union partners in the project's seven countries a space to share their experiences with a global audience. It also provided the project's international researchers and

facilitators with the ability to explain the tools and theoretical frameworks that have guided the facilitators and teachers through their first teacher-led learning circle cycle.

The first webinar entitled "Formative Assessment Practices Around the World: What works and what doesn't?" was held on the 5th of September and began with an introduction by the project's international research team. Professor Carol Campbell, Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto and Dr Danielle LaPointe-McEwan, Adjunct Professor at Queen's University, outlined the contents of the [literature review](#) and [research framework](#) that provides the basis for the project as well as clarified what is next for the project's international research team.

The webinar was then moderated by Danielle, who moved the conversation between Dr Claude Koutou, the project's national researcher in Cote d'Ivoire and Professor at the Universite Felix Houphouet Boigny and Ana Maria Clementino, Learning Circle Facilitator in Brazil and Researcher at the Federal University of Minas Gerais as well as two of the project's union partners Gabriela Arbeleche, Acting General Secretary of the Federacion Uruguaya de Magisterio Trabajadores de Education Primaria (FUM-TEP) and Hyunsu Hwang, International President of the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU).

The first webinar's panelists gave important insights that highlighted the:

- Global readiness for formative assessment and collaborative teacher professional learning on the topic of formative assessment;
- Positive impacts of formative assessment on both students and teachers, with learning being enhanced through developing stronger student-teacher relationships;
- Spread of formative assessment through teacher leadership within and beyond the project;
- Adaptation of the Learning Circles model in response to diverse country, school and classroom contexts as well as participants' needs, access to technology, and political conditions;
- Importance of collaboratively navigating challenges to support participants' engagement in the project and the implementation of promising formative assessment practices.

The second webinar, entitled "Teacher-leadership for Formative Assessment Around the World: What works and what doesn't?" took place a month later, on the 3rd of October, and built on the insights of the first. The webinar began with Julie Roberts, former secondary school teacher and school principal introducing her fellow co-director of [HertsCam](#) and Emeritus Fellow at Wolfson College Cambridge, Dr David Frost who clarified how the T3LFA project empowers and enables teachers to be agents of change in their schools, communities, and wider society.

The focus of the webinar then moved to the teachers involved in the teacher-led learning circles themselves, with Selina Brunner, teacher and learning circle participant in St Gallen, Switzerland, describing how her promising formative assessment practices have positively impacted students. Selina then moved the webinar into a panel discussion among Viknesh Nair a/I Devaharan, teacher and learning circle participant in Penang, Malaysia, Ruth Annan Sly, teacher and learning circle participant in Cape Coast, Ghana, and Hyunok Oh, teacher and learning circle participant in Jeonbuk, South Korea.

During the second webinar, the teacher panelists outlined:

- How they developed formative assessment strategies such as think-pair-share, peer assessment, questioning, classroom discussion, exit slips and quizzes to more actively involve learners in their classrooms;
- How formative assessment transforms students into active learners who have meaningful learning experiences;
- How the project has given teachers the ability to influence, guide and support colleagues and the broader educational community to improve teaching and learning practices;
- The challenges that teachers face in getting colleagues to adopt formative assessment due to the novelty of the practice in particular contexts.

Overall, the webinar series highlighted that teachers must continue to be supported by unions and governments to participate in continuous professional learning and development programmes to provide inclusive quality public education for all.

Interested in keeping up to date with the project and finding out more about the progression of the project in our seven project countries? [Listen to our podcast](#) and follow our project page [here](#).

### **Malaysian and South Korean Teachers Agree - Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment Empower and Enable Teachers to Become Agents of Change**

The verdict from teachers across Malaysia and South Korea could not be clearer: Teacher-led learning circles for formative assessment are a unique form of continuous professional learning and development (CPLD) that empowers and enables teachers to use their leadership skills to identify and establish promising formative assessment practices in their classrooms. Teachers must continue to be supported by unions and governments to participate in CPLD programmes to provide inclusive quality public education for all.

On the 4 and 5 November, Education International in partnership with the Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU) and the National Union of the Teaching Profession Malaysia (NUTP), held a groundbreaking Asia-Pacific learning event in Seoul, South Korea as a part of the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment \(T3LFA\) project](#).

The T3LFA project is currently being conducted in seven countries with the support of its union members and the [Jacobs Foundation](#). The project aims to provide teachers with the tools and support necessary to identify and establish promising teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

To help realise the project's ambitious goal, thirty-nine teachers, facilitators, national researchers, and union representatives from Malaysia and South Korea were brought together in Seoul to partake in a packed programme.

The two-day event began with a welcome from Aminuddin Bin Awang, President of NUTP, Yeonok Jeon, Vice-President of KTU, and Undarmaa Batsukh, coordinator at EI, who each stressed the importance of the event to organising work that highlights the significance of respecting and trusting teachers as leaders in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

What came next on the first day of the Asia-Pacific learning event then shifted the focus to teachers themselves through a panel discussion with national researchers Dr Zuwati Binti Hasim, associate professor at Universiti Malaya and Dr Sun Kim, research professor at Chungnam

National University, that took stock of what had been achieved as part of the project in Malaysia and South Korea so far, group work where teachers first discussed and then presented the promising formative assessment practices developed in their classrooms, and paired work where teachers recorded one on another sharing their T3LFA experience on their smartphones.

The second day of the learning event was just as jam-packed with opportunities for inspiration and exchange as the first. The General Secretary of NUTP Fouzi Singon and vice-president of KTU Yeonok Jeon began the day by emphasising that this was just the beginning for teacher-led learning circles for formative assessment. Next, teachers and facilitators motivated by the union's commitment to continuing the project spent time drafting and sharing action plans to ensure that teacher leadership and formative assessment would propagate through teacher-led learning circles in Malaysia and South Korea. The event concluded with a gallery walk where teachers appreciated one another's portfolios before then being handed a certificate to celebrate the learning that had taken place.

Overall, the two-day learning event:

1. Provided teachers with the opportunity to present, discuss and celebrate the promising formative assessment practices that they had developed in their learning circles and classrooms;
2. Gave both teachers and facilitators the chance to reflect on their achievements as leaders and chart how they would use their leadership skills to cascade the T3LFA project throughout Malaysia and South Korea;
3. Allowed unions to clarify their commitment to working to get governments to provide dedicated institutional time for teacher-led learning circles for formative assessment as well as other forms of CPLD that support teacher leadership for inclusive quality public education for all.

Take a look at the photos from the event [here](#)! Want to find out more about our learning event in Seoul or even learn about the work that is taking place across our six other project countries? Take a look at the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment page](#).

## **Global Collaboration in Education: T3LFA Project Strengthens Ties Between Malaysian and South Korean Unions and Educators**

On 6 November, the Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU) alongside Education International (EI) organised a school and union office visit for Malaysian teachers and members of the National Union of the Teaching Profession Malaysia (NUTP) who were in Seoul, South Korea, as a part of the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment \(T3LFA\) project](#).

The T3LFA project is currently being conducted in seven countries, including Malaysia and South Korea, with the support of its union members and the [Jacobs Foundation](#). The project aims to provide teachers with the tools and support necessary to identify and establish promising teacher-led formative assessment practices that can be disseminated within and across education unions.

As a part of the project, thirty-nine teachers, facilitators, national researchers, and union representatives from Malaysia and South Korea had come together in Seoul in the preceding days to take part in a two-day Asia-Pacific learning event.

After a successful two-day exchange, South Korean teachers returned to their classrooms and the Malaysian delegation began the final day of their visit by being guided through Seoul Cheonwang Elementary School by its Principal Jeong Yong-Ju.

The school, whose motto is Learn Together Grow Together, aims to provide an inclusive educational community for its teachers and students. This was clear in the physical structure of the school, with the delegation having the opportunity to explore classrooms, indoor play areas, a woodcraft room, a therapy studio known by students as the mind playground as well as so much more.

Following the tour of the school, Principal Jeong Yong-Ju brought Malaysian teachers, facilitators and NUTP union representatives together in a circle to give a presentation that highlighted the ethos guiding his stewardship of Seoul Cheonwang Elementary.

During his presentation, Principal Young-Ju emphasised that a change to the curriculum in 2022 meant that teachers had more flexibility and adaptability in using their leadership skills to identify and establish teaching methods that ensure that all students can enjoy the benefits of education. Despite this change, teachers have faced challenges as balancing standardised testing with holistic evaluations has proved difficult and protecting professionalism so that the autonomy of the curriculum is not a teacher's responsibility has also posed a problem.

Principal Young-Ju clarified that the way forward included: continuous training and support for teachers; regular review and revision of evaluation methods; engaging stakeholders in the reform process; and fostering a democratic school culture. Malaysian teachers, facilitators and representatives from NUTP agreed, that continuous collaboration that accepts teachers as leaders in their classrooms, schools and communities was necessary to ensure inclusive quality public education for all.

After the visit, the delegation was guided to the KTU's office, built with compensation provided by the South Korean government after a historic conflict. During the welcome by KTU president, Malaysian teachers, facilitators and representatives from NUTP strongly mirrored Heeyeong Jeon's sentiments, reiterating that it was important to build solidarity and unity between NUTP, KTU and EI for the benefit of all teachers and students.

What followed was a presentation on the history of KTU by Hyunsu Hwang, International Director of KTU, as well as a tour of the office's gallery that encapsulated the spirit of one of the union's motto's 'conservatives tried to kill KTU, but KTU is immortal.' Education trade unions are central to disseminating promising teacher-led formative assessment practices identified and established with the tools and support provided by the T3LFA project. KTU and NUTP's strength is crucial to continuing to realise the T3LFA project to provide inclusive quality public education for all.

The Malaysian delegation ended the day in Seoul inspired by what they had seen. Take a look at the photos from the day [here](#)! Want to find out more about our learning event in Seoul or even learn about the work that is taking place across our six other project countries? Take a look at the [Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment page](#).

**Formative assessment: an opportunity to make progress on professionalisation**

In Uruguay, student learning at primary school level is assessed in different ways. Traditional summative practices coexist with practices aligned with the concept of formative assessment or the idea of assessing for learning. Academic freedom and solid teacher training in Uruguay – teachers are either graduates from official or accredited institutions – make it possible to use and design both assessment modalities.

Beginning in 2007, driven by a progressive government and because education in our country [1] is organised independently, formative assessment increasingly became a systematic practice in primary education.

Spaces were created for people to reflect collectively, and paid working time was specifically set aside for them to analyse, discuss, and build collective didactic knowledge. This led educational institutions, which traditionally operated hierarchically, to embark on different processes that opened up opportunities for all teaching staff to participate.

Initially, the System of Learning Assessment (SEA) was comprised of groups of assessment specialists and teaching staff who developed items and organised tests for assessment that were applied using the Plan Ceibal [2] technology resource. In doing so, all teachers in the country had the opportunity to understand and assess their students' knowledge, identify possible reasons behind their mistakes, understand the reality of their group, and engage in conversations with other teachers based on information from the assessment.

These were the first steps, and they marked the beginning of a process where significant progress was made on the professionalisation of teaching staff. Spaces were created for people to reflect collectively, and paid working time was specifically set aside for them to analyse, discuss, and build collective didactic knowledge. This led educational institutions, which traditionally operated hierarchically, to embark on different processes that opened up opportunities for all teaching staff to participate. The Early Childhood and Primary Education Programme [3] itself allowed these approaches to be adopted because it defines teachers as intellectuals capable of transformation. It also promotes and values pedagogical dialogue from the point of view of didactic communication at the institutional level. "*Teachers are intellectuals who use their knowledge to problematise and question their own practice and that of others, analysing the assumptions on which it is based and revealing them. This revelation is not an individual or individualistic activity but a collective and cooperative activity that establishes itself as an institutional model.*"(p.36)

The opportunity to meet around a table, analyse students' work, listen to different arguments and compare them, and exchange ideas with colleagues with such rich and varied educational backgrounds meant teachers had to turn to theoretical foundations so they could discuss and make progress on building subject-based didactic knowledge in different areas of expertise.

Formative assessment, or assessment for learning, thus became an opportunity to promote students' learning based on their knowledge, mistakes, and assumptions. It also enhanced the growth and development of teaching staff who became agents of change for their own practice and for institutional practices that had often been implemented without critical examination or the opportunity to review them.

The strengthening of professionalism and empowerment of teachers led to a change in leadership styles, both in the classroom and at institutional level. In the classroom, teachers implemented what Perrenoud called "differentiated pedagogy" [4], turning themselves into democratic leaders. They listened to students and facilitated their participation in the collective process of building the kinds of knowledge that guarantee access to culture and ensure they have ownership of its benefits. At the institutional level, there was a shift from a managerial, authoritarian leadership style to the practice of more democratic and participatory styles, where listening, debating ideas, putting arguments forward, and building collectively were valued.

Unfortunately, these processes, which were highly appreciated and defended by teachers, have slowed down and have been rolled back. As a result of a change in government, which began in 2020, authoritarian leadership styles were reintroduced, limiting teacher participation in several areas and their ability to make decisions, as well as restricting their professional development opportunities. For example, Early Childhood and Primary, Secondary and Technical-Vocational Education Councils were no longer comprised of teacher representatives, changing them from bodies made up of several people to General Directorates comprised of one person. Input from Technical-Teaching Assemblies as technical advisory bodies was minimised, and we went back to a system where teachers were merely informed of decisions that had already been made.

However, we know the tracks of the previously travelled path run deep. Hence, taking part in the ["Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment T3LFA" project](#) was an opportunity for a small group of teachers to get back on track with discussions, reflection, participatory leadership and, above all, building collectively.

Limiting teacher participation in the decision-making process on matters of education and disregarding their right to professionalisation are very real ways in which these groups are being attacked. Nevertheless, the paths travelled and the search for alternatives are the tools that will allow them to continue making progress even in the most challenging times.

Law 18437. Título III Sistema Nacional de Educación Pública Capítulo I Title III National Public Education System Chapter 1

Executive Decree 144/007 Creation of the Ceibal Project "Educational Connectivity for Basic ICT for Learning online"

ANEP (2008) Early Childhood and Primary Education Programme

Perrenoud, P. (2007) *Differentiated pedagogy . From intentions to actions*. Madrid.

## Headlines

### 1. Women's Participation in Education Unions in a Time of Covid-19

Since the start of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, education unions have been pragmatic and quick to respond to the rapid changes brought about by the global health crisis. Thus, it is important for education unions to review the work done to engage with members since the onset of the pandemic through an intersectional gender lens and, from these experiences, to harvest learning that will inform building on progress to increase gender equality within unions.

There are important lessons for education unions to document and learn from, as countries move forward into a (post) Covid-19 'new normal'. This research considered the lessons learned over the last two years (2020-2022), and how they can be applied to further increase and strengthen women's participation, voice, and leadership within education unions, especially in a 'post-pandemic' world.

The purpose of the research was to investigate and analyse:

- Women's lived experiences of union engagement, participation and leadership 2020-2022);
- The effectiveness of education unions' efforts and strategies to organize and engage members; recruit new members; and to advance women's union engagement, participation, and leadership through the use of online technologies 2020-2022.

### 2. Education unions urge governments to fund inclusive education

"Unions are a place for inclusion", Australian Education Union (AEU) Federal Secretary Kevin Bates told participants at the Diversity in Education Conference, a [Sydney WorldPride](#) event. Education unions from around the world took part in the Sydney WorldPride, a two weeklong celebration of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)+ people.

The Diversity in Education conference was hosted on 28 February by the AEU and the New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF), with support from Education International. The conference was an international LGBTI+ forum for educators to create awareness and understanding of gains made by, and challenges facing, LGBTI+ workers within schools, as well as an opportunity to build community.

#### **Furthering the rights of LGBTI+ students and teachers**

Representatives from Education International (EI) member organisations, i.e. the AEU, the National Education Association (NEA)/USA, the *Fédération syndicale unitaire-Syndicat national unitaire des instituteurs, professeurs des écoles et PEGC* (FSU-SNUipp)/France, the *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (GEW)/Germany, the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association / Te Wehengarua (NZPPTA), the Educational Institute Of Scotland (EiS), the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)/Australia, the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU), the Friendly Islands Teachers Association (FITA)/Tonga, and the Samoa National Teachers' Association (SNTA), joined other activists, civil society members, and unionists to build solidarity and community and learn from one another on how to further the rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other gender diverse students and teachers.

With plenary discussions, international panels, and over 25 workshops led by teachers and their union representatives, speakers offered insights on better protection of and respect for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other gender-diverse students and teachers in schools. The role of unions in securing LGBTI+ rights, and strategies to build more inclusive unions were key themes as well.

During workshops:

- NTEU shared their ongoing campaign to secure gender affirmation leave for workers.
- IEU made a presentation on the role the union has played in supporting LGBTI+ staff and students in religious schools.
- EiS described the role the union played in securing the rights of LGBTI+ students and teachers, including on obtaining the government's 2021 national commitment to an LGBTI+ inclusive curriculum, the first country in the world to do so.
- NZPPTA outlined the role of the union's Rainbow Taskforce in providing trainings to teachers across the country on building more inclusive schools.
- GEW shared strategies for supporting trans, intersex, and nonbinary students at school.
- AEU Tasmania highlighted the role of union organising in fulfilling LGBTI+ rights.

It was clear that teachers play a critical role in the advancement of LGBTI+ rights in schools, just as unions play a critical role in securing the industrial and professional rights of LGBTI+ workers.

AEU President Correna Haythorpe told the conference: "We are committed to fighting for and protecting the industrial and professional and civil rights of our members and, indeed, the rights of all LGBTIQA+ people throughout the world".

In order for educational settings to have a culture of support and inclusivity, she believed governments and their departments must take the lead and set the standard. "To build inclusive systems we must address the issue of resourcing," she said.

### **Go Public! Fund education**

Calls for greater education funding were made by EI President Susan Hopgood, who stressed that "dwindling government investments in public education translate into an education system that is fundamentally less inclusive, impacting the most marginalised and vulnerable".

She highlighted tools that are crucial for the delivery of inclusive, quality education, including for LGBTI students, such as:

- Comprehensive gender and sexuality education that is based on scientific evidence and human rights standards.
- Pre-service and continuous professional development for teachers.
- Resources for LGBTI student organisations in schools.
- Inclusive curriculum, resources, and materials.

Hopgood also deplored the fact that education support personnel such as school counsellors or family social workers "are often the first to go when governments choose austerity over humanity".

She went on to explain that, through the [EI Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#), education unions around the world are joining forces to build inclusive quality public education for all: "We are

mobilising to fully fund public education systems and resist budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation. Go Public! Fund Education is an urgent call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.”

### **Teachers as agents for change**

The special role of teachers was also celebrated by conference speakers. They said that, as educators, trade unionists, human rights defenders, and members of the global community, teachers play a critical role in promoting inclusion and diversity in their schools, and ensuring that LGBTI students and families feel safe, seen, and respected.

The Diversity in Education Conference was part of a larger programme during Sydney WorldPride, where participants both took time to celebrate the collective joy of the LGBTQIA+ community as well as to strategise and to learn from one another how the rights of LGBTQIA+ students and teachers can be furthered in our schools, communities, and unions.

### **Mardi Gras Parade**

The festivities began with Sydney’s Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras Parade, where EI members marched to show their support for LGBTAIQ+ teachers and students. Sydney’s 45th Mardi Gras was one of the biggest ever, according to organisers, with over 12,000 marching in the parade and thousands watching. The Mardi Gras Parade commemorates the Pride celebration in New South Wales in 1978, in which police attacked members of the LGBTQ+ community. The New South Wales Teachers Federation has participated in the Mardi Gras Parade for several years. As Deputy President of NSWTF, Henry Rajendra, explained, “it is important for our LGBTQIA+ families and students to see their teachers in the Parade as it reaffirms that teachers see and validate them”.

### **WorldPride Human Rights Conference**

EI delegates also participated in the Sydney WorldPride Human Rights Conference, which was the largest LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Conference ever to be held in the southern hemisphere. In a three-day exploration of LGBTQIA+ human rights, participants reflected on where they were, their vision for the future and their legacy of change. Union delegates brought the voice of educators and unionists to the Conference.

Roundtables led by representatives from AEU, EiS, and GEW facilitated roundtable discussions on building inclusive education institutions. Strategies for collaboration amongst parents and teachers, and the importance of continuous professional development for teachers on LGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools were key issues discussed.

Hilario Benzon, Associate Director of the NEA’s Human and Civil Rights Department at the Center for Racial and Social Justice, gave a keynote address on Equality in education: creating safe spaces for teachers and students. He provided a glimpse into the anti-LGBTI+ and anti-gender legislation being introduced at a record pace across the United States, many of which directly impact curriculum in schools, school facilities, or school sports programmes. He also highlighted how so far in 2023, there have been over 327 bills introduced as “a coordinated attack against public education and the LGBTQIA+ community”. Benzon went on to explain the NEA’s efforts to resist these bills, through

training and professional development of its members for the classroom, training on how to address local and state government bodies, messaging guides, and forging partnerships with other civil society organisations, amongst other initiatives. “Through all these attacks, we must continue on our journey towards freedom, liberation, and joy with no exceptions!” he continued.

### **Call to action**

EI President Susan Hopgood stressed that “the collective strength of teachers, activists, and education unions means we can effect change even when governments are unwilling, unable, or hostile to providing quality education that is inclusive or ensuring equal access to human rights for LGBTI people. Let’s stand up to intolerance and discrimination whenever and wherever we see it. Let’s keep working to ensure our unions and schools are more LGBTI inclusive.”

The EI experience at Sydney WorldPride concluded with a powerful finish as delegates joined an estimated 50,000 people for a historic Pride march over the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was also the first time since 2000 that the bridge was closed for a march.

EI is looking forward to continuing this spirit of solidarity and joy at the next WorldPride, to be held in spring 2025 in Washington D.C., USA.

### **3. Central African Republic: Education Global Union Federation welcomes release of arrested union leaders**

Education International (EI) welcomes the release on 10 March of arrested Central African Republic trade union leaders. It will continue to closely monitor their treatment, the state of trade unionism and developments in the education system in the country.

The Director of the EI Africa Region (EIRAF), Dennis Sinyolo, sent a letter to the Prime Minister of the Central African Republic (CAR), Felix Moloua, expressing his “deep concern about the threats to union leaders and non-affiliated teachers in Primary 1,2 and Technical Education in the Central African Republic”.

#### **Threats violating education workers' rights**

He also expressed his dismay that the CAR’s National Education Minister Aboubakar Moukadas Noure has threatened union leaders with retaliation for calling a strike, and threatened teachers not affiliated to the education unions who plan to join the current strike with sanctions: “We consider these threats to be unacceptable and in violation of the right to freedom of expression and assembly, as well as the right to strike, which are fundamental rights for all workers, including teachers.”

When he learned of the arrest of three union leaders, namely Guillaume Lebrun Sesse Brassy, general secretary of the *Syndicat National des Enseignants Autonomes de Centrafrique* (SYNEAC, a member organisation of Education International), Innocent Kereguele, general secretary of the *Syndicat des Travailleurs pour le Développement* (STD), and Georges Kevin Wikon, general secretary of the *Fédération de l’Enseignement Technique* (FET), Sinyolo demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all three and urged the Central African Republic government to engage in negotiations with the education unions to constructively address their legitimate demands.

## Call for constructive social dialogue

He added that it is essential to find a way to establish a special status for teachers in Primary Education 1, 2 and Technical Education, to revalue gross salaries and chalk allowances, to create new allowances and to improve teachers' working conditions.

"We call on the government to fully respect the rights of education workers, including their right to freedom of association and their right to strike, and to engage in constructive social dialogue with the unions to address their demands," concluded Sinyolo.

EI has already expressed its support for the leaders of the Central African Republic education unions who filed a strike notice via the union platform "Primary 1 and 2 and Technical Education Teachers' Unions' Dynamic" as well as supporting non-unionised teachers who joined this action following the threats made against them.

## 4. Education International statement on human rights violations and anti-union attacks in the education sector in the Philippines

Education International (EI) strongly condemns the ongoing human rights violations and anti-union attacks against teachers and education union activists in the Philippines.

Despite the International Labour Organization's (ILO) recommendations to the Filipino government, attacks on teachers and union activists continue, including extra-judicial killings, red-tagging, harassment, and forced disappearance.

EI supports its national member organisations, including the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), the Federation of Free Workers-Trade Federation VIII (FFW), the National Alliance of Teachers and Office Workers (SMP-NATOW), and the Teachers' Organisation of the Philippine Public Sector (TOPPS), in their calls for the authorities to stop interfering in union processes such as certification, elections, negotiation of collective agreements, union organising, and other legal union activities.

EI urges the Government of the Philippines to adopt legislation to ensure the realisation of public sector teachers and workers' rights to collective bargaining and union activities, including the right to strike. EI also demands the establishment of a single presidentially mandated body to comprehensively address all outstanding cases of alleged labour-related, extra-judicial killings and abductions.

EI will monitor the follow up to the ILO Mission in the Philippines during the International Labour Conference in June 2023.

## 5. Development cooperation partners reaffirm their commitment to support education unions' capacity-building activities

The recent [meeting of the Education International \(EI\) Development Cooperation \(DC\) Network](#) gathered education unionists and cooperation development partners from all over the world, the first one since March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. They took stock of past and current projects and exchanged good practices and tools to ensure the renewal of the network and the strengthening of education unions.

Opening the meeting, held from February 28th until March 1st, in Brussels, Belgium, and attended by 32 participants from 21 unions in 18 countries, EI Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst stressed: “We are happy to provide DC partners with this great opportunity to meet again in-person after three years, exchange with colleagues from different parts of the world working on similar projects, integrate the network’s many new members, and make new work contacts during the coffee and lunch breaks, as well as the side meetings to discuss concrete projects”.

“Through your on-going DC work, you are also showing that solidarity is strongly entrenched in the unions’ DNA,” she added.

Thematically, the content of the meeting covered 3 areas:

- EI’s current strategies and priorities and the new campaign.
- Solidarity work (how to make it more efficient, how member organisations can work better together).
- Union strengthening as a main pillar of solidarity work.

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the participatory process and appreciated the DC Cafés, focusing on the [John Thompson Fellowship \(JTF\) Programme](#), the [EI Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure](#), the EI African region, the [EI Asia-Pacific region](#), the [EI European region](#) and the EI Latin American region. They agreed that DC cafés offered opportunities to prepare for the DC in-person conference and to free some time for more discussions.

The project database on the EI website was another tool considered important for exchanging information on each other's projects. Several participants also asked that positive examples continue to be showcased through the EI Solidarity newsletter.

Welcoming the EI regional directors’ participation and guidance, DC partners expressed the need for information and support from regional offices, especially for unions that do not yet have external support, to coordinate activities and follow-up and set up timelines for projects.

## **Lessons learnt from the pandemic**

A session tried to frame how the COVID-19 crisis impacted the solidarity work and if it had left a lasting impact.

Participants noted that the pandemic had placed teachers and trade unionists in an unprecedented situation. The issue of working conditions had to be addressed in new ways, with new challenges caused by the lack of connectivity of students and teachers. Virtuality also redefined working hours and work/life balance. Teachers and trade unionists have shown extraordinary adaptability. Unions have changed the way they organise and communicate.

In terms of lessons learnt, participants highlighted that technology had been of help in the continuation of projects, but that it was essential to establish the connection with partners beforehand. Just as technology cannot fully replace teachers, technology cannot fully replace in-person meetings around projects.

Participants were convinced that the essential prerequisite of a successful project was to know the terrain well and in person, as well as the partners and their context. Once in-person knowledge is gained, and the trust relationship established, technology could help move forward projects quickly and without the extraordinary cost of travel.

The pandemic also affected the way cooperation projects function. Several member organisations reported that they had the capacity to pursue projects more autonomously, by training their members themselves. Funds could be freed up when travel was disrupted, and travel budgets could be reinvested in the projects.

### **Underlining the benefits of unionisation**

Participants felt that the issue of unionisation is extremely important. Since there is a broad spectrum of trade union cultures, the strategy for unionisation must be adapted to the political context and regulations of the country.

DC partners said that the objective of increasing membership was always implicitly or explicitly part of cooperation programmes. This is considered fundamental to achieve the final goal of a cooperation partnership, namely the sustainability of the union.

Good practices for increasing membership, ensuring that each union member understands how they can benefit from joining the union, were shared.

Two aspects are fundamental, participants noted: increasing the number of members, but also making sure that they are active.

### **Encouraging union renewal processes**

DC partners insisted that unions need to update their actions/activities/policies to reflect their membership and its priorities.

Retaining members was highlighted as a key issue, as well as re-creating enthusiasm for trade union action among members.

Participants also stated that capacity building is key to making unions resilient, and members able to define a strategy that would otherwise be defined on their behalf.

The meeting felt that unions need to connect with members in a way that works for them and shows them how the union benefits them and what the union's wins are. And unions must give responsibility to younger members, involving them actively in union structures and activities.

### **Presentation of the EI Toolkit to build union strength for more effective education unions**

This new manual to strengthen education unions builds on previous DC tools, such as the [Development Cooperation Handbook: A guide to successful partnerships](#), and can easily be used for union capacity-building purposes. It focuses on the idea that it is only at the national and local level that union building and renewal can take place.

EI acknowledges that key factors include active members and multiple levels of leadership, so that the future of a union does not depend on a handful of leaders. Education unions should listen

carefully to the needs of the grassroots, being inclusive, having democratic internal processes and being open to alliances and coalitions.

### **Supporting the EI Go Public! campaign**

Meeting participants showed great interest in the new EI campaign, “Go Public! Fund Education”. This campaign is an urgent call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

## **6. Education International brings support to help cushion the impact of Cyclone Freddy**

The global union federation representing educators worldwide has brought financial support using its Solidarity Fund to help students, teachers and education support personnel severely affected by devastation caused by tropical Cyclone Freddy in Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique.

Education International (EI) has answered the call for emergency assistance from affiliates affected by this natural catastrophe. It allocated financial resources to the *Fédération Chrétienne des Enseignants et Employés de l'Éducation* (FEKRIMPAMA) in Madagascar, to its member organisations in Malawi, i.e. the Private Schools Employees Union of Malawi (PSEUM) and the Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM), and to the *Organizaçao Nacional dos Professores* (ONP) in Mozambique.

### **Madagascar**

In his letter dated March 17th, FEKRIMPAMA General Secretary Constant Andrianatrehy Marolaza informed EI that 226 educational institutions were destroyed in the Atsimo andrefana region, and 72 teachers fell victim – 39 in the Vatovavy and Fitovinany regions, 10 in the Sofia region and 33 in the Atsimo andrefana and Menabe regions.

« The heavy damage is causing the disruption of teaching in the affected areas and in particular ruining the lives of teachers. We therefore plan to organise a field trip to some affected areas such as Toliara and Mananjary to provide moral and, above all, financial support,” he wrote.

These actions aim to help affected members and strengthen the union’s visibility.

Financial assistance contributed to FEKRIMPAMA being able to:

- Distribute financial support to affected members;
- Strengthen the relationships between the federal office and members in visited regions;
- Visit and support heads of education; and
- Recruit more educators as members of FEKRIMPAMA.

### **Malawi**

TUM General Secretary Charles Kumchenga and PSEUM General Secretary Falison Lemani sent out to EI an appeal for emergency support for over 500 affected teachers in southern Malawi.

They explained that on March 12th, Malawi experienced a devastating tropical cyclone in most districts of southern Malawi that killed many people and others are still missing. It rendered thousands of people homeless. The cyclone also severely destroyed infrastructure such as road networks/bridges, electricity networks, water supply systems, and schools.

On March 13th, President Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera declared a state of disaster in Malawi's southern region. The Malawi government instantly set aside 1.6 billion Malawian kwacha (1.450.000 euros) to help victims of the cyclone.

According to a governmental report, as of March 15th, Cyclone Freddy had so far claimed 225 lives, injured 707 people and displaced over 83, 000 people (including school-going children and over 500 teachers) from 18, 689 households who now are hosted in 165 evacuation camps, with 153 schools turned into evacuation camps for flood survivors.

One of the sectors that has been especially affected by the cyclone is the education sector, the union leaders reported. The Ministry of Education ordered an immediate, indefinite closure of all schools in southern Malawi.

Kumchenga and Lemani also stressed that the cyclone severely damaged infrastructures (classrooms, toilets, teachers' houses, or water facilities) of 129 primary schools and 22 secondary schools in the 13 affected districts.

According to Education Offices' reports, the natural disaster so far claimed the lives of 5 teachers (with others still missing), rendered about 500 teachers homeless (they are currently among the 83,000 people living in camps), while over 409 teachers were indirectly affected by the cyclone (teachers staying in schools' teacher houses that were turned into evacuation camps, which hosted some of the flood survivors and shared their hygiene facilities).

The union leaders added: "As teacher unions in Malawi, we believe that providing educational supplies, psychosocial support to teachers and providing various items that will address issues of shelter, health, WASH facilities (mobile toilets, water treatment chemicals, soap, buckets) and food security for the affected teachers will help mitigate some effects of the cyclone on our affected members."

They stated that "these teachers and their school children alike have gone through such a traumatic event that teachers need to be in a good mental state if they are to resume teaching. As such, providing counselling for them is important and may, in the long run, extend to the children that they will be engaging with in the camps that they are based in."

"We are appealing for emergency relief support towards the affected teachers in southern Malawi to be brought through union's solidarity visits to the affected teachers," they concluded.

## **Mozambique**

"At the moment, it is estimated that more than 43,000 families are affected, almost half of them having lost their belongings and seen their houses completely flooded or destroyed due to the rains, winds and raging waters of rivers," ONP General Secretary Teodoro Albino Muidumbe stressed.

He added that provisional data indicate that over 400 schools (infrastructure partially flooded and destroyed), 350,150 students (more than half of them currently outside their places of residence or without housing), 22,517 teachers, and 875 technical, administrative and support staff were affected.

ONP joined governmental bodies, NGOs and concerned citizens and activists for rescue interventions, monitoring of the impact of the disaster and bringing support to families in the affected areas, Muidumbe said.

Noting that 29 accommodation centres were activated right after the cyclone hit, he reported that, in addition to classes in destroyed schools, classes are suspended in schools located in areas considered as safe, these schools now serving as reception centres for homeless people.

The union needs financial assistance to launch a campaign aiming to help the victims recover, he said: “We ask sympathetic organisations and people to show solidarity and bring support. According to the technical impact mapping team, key basic needs that still must be met include food products, clothing, mattresses, blankets, school supplies, household utensils, mosquito nets, hygiene products and tools to monitor rivers.”

For Muidumbe, this aid will target around 2,890 severely affected ONP member teachers and will allow the union to:

- Collect and allocate products and materials to the victims;
- Raise awareness among education authorities about the need to boost the recovery process of professionals in the sector; and
- Motivate teachers to join the union to benefit from the advantages of membership.

# April

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## Highlights

### 1. 13th annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession

The 13th annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession convened in Washington, DC on April 25th, amid growing concerns over the teacher shortage crisis, shrinking education budgets, and continuing changes in education technology.

The summit brought together education ministers and union and school leaders from 22 countries to discuss critical common issues as a group, a unique global format developed and led by Education International and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

## Related Items

### **Summit to focus on key global education issues at EI 30th anniversary**

The 13th annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession convened in Washington, DC on April 25th, amid growing concerns over the teacher shortage crisis, shrinking education budgets, and continuing changes in education technology.

The summit this year brings together education ministers and union and school leaders from 22 countries to discuss critical common issues as a group, a unique global format developed and led by Education International and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

"Our Summits have shown the power of partnership between teacher organizations and governments to advance education policies that meet the needs of all students in a turbulent world."

David Edwards | General Secretary, Education International

The central themes this year reflect the prominent and complex issues facing education systems worldwide: elevating and enhancing the teaching profession, educating for global and cultural competence and civic engagement, and leveraging digital technologies to ensure equitable access and enhanced learning for all.

"Our Summits have shown the power of partnership between teacher organizations and governments to advance education policies that meet the needs of all students in a turbulent world," said EI General Secretary David Edwards. "The ambitious agenda for this year's Summit gives us all a unique opportunity to reassert the importance of quality education and work on practical strategies to make this a reality for every student."

This year's sessions of the ISTP are hosted by the US Department of Education and US unions the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. "The International Summit on the Teaching Profession is about driving the intentional collaboration students around the world need to fulfill the full promise of education to open doors to better lives and livelihoods,"

said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “Whether it’s building and supporting the next generation of incredible educators, preparing young people to engage globally in an increasingly interconnected world, or seizing the opportunities and managing the risks of digital transformation, our students are counting on governments and organizations alike to come together and invest in their future.”??

Andreas Schleicher, OECD Director for Education and Skills and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary General, said: “From its humble beginnings in 2011, through years of controversial debates up to this very moment, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession has always pursued one goal: to bring governments and teacher unions together to build a better future, through education.”

### 30 years of Education International

Pre-summit sessions earlier this week focused on the intersection of democracy and public education, highlighting the 30th anniversary of Education International and the 25th anniversary of the Albert Shanker Institute. Longtime AFT leader Albert Shanker co-founded EI along with former NEA and EI president Mary Hatwood Futrell, who was present for the early session.

Mary Hatwood Futrell and David Edwards

“Mary is the soul of Education International, a champion of democracy and human and civil rights and a living example of what educating for global and cultural competence and civic engagement actually means,” Edwards highlighted.

Kateryna Maliuta-Osaulova (TUESWU, Ukraine), David Edwards (EI General Secretary), Mary Hatwood Futrell, Olha Chabaniuk (TUESWU, Ukraine), Susan Hopgood (EI President)

In her remarks, EI President Susan Hopgood noted the lasting impact of her predecessors. “Mary led her members to the doors of the South African Embassy in Washington in the early days of the fight against apartheid. In places like Chile and Poland, AI mobilised his own memberships against tyranny and for democracy. Together, they gave us a federation that still has much work to do in the fight for democracy. But thanks to them and their examples, we have the tools, and we have the spirit.”

### **Education unions and governments come together at Summit to strengthen the teaching profession**

The 2023 International Summit on the Teaching Profession concluded in Washington last week, providing what EI General Secretary David Edwards called “a policy beacon and safe harbor for ideas to be exchanged and debated” on critical global education issues.

The 13th annual ISTP brought together 22 countries to discuss how to strengthen the teaching profession and ensure all students have access to a quality education.

Co-hosted by Education International, the U.S. Department of Education and EI members the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Summit was organised around the theme “Poised for the Future: Transformative Teaching for Global Engagement, Sustainability, and

Digital Access.”

The Summit this year focused on three subthemes - elevating and enhancing the teaching profession, educating for global and cultural competence and civic engagement, and leveraging digital technologies to ensure equitable access and enhanced learning for all.

Participants across the three-day Summit noted the connections between civic engagement and quality education including well-resourced and compensated teachers.

EI President Susan Hopgood noted the inseparable elements of the Summit themes and subjects in her remarks opening the event: “At EI, we are mobilising to connect the crisis in funding to the sustainable world we want to create. Our global campaign – Go Public! Fund Education – unites our 383 member organizations in 178 countries and their 32 million members in the fight for publicly funded education and resourcing the public sector to build inclusive, quality public education for all. As we mobilise for resources, we also recognise the need for a collaborative and cooperative approach to solving the teacher shortage crisis, to ensuring an education workforce that is prepared and “poised for the future” as we say in the call to these sessions.”

In addition to Edwards and Hopgood, the Summit featured remarks by U.S. First Lady Jill Biden, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, and OECD Director of Education and Skills Andreas Schleicher.

U.S. First Lady Jill Biden stated: “When we commit to building an education system that works for all, schools and communities are stronger. Teachers have the support they need to reach students where they are. Parents don’t have to worry that their children are being left behind, and kids grow and learn every day.”

In his closing remarks, Edwards noted that the status of the profession, especially the critical shortage of teachers globally, is a high priority for the United Nations.

“For the first time in 60 years the UN Secretary General has stopped the normal mode of describing the problem and listened to the teaching profession’s call to reverse this trend,” Edwards said. “The UN High-Level Panel is gathering evidence around the world to develop recommendations and I encourage all of you to participate in the consultations to enable the knowledge and wisdom developed in fora like ISTP to inform those recommendations and show why critical investments must be made to implement them.”

Edwards also cited a broad consensus among Summit delegates that teachers have a say in how technology is used in education and for what purpose.

“This is why Education International looks forward to further developing ethical principles for effective and equitable use of AI with and for teachers and in the service of our students,” Edwards said. “You have heard that ‘we are the ones we are waiting for.’ In this case it means we are responsible to mobilize for the progressive use of this technology and hold governments accountable to make this real.”

## 2. Solidarity and support for the Swaziland National Association of Teachers

Education International (EI) sent a High-Level Mission to Eswatini to reiterate on-site the support of the education union community to colleagues in the country, and to urge the national governmental authorities to put an immediate halt to the persecution of Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) leaders, introduce democratic governance in the country, and respect basic human and trade union rights.

### **Eswatini: Murders and harassment of trade union leaders must cease immediately!**

Education International denounces the continuous attacks on trade union leaders in Eswatini and condemns the targeting of Mbongwa Dlamini, President of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), a member organisation of Education International.

The absolute monarch of Eswatini, King Mswati III, in power since 1986, continues to crush human rights defenders who protest the deteriorating human rights situation in the country. There are several laws in place which severely restrict freedom of expression and association, including the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act 1938, which continues to be invoked, the Public Order Act 1963, and the Suppression of Terrorism Act, 2008. In addition, the State of Emergency, which was declared in 1973 and remains in effect, suspends constitutional freedoms, and effectively prohibits opposition political parties.

In 2014, the Government tabled legislation to dissolve all workers' and employers' federations in Swaziland, including the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, of which SNAT is a member. In 2019, the SNAT president was fired from his teaching position for attending a union meeting. In October 2021, teachers and public sector workers were attacked while they were delivering a petition to the Municipal Council of the capital city, appealing for decent working conditions, a salary review, and basic trade union rights.

In a letter addressed to the Eswatini's Prime Minister Cleopas Siphos Dlamini, and dated 7 February, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Deputy General Secretary Owen Tudor and Education International General Secretary David Edwards denounced "the brutal murder of Thulani Maseko, a human and trade union rights lawyer," as well as the "government's forced exile of Sticks Nkambule and Mbongwa Dlamini, both leading representatives of trade unions in Eswatini." International trade unions believe the government is behind the assassination as the lawyer was killed after he appeared on a hit list.

Mbongwa Dlamini is being persecuted for his trade union activities following union protest actions for better wages and working conditions for teachers. Both union leaders have been forced into exile to safeguard their lives and security.

### **SNAT check-off system for the collection of membership dues must not be undermined**

Education International and ITUC's leaders also expressed serious concern due to "the threats made by the Minister of Public Service, Mabulala Maseko, to stop the check-off system for the collection of membership dues for the SNAT. The Government has also refused to include the 3% increase in SNAT dues and to include new members recruited by SNAT."

These attacks continue despite the government of Eswatini and the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland's agreement to submit such disputes for mediation through the International Labour Organization (ILO).

### Social dialogue needed to bring peace, social reconciliation, and development

Both ILO Conventions 87 and 98 have been ratified by Eswatini and guarantee workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The ratification of these two conventions places an obligation on Eswatini to ensure workers enjoy adequate protection against acts of antiunion discrimination with respect to their employment.

Education International and the ITUC call on the government of Eswatini “to immediately take steps to stop security operatives from carrying out any further repression and the extra-judicial killing of trade unionists and human rights defenders”. EI and ITUC urge the government to “choose social dialogue to bring peace, social reconciliation, and development to the people and the workers of Eswatini.”

### A history of violence against workers

In October 2021, Education International and the ITUC vigorously denounced [attacks and violence perpetrated by the police against teachers and other public sector workers](#) in Eswatini.

They strongly condemned the disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters, which caused scores of injuries and the death of a student.

The SNAT had reported that the security forces fired teargas, stun grenades and live ammunitions. Two busses ferrying public workers to the peaceful gathering were also stopped by the police and their passengers shot at with live bullets.

In March 2021, following a submission by Education International, the review of Eswatini by the United Nations Human Rights Council had noted “According to Education International, the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Employment Act of 2000 and the Industrial Relations Act of 2000, and the Public Order Act (2017), continued to create restrictions on freedom of expression of trade union members, some of whom have also been intimidated, beaten and arrested. Education International indicated that the government intimidated teachers, including through media platforms, to discourage them to exercise their right to strike.”

The UN recommended that the Government of Eswatini “reform, in accordance with international human rights standards, all legislation that unduly restricts freedom of expression and association, in particular, the suppression of Terrorism Act and the suppression of Sedition and Subversive Activities Act.” and to “Immediately end law enforcement violence and other restrictions against people exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association”.

### **Executive Board Resolution on Eswatini**

The Education International (EI) Executive Board has reaffirmed EI’s unwavering solidarity and support for the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), its leadership and members.

The Education International Executive Board, meeting online on 14-16 March 2023,

1. Concerned that the Government of Eswatini continues to violate trade union rights, and in particular curtails the rights and autonomy of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT);
2. Concerned that SNAT is prevented from engaging effectively with the Government on all matters pertaining to the welfare, training, and retention of teaching personnel;
3. Reaffirms EI's unwavering solidarity and support for SNAT, its leadership and members.

The Executive Board urges the Government of Eswatini to:

4. Respect and protect the fundamental rights of workers and trade unionists, including the right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and peaceful assembly, in line with international labour standards;
5. Cease immediately all forms of harassment and intimidation against trade unionists and human rights defenders, and to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into all cases of violence and attacks against them;
6. Engage in constructive and continuous dialogue with SNAT;
7. Uphold the check-off system and implement dues' increases in a timely manner, and to register all new unionised teachers as required by law;
8. Reinstate the salary and benefits of the President of SNAT, drop all charges laid against him for undertaking legitimate union duties and ensure his safety.

The Executive Board requests the EI Secretariat to

9. Organise a high-level mission to meet the authorities of Eswatini to restore dialogue and respect for international labour standards, in particular ILO Conventions 87 on freedom of association and 98 on the right to organise and collective bargaining.

### **Eswatini: Education International fully supports education unionists**

Education International (EI) sent a High-Level Mission to Eswatini to reiterate on-site the support of the education union community to colleagues in the country, and to urge the national governmental authorities to put an immediate halt to the persecution of Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) leaders, introduce democratic governance in the country and respect basic human and trade union rights.

The mission, led by EI General Secretary David Edwards, EI Vice-President Mugwena Maluleke, and the Director of the EI Africa Regional Office Dennis Sinyolo, and hosted by SNAT General Secretary Lot Vilakati, met with the Eswatini Education Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office and the national trade union center to address the issue of the governmental harassment of the SNAT leadership.

Despite the fact that Eswatini has ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 87 – [Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise](#) – and 98 – [Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining](#) – the unions are not allowed to march in streets or protest, and that SNAT is being targeted by the government for basic union activity.

“It is a true honor to be with such a committed, brave, and vibrant organisation defending quality teaching and learning for the students and teachers of Eswatini in the face of repression, violence and threats. The world’s teachers stand with you!” Edwards told SNAT members during the mission in March.

He added that “we remain concerned for the safety and the security of teachers and the citizens, in the face of what we see as unnecessary repression. We worry about labour rights and about the casualisation of education. We also wanted to make sure that the SNAT president was treated fairly, reinstated, and remunerated.”

If the government of Eswatini does not address the issues, EI will go to the International Labour Organization, where it will be supporting the grievance process, Edwards also said. “We will also be discussing the situation with the UN, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education, and all other members of the teacher community. These international organisations expect that the teachers of any country are treated with fairness, see their rights respected, and teach their students, and their students can learn, without fear of intimidation and the necessary resources. The choice is right now with the government,” he insisted.

The mission was held after the EI Executive Board had reaffirmed during its March 2023’s meeting, via a [Resolution on Eswatini](#), “EI’s unwavering solidarity and support for the SNAT, its leadership and members,” and requested the EI Secretariat to “organise a high-level mission to meet the authorities of Eswatini to restore dialogue and respect for international labour standards”.

### Support from African colleagues

Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, from March 21st-22nd, the EI Africa Regional Committee also adopted a [Resolution on Eswatini](#) acknowledging that it is “deeply concerned about the developments in the Kingdom of Eswatini where the Government continues to violate trade union rights, and deny the SNAT the right and autonomy to effectively engage with the Government on all matters pertaining to the welfare, training, and retention of teaching personnel”.

Deploring that “the Government of Eswatini has continued to harass the SNAT President for his role in the union and the persistent attempts by the Government to weaken SNAT by interfering with the check-off system and by refusing to increase dues or to register new unionised members,” it urges the Government of Eswatini to:

- Respect and protect the fundamental rights of workers and trade unionists, including the right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and peaceful assembly, in line with International Labour Standards, to which Eswatini is a signatory, in particular, ILO Conventions 87 on freedom of association and Convention 98 on the right to organise and collective bargaining;

- Cease immediately all forms of harassment and intimidation against trade unionists and human rights defenders and instead engage in constructive continuous dialogue with SNAT;
- Uphold the check-off system and process the request to increase SNAT membership dues in a timely manner, and register all new unionised teachers as required by law; and
- Reinstate the salary and benefits of the President of SNAT, drop all charges laid against him for undertaking legitimate union duties, and ensure his safety.

## Global Day of Action

On April 12th, EI will join other international trade union confederations and participate in the [Global Day of Action](#) in solidarity with trade unionists in Eswatini who are under siege from their government.

Trade unionists and human rights activists the world over will demand:

- An end to the culture of impunity.
- A stop to human and trade union rights violations.
- The government institutes a dialogue with all stakeholders concerned and an independent investigation into the murder of human rights defenders and trade unionists.

Watch EI General Secretary's support message:

## Headlines

### 1. Crises and the COVID-19 pandemic: education responses and choices during times of disruptions

This research was commissioned by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) and Education International (EI) with the aim of understanding the global policy responses to education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research also aims to understand how various states have responded to the pandemic in the midst of existing global crises and disruptions.

The assumption is that when crises interlock, their effects are amplified because the context is already found to be weak and vulnerable. This report thus maps these global responses, with a particular focus on the effects on equity and equality.

### 2. Development cooperation and solidarity in the Caribbean, in times of COVID-19 and afterwards

Present in Brussels, Belgium, for a [meeting of the Education International \(EI\) Development Cooperation Network](#), Don Howell, General Secretary of the Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT) - an Education International umbrella body for teachers in the Caribbean - and President of the Saint Lucia Teachers' Union (SLTU), explained how education unions in his region took the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to rethink their ways of operating, especially in development cooperation activities. He also showed appreciation for global solidarity by education unions with Caribbean unions counterparts.

#### **Union activities greatly impacted by the pandemic**

“The COVID-19 period was a very difficult one for unions in the Caribbean, we are very accustomed to vibrant union meetings, having our colleagues gather in one location to discuss issues,” Howell stressed.

He acknowledged that with COVID-19, Caribbean education unions had to re-strategise what they do as a region.

Firstly, we did not understand what was happening, where it would lead, and how long we would be in the pandemic.

Secondly, it took us away from our culture, from our normal way of operating as trade unions, not being able to meet a member physically, he added.

Howell insisted that “not being able to really understand what is happening with your membership was difficult for any union leader. Even if you were to do online surveys for example, you feel the mood statistically, but you never really get the in-person analysis of issues that impact members. While many unions resorted to having their conferences and meetings, even workshops, online, you could never really assess the impact of the pandemic, or whether people were really listening to you on the other side. Is someone listening in? Or is it just a device logged on to the meeting and nobody is listening?”

He also said that meeting timeframes were impacted. “Before COVID, we could have a meeting that would last a day, however, online, it is extremely difficult to keep participants focused for long periods

of time.”

For Howell, other issues also surfaced during the pandemic, including the issue of working hours and workload, “because preparing for an online class or for a face-to-face class, these are two different dynamics”.

Teacher training and lack of resources were other major issues.

He also criticised the fact that “unions had to fight off efforts from governments to erode some of the benefits that they had obtained through the collective bargaining process. Many unions got confronted with the fact that governments tried to cut educators’ salaries when they were doing more work than before. And we have not seen or have any evidence that governments would have done something to show their appreciation for the work that teachers did. If anything, there was more criticism than appreciation.”

Partnering with the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), SLTU further collected empirical data for a study on the impact of COVID-19 on its members, Howell explained.

Saying that study findings revealed that psychosocial support was very much needed by members and that they were disappointed with the support received from the employer, He said that these results informed an action plan that the organisation is putting together.

The findings also gave an idea of what is happening in the Caribbean, as other unions in the region continue to engage their members in various ways to try to return to a state of normalcy after the pandemic and school shutdowns linked to it, because they still must deal with COVID-19 and other emerging diseases, he stressed.

“With inflation and the high cost of living, many unions are struggling to survive financially and to support their members. The pandemic provided unions with an opportunity to engage in introspection, to revisit their strategic plans as to how they are going to move forward. For the CUT, resilience became a very critical issue, one that is supported by EI,” according to Howell.

### **Union work impacted by natural catastrophes and weakened collective bargaining process**

Howell was also clear that “we can say that development cooperation helped during the pandemic, helped us to recover, and it still supports us, in several ways, and is critical to our survival.”

He added that, apart from COVID-19, we also had natural disasters to deal with in Haiti – an earthquake –, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – volcano eruptions –, Belize – flooding.

He noted that another issue for Caribbean unions is ensuring the continuation and preservation of the collective bargaining process and the eroding of some of the benefits.

“Development cooperation helped us to raise resources that we need to undertake work within the region and to develop strength in front of our respective governments in the region, as we can show that collective bargaining it is not an issue that we are fighting for alone, but that we have partners out there supporting us,” Howell said.

We must also focus on capacity building, as we have changes in union leadership. He underlined that we have to ensure that the trade union philosophy within the teaching profession is always maintained, and development cooperation can help with that.

Howell concluded that “moving forward, we must strengthen our partnerships and deepen cooperation. The pandemic has taught us that cooperation – no matter how small we may think it is – every bit of solidarity, is relevant to our survival.”

### 3. Great steps forward for teaching and research at the World Intellectual Property Organisation

The 43rd meeting of the World Intellectual Property Organisation’s (WIPO) Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) concluded with major wins for the rights of teachers and researchers to adapt and choose materials for quality education and research. Education International participated together with member organisations CONADU (Argentina), AUSPS (Fiji), and UASU (Kenya).

#### **Concrete plan to advance work on copyright limitations and exceptions**

[The work programme on limitations and exceptions](#) proposed by the African Group was adopted. The programme provides a solid framework to advance in the discussion on copyright limitations and exceptions for libraries, archives, educational institutions, research institutions, and persons with disabilities. Provisions for limitations and exceptions are crucial because they allow teachers, researchers, librarians, and others to use copyrighted works without costly licenses from copyright owners.

The Work Programme calls for the Committee to focus particularly on adaptations of exceptions that allow teaching, learning, and research through digital and online tools. For example, to allow teachers to show a YouTube video in class or have access to research papers to share with students. It also recommends concrete steps to make progress in the discussion on the implications of cross-border uses of copyrighted work, for example when an online class involves students from multiple countries, or when collaborating researchers are located in different countries.

The current challenges teachers and researchers face when working across borders are daunting, as a Senior Lecturer from a Swedish University describes it, “to access material from 1956, we have to go to the National Library Lab in Stockholm. It is a small glass cage with three data terminals. You sit in the lab, annotate. Access to it costs SEK 70,000 the first year, and 35,000 in the following years. You are not allowed to take data in or out, all labs must be done in the cage. Transparency is non-existent. If someone wants to verify the results, they also have to buy the license for a lot of money. An incredible anxiety!”. This and other testimonies shared by Communia Association in the publication “[Nobody puts research in a cage](#)” show the barriers EU researchers face due to the limitations copyright law poses to scientific research.

The programme also sets up other relevant topics for education and research that can be taken up by the committee in future discussions, such as limitations and exceptions for text and data mining research, the legal implications of the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (2021), cross border implications in relation to limitations and exceptions on preservation, teaching and research,

among others.

### **Women leaders from the Global South voice the perspectives of teachers and researchers**

Miriam Socolovsky from CONADU, Grace Nyongesa from UASU, and Elizabeth Fong from AUSPS shared the experiences of teachers using materials in their classrooms and dealing with copyright barriers. According to [EI's research "Is it legal?"](#), copyright barriers affect teachers in the Global South to a greater extent than teachers in the Global North. As educators and unionists, the EI representatives provided valuable insights into teachers' and researchers' needs and called for copyright reforms in national legislations that guarantee limitations and exceptions for education and research purposes. The approval of the Working Programme proposed by the African Group is an important step forward in the right direction.

Welcoming the outcomes of the meeting, Elizabeth Fong stated: "The SCCR 43 is considered the best thus far. The important work now is to keep the momentum until the next meeting in order to bring about change. The Association of USP Staff supports the work of EI in this area and I was pleased to be able to share a Pacific view at the SCCR 43. I am working to rekindle a focus on the revision of the Fiji Copyright Act (1999) in consultation with the Fiji Teachers Union, the Fijian Teachers Association, the Library Association of Fiji, and the Fiji WIPO representative that will also encourage University of the South Pacific countries to do the same via their governments."

The education unionists also represented the voice of teachers and spoke up for the right to education among governmental representatives from around the globe and members of civil society represented by the [Access to Knowledge Coalition \(A2K\)](#).

As Miriam Socolovsky from CONADU points out, joining forces across civil society is essential: "Being present at the SCCR 43 allowed me to connect with A2K members, especially all the Latin American organisations, and begin to think about ways for unions and other organisations to collaborate. Our presence was an important asset to the A2K coalition because we represent millions of people working in public education. Our voice rings louder and country delegates cannot ignore it."

Elizabeth Fong noted that "the SCCR revealed, yet again, that while governments are driven by politics, it is civil society that advocates and strives for equity in access to information. This is our position as education unions."

### **Upcoming Education International research**

At the SCCR, Education International shared the [interim results of three research studies](#) that will be released later this year. The studies highlight the perspectives of teachers on the impact of copyright on teaching and learning, and the challenges of teaching in cross-border contexts, when the teacher or the students are in different countries with different copyright legislation.

Interim results show that:

- Teachers rely on access to quality educational resources, including options to make these materials accessible for students with disabilities.
- Teachers work with a variety of resources to provide modern education, including copyright-protected materials. They therefore rely on copyright exceptions that are broad and flexible

- enough to allow for education to stay relevant as innovation advances.
- Teachers mostly use part of copyright-protected works.
  - Teachers need training on copyright legislation to make informed decisions about the use of materials for education.
  - Copyright challenges in relation to cross-border educational activities require further attention through global policy reforms at WIPO. These reforms must be informed by evidence from the classroom.

The three studies will be launched in September, to mark the International Day for Universal Access to Information.

#### 4. Sudan – Education International calls for the protection of students, teachers and education facilities

Education International strongly advocates for the right to education and condemns any actions that jeopardize this fundamental human right. The ongoing fighting in Sudan has resulted in restricted movement and disrupted access to education, which is crucial for the country's stability and development.

Education International (EI) calls on all parties to ensure that education facilities are protected and that students and teachers are able to safely resume their learning process.

We urge the international community to prioritize the right to education in any efforts to resolve the crisis in Sudan and to support the country in building a peaceful and prosperous future for all its citizens.

##### **Outbreak of violence**

Education International condemns the outbreak of fighting that is taking place in Sudan and appeals the United Nations to request the leaders of the Rapid Support Forces (RAF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) to immediately cease hostilities, restore calm, and begin a dialogue to resolve the crisis.

The crisis began on 15 April when armed clashes broke out between the SAF, loyal to the head of the military government, and the RAF paramilitary, led by the deputy head of State. Skirmishes led to widespread fighting across the capital Khartoum and surrounding areas.

An independent Sudanese military force, the RSF evolved from the Janjaweed militia, formerly active in Sudan's Darfur region, and has been involved in talks aimed at a transition to a civilian government. A military rule has been in place in the country since the 2021 military coup.

##### **Call for a humanitarian pause**

Rising numbers of casualties have been reported across Khartoum, South Kordofan, North Darfur, Northern State and other regions, with the heaviest concentration of fighting taking place in Khartoum.

Movement in the city is restricted due to the insecurity, creating challenges for health workers to attend to those who need urgent medical care.

Eighty-eight students and workers of the University of Khartoum were trapped for four days in the university premises without food or water due to heavy firefights. One student was killed after being hit by a stray bullet. At least one other was wounded. They were eventually evacuated by the SAF on 18 April.

Education International condemns the gross violation of international humanitarian law and calls for a humanitarian pause. A humanitarian pause would allow for the Sudanese to go to safer places, get supplies for Ramadan, go to the hospital and resume the learning process. Stakeholders must prevent the country from sliding into serious instability. They must ensure that the rule of law and international human rights standards are upheld in resolving the issues facing the country.

### **Attacks against humanitarian workers**

Education International echoes the declaration of UN Secretary General who stated “We are deeply concerned about the safety and security of civilians in the areas affected by the fighting, including refugees and internally displaced people.” The UN calls for all parties to protect civilians, including refugees and displaced people, and to respect the safety of humanitarian staff so that critical aid can be delivered.

UN facilities have been looted and destroyed. Ten UN agencies and more than 80 non-governmental organizations have been running more than 250 programmes in Sudan. Three UN World Food Programme employees have been killed in violence in Kabkabiya, North Darfur while carrying out their life-saving duties on the front lines of the global hunger crisis.

The UN food agency estimates that one third of Sudan’s population, or some 15 million people, face acute food insecurity.

## **5. Education International provides educators with a tool to support the strengthening of their unions**

Education International (EI) has developed a "[Toolkit for Union Building – Making Education Unions More Effective](#)". This toolkit enables each member organisation to engage in a process of self-assessment, proposing that they experiment with new activities to strengthen their organisations.

The toolkit has three distinct components that users can consult independently or chronologically. The first component focuses on a self-assessment process, the second component includes a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and the third component takes the user through a planning process based on the theory of change.

### **Unions caught in a storm**

The preamble points out that many education unions around the world are facing challenges, the three major challenges being:

1. Insufficient budgets to provide high-quality public education, and the growth of the private sector;
2. Unsatisfactory wages and working conditions, making the profession unattractive; and
3. Insufficient social dialogue with trade unions.

In addition to the chronically insufficient public budgets allocated to education, other challenges include the anarchic introduction of new technologies and the increased recourse to private operators, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The good news is that unions still have room for action, whatever the political, economic and social constraints of the country. The internal organisation of the union, its strategic priorities, its communication - these are all areas where a union can do things differently," says David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, in the preamble.

### **Union renewal as a mindset**

Union renewal is a strategic priority for EI, reflecting by the Resolution "[Union Renewal: the New Imperative](#)", adopted by the 8th EI World Congress meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2019.

The resolution calls for the development of a "union renewal toolkit - a set of flexible resources, able to take account of cultural and contextual differences, which can help affiliates that seek to reflect on current experiences and bring about strategic organisational change".

According to the toolkit published by EI, trade union renewal involves adopting a constructive stance, considering that one can always be more effective in a challenging context: how to adapt to profound changes? how to reinvent and rethink the way trade unions operate? It proposes that education unions implement a culture of permanent questioning in a collective manner, draw inspiration from the ideas and practices of other organisations and, step by step, move forward in a long-term process.

### **The commonalities of strong unions**

The Toolkit emphasises that there is no single model of a strong union that can be emulated, as each union is the product of its history and operates in a unique political context, so comparisons must be made with great caution. However, based on the observation of unions in different parts of the world, the publication identifies several common characteristics of strong unions.

The toolkit stresses that constant contact with educators at the grassroots level in the workplace, and an excellent knowledge of their needs and expectations can help to implement the necessary measures to give voice to trade unionists and to try to provide concrete answers to their problems.

Another success factor identified is inclusiveness, whether it is women, young people, educators living in remote areas, those on precarious contracts, in other words all the categories usually under-represented in trade unions. Other important criteria include being a transparent and democratic organisation, better communication and building alliances.

### **Strengthening in a methodical way**

EI has created this toolkit, drawing on the diversity of trade union experiences and consulting with affiliates and experts, to support its member organisations on the road to trade union renewal.

The first part of this document explains how to carry out a self-diagnosis of the organisation. The self-diagnosis is a reflective exercise that should give a picture of the situation of the organisation, the structures and processes that make it up and the way it functions in its environment.

The second part helps educators to check where the power lies in the union and how they can work best as an organisation, by asking questions such as: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the union? What opportunities and threats come from their environment and the way the organisation does things?

And the third part describes how to define a strategy for action - from identifying objectives and activities to evaluating and monitoring results. The key question is: what is the change we want to achieve?

### **This toolkit is yours!**

As the publication explains in its prologue, “unlike many global players, who are often organised from the top down, Education International's strength and legitimacy comes from its member organisations”. It is this structure that sustains its actions and enables education unions around the world to take the lead and act as the voice of the teaching profession and the voice of education workers organised at its heart.

Addressing member organisations, Edwards emphasises that “this toolkit is now yours. It is up to you, as organised and committed unions, to bring it to life, to implement it.”

## **6. The Gambia: Development cooperation supports teacher union's co-operative credit union**

The successful partnership between the Gambia Teachers Union Co-Operative Credit Union (GTUCCU) and the Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union of Ireland has positively impacted the lives of teachers and their families in The Gambia. GTUCCU currently has over 30,000 members who use a variety of financial services, including savings and loan facilities, delivered through a network of offices spread throughout the country.

### **Providing Gambian educators with quality financial services**

GTUCCU was established 27 years ago by members of the Gambia Teachers Union (GTU) – one of the oldest teacher unions in Africa, founded in 1937 and representing over 30 thousand teachers who work at both the primary and secondary levels –, to provide union members with financial services.

GTU established GTUCCU following a resolution adopted during the 1992 National Teachers Congress on August 31st, 1996 calling for a credit union to be set up for members of the union.

The credit union is a financial cooperative thriving on the operating principles of a cooperative and the cooperative philosophy "people helping people" or in this case 'teachers helping teachers. It is a member-owned, non-profit financial cooperative. The main activity of the Credit Union is to provide financial services to its members.

GTU has been closely associated with the growth and development of the credit union and is extremely proud of its contribution to the financial wellbeing of its members.

GTUCCU General Manager Dawda Kujabi underlined: “The credit union has provided access to financial services, including savings and loan products, to its members over the last twenty-five years through a network of offices located across the country. It is a credit to the loyalty of our members,

who have supported the co-operative model to achieve financial independence.”

“When I was invited by the Board to lead GTUCCU in March 1997, I had no idea what co-operation could do for a population largely excluded from financial services, stigmatised for demanding inclusion, but determined to disentangle themselves from this predicament,” GTUCCU General Manager from 1997-2022 and current Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of The Gambia, Baboucarr Ousmalia Joof, recalled.

In two decades, we succeeded in domiciling all the financial needs for house improvements, medical services, educational fees, mobility, entertainment and even investment in small, medium, and micro enterprises which create jobs, he said.

He went on to stress: “When I left my position of GTUCCU General Manager in May 2022, due to a call to national duty, I left a vibrant, responsive, resilient financial cooperative with the capacity to continue to deliver and enhance the vision of the pioneers since 1996, namely ‘to improve the socio-economic status of the members’.”

### **Support from the Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union**

Shortly after GTUCCU was established, a group of credit union volunteers, including the newly elected Chairman, Amadou L. Kambi, visited Ireland to establish links with credit unions in Ireland.

A particular relationship was established with Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union – the Credit Union created for members of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO). This partnership continued over the years and provided moral, financial, and technical support to GTUCCU as it grew and developed.

The CEO of Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union routinely visited GTUCCU to provide technical support and monitor implementation of programmes.

Many other supportive partners contributed to the unprecedented success of GTUCCU, including the National Association of Credit Unions of The Gambia, as well as the Government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education.

### **GTUCCU key activities**

The credit union’s main activities remain the promotion of money saving by members in the form of shares and saving accounts and the provision of loans to members.

Loans are issued to cover a variety of needs, including the purchase of vehicles, motorbikes, houses, household items such as televisions and fridges, and personal finance. Rates charged on loans are very competitive compared to rates charged by banks and other financial institutions. Recently, a separate Islamic finance cooperative credit union based on a Sharia compliant model has also been set up.

The credit union also facilitates the payment of teacher salaries.

GTUCCU was further given the responsibility to manage and administer the School Improvement Grant, an education support fund from the World Bank to the government of The Gambia and administers a school feeding programme on behalf of the World Food Programme.

As The Gambia has a very limited banking infrastructure, the credit union fills the void and its presence throughout the country facilitates the provision of financial services to communities that had little or no opportunity to benefit from such services.

Services are provided through a network of offices located throughout the country. The main office is in Kanifing with branch offices located in Basse, Soma, Wassu, Brikama, Soma, Farafenni and Barra. Staff accommodation is provided in several branch offices. Each of these branch offices also includes an office for the GTU Regional Director, who provides support to teachers on trade union matters in the local area.

According to GTU General Secretary Marie Antoinette Corr, “GTUCCU had a powerful effect in many areas of development to upgrade teachers’ livelihoods. For example, they provide access to credit facilities, like loans for motorbikes, and teachers can now use motorbikes instead of donkey carts or horse carts or walking several kilometers on dusty roads, arriving at school covered with dust and tired. GTUCCU also came up with a housing scheme preventing teachers from being homeless.”

“The status of the average teacher is now much better than it used to be, and this has a positive impact on the lives of both students and parents,” she added.

### **GTUCCU on-going development**

The credit union is currently upgrading its IT infrastructure with the aim of providing members with a range of online services: access to the account, payment of bills, transfer and withdrawal of funds online.

While The Gambia is primarily a ‘cash society’ and at the early stages of a move to online money transfer services, this IT system upgrade will put GTUCCU members at the forefront of the transition to a digital economy.

GTUCCU, wishing to mark 25 years of unprecedented support for teachers and their families, also recently built a 15-bedroom accommodation unit to house teachers in the village of Bollibana, in one of the most remote parts of the country. Prior to this initiative, teachers there slept in their classrooms which were converted into bedrooms every evening and transformed back into classrooms early every weekday.

Another great example of teachers helping teachers through the cooperative model is the borehole drilled to give both teachers and students access to safe and potable water for the first time.

A waiting room was also built, furnished, and equipped at the state’s only teaching hospital to accommodate partners of pregnant mothers admitted at the maternity wing.

The Gambia’s only teacher training institute was also given furniture – students stood during lectures – when the management sent out a call for support on a May Day.

Solidarity between cooperatives was further demonstrated when other credit unions were invited to use GTUCCU facilities to serve their members for free through a branch-sharing arrangement

coordinated at national level.

GTU General Secretary Marie Antoinette Corr insisted that a lot has been achieved since the GTUCCU's early days: "Gambian teachers are extremely proud of their credit union. It has delivered beyond their wildest expectations. The demand for additional financial services will most probably increase and GTUCCU has the infrastructure and capacity to deliver these services, enhancing the wellbeing of teachers and their families over the coming year."

## 7. May Day 2023: Education unions call on governments to Go Public! Fund Education

To mark May Day, Education International, the global voice of the teaching profession, is calling on governments everywhere to fully fund public education systems, and guarantee labour rights and good working conditions for teachers and education support personnel. Well-resourced, inclusive, and equitable quality public education systems are a prerequisite for advancing human rights, equity and equality, peace, democracy, social and climate justice.

"A more just, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable future is impossible without a clear and meaningful commitment to education."

David Edwards | General Secretary, Education International

The global teacher shortage is threatening the right to education around the world. Widespread policies driving uncompetitive pay, unsustainable workloads, and growing precarity make it impossible to recruit and retain the teachers the world needs.

This crisis has been years in the making. Despite the warning issued by UNESCO in 2016 that 69 million new teachers were required to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all, governments failed to act.

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the failure of chronically underfunding essential public services, including education. In the wake of the pandemic, educators everywhere must now help their students heal and make up for lost time with even fewer resources than before. Despite professing their support for public education, too many governments have in fact cut education budgets. Education financing has fallen in 65% of low- and middle-income countries and in 33% of upper-middle and high-income countries since the start of the pandemic.

The teaching profession has reached breaking point. Experienced educators are leaving the profession they love, fewer candidates aspire to replace them, and the global teacher shortage is reaching alarming proportions. This shortage denies students their right to learn, it denies them the bright futures they deserve.

### **Global mobilization for public education**

To address the global teacher shortage, governments must make education a real priority and give their public education systems the resources needed to have a well-supported, well-trained workforce that has the time, tools, and trust to carry out their profession.

Education unions everywhere are rallying around the [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign launched by Education International. Educators are joining forces to build the inclusive quality public education all students deserve.

“We want to go public about the fact that this crisis needs to be addressed without delay because this is an existential, pivotal moment for the future of our planet. We are mobilising at the local, national, regional, and global level so that all governments commit to increase funding for public education. We want to make sure we have the working conditions we need to teach, and our students have the environment they need to learn. A more just, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable future is impossible without a clear and meaningful commitment to education,” stated David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

As we celebrate May Day, we reaffirm our determination and commitment to social justice, peace, and democracy. Educators stand together, one union, one voice, to Go Public and Fund Education. We also stand in solidarity with the global union movement, our union brothers and sisters, in our common fight for workers’ rights and a just and sustainable future for all.

# May

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## Highlights

### 1. Second World Education Support Personnel Conference

Over 70 participants to the 2nd Education International (EI) Education Support Personnel (ESP) Conference, held from 17th-18th May in Aveiro, Portugal, adopted a strong statement urging governments to increase funding in education systems and to invest in trained and qualified education support personnel that have good working conditions, to ensure quality education for all.

#### Related Items

#### **Building Union Power: Defending the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel**

World Education Support Personnel Day – May 16th– is the yearly opportunity to say out loud: ESP are essential to our education community at the local, national, and global level!

ESPs must be recognised for their contribution to ensuring quality education. Their rights should be guaranteed and their status enhanced, as outlined in the [Education International's Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel](#).

#### ESP Day Statement by EI President Susan Hopgood

Colleagues,

On 16th May we celebrate World Education Support Personnel Day. The day is an opportunity to show recognition and appreciation for the incredible contribution that education support personnel make to quality education. It is also a moment to demand that these professional workers have quality working conditions.

Teachers, working interdependently with administrative staff, counsellors, canteen staff, teaching assistants, caretakers, technicians and others, as a team, are able to create welcoming, inclusive, and quality learning environments.

Education support personnel are the beating heart of education institutions everywhere. You are pivotal for student wellbeing, for their health and for their learning.

Today, with austerity measures set to impact 85% of the world's population by the end of the year, public education is under attack and education support personnel are particularly impacted. Shrinking budgets mean layoffs, increasing privatisation and deteriorating working conditions. It is not only the workers that are affected, but the students too. This is why Education International has launched its [Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#), an urgent call for governments to fund public education and invest in the education workforce.

The global education union movement demands that the labour rights of Education Support Personnel are guaranteed. We demand that their working conditions reflect the importance of their contribution to quality education. And we demand that governments take concrete policy

steps to enhance their status.

This year, Education International will hold our second Conference dedicated to these exceptional education workers. The event will bring together education union activists from around the world to exchange ideas, join together in solidarity, and build power across the globe to defend education support personnel.

Let us all reaffirm that education support personnel are fundamental to creating the quality, inclusive education our world needs. We call on all governments to invest in these professionals now.

### **The Aveiro Statement - Go Public: Fund Education Support Personnel**

Recognising education support personnel's important contribution to ensuring equitable, inclusive and quality education for all and fostering the development of the whole student;

Further recognising education support personnel's role in supporting student learning, wellbeing and safety during the closure of schools and education institution due to the COVID-19 pandemic and in the process of pandemic recovery;

Reaffirming the vision outlined in the Education International Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel;

Affirming the power of trade unions to advocate for improved working and employment conditions for education support personnel;

Yet noting that 85% of world's population will live in the grip of stringent austerity measures by the end of 2023 and that this trend is likely to continue until at least 2025 unless governments take decisive action [1];

Concerned that financing for education is stagnant or declining despite the need for post pandemic recovery in the sector, with 41% of countries reducing education spending in 2020, and lower-income countries reducing spending again in 2022 [2];

Observing that reductions in education budgets impact the job security, rights, wellbeing, and employment conditions of education support personnel;

Further observing that insufficient education funding can lead to increased privatisation and outsourcing of education support personnel roles;

Noting that education support personnel often have low salaries, and that the cost-of-living crisis has worsened education support personnel's living conditions;

Further noting that many education support personnel roles are female dominated professions and that ensuring their quality working conditions is necessary for the realisation of gender equality;

Aware that digitalisation and climate change are adding new challenges and realities to the role of education support personnel;

Alarmed by the continuing prevalence of reports of violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, against education support personnel;

Education International's second World Education Support Personnel Conference [3] calls upon governments to:

- Urgently increase investment in public education in line with international targets and the Transforming Education Summit Call to Action on Financing;
- Invest in sufficient numbers of trained and qualified education support personnel that have quality working conditions, salaries that enable a life with dignity, and quality career pathways;
- Provide education support personnel with quality training and free professional development opportunities according to their needs;
- Increase the attractiveness of a career as an education support worker;
- Take concrete actions to enhance the status of education support personnel and ensure that they are recognised as part of the education community;
- Ensure gender pay equity;
- Halt and reverse the privatisation of education and the outsourcing of education support personnel roles to contractors;
- Ensure that education support personnel have secure and permanent positions, with access to full-time employment;
- Ratify and implement Convention C190 to ensure education support personnel are safe from all forms of violence including gender-based violence in the workplace;
- Ensure a just transition in the education sector by protecting education support personnel's safety and labour rights in the context of the worsening impacts of the climate crisis;
- Collaborate with education support personnel and their unions to define how information technologies can support their work, and provide high quality training on how to use them effectively;
- Respect the labour rights of education support personnel and their right to join unions;
- Respect trade union rights, including the right to organise, bargain collectively, and strike, as well as engage in meaningful social dialogue with organisations representing education support personnel.

It further encourages education unions to:

- Continue to advocate for the worldwide application of the Education International Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel;
- Call for increased domestic and international public education financing and specific funding for education support personnel as part of Education International's Go Public: Fund Education campaign;
- Build union power to defend the rights and status of education support personnel by recruiting and organising members;
- Encourage ESP and teacher representatives to support each other and work hand in hand to defend common rights and values to ensure student needs are met.

[End Austerity - Eurodad](#)

[2022 Education Finance Watch | Global Education Monitoring Report \(unesco.org\)](#)

## **From Aveiro to the world: “Go Public: Fund Education Support Personnel”**

Over 70 participants to the 2nd Education International (EI) Education Support Personnel (ESP) Conference, held from 17th-18th May in Aveiro, Portugal, adopted a strong statement urging governments to increase funding in education systems and to invest in trained and qualified education support personnel that have good working conditions, to ensure quality education for all.

In her welcome message to participants to the conference co-organised by EI and the Portuguese EI member organisation *Federação Nacional da Educação* (National Education federation, FNE), EI President Susan Hopgood stated that “education support personnel are the beating heart of education institutions everywhere.”

She went on to criticise that, “today, with austerity measures set to impact 85% of the world’s population by the end of the year, public education is under attack and education support personnel are particularly impacted. Shrinking budgets mean layoffs, increasing privatisation and deteriorating working conditions. It is not only the workers that are affected, but the students too.”

“The global education union movement demands that the labour rights of Education Support Personnel are guaranteed. And we demand that governments take concrete policy steps to enhance their status,” she emphasised.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, also explained in a recorded message to the conference, that “the COVID19 pandemic highlighted the value of support personnel to ensure schools remained open and accessible to all, and that our children had access to quality education and related health, nutrition and psychosocial support”.

He added that, “too often, education support personnel are undervalued. We owe all essential workers our support. Links between education, health and employment are critical for strong economies.”

In her intervention, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Giannini deplored that, “despite their dedication, the rights and status of education support personnel are not well protected. Today, we call on the global community to invest in decent working conditions for all members of the education workforce.”

She explained in a message to the conference that, following on last year’s Transforming Education Summit, a High Level Panel on the Teaching Profession has been established. It will produce evidence, inform recommendations to support countries to deliver on their commitment to provide every learner with the professionally trained, qualified, well-supported teacher who can flourish in a transformed education system.

“Part of the support that teachers need is actually provided by the very personnel we celebrate today as we mark the fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel, which is firmly aligned with the ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the status of teachers,” she also said.

EI General Secretary David Edwards addressed the conference which included unionists from all over the world.

“Let us continue to collaborate and coordinate across borders, supporting each other to renew our unions, sharpen our strategies, and win our campaigns. EI commits to continuing to build the ESP network and to ensuring that ESP issues remain firmly on the agenda, in our programmes, our policy and at our upcoming Congresses. Let's act together in solidarity to Go Public and fund ESP. We are Education International.”

In tune with these remarks, the adopted Aveiro statement calls on governments, among other, to:

- Urgently increase investment in public education in line with international targets and the Transforming Education Summit Call to Action on Financing;
- Invest in sufficient numbers of trained and qualified education support personnel that have quality working conditions, salaries that enable a life with dignity, and quality career pathways;
- Provide education support personnel with quality training and free professional development opportunities according to their needs;
- Increase the attractiveness of a career as an education support worker;
- Ratify and implement Convention C190 to ensure education support personnel are safe from all forms of violence including gender-based violence in the workplace;
- Ensure a just transition in the education sector by protecting education support personnel's safety and labour rights in the context of the worsening impacts of the climate crisis;
- Collaborate with education support personnel and their unions to define how information technologies can support their work, and provide high quality training on how to use them effectively;
- Respect trade union rights, including the right to organise, bargain collectively, and strike, as well as engage in meaningful social dialogue with organisations representing education support personnel.

It further encourages education unions to:

- Continue to advocate for the worldwide application of the Education International Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel;
- Call for increased domestic and international public education financing and specific funding for education support personnel as part of Education International's Go Public: Fund Education campaign;
- Build union power to defend the rights and status of education support personnel by recruiting and organising members;
- Encourage ESP and teacher representatives to support each other and work hand in hand to defend common rights and values to ensure student needs are met.

[The full Aveiro statement is available here .](#)

## **The struggle for the rights and dignity of education support personnel in private schools in Nepal**

Our union, the Institutional Schools Teachers' Union (ISTU) brings together teachers and education support personnel working in privately funded schools in Nepal. Our mission is to improve the working conditions of our members, ensure their rights are respected, and their important role recognized. Our work is essential, but it is never easy. Our members face unfair treatment and injustice every day in a system that resists change.

### **The devastating impact of the pandemic**

The outbreak of COVID-19 had a profound impact on the education support personnel (ESP) working in private schools in Nepal. Many have been struggling to make ends meet since the pandemic began.

Despite their hard work and dedication, many ESPs have still not received their salaries for the pandemic period. This has put them in a difficult financial situation, leaving them unable to pay their bills or support their families.

Moreover, many ESPs have lost their jobs because of the pandemic. This has left them without a source of income and struggling to survive. The situation is particularly dire for those who were employed on a part-time basis or who worked in non-teaching roles. They were the first to be let go by the schools.

Even those who managed to keep their jobs have not been spared hardship. The salary of school bus drivers has been cut by 75%, and teachers have seen their salaries cut by 50%. Making ends meet has become increasingly difficult.

To make matters worse, the union of school owners tried to impose home leave without payment, but our union rejected this measure and mobilized to fight for the rights of ESP and teachers. We persisted and were successful.

### **The tip of the iceberg**

The pandemic has exacerbated many of the old challenges faced by education support personnel in private schools. However, even before Covid, the situation was far from tenable.

Many ESPs in private schools suffer terrible working conditions. They are often paid low salaries, which leads to demotivation and a lack of job satisfaction. Opportunities for career advancement are scarce, further undermining motivation. As many ESP in private schools are hired on a contract basis, the lack of job security is a source of constant concern and anxiety. Worse still, ESPs in private schools are often required to perform multiple tasks, such as administrative work, cleaning, and maintenance, leading to burnout and exhaustion.

Another challenge ESP have to deal with is the lack of adequate training, which makes it difficult for them to perform their duties effectively and causes frustration and a lack of confidence.

ESPs in private schools feel undervalued and underappreciated, as their contributions to the school are not always recognized or acknowledged.

### Widespread gender discrimination

Women ESP in private schools in Nepal endure considerably worse conditions compared to their male peers. They often receive lower wages than their male colleagues for the same work, in a clear example of gender discrimination in the workplace. Many times, they also do not receive benefits provided to other employees, such as long leave, maternity leave, or sick leave.

Harassment and discrimination in the workplace are common. Many women ESPs are subjected to verbal and physical abuse, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment.

Equal opportunities for career growth and promotion are hard to come by, mainly because women ESP are not provided with adequate training and development opportunities. Women in education support roles also have extremely limited participation in decision-making, their voices silent during school meetings.

Our union strongly believes that all education support personnel must have equal opportunities, salary, and benefits, irrespective of gender or other defining factors. We need to acknowledge the work and contribution of women ESP in private schools and work toward creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. This is one of our union's core objectives.

The struggle for the rights and the fair treatment of all education support personnel in private schools in Nepal continues. Difficult as it may be, the resilience and dedication of our colleagues in education support roles give hope and determination to keep pushing for a brighter future.

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### **Education support personnel: an essential part of a quality public service**

World Education Support Personnel Day on 16 May is an excellent opportunity to remember their invaluable contribution to quality education. They work in dozens of different roles, providing services in occupational therapy, psychoeducation, special education, remedial education, computer science, driving school buses, preparing meals in school, college and university cafeterias, providing early childhood education services, and so on. It is hard to imagine that a government that privatises or contracts out these services would achieve the same level of commitment to young people and adults in the education system.

"The use of privatisation and outsourcing weakens public services and inexorably leads to a loss of public confidence in them."

Yet the privatisation and outsourcing of these services is a very real issue of which we must be fully aware. Several states are considering them as a way of rebalancing their budgets, despite numerous studies showing the contrary, including that of the IRIS [1] Institute for Research and Socioeconomic Information, which concludes that the outsourcing of public services:

- Is often more expensive than originally forecast;
- Does not guarantee better implementation deadlines;
- Does not ensure better quality or efficiency;
- Invariably leads to a loss of expertise;
- Contributes to making government activities less transparent

Moreover, privatisation and outsourcing lead to lower wages, poor working conditions, and increased inequalities.

## The effects of privatisation and outsourcing

The Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ) has nine federations in the education system representing professional, teaching, and support staff, from early childhood education to university. They have all collected concrete examples of privatisation and subcontracting, as well as information on their effects.

### **Primary and secondary school sector**

The years of severe budget cuts in Quebec during the 2010s have almost normalised the use of external services to perform work usually done by school staff. This practice has seriously weakened the public school system, with damaging consequences for students, staff, and organisations that have not necessarily seen the savings anticipated.

Inequitable access to professional and support services for students, a loss of coherence in actions aimed at supporting them, the lack of stability and durability of the services offered, and the fragmentation of the school team are among the impacts identified. The repercussions on staff are clear, particularly on their sense of belonging and the collaboration between the different categories of staff.

The ability of unions to represent all employees in a bargaining unit (*unité d'accréditation* in French) is undermined by the use of external workers, either from the private sector or a range of organisations.

### **Higher education**

The higher education sector has not been spared when it comes to privatisation and outsourcing. Increasingly, education systems are responding to the imperatives of economic growth, turning teaching and research into income-generating resources. Entrepreneurship leads to self-generated revenue streams for higher education institutions, which governments unfortunately use to justify cuts in funding. In the end, the very nature of the public higher education sector is altered.

### **Early childhood education**

The early childhood education and care sector has been marked by a significant wave of privatisation, which began around 2008-2009 when the ruling Quebec Liberal Party increased tax credits for private sector childcare. It intensified in 2015 when the government introduced

income-tested childcare fees. Previously, childcare fees were C\$5.00 a day per child (about €3.50). This was compounded by austerity measures that have greatly damaged the regulated [2] and subsidised early childhood education sector.

The number of places in private, unsubsidised childcare centres skyrocketed between 2009 and 2018, with an increase of 867%. Meanwhile, in the public system, spaces in early childhood centres (ECCs) increased by just 9%, and spaces in regulated and subsidised family day care centres increased by just 4%.

The privatisation of childcare services has had an effect on the overall quality of services offered in Quebec. The early childhood literature is very clear on the matter: the quality of services offered is distinctly higher in public ECCs than in private child care centres and the number of complaints is four times lower than in the private sector.

### Keeping up the trade union fight

The use of privatisation and outsourcing weakens public services and inexorably leads to a loss of public confidence in them. It is important to counter these practices and protect our public services.

Trade unions need to develop public campaigns that promote the tangible benefits and democratic values that underpin public services, to counter the narrative that the private sector is better, that outsourcing is a lesser evil, and that the public sector does not perform well.

In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic was a powerful reminder that having a strong public education system is the only way to coordinate an effective and equitable response for the entire population.

The struggles waged by the CSQ against privatisation and outsourcing are part of the public campaign led by Education International, [Go Public! Fund Education](#). It is essential that education unions around the world join forces to build inclusive, quality public education for all. Together, we must mobilise to ensure that public education systems are fully funded and not subject to budget cuts, austerity measures, and privatisation.

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INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE ET D'INFORMATIONS SOCIO-ÉCONOMIQUES (2013). La sous-traitance dans le secteur public : coûts et conséquences, (June) [online], 60 p. <https://cdn.iris-rechehe.qc.ca/uploads/publication/file/Sous-traitance-WEB-03.pdf>

by the Early Childhood Education and Care Act (ECECA) and its regulations (ECECR).

**Defending the essential work of education support personnel for quality public education**

With more than 100 000 members, FECCOO is the most representative trade union organisation in the education support personnel (ESP) sector in Spain. Our union believes that the work of ESP in schools around the world is vital for achieving the right to quality education.

ESP, like education workers in general, receive little recognition for their work, despite the fact that during the recent health crisis it became clear that they are essential to education systems worldwide.

## International Declaration on the Rights of ESP

We affirm that we are part of the educational workforce in schools. We are workers, professionals in all educational categories. We are in all schools and work at all stages of education, from nursery to secondary education.

We carry out all kinds of tasks and functions: administrative, educational, health, cultural, assistance, surveillance and control, cleaning and maintenance... We are present at all negotiating tables.

"We play a key role in shaping the "whole student", helping to ensure that the academic, socio-emotional and practical needs of the individual student are met, fostering equitable and inclusive education systems."

At the first Education Support Personnel (ESP) Conference in May 2018, Education International issued a [Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel](#), calling for its implementation everywhere in the world.

The declaration refers to our sector as "education employees working in a broad range of roles and careers across all levels of education in both public and private education institutions".

We carry out very important tasks and play a vital role in guaranteeing quality education for all, and in providing a public education service to meet the needs of the 21st century.

We foster positive and safe learning environments, ensuring that educational institutions function effectively so that every student can learn, because we are educators.

We play a key role in shaping the "whole student", helping to ensure that the academic, socio-emotional and practical needs of the individual student are met, fostering equitable and inclusive education systems.

The entire educational community agrees that one of the most pressing challenges for schools is to develop programmes, projects, and activities in line with the needs of a just transition to a green economy, and the new challenges and policies of environmental sustainability.

For all these reasons and because of the involvement of all education support professionals (monitors, librarians, psychologists, cleaners, counsellors, etc.) in the day-to-day life of schools, we reiterate that we play an essential role in helping to achieve these challenges.

## Demanding decent work

It is important to train and equip education support professionals (not only teachers) with key tools on topics such as bullying, coexistence, environmental education and sustainability, to give just a few examples.

In our union, we celebrate World ESP Day on 16 May, defending their fundamental work, as well as continuing to fight to improve collective bargaining to recover lost rights and achieve working conditions and salaries in line with the needs of each professional in the sector.

In addition, we are working in the framework of a new dedicated bargaining scenario in the education sector in order to qualify education support roles in a way that recognises their specificity and differentiates them from similar positions in public services.

"We are entitled to high quality employment conditions in order to be able to perform our duties in a professional manner, and to serve our students in the best possible way."

The rights and working conditions of education support personnel must be protected against privatisation and outsourcing of public services.

Their right to decent work, i.e. to the four basic pillars of the International Labour Organisation: social protection, rights at work, social dialogue and quality employment, must also be guaranteed.

As part of the education community, we have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to decision-making in educational institutions. In FECCOO, we are working to achieve a greater level of participation of ESP in decision-making in schools.

We are entitled to high quality employment conditions in order to be able to perform our duties in a professional manner, and to serve our students in the best possible way.

All aspects of our employment should be free of any form of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, political opinions, socio-economic status or origin, ensuring gender pay equity.

We have the right to be safe at work and not to suffer harassment, abuse, or violence in the workplace. Education administrations must ensure the safety and health of workers in our sector.

All these demands for the rights of education personnel set out by Education International coincide with, and are part of, the proposals and demands that our organisation defends and takes to negotiating tables across Spain.

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**Valuing education support personnel amid investment cuts and privatization**

The Federação Nacional da Educação (National Education Federation – FNE), its nine teachers' unions and three education support personnel (ESP) unions are honored to host the 2nd World ESP Conference, in the city of Aveiro, Portugal. Unions around the world are coming together for this important event to focus on improving working conditions for ESP everywhere and to fight for more investment in quality education.

### Navigating increasing challenges in school communities

When we gathered in Brussels for the first World ESP Conference, in May 2018, we could not have imagined the changes that would take place in the world, particularly in education.

"The job of ESP has become more challenging but also even more vital to school communities everywhere."

In the years since our last Conference, education support personnel felt the impact of the global crisis brought on by Covid-19, the wars that ravaged countries in Europe and Africa, the economic and social crisis, the waves of refugees driven from their homes by adverse conditions or the effects of climate change, notably in Africa and South America.

School-aged children were particularly affected by these crises and require more support at school. This means more and better health care, nourishment, teaching and learning support, and counselling, to give just a few examples.

Education support personnel must now provide more effective and consistent support to all these young people, families and communities, with a very special focus on those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

The job of ESP has become more challenging but also even more vital to school communities everywhere. They support diversity in schools, with a very special focus on refugee students who are victims of wars and displacement, on immigrants, on students with special needs, on improving conditions for those who suffer from gender bias, on democratic access for all to a free, quality school.

Education support personnel have to deal with all these challenges on a daily basis, in both public and private schools. In fact, there are no differences in their professionalism and dedication. The only difference is the nature of the entity that owns the school.

### The need to invest in ESP's fundamental educational mission

In Portugal, many schools remained open in the middle of the pandemic, because there were professionals who could not work from home - doctors, nurses, policemen, military, firefighters, or ambulance technicians. Education support personnel were in schools, supporting the children of those workers. In an uncertain and dangerous public health situation, our colleagues in education support roles were always present.

But can education support personnel keep going in the new normal of underfunded education systems, deeply marked by successive cuts in public school budgets? Are our children served by the trend towards the privatization and commercialization of education and quality public

schooling? Can every child's right to education be fulfilled when our public schools are consistently undermined and underfunded? The answer is no.

### Change is imperative

Education support personnel call on governments to ensure sufficient public investment in education so that our schools can keep up with all changes and challenges, including the ongoing digital transformation. FNE calls for a digital transformation that is fair and includes all students, teachers, and education support personnel, valuing equity, and access to new technologies for all. Providing adequate professional training opportunities during working hours is particularly important.

Governments should also take a closer and more comprehensive look at inclusive schooling, for all students, in all their diversity. To be able to deliver a truly inclusive education experience, education support personnel need lifelong professional training covering a broad range of topics, from digital, legal, pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic skills to emotional competences and conflict resolution. Solid specialized training enables ESP to carry out a complete educational mission in multidisciplinary teams focusing on inclusion.

"FNE is also proud to join forces with millions of colleagues around the world in support of the new Education International global campaign – [Go public! Fund education.](#)"

### Quality terms and conditions matter

In Portugal, education support personnel are fighting for a dignified professional status and for the development of appropriate career paths. We are also fighting to end precarity and unsustainable workloads.

The latter is very high on the agenda for ESP in Portugal. In the last four years, FNE carried out eight national consultations with our ESP members. 78.3% of respondents said their workload had increased considerably. Measures must be taken to ensure the physical and mental well-being of all education support personnel.

A salary raise, support for career mobility, a fair performance evaluation, better living and working conditions, and the social recognition of their role in education are all major goals of education support personnel in Portugal.

This year, the management of Portuguese education support personnel passed from the central Ministry of Education to local municipalities. It is now vital to find new forms of collaboration and establish an effective social dialogue in order to create synergies and deliver concrete solutions to the real problems of education support personnel across all professional categories.

Since 2018, FNE has celebrated World Education Support Personnel Day on May 16, but we also mark the national day dedicated to education support personnel on November 24. Celebrating education support personnel and their role in our schools and communities is essential and we encourage everyone to join in this public recognition of their work.

This year's World ESP Day will be followed by the 2nd EI World ESP Conference – an event we are honored to host and a great opportunity for our union and all education support personnel in Portugal. We are looking forward to learning from colleagues from around the world and working together for education support personnel everywhere.

FNE is also proud to join forces with millions of colleagues around the world in support of the new Education International global campaign – [Go public! Fund education](#). Education support personnel, teachers, and public education are in dire need of investment. It's up to all of us to make the case for fully funded public education systems everywhere. The 2nd World ESP Conference in Aveiro is a campaign highlight, offering us the space to come together and strategize the way forward to fully funded inclusive quality public education for all.

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### **Who our students see**

As an educator who taught at the secondary and university levels, I quickly realized education support personnel (ESP) are the glue to our public schools. ESP are often the first people our students see when they are going to school, and the last people our students see when they get off the school bus. ESP play an integral role to ensure every single student feels safe, secure, respected and accepted for WHO THEY ARE.

An inclusive learning environment for students, particularly our LGBTQ+ students, does not just exist in the classroom. It happens in the hallways, on the school bus, on the sports fields, in the cafeteria, in the nurse's office, the front office... everywhere. It is ESP who are in all of those places, AND when our students see ESP, they SHOULD see ESP:

- wearing a nametag with their pronouns on it letting students know they respect the use of pronouns.
- wearing a rainbow symbol or flag to show our students that they celebrate LGBTQ+ every day.
- serving as mentors offering advice and guidance to their peers.
- discussing and teaching health education.
- cheering at school sporting events.
- reading and discussing LGBTQ+ books and articles with their teachers.
- serving as advisors for Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and other inclusive student clubs.
- participating in PRIDE Month activities inside and outside of school.
- raising/hanging the Pride flag on the school's flagpole or banner.
- in the LGBTQ+ community and at social events.
- addressing mean behavior, so students feel safe.
- using gender neutral bathrooms.

.....And the list can go on and on.

When our LGBTQ+ students can SEE our ESP in every aspect of their school, then our LGBTQ+ students no longer just see an ESP, but they now see and know an ally who helps them feel safe, supported and valued. ESP are a wealth of knowledge that our schools and communities need to utilize. The positive impact ESP have on the lives of our students is life changing and life saving. The roles of ESP might vary all over the world, but as long as an ESP continue to be the caring adults our LGBTQ+ students see and interact with every single day, then our LGBTQ+ students will be able to succeed at their full potential.

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### **Uniting the voices of educators**

Over the past few months, I have been investigating for Education International the strategies and practices of unions to improve the status of education support personnel (ESP) in their respective education systems.

"Through each role, students' learning experience is enhanced. Without any of these roles, their educational experience would not be the same."

I have come to understand that all of the workers within the education system are educators. Starting from the transportation personnel who picks up and drops off the student; the health and welfare personnel who ensures everyone is taken care of; the food and nutrition personnel who nourishes students; maintenance and skilled trades personnel who keep the buildings sanitary; security personnel who keep the buildings safe; tutors, teaching and learning assistants providing much needed support to ensure our students grow and learn; administration and clerical personnel who ensure the buildings are running smoothly; career guidance and counselling personnel that are there to support students to achieve their dreams; documentalists and librarians who provide students with resources that enhance their learning; technical, technological and communications personnel that ensure that our schools are connected; specialist professionals that provide additional services to support students. Through each role, students' learning experience is enhanced. Without any of these roles, their educational experience would not be the same.

Day in and day out, ESP and teachers alike are educating and supporting every student to become the best student that they can be. Through this experience, I have learned that there is a lot of great work occurring to ensure that all educator voices are heard.

### **Towards more inclusive unions for the entire education workforce**

Through my investigation, I have come across ways in which national affiliates of Education International have created a space of belonging for all their members.

Some of them changed their name from “Teacher Association” to “Educator Association”: a simple title can make people feel a sense of belonging to their association.

Including ESPs in the conversations of the association also makes a difference, by having all members participate in conversations on collective bargaining, school climate and culture, arbitration, and negotiations. It is essential to have the voices of all members included in the work of the union to ensure that all members are represented. An example is how during my conversation with TEWU, Ghana, I learned that they would never have known that their members needed propane gas stoves in their school kitchens, if they had not included food and nutrition personnel in their pre-negotiation meetings.

### Letting the world know

Teacher unions around the world are doing great work and it needs to be made visible. It does not matter how small or big, members of the union and citizens of their respective countries should be aware of what the union is doing to benefit the common good. These positive stories and small triumphs can change people’s perspective on the association.

Behind all the work that is done to improve the quality of life of those within the education ecosystem, there is a story. Therefore, we must find ways to use data and narrative to share issues within our education system and create a sense of urgency to fix the issues that we need to improve.

A case is not complete without data and research. It is important to always have a solid foundation on how research can support unions’ claim. By doing so, unions can have a stronger argument towards those that may disagree with their perspective.

The future of public education lies on our hands. As I transition from my graduate degree program into the workforce, I am left assured that if we continue to be reflective and inclusive, our ability to support public education will flourish. To make this a reality, we have to continue highlighting the wins and progress we are making for more people to join the fight for an equitable public education system.

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## Headlines

### 1. Ivory Coast: Teachers mobilise communities to end child labour

*In the rural region of Soubré, Côte d'Ivoire, teachers play a key role in the fight against child labour. Thanks to the training provided by the SYNADDEPCI union in partnership with Education International, UNICEF, and Save the Children, education professionals have learned to distinguish between work that is socialising and work that interferes with schooling, including activities that are dangerous for children.*

*Teachers have also embraced their role in raising awareness among parents and communities. As a result of their efforts, they have been able to prevent several early marriages and abuses that would have affected students in the area. Village chiefs and religious leaders are also involved in this initiative, which has reduced child exploitation in the Soubré region. School dropouts may still occur, but teachers continue to work with local authorities to find appropriate solutions and prevent child labour.*

Since 2020, the union has trained 303 teachers to combat child labour.

The SYNADDEPCI union is participating in the [Work: No Child's Business](#) project with Education International, UNICEF, and Save the Children to eradicate child labour in the Soubré region. Since 2020, the union has trained 303 teachers to combat child labour, which includes cocoa farming, trade, handicrafts, and domestic work.

Teachers have learned to distinguish between child labour and socialising work and are better able to intervene with the families of pupils in case of abuse that could harm their schooling. Otété Kaouka Affoué, headmistress in Kpada stated: “We have learned [the difference between child labour and socialising work](#). For example, on a cocoa plantation, a child cannot pick cocoa pods from the tree, but he or she can help assemble them into a pile outside of school hours. I am better trained to talk to the planters. I know how to approach them, how to explain that a child can carry a load, but not a heavy load.”

Teachers are respected by their communities and this helps them change the behaviour of parents. According to Otété Kaoukou Affoué, “in rural areas, teachers are respected by parents. Many parents lack awareness, so when we talk to them, they reflect on their actions. When the teacher summons a parent, he or she also thinks that we have a link with the authorities, that we can call the gendarmerie if they do not change their attitude towards their children.” In 2017, Côte d'Ivoire adopted a list of dangerous work prohibited for children and a list of light work permitted for children aged 13 to 16.

The teachers trained under *Work: No Child's Business* are equipped to intervene in the families of pupils when they notice abuses that put the children's schooling at risk. Seyba Sigui, head teacher in Oupoyo, shared one such story: “At the beginning of the school year 2022-2023, I noticed that a pupil in CM2 (last year of primary school) was sleeping frequently in class. She is 11 years old, and she told me that she worked a lot: she got up every day at 4 am to wash clothes and fetch water before coming to class at 8 am. I summoned the father. At first, he was opposed to what I was saying, but when I explained to him the consequences of this work on his daughter, he changed. She doesn't have to work as hard anymore and she attends class regularly. This student's dream is to become a midwife.”

Raising awareness has also helped to prevent early marriages and pregnancies. Sandrine Affoué, a teacher at the Oupoyo school: “In 2020, a 13-year-old pupil in CM2 (last year of primary school) was about to be married. Her parents were preparing the dowry. I talked to her mother about my own situation, making her realise that if her daughter did not get married so young, she could become a teacher, for example. The mother understood. The girl is still studying, she is now in the secondary school, and she comes to visit me regularly.”

### **Support from village chiefs**

The awareness-raising activities carried out by the *Work: No Child's Business* project have helped to reduce the exploitation of children in the six schools of the Okrouyo school group, a commune near Soubré. Helping the local population become aware of the risks of child labour is an important step towards the protection of children's rights and their access to education.

Bancé Yacouba, the head of the six schools in Okrouyo, explains that there are no longer any children being exploited as workers in the area: “School dropouts can still occur, there are still recalcitrant parents, but we then call on the village chiefs, who are partners in our project, and thanks to this intervention with the families, the child returns to school. We have also sensitised religious leaders and representatives of foreign communities living in the area (Maliens, Burkinabés, etc.) to support us.” The teachers of Okrouyo also report an improvement in relations between teachers and parents following these awareness-raising activities.

Some of SYNADEEPCI's training courses under *Work: No Child's Business* focus on gender issues, including gender-based violence. Antoinette Sole, Director of the Institution de Formation et d'Education Féminine de Soubré, says: “We are a second chance school for girls who have dropped out of mainstream education. Our students are generally the most vulnerable and most at risk of being victims of violence. Some don't have enough to eat and may be tempted if they are propositioned with offers of money. Being better trained in this area helps us to establish a relationship of trust with our students and to refer them to social welfare centres.”

### **Students mobilise to raise awareness**

Teachers trained by SYNADEEPCI create anti-child labour clubs in schools. Students in these clubs organise cultural awareness-raising activities on topics such as forced labour, child protection, and child labour. Adults working near the schools or passers-by regularly stop to watch the skits, songs, and poems.

Some schools have even succeeded in convincing parents to send their children to school, rather than making them work. In the town of Soubré, the Gnizako-Beakou school club spotted two children who had dropped out of school completely and were working. One is seven years old and was working as a welder's apprentice with his father, the other is nine years old and was helping his mother clean fish at the market. Julien Okoupo, the school's director, said: “We were able to convince the parents after several visits, explaining to them that they were breaking the law by not sending their children to school, that the children would be very well looked after. To the father we explained that his son will never become a good craftsman if he does not master some basic skills learned at school.”

Sekongo Donafologo Yaya, the teacher in charge of the school club, explains that the SYNADEEPCI training gave him the courage to guide the children. He stressed the importance of differentiating

between child labour and socialising work. During visits to families, some parents accuse teachers of encouraging children to be lazy, but teachers are able to explain that socialising work is positive, unlike child labour, which is prohibited. At public meetings, such as parents' meetings, teachers have the support of the representative of the town hall or the pedagogical advisors to back up their arguments.

### **Positive behaviour changes in teachers**

Some teachers say that they changed their own behaviour as parents after their union training. Mr Gnahoré, a teacher at the Gnizako-Beakou school, explained: "As parents, we used to force our children to fetch water from the well. This training has opened my eyes, it has taught me that I should not ask them to do such heavy work. I now give advice to those around me, for example when I see that a child is carrying something too heavy for them."

SYNADEEPCI's activities are only a small part of the *Work: No Child's Business* project in Côte d'Ivoire. The other two project partners, UNICEF and Save the Children, are also carrying out important activities to reduce child labour in the Soubré region, such as bridging classes to enable the enrolment of children at risk of child labour, income-generating activities, and support to village savings and loans associations.

Bridging classes, for example, have been set up in the Nawa region to enable the enrolment of children at risk of child labour. 1,580 children (728 girls, 852 boys) enrolled in the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. In 2022, community mobilisation facilitated by Save the Children resulted in the construction of 38 new classrooms.

The collaboration between SYNADEEPCI, UNICEF and Save the Children for *Work: No Child's Business* will continue until the end of this project, scheduled for June 2024.

## **2. IDAHOBIT 2023: Everyone belongs in our unions!**

On May 17th, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Education International (EI) renews its commitment to human rights, respect, social justice, dignity for all, and solidarity.

### **Statement by EI General Secretary David Edwards**

On the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, Education International, the voice of over 32 million educators worldwide through 383 member organisations, reaffirms its support and efforts to create safe and inclusive schools, universities, and other educational settings for learners and teachers in all their diversity.

Safe schools are those where all educators and students can feel and be free from discrimination, threats, and violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

As teachers, education support personnel, trade unionists, and human rights defenders, we play a critical role in promoting inclusion and diversity in our schools, and protecting the fundamental rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex members and students.

As trade unions and members of the global community, we have played an important role in promoting inclusion and diversity in the workplace and will continue to work to protect our LGBTI members.

Around the world, many of our affiliates have taken up the duty to defend LGBTI members. Unions have negotiated collective agreements, advocated for inclusive curriculum, and celebrated Pride with the LGBTI community. Importantly, EI and our unions continue to urge governments to go public and fully fund inclusive education!

The trade union values of solidarity and mutuality mean that our unions, our movement, our struggle include LGBTI workers, as their rights are human rights.

But there is still much work to do, as a rise of political leaders who fuel anti-LGBTI rhetoric and violence seek to divide us. However, as this year's theme reaffirms, we are "Together always: united in diversity".

Everyone belongs in our unions.

## Highlights

### 1. United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession

Established by the United Nations' Secretary General António Guterres, the Panel is tasked with producing a new vision and set of recommendations on the teaching profession for the benefit of teachers, students, parents, and education systems worldwide.

#### Related Items

#### **High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession launches to address the global teacher shortage and status of the profession**

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, brings together key stakeholders in the education sector to help tackle the growing teacher shortage around the world. Education International brings the voice of the teaching profession to the High-Level Panel.

“Teachers are leading the transformation. As a member of the High-Level Panel and as President of Education International, I will work to ensure the recommendations put forward elevate our profession, improve the status of teachers around the world, and help build the next generation of educators.”

Susan Hopgood | Education International President

[Established by the United Nations' Secretary General António Guterres](#), the Panel is tasked with producing a new vision and set of recommendations on the teaching profession for the benefit of teachers, students, parents, and education systems worldwide.

The High-Level Panel aims to produce a set of evidence-informed recommendations on how to deliver on the commitment that every learner has a professionally trained, qualified, and well-supported teacher and can flourish in a transformed education system.

The Panel will map out relevant research and evidence to formulate action-oriented recommendations for governments, policymakers, employers' and workers' organisations, and other stakeholders to promote better conditions of work for teachers and educators. The recommendations will be in line with existing international labour standards and international standards on education and teaching personnel.

“The establishment of the UN's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession is a great victory for teachers everywhere. The world recognizes both the irreplaceable role of teachers and the scale and depth of the global teacher shortage and why urgent solutions must be found. As the

global voice of the teaching profession, EI will make sure that the analysis and recommendations are informed by the wisdom and experience of those working at the grassroots level. We will collect insights from classrooms and unions around the world and bring those voices to the Panel. Together we can effect real change for millions of teachers and students everywhere.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

## Six imperatives for the future of the teaching profession

The High-Level Panel will consider six imperatives for the future of the teaching profession:

- Quality - transformative role, standards, data, qualifications, teacher development as well as learning (professional learning and development), evaluation, accountability, career development, leadership, agency, and professionalism;
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion - composition, identity, networks, community, place-based responsibility, non-discrimination, and gender equality;
- Humanity - wellbeing, quality of life, human rights, commitment, moral purpose, passion, status and recognition, trust, voice and empowerment, and learning to be and to live together;
- Sustainability – long-term planning, efficacious systems, generational succession, collective autonomy, and diversity;
- Dignity – terms and conditions of employment and working conditions, salaries, social dialogue including collective bargaining, labour rights, and academic freedom (professional autonomy);
- Innovation and leadership – commitment to transformative changes, scaling up micro-innovations, technological tools, teacher-led research, and development hubs.

The scope will cover educators from early childhood through tertiary education, including technical and vocational education and training.

## Members of the High-Level Panel

### Co-Chairpersons

- H.E. Ms. Kersti Kaljulaid | Former President, Republic of Estonia
- H.E. Ms. Paula-Mae Weekes | Former President, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

### Members

- Ligia Deca | Minister of Education, Romania
- Ida Fauziyah | Minister of Manpower, Indonesia
- Matsie Angelina Motshekga | Minister of Basic Education, South Africa
- Jaime Perczyk | Minister of Education, Argentina
- Jutta Urpilainen | Commissioner for International Partnerships, European Commission
- Sebastien Berger | Executive Director, Global Student Forum
- Gerhard F. Braun | Chair, German Employers Association’s Education Committee
- Mamadou Cellou Souare | La Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Guinée
- Linda Darling-Hammond | President and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute and Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University
- Susan Hopgood | President, Education International
- Gorgui Sow | Independent Education Policy and Advocacy Specialist

- Manal Hdaife | Primary School Principal, Lebanon, and Chair of the Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure of Education International
- Mike Thiruman | General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union
- Tiago Pitta e Cunha | CEO of Oceano Azul Foundation
- Denise Vaillant | Academic Director, Institute of Education, ORT University (Uruguay) and Chair of the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel
- Andria Zafirakou | Winner of 2018 Global Teacher Prize, United Kingdom

#### **Ex-Officio members:**

- Gilbert F. Hounghbo | Director-General, International Labour Organization
- Audrey Azoulay | Director-General, UNESCO
- Leonardo Garnier Rimolo | Special Adviser for the Transforming Education Summit

The High-Level Panel will be supported by a joint ILO-UNESCO Secretariat, administered by the International Labour Organization. [Click here to access the website.](#)

Education International will continue to work with its member organisations across the world to ensure that the voices and realities of teachers are represented at all levels. Teachers everywhere will also continue to mobilise in the framework of EI's [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign, an urgent call for governments to fully fund public education and to invest in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

#### **The UN High Panel on the Teaching Profession: Panelists discuss strategies to end the teacher shortage**

On 1 August, the UN High-Panel on the Teaching Profession convened its second virtual meeting bringing together leading experts, policymakers, and representatives from education organizations to address crucial issues within the teaching profession. Education International, as the voice of the profession at the global level, plays a central role in the Panel.??

The objective of the UN High-Level Panel is to develop actionable recommendations to ensure that every learner has a professionally trained, qualified and supported teacher, who can flourish within a transformed education system.

Their first meeting on 18 July served to ensure panelists had a clear overview of the working methods of the Panel, which is co-chaired by Paula Weekes of Trinidad and Tobago and Kersti Kaljulaid of Estonia and supported by a UNESCO-ILO Secretariat.

In the second meeting, the Panelists discussed three core imperatives for the teaching profession:

- Dignity, broadly framed to imply a focus on positive, supportive and decent working conditions that create and sustain a dignified professional environment.
- Humanity, broadly framed to imply teacher wellbeing, including attention to teacher job satisfaction, sense of efficacy, sense of belonging within the profession which promote a sense of well-being.
- Equity, broadly framed to imply a focus on ensuring that all learners have equitable access to diverse and high-quality teachers, and teachers promote inclusive teaching and learning

experiences.

Key issues discussed included: raising the status of the profession and making teaching an attractive career for young people; improving teacher working conditions; ensuring a diverse and inclusive workforce; and guaranteeing human and trade union rights.

Education International (EI) is represented on the panel by Susan Hopgood, President of Education International, Manal Hdaife, school leader in Lebanon and chair of the Education International Arab countries cross-regional structure (ACCRS); and Mike Thiruman, General secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union.

EI called for the Panel to seize the opportunity to make bold Recommendations that will address teachers' challenges and ensure that the teaching profession is valued and respected.

Susan Hopgood reports on her experience as part of the Panel:

The Panel will meet again on 15 August, when they will discuss three further imperatives for the teaching profession: quality, innovation and leadership, and sustainability. They will then have an in-person meeting in September 2023 in New York, where the Panel Recommendations will be adopted.

The Recommendations will serve as a key input into the preparations for the UN Summit of the Future and will be published on World Teachers Day. The full report on the outcomes of the Panel will be made available in 2024.

### **The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession: how to recruit, prepare and retain quality teachers**

The UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession convened its third virtual meeting on 15 August.

The Panel discussed three core imperatives for the teaching profession:

- **Teacher quality**, broadly framed to imply a focus on preparing and supporting high-quality teachers and quality teaching.
- **Innovation and leadership**, broadly framed to focus on teachers' ability to lead innovations in educational practices, within and beyond the classrooms.
- **Sustainability**, broadly framed to focus on ensuring a sustained supply of well-trained, diverse, quality teachers distributed equitably, and teachers educating to support system resilience to mitigate impacts of climate disasters.

Panelists noted the interconnected nature of these three imperatives and the need to ensure comprehensive national teacher policies.

Quality initial teacher training and professional development were highlighted as important for both quality and sustainability, as good preparation gives teachers a sense of self-efficacy and reduces turnover. Panelists also noted that well-prepared, highly qualified teachers take the lead with innovation, as long as they have the enabling conditions to do so, including tools, time and

trust.

During the meeting Education International and others were clear that the Panel must have a strong position on ending the use of under-qualified contract teachers. Instead, governments must invest in ensuring qualified, high-status teachers who have secure employment contracts and decent working conditions.

Investment in the profession was also high on the agenda of the Panel, as a crucial prerequisite for sustainably improving teacher quality and enabling innovation.

EI President Susan Hopgood stressed the need to invest in raising the status of the profession, noting that austerity policies and public sector wage bill constraints take us in the wrong direction and must end. She also emphasised the necessity of an international monitoring mechanism to hold governments accountable for implementing recommended policy measures.

In the video below, Susan Hopgood, EI President and member of the Panel provides her perspective on this latest meeting of the Panel.

Teacher union representative on the panel and General Secretary of the Singapore Teacher Union, Mike Thiruman, underscored the need for governments to engage in forward-looking, intentional workforce planning to ensure a strong public system, tackle teacher shortages and ensure teacher diversity.

Teacher union representative on the panel, school leader in Lebanon and Chair of the Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (ACCRS) Manal Hdaife called for governments to take concrete steps to close the gender gap in school leadership positions by breaking down barriers which stop their access to promotion.

The next meeting will be in-person in New York in mid-September. Panelists will discuss draft recommendations and agree on a final set of recommendations, which will input into the preparations of the UN Summit of the Future.

Education International will hold a consultation for its member organisations prior to the face-to-face meeting in New York. The consultation will enable EI member organisations to share their perspectives on priority national and international actions that should be taken to end teacher shortages and uplift the profession.

The consultation will be held twice to enable EI members to join at the time zone most appropriate for them.

[Click here](#) to register for the consultation at 09.00-10.30 CEST (interpretation in English and French).

[Click here](#) to register for the consultation at 16.00-17.30 CEST (interpretation in Spanish and English).

For more information about the consultation [click here](#).

## **Elevating Teachers' Voices to the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession**

Educators from around the world expressed their concerns about the global teacher shortage, sharing firsthand experiences which highlight the detrimental implications for their classrooms and school communities. Their testimonies were part of consultations organised by Education International to bring the voices of educators to the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession.

Educators from various regions also addressed the need for comprehensive support to early-career teachers, affordable housing, teacher well-being, and mental health. There was also a call to acknowledge internal country disparities, with shortages often more pronounced in disadvantaged regions. Concerns surrounding gender pay inequity, teacher migration, and the climate crisis's impact on educators were also part of the discussion.

In his opening remarks, EI's General Secretary, David Edwards, emphasized the significance of the Panel's draft recommendations, noting their alignment with EI's global efforts, particularly the Go Public! Fund Education campaign. "These recommendations will empower our unions during national negotiations, ensuring governments remain accountable. We're building upon the foundation set by the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. Through this consultation, we're channeling the collective voice of our educators to the High-Level Panel, with our president, Susan Hopgood, leading the charge," Edwards explained.

"We must understand the real cost of quick fixes to the global teacher shortage, like turning to untrained teachers," he continued. "As we approach the Summit of the Future, a new vision for education will emerge. It's vital that our unions are not just witnesses but active contributors to shaping this new vision."

Reflecting on members' inputs, EI president Susan Hopgood noted that the key themes highlighted very much aligned with the concerns she has emphasised in the Panel discussions so far and committed to bring additional emerging issues expressed by members to the table at the next Panel meeting at the U.N. She further stressed the importance of holding governments to account to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

From the Transforming Education Summit to the upcoming summit of the future

The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession was a direct outcome of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit (TES). The TES identified the urgent need for a dedicated forum to discuss the multifaceted challenges faced by educators worldwide. Notably, Susan Hopgood, EI's President, serves as a distinguished member of this Panel. With the upcoming [Summit of the Future](#) in 2024, the recommendations from the Panel are expected to contribute significantly to the discussions.

Mike Thiruman, General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union and a member of the Panel, shared his perspective on the Panel's work. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the recommendations are followed through with concrete actions for implementation. He also expressed the aspiration to eventually elevate these recommendations to a status similar to a UN Convention, aiming to set a global standard for the teaching profession.

The panel will meet in person in New York this week to deliberate and adopt a set of recommendations. EI's president, Susan Hopgood, will bring educators' perspectives to the meeting and call for bold, ambitious recommendations to be adopted.

### Teachers' experiences: a global overview

Vivid narratives emerged from countries like Brazil, South Africa, and India, painting a picture of classrooms grappling with overwhelming student numbers due to teacher shortages. An educator from South Africa highlighted the cascading effects of this issue, with burnout rates climbing and fewer individuals considering teaching as a viable career. A Brazilian trade unionist also shed light on the challenges of ensuring quality education in crowded classrooms.

Educators from France outlined the challenges of retaining and attracting teachers, highlighting the impact of under-investment and the decline in purchasing power. A participant from Australia described the specific issues faced in rural and remote areas, such as STEM teacher shortages and the prohibitive housing costs for educators. In Finland, the lack of comprehensive data on qualified teachers and the impact of population decrease were brought to the forefront.

The conversation also spanned other systemic issues, with insights from countries like Thailand and Nigeria, detailing challenges ranging from inadequate infrastructure to the diminishing autonomy of educators in their own classrooms.

A significant part of the consultation was dedicated to solution-oriented discussions. Participants explored potential strategies to address systemic challenges and enhance the status of the teaching profession. In this context, the importance of increased public funding for education was emphasized by several participants as a foundation for improving teachers working conditions and salaries and address the global teacher shortage, in line with [EI's flagship campaign Go Public! Fund Education](#). The campaign calls on governments to fully fund public education systems and invest in the teaching profession as a prerequisite to achieve quality education for all and a sustainable future.

### **Panel on the Teaching Profession convenes at United Nations**

Continuing on the fast-track process set by United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession opened its in-person sessions Thursday with urgent calls to recruit, retain and support professionally trained teachers worldwide.

After weeks of evidence-fueled discussions and consultations, the 18-member global panel advanced what panelist and EI President Susan Hopgood called "clear, concise, concrete and actionable recommendations to guide governments towards transformation of education systems."

The HLP was formed at Guterres' direction of as an outcome of the 2022 Transforming Education Summit. More than 100 countries submitted Statements of National Commitment on subjects including elevating the teaching profession, financing education, and digital learning. The Panel will produce a set of recommendations towards ensuring every learner has a professionally trained, qualified, and well-supported teacher who can flourish in a transformed education system. The recommendations, expected to be a significant contributor to the UN's Summit of the Future in 2024, are due to be finalized by the end of 2023.

The Panel is co-chaired by two former Heads of State, with representatives from member states, employers' organizations, teachers' unions, civil society, academia, and youth. The union representatives include Hopgood, Manal Hdaife, Primary School Principal and Chair of the Arab Cross Country Regional Structure (ACCRS) of EI, Lebanon, and Mike Thiruman, General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union.

"The success of our education systems is directly tied to the success of the teaching profession. When we focus on transforming education systems, we can transform conditions in our schools, transform the practice of teaching, transform learning and transform lives."

Susan Hopgood | Education International President

Since mid-July when the Panel structure was established, EI has reached out repeatedly to member organizations for information, opinions and other input. In an August call, General Secretary David Edwards called the Panel's work "a once in a lifetime opportunity".

"Because of you, because of the lead-up and the work we did at the Transforming Education Summit, the Secretary General heard our call for this High-Level Panel. This work is critical to our movement, critical to our Go Public-Fund Education campaign, and touches everything we do to support our members, in terms of education financing and teacher pay, well-being and working conditions."

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed opened the two-day session with a strong endorsement of education funding, specifically to advance the transformative role teachers must play to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

"The 'T' in Transformation stands for teachers and it requires that we invest for the long haul. This message will infuse everything we say," said Mohammed. She noted that too often, education systems and unions do not collaborate and interactions between them occur only at times of conflict. "We need to see the value of investment and representation; they are two sides of the same coin," she said. "But this investment comes with the understanding that there must be accountability."

Throughout the written work and discussions, the need to elevate teacher pay and protect public-sector financing of quality education has been prominent. The financing situation was brought into sharp focus in July when the United Nations released the latest totals for the global debt crisis, now at a record \$92 trillion. Some 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt interest payments than on education or health.

As the panel worked through a draft of 55 recommendations, Hopgood said that the notion of transformation should be viewed as a series of interlocking activities, beginning with transforming education systems: "The success of our education systems is directly tied to the success of the teaching profession. When we focus on transforming education systems, we can transform conditions in our schools, transform the practice of teaching, transform learning and transform lives."

## **United Nations High Level Panel forwards urgent solutions to address the global shortage of teachers**

Governments worldwide must act decisively to address the global education crisis by elevating and transforming the role, status, and future of the teaching profession according to recommendations from a United Nations High Level Panel.

The UN High-level Panel on the Teaching Profession moved on September 15th toward finalizing a set of more than 50 recommendations to be presented to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

“What we are seeing here today is historic,” said Education International President and UN panelist Susan Hopgood, “and that is an unprecedented agreement not only about the challenges facing education systems and the teaching profession, but about the specific steps all of us can take in concert to make real progress.”

Included in the draft recommendations are a series of urgent calls for government action, including ensuring that teachers and their organizations can engage in social dialogue with governments, including collective bargaining, and policy dialogue on all matters affecting their profession and that this same collaborative framework be the principle means for developing policies on education, teaching, and the teaching profession.

The Panel also called for governments to establish national commissions with relevant financial authorities, representatives of teachers’ organizations and others to immediately tackle shortages of adequately trained teachers.

The Panel also called on teachers’ organizations to develop, implement, and monitor professional standards for teachers to hold the profession accountable to the highest standards, while urging governments to begin phasing out the use of contract teachers and the hiring of unqualified teachers to fill teacher shortages.

Responding to growing global crises on education, the Panel called for the establishment of a Global Fund for Teachers in Emergencies to provide payment of salaries of teachers working in crisis-affected contexts and urged that international financial institutions end all public sector wage bill constraints and austerity measures that have severely depressed education spending globally.

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, brings together key stakeholders in the education sector to help tackle the growing teacher shortage around the world.

### **Teaching in an age of crises: rediscovering the importance of dignity**

In 1968, Martin Luther King addressed striking sanitation workers in Memphis, but his words will resonate with teachers around the world today: “. . . whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity and it has worth”. Tackling what

UNESCO has called ‘the global crisis in teacher supply’, as set out in the mandate given to the [UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#), cannot go without returning to the concept of dignity – something that teachers in many parts of the world do not believe they experience in their work.

Dignity is inevitably a complex concept, but in the thematic background paper I prepared for the [UN High-Level Panel](#), I argue that it rests, fundamentally, on three foundational elements.

**Recognition** - dignity depends on recognising worth and value. For teachers this requires working conditions that allow teachers to undertake their work in ways that are consonant with their expertise and professional judgement. In this context ‘working conditions’ refer to all those factors that contribute to creating the context in which teachers’ work is enacted.

**Agency** - dignity in work is the ability to perform the activity in a way that provides space for personal judgement and expertise to be exercised. It is about being able to exercise levels of autonomy that are consistent with the skills of the worker, the complexity of the task and the legitimate aspirations of the wider community.

**Rights** - Dignity is something that has to be actively established, and continually maintained. This requires, as a necessary condition, the existence of appropriate individual and collective rights that both ensure, and protect, the right to dignity in work.

The problems that are experienced today in relation to teacher supply exist because in very many contexts these foundational elements of dignity have been progressively eroded.

Recognition is not limited to material factors, but remuneration and working conditions are tangible reflections of recognition. However, in the vast majority of jurisdictions teachers are paid less than average graduate earnings, and working conditions are poor. In relation to both factors, there is clear evidence of a poor situation deteriorating.

However, the trends in relation to agency and professional autonomy are if anything more dramatic. Teachers find themselves subject to increasing levels of prescription and surveillance, with diminished capacity to act in ways that acknowledge professional experience and expertise. High trust environments are being replaced by low trust systems and the growth of cultures of compliance.

Furthermore, the rights that are essential to protecting teachers’ access to good working conditions and professional autonomy are also being undermined. Not always, and not everywhere – but in far too many places.

In my contribution to the UN High-Level Panel, I provide a conceptual framework for thinking about how re-engaging with the concept of dignity can help make teaching the job it deserves to be – working in the best interests of students, as well as making teaching an attractive job for prospective educators. Such an approach would begin to tackle the long term, global, trends in the teaching profession that have created the current crises of teacher supply and that are undermining educational advance in so many parts of the world.

The model is based on the foundational elements of recognition, agency and rights which in turn ensure fairness and justice in employment, a democratic professionalism, decent working

conditions and a real voice for teachers in relation to all aspects of their work.

“Strong education trade unions are not only a source of dignity (by providing a powerful, independent voice for teachers) but, crucially, they act as guarantors of dignity in work.”

This ‘voice’ can assume many forms, for example authentic teacher leadership and collegial governance, but it is important to recognise that there can be no genuine teacher voice without the existence of strong, independent and democratic trade unions capable of representing the collective views of the profession through social dialogue.

In such circumstances strong education trade unions are not only a source of dignity (by providing a powerful, independent voice for teachers) but, crucially, they act as guarantors of dignity in work by asserting the rights needed to underpin the status of an independent and valued profession.

The global crisis of teacher supply, is but one manifestation of a wider set of crises (economic and social, environmental, democratic) that make the job of a teacher simultaneously both more demanding, and more vital. In order to tackle these crises, and the societal challenges they represent, a much more ambitious vision is urgently required.

The radical solution is to re-discover, re-think and re-invigorate the notion of dignity in teachers’ work, and to place it at the heart of a new democratic teacher professionalism. The ‘building of humanity’ demands nothing less.

## **Valuing the humanity of teachers and the teaching profession**

Education involves the development of humanity. This requires valuing the humanity of teachers as people and professionals, and the importance of their complex work to teach learners and equip them to thrive in their lives. Below, we discuss our background paper submitted to the [United Nation's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#) on the development of humanity as an imperative.

**Definitions** of humanity include “understanding and kindness towards other people,” and “the qualities and characteristics of people.” Humanity includes teacher wellbeing, which encompasses physical, mental, and emotional health, and is interrelated with the status of the teaching profession and the nature of teachers’ work, and working conditions ( [OECD, 2021](#); [Viac & Fraser, 2020](#)).

Worryingly, evidence indicates deteriorating teacher wellbeing globally, with widespread concerns about stressful working conditions, workload, and work intensification ( [Schleicher, 2018](#); [Thompson, 2021](#)) and a decline in teachers’ feeling of being valued and respected ( [Singh, 2021](#)). The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, including school closures and shift to online teaching, further challenged teachers’ work and wellbeing ( [Education International, 2020](#)).

Within this global concern, there are also variations. Who teachers are and where they work can affect their wellbeing. Teachers from marginalized groups such as women, the LGBTI+ community, people with disabilities, and those living in underprivileged contexts are often most

impacted by structures of inequity and discrimination that impact wellbeing ( [Day, 2008](#); [Kraft & Papay, 2014](#); [Singh, 2021](#)).

Neglecting the humanity and wellbeing of teachers has negative consequences for teachers, learners, schools, and education systems ( [UNESCO, 2020](#)). For teachers, exhaustion, stress, and burnout can result in reduced motivation, changes in performance, illness, and leaving the profession. Crucially, teacher wellbeing also affects students' learning, wellbeing, and achievement ( [OECD, 2021](#)). The consequences are too pervasive to ignore. Urgent attention is needed.

In our paper, we propose five imperatives for advancing the humanity of teachers and the teaching profession.

**Imperative 1: Improving the status, respect for, working conditions and work life balance for the teaching profession is vital.**

Put succinctly: “The most successful education systems are those in countries where society values the teaching profession” (Schleicher, 2018, p. 91). Championing and improving the prestige of the teaching profession is important for encouraging people to enter teaching, as well as recruiting and retaining effective teachers. This involves ensuring appropriate pay and working conditions, work-life balance, and safety.

What we propose:

- A global campaign championing the importance of teachers and teaching and educating policymakers and key stakeholders about the facts concerning teachers' work and wellbeing and students' learning, wellbeing and equity would be timely and important.
- An appropriate work-life balance requires urgent attention, including addressing inequities for different groups of teachers.
- The right to be emotionally and physically safe in school must be upheld globally.

**Imperative 2: Developing human-centred educational improvement requires teacher agency and leadership.**

[Human-centred educational improvement](#) places teachers' agency and leadership at the centre of educational decision-making ( [Campbell & Harris, 2023](#)). Thompson (2021) called for a new “intelligent professionalism”, which requires a shift from professional agency and autonomy being conceived as the downloading of government mandates and linked work intensification for educators to an approach that “privileges the expertise in the profession itself” (Thompson, 2021, p. 5). The [International Labour Organization](#) has also called for ensuring a decent future of work.

What we propose:

- The future of the teaching profession is dependent on approaches that embed human-centred educational improvement, intelligent professionalism, and decent future of work as a global priority.

**Imperative 3: Prioritising the joy of teaching and love of learning by supporting teachers' enthusiasm and commitment.**

As the United Nations called for in the [Report on the 2022 Transforming Education Summit](#), “transformative teaching and learning based on experience, enquiry, curiosity and joy” (2023, p. 14) are vital. The motivation to enter the teaching profession often includes an enthusiasm for working with learners and making a difference. This commitment needs to be harnessed and supported throughout a teacher’s career. The need to mitigate current policies and practices that undermine the joy of teaching and a love of learning is also vital.

What we propose:

- The development of a global vision and linked actions to prioritise and centre the joy of teaching and love of learning as a defining purpose and outcome of education would be an important shift for current educational reform. This would require asking, “how will these policies support the joy of teaching, love of learning and teachers’ and students’ wellbeing?”
- A one-size fits all or prescriptive approach to prioritising the joy of teaching is totally inappropriate. What is needed is connecting with what motivates individual teachers.
- Approaches to initial teacher education and to continuing professional learning which include attention to teachers’ motivations are important.

**Imperative 4: Supporting teachers’ work and wellbeing through continuing professional learning and collaboration.**

The [Report on the 2022 Transforming Education Summit](#) states that: “Teachers must be supported and empowered to transform themselves and become agents of change, knowledge producers, facilitators, and guides for understanding complex realities” (2023, p. 14). Effective professional learning is linked to teachers’ identified priorities and differentiated for their needs, provides relevant quality content, supports inquiry, reflection, and collaborative learning, requires adequate resources, and support from leaders ( [Campbell et al., 2022](#)).

What we propose:

- Access for all teachers to high quality effective professional development opportunities is essential.
- Following the COVID-19 pandemic, re-invigorating the confidence of the profession is necessary.
- Ensuring teacher voice, agency and choice in their professional learning is vital.
- Opportunities for teachers to collaborate meaningfully, authentically, purposefully and with impact matter.

**Imperative 5: Attending to teacher wellbeing and preventing teacher illbeing are urgent.**

Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations, and teacher stress and burnout are highly prevalent globally ( [De Clercq et al., 2022](#); [Schleicher, 2018](#); [Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020](#)). Workload, work pressures, and limited time to switch off and recharge are major contributors to exhaustion. While education systems are increasingly aware of wellbeing concerns, too often the supports that are available rely on the individual teacher seeking out advice rather than systemic approaches to preventing illbeing.

What we propose:

- Teachers' working conditions require investment and attention.
- A clear commitment to reasonable working hours and workload that can be managed within those working hours requires leadership globally.
- Attention and support for both individual wellbeing and removal of systemic reasons for professional illbeing must be simultaneously advanced.
- There is a need to bring together education, health and wellbeing experts, policymakers, and researchers to engage in a sustained high-profile campaign to end teacher illbeing with evidence of effective approaches required.

## The urgency of action

Valuing the humanity of teachers is vital for supporting learners, the education profession, and high-quality education. The far-reaching negative consequences of neglecting the humanity and wellbeing of teachers are already being felt globally. We urge consideration and action on the five imperatives we have outlined. Valuing the humanity of teachers must be central to education, this is about the very essence of our collective future.

## Teachers need more innovation, not more innovations

We're in a global fight for the future of the teaching profession. One place where the forces are tussling it out is around the importance of educational innovation. Many people leave teaching because they just don't like how the job feels. Educators want more opportunity to innovate in their own schools with the kids they know best. We need bigger, stronger cultures of teacher-driven innovation running through all our schools. But what we're often seeing instead is restriction of innovation by top-down bureaucracies and too much testing. Elsewhere, unwanted innovations are imposed on teachers from the outside.

## The promise of innovation

When schools are allowed to innovate, students thrive and so do their teachers. I have seen this up close. This year, I have spent a week in almost every month in classrooms all over Canada as part of a network of 41 schools our team at the University of Ottawa has developed ( [CPSN 2023](#) ). The schools use innovations in play-based learning to increase engagement and well-being among vulnerable and marginalized groups of middle school students after COVID-19. Teachers have developed and advanced an incredible array of innovations ( [Hollweck, Cotnam-Kappel, Hargreaves & Baultif, 2023](#) ). Some are digital and involve things like coding, film editing, or playing Minecraft. Some have more machine-like or makerspace elements like robotics, mapping with drones, constructing murals, building calming spaces for younger children, or creating electronic cardboard arcades.

Many teachers are pulling back from innovations that add more indoor screen time to focus instead on "green" innovations outside. These include building outdoor trails and gardens, constructing wooden grow towers to cultivate food during the winter, or linking indigenous learning on the land to the seasons of the moon. Other innovations involve activities such as writing stories, or learning to cook, knit, play board games with children's parents, or perform magic tricks.

Everywhere there are compelling stories about the uplifting impact of teachers' innovative efforts.

A student with very poor attendance started to come in just on project days so he could build a bridge that little ozobots, dressed in costumes, would travel across as they became protagonists in a story that he and his fellow students had written.

A Grade 7 student who had been excluded from school for several weeks for fighting, built a wooden tower with his dad, in their garage, to grow food indoors. He then led other students in the school's atrium in building more towers so they could provide fruits and vegetables for their low-income community year-round.

### The perils of innovation

Sadly, innovation is the exception, not the rule in most schools today. It may prosper in early childhood classrooms before “real school” begins but in most schools, the demands of test preparation, top-down accountability, standardization, overbearing bureaucracy, and successions of externally imposed and unwanted reforms, squeeze the life out of teaching and learning. This is one reason why so many teachers leave. They can't pursue the passions that brought them into the profession in the first place. They have no autonomy to use their professional judgment. Their inability to fulfil their own purposes de-moralizes them.

### Disruptive innovation

Some governments, many EdTech companies, and a lot of consultants are trying to bust open this iron cage of educational inflexibility with what the business community calls disruptive innovation ( [Christensen, Johnson & Horn, 2008](#)). They want to disrupt the basic organization and assumptions of schooling with technologies that mean students can, in different ways, access learning from anyone, everywhere, at any time they choose, with or without a teacher. The spread of digital technology during COVID-19 ( [Vaillancourt et al, 2021](#)) has emboldened them.

Some are genuinely enthusiastic about the possibilities of moving more learning towards learners and giving them greater self-determination in their learning ( [Wehmeyer & Zhao, 2020](#)). Others have more suspect motives – to replace teachers with technology, limit them to being supplementary coaches or facilitators, increase profits for Edtech, and cut back on the costs of public education.

Digital tools and platforms have, since COVID-19, undoubtedly expanded the ways in which teachers can do their work and engage their students more effectively. But, as [UNESCO \(2021\)](#) point out, the purpose of technological innovation should be human centred to improve human purposes and processes, not replace them or dominate them.

As we saw during COVID-19, and even before it, hasty introductions of too much technology reduce rather than enhance everyone's humanity. Excess screen time damages mental health ( [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2020](#)). It limits the opportunities for students to engage with each other or to learn outdoors ( [Nature Canada, 2018](#); [Louv, 2008](#)). In-school, smart phone use creates distraction, impedes many students' learning, and increases student anxiety ( [UNESCO, 2023](#)). Digital engagement presumes that young people can already self-regulate their learning when many of our most vulnerable and marginalized students clearly cannot. Online learning and interaction may be cognitively as good as and sometimes even better than in-person learning, but emotional learning, humour, inspiration, moral, and ethical

reflection, interpersonal caring, ability to “read” how people are feeling and responding, and sheer senses of awe are dealt with far better within in-person environments.

Our best resource is not our technology but our teachers. Teachers working together, as partners in innovation, without hindrance from high stakes testing and standardization, and without the distractions of digital quick fixes, should be an overarching priority now.

### Dependable innovation

We do need to bust open the rusty iron cage of schooling that is making many teachers disheartened with their profession ( [Hess, 2013](#)). What our students and their teachers especially need, though, is more innovation that is driven and developed by teachers in their own classrooms with their own students that they know best.

Teachers and schools need to get out of implementing other people’s innovations. Instead, they need to build on the bond of the teacher-student relationship and develop reliable, dependable innovations of their own, collaboratively, as a school or as an entire profession, that strengthen that bond, not weaken it.

Dependable innovation is not recklessly disruptive. It develops and refines ways of teaching, learning, and assessing through constant inquiry and testing by teachers working together so that it is effective, meaningful and does no harm to the people affected by it. Dependable innovation leads to genuine improvements. It gets teachers out of bed every morning. It may use digital technology but is not driven or dominated by that technology. It does not have serious side effects. Dependable micro-innovations can be used effectively by ordinary educators everywhere ( [Hatch, Corson & Van den Berg, 2021](#)).

Teachers need whole cultures of dependable micro innovation in which passionate teaching and engaging learning can flourish. Dependable innovation supports teachers’ autonomy to create new ways of serving their students. It relies on cultures of collaborative professionalism among teachers as communities within and beyond their schools ( [Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018](#); [Campbell, 2018](#)). It draws on the research of outside evidence, and the insight of in-school inquiry. It stimulates teachers to share what they are creating and learning with other teachers elsewhere. And in doing all this, in addition to inspiring their students, it engages them more deeply in their own teaching.

Cultures of dependable innovation that spread across entire systems of schools are not a distant dream. I have engaged with them, supported them, and seen the evidence of their impact on teacher motivation and engagement, in large and long-lasting networks in Canada, the United States, Uruguay, Mexico, South Korea, Colombia, and the United Kingdom, among other places ( [Hargreaves, 2023](#)). What will it take to create and sustain such thriving cultures of innovation in other schools and systems today?

My expert paper on Leadership and Innovation for the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession includes the following 8 recommendations on how to create and sustain widespread cultures of dependable innovation.

1. Create an inclusive Innovation Commons in every school, community, and society

2. Invest in system-wide collaborative cultures of teacher innovation.
3. Remove the barriers to teacher innovation such as high stakes testing.
4. Ensure innovation budgets are driven by educational needs for equity and excellence, not by outside corporate interests.
5. Avoid disruptive transformation. Embrace dependable innovation.
6. Infuse an equity imperative into all innovation efforts.
7. Use place-based innovation to bring about collaborative inclusion and equity in communities.
8. Preserve and protect the contributions that teachers outside grade-level and subject-based classroom roles make to innovation.

The battle for the status and sustainability of the teaching profession is also a battle for the soul of the world and for the young people who will define its future. Our best resource is not our technology but our teachers. Teachers working together, as partners in innovation, without hindrance from high stakes testing and standardization, and without the distractions of digital quick fixes, should be an overarching priority now.

## 2. 111th International Labour Conference

From 5 to 16 June 2023, an Education International delegation was in Geneva to represent teachers everywhere at the 111th International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization.

### **The voice of teachers rings out at the 111th International Labour Conference**

Education International (EI) is the voice of teachers and education support personnel worldwide. As such, EI advocates for quality education for all, social justice, democracy, and professional rights and freedoms. From 5 to 16 June 2023, an Education International delegation is in Geneva to represent teachers everywhere at the 111th International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization.

The International Labour Conference is the annual meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the tripartite agency of the United Nations that brings together governments, employers, and workers to set and monitor international labour standards.

The conference is a unique opportunity for Education International and its affiliated trade unions to influence the global agenda on the working conditions of teachers and on human rights.

A large number of representatives of EI affiliates are participating in the Conference as part of national delegations from the workers' sector, expanding opportunities to deliver EI's messages on the rights of education workers. Education unions are also calling for increased global financing for public education, the key demand of EI's new global campaign Go Public! Fund education.

### **Gender equality at work and in education**

Dominique Marlet, EI Senior Coordinator for Human and Trade Union Rights, spoke to the report on Achieving Gender Equality at Work at the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations on 6 June. Marlet highlighted the strong measures

contained in the report to promote the participation of women in the labour market and in positions of responsibility.

"Selection criteria and quotas can be adopted, and financial support measures and distance learning services can be implemented to facilitate women's participation. It is also important to develop quality childcare services to support parents and encourage women's participation in education, vocational training, and employment," she added.

The EI Senior Coordinator also expressed solidarity with the more than 4 million Afghan girls who have been deprived of access to school and higher education, as well as the more than 20,000 Iranian students who were injured during the gas poisoning incidents.

"These poisonings affected 325 schools in 29 of Iran's 31 provinces. Many parents have withdrawn their daughters from school, which will have serious consequences on their education," she concluded.

Furthermore, Marlet coordinated the strategic involvement of and support for Education International affiliates in cases of violations of standards and conventions in specific countries, and presented Education International's position.

### Promoting quality learning in an international labour standard

Martin Henry, EI Research, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, is a member of the drafting committee and is coordinating the input from the workers' sector in the second discussion of the Commission on Quality Apprenticeships towards the development of a new international labour standard in the form of a Recommendation.

"This Recommendation not only ensures strong educational support for apprentices by qualified professionals, proper certification processes, and good vocational guidance and vocational support, but, thanks to amendments proposed by workers, the committee moreover managed to remove superfluous mentions with regard to national circumstances, which is an important change in the ILO. This recommendation provides an inspirational normative instrument for apprentices, including protection for the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as other collective and labour rights of workers," the Coordinator said.

The discussion sessions of the Commission on Quality Apprenticeships are being held from Monday 5 June to Wednesday 14 June. The discussion will produce the final recommendation.

"Education International has been involved in the development of this recommendation at the request of the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) because of our expertise in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the need for qualified teachers and educators, and the importance of ensuring a strong educational foundation for learning. The recommendation team has succeeded in providing strong educational support for apprentices, as well as ensuring adequate labour protections," Henry concluded.

Education International's address to the ILO

The work of education union representatives at the 111th International Labour Conference will continue until 16 June.

José Olivera, President of the Federación Nacional de Profesores de Educación Secundaria (FENAPES) [National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers] of Uruguay, will take the floor on 9 June at 3:45 pm (Geneva time) at the International Labour Conference, speaking on behalf of Education International on the importance of social dialogue in the development of effective and equitable education systems.

We invite you to listen to the speech live, send the link to your colleagues, and share the broadcast on your social media: [ILC Plenary Discussions, 09 June 2023 – Afternoon Session](#)

### **International Labour Conference: EI calls for social dialogue with teachers to strengthen quality public education**

Education is a fundamental human right and a key factor in achieving sustainable development. But to ensure quality education for all, the teaching profession must be recognised and supported.

This was the message delivered by José Olivera, president of Uruguay's National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers (Fenapes), in his address to the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 9 June 2023, during the International Labour Conference (ILC), on behalf of Education International.

The International Labour Conference is the annual meeting of the International Labour Organization, the tripartite agency of the United Nations that brings together governments, employers, and workers to establish and supervise international labour standards.

Olivera referred to the [report of the ILO Director-General](#), in which the word “education” is mentioned 20 times, while the word “teacher” is barely given a mention. “You know as well as I do that without teachers there is no education, let alone quality education,” said Olivera, recalling the crucial role played by teachers during the pandemic.

Olivera stressed the importance of social dialogue and the participation of social partners in the development of effective and equitable education systems. He welcomed, in this respect, the creation of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, announced at the [United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022](#). “This first step reflects the much-needed political will to prioritise public education by increasing education funding and investing in the teaching profession,” Olivera highlighted.

Finally, Olivera called on the ILO to play an active role in the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession and to continue to defend the professional and labour rights of teachers around the world while ensuring the right of all students to qualified teachers, a comprehensive curriculum, and appropriate learning environments.

“To achieve these objectives, the ILO must take on a leading role in ensuring, within the framework of social dialogue, spaces for meaningful trade union involvement in shaping public education policy, as well as ensuring respect for and the full exercise of trade union freedoms,

which are currently being violated in a growing number of countries,” Olivera concluded.

### **Social justice without quality public education and teachers?**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) held its 111th annual conference in Geneva (Switzerland) from 5 to 16 June. The ILO is the only tripartite body of the United Nations system that brings together representatives of the labour sector, governments and employers to address a range of issues pertaining to the world of work and related topics.

I was part of the delegation representing workers from Uruguay at this Conference, nominated by our central union, PIT-CNT, without leaving aside my status as an education worker and President of FENAPES, a trade union affiliated to Education International (EI). I was honoured to address the Plenary on behalf of Education International and present a set of reflections on the Report of the ILO Director General.

The report submitted to the Conference by the Director General is entitled "Promoting social justice". The report identifies the main elements of a world in crisis: the increase in economic inequality; the widening gap between the poorest and the richest segments; the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; and the increase in unemployment and informal work.

In this context, it seems important to me to express some personal reflexions that I believe are necessary and opportune for us as education workers to take note of, especially considering the role education should play in the construction of social justice, a task which we are called to by the ILO Director General. In particular, I would like to raise some concerns regarding what was said and also what was left unsaid, both significant as they pertain to education.

"As workers in the sector, we must be fully aware that our profession is under pressure from economic and political power groups, and is subjected to flexibilisation, deregulation, deprofessionalisation and substitution".

First of all, although our participation is stated to be "crucial for the development of effective and equitable systems of education and lifelong learning", this participation would take place within a framework where the meaning of education is defined by a fundamentalist neo-liberal understanding, predominant in much of the world, in which education is viewed from an economic perspective and assigned an instrumental function. A political and ideological definition if ever there was one.

Secondly, as I stated in the address to the plenary session on behalf of EI, "it is striking that the word teacher is hardly mentioned in the 31 pages of the Director General's report", even though we know full well that "without teachers there is no education, let alone quality education". This situation means that, as workers in the sector, we must be fully aware that our profession is under pressure from economic and political power groups, and is subjected to flexibilisation, deregulation, deprofessionalisation and substitution.

Thirdly, the absence of any mention of the growing privatisation and commercialisation in and of education, which are very present in Latin America, as well as the constant cuts in education budgets in many of our countries, is worrying. In both cases, the human right to education, which should be guaranteed by the state through the development and management of strong public education systems, is undermined.

Fourthly, while we continue to stress the importance of social dialogue and are fully committed to achieving social justice, education workers have serious doubts about working alongside international organisations such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These organisations have growing and decisive influence over public education policy in many of our countries. They are also responsible for promoting the budget cuts, the privatisation and commercialisation in and of education that we denounce.

None of these considerations can lead us to doubt the importance of our participation in global bodies, particularly the ILO, or in the recently created High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, announced at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit in 2022. Quite the contrary.

Firstly, it is imperative to take note of some of the ideological disputes present in the current global context, which are expressed and developed in the political arena. We must ensure that our participation is not distorted and does not end up serving other purposes and interests.

Secondly, our solidarity is our strength. We are part of Education International, an organisation whose political and organisational development, policies and demands, as well as capacity for mobilisation and dialogue have made it a strong and respected global political and trade union actor.

## Headlines

### 1. Education International stands with Ukraine: Union leaders in Kyiv meet colleagues and show solidarity

*On May 8 to 11, an Education International delegation visited Ukraine's capital to deliver a strong message of solidarity and meet with colleagues from the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU), EI member organisation in the country. The delegation also met with the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Mayor of Kyiv, as well as representatives of the Trade Union Federation of Ukraine, UNICEF, and UNESCO.*

“This is absolutely clear: we support Ukraine. Education International member organizations have showed up like never before for the Solidarity Fund for Ukraine. We support our Ukrainian colleagues who are doing a fantastic job making sure teachers get the help they need. We need to continue translating solidarity into action.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

The Education International delegation was led by David Edwards (EI General Secretary), Larry Flanagan (President of the European Trade Union Committee for Education, EI's European structure), and Randi Weingarten (President of the American Federation of Teachers and EI Executive Board member).

#### **Union solidarity in action**

Georgiy Trukhanov, President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, welcomed the EI delegation to Kyiv and presented the situation of the Ukrainian education sector and the challenges faced by teachers since the start of the full-scale invasion. Trukhanov shared the work of the union in defense of its members and their rights under martial law and thanked education unions across the world for their support which enabled the Ukrainian union to help its members affected by the war, those wounded, and those who lost family members.

The EI delegation and TUESWU also discussed further cooperation in support of Ukrainian educators and education, including strengthening ties with UNESCO and UNICEF for future joint projects in the country. The union also shared its plans for the end of the war, including using the trade union camp to provide much needed psychological assistance for children and teachers affected by the war.

The EI delegation visited Borodyanka and the wider Kyiv region to witness the destruction caused by the invasion

Despite the dire circumstance, TUESWU is determined to continue its mission and will keep doing everything possible to help educators in Ukraine.

#### **Social dialogue to strengthen education**

Together with TUESWU colleagues, the EI delegation met with the new Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Oksen Lisovyi, who took office in March 2023. The meeting focused on priority issues such as the safety of teachers and students and reforms to strengthen and improve Ukraine's

education system.

The critical role of effective and constructive social dialogue between trade unions and government in a country waging a war of liberation was highlighted, with the EI delegation expressing its full support for colleagues in Ukraine.

### **Teachers on the frontlines**

During his meeting with the EI delegation, the Mayor of Kyiv, Vitalii Klitschko praised the capital's teachers, noting their courage and dedication. While some teachers went to fight on the frontlines, others stayed behind and continued to work under challenging circumstances in support of their students. They teach from basements and bomb shelters to keep education going and provide children and parents with a sense of normalcy and resilience.

Klitschko explained how education in Ukraine's capital was taking place under martial law. After the Russian invasion, school continued in a mixed format - face-to-face, online and individual education. Currently 44% of students in Kyiv are studying in person, 47% remotely, and 9% individually. Almost 300,000 students study in Kyiv's municipal schools. Nearly 70,000 people, including 1,500 internally displaced persons, are employed in the capital's education system.

#### Meeting with the Mayor of Kyiv, Vitalii Klitschko

The budget of the education sector accounts for 40% of the city's budget and the sector is a top priority for city authorities. Vitalii Klitschko highlighted that teachers' salaries in Kyiv have been paid on time and in full, with all additional payments and allowances preserved, including the 30% municipal allowance.

In preparation for the new 2022-23 school year, shelters were prepared in educational institutions in the capital as part of the city's Safe Educational Environment program. Only schools with shelters are open for full-time education. The schools that do not have bomb shelters operate online. Today, 97% of municipal schools have shelters. The efforts of the Kyiv authorities are also focused on repairing the 95 educational institutions damaged by the occupiers.

#### The EI delegation visited schools in the Kyiv region damaged in the invasion

Oleksandr Yatsun, head of the Kyiv branch of TUESWU, presented the work of the organization during the war. From the first days of the invasion, some Kyiv educators have been volunteering, weaving nets for the front, preparing dry rations, and doing everything they could to help Ukrainian defenders on the front line.

AFT President Randi Weingarten reaffirmed educators' solidarity with Ukraine, stating: "We see our responsibility as not just talking about democracy and talking about the future, but actually helping in any way we can to make that a reality."

David Edwards expressed his admiration for Ukrainian educators and stressed the importance of cooperation between authorities and education trade unions.

### **Support from UN agencies**

Chiara Dezzi, Head of UNESCO's Ukraine Desk, also met the EI delegation and presented the UN agency's efforts to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning for Ukrainian teachers and students. UNESCO provides computer hardware and equipment to support online teaching and learning, develops digital education platforms, and strengthens the psychosocial support and care system for crisis-affected populations.

Both UNESCO and TUESWU have been actively involved in the development of the education system and its reconstruction during and after the war and are open to cooperation to improve the lives of educators and youth in Ukraine.

At the meeting with UNICEF, Murat Shahin, UNICEF Representative in Ukraine, highlighted that his organisation's main focus is to restore opportunities for young people. UNICEF is creating education support centers for children and youth and is equipping shelters for schools and other children's institutions.

### **Workers' rights key to Ukraine's future**

The EI delegation also met with the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) to discuss the current economic situation. Grygorii Osovyi, FPU President, noted that all people in Ukraine are actively working to strengthen the country's defense capabilities and the livelihoods of its citizens.

However, the economic situation is extremely difficult: the minimum wage is frozen, inflation is 27%, unemployment is 26%, and the poverty rate has increased fourfold over the past year, with about 7 million people now living below the poverty line.

Therefore, in negotiations with social partners, trade unions emphasise the need to make changes and create conditions that would give people an incentive to return to Ukraine. Without proper support for workers, without guarantees of decent working conditions, Ukraine will not have the human resources it needs to rebuild.

EI General Secretary David Edwards and Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Oksen Lisovyi

### **Hope in the midst of war**

The EI delegation visited Save Ukraine, the public organisation that regularly conducts rescue missions to return Ukrainian children abducted by Russian forces. The organisation identifies abducted children, works to return them to Ukraine, documents their cases for national and international courts, and provides physical and psychological support to these children and their families.

Visiting Save Ukraine's Hope and Healing Centre, Larry Flanagan, ETUCE President, stated: "What struck me most was the sense of hope that we saw in so many young people. Young people were smiling, young people we happy to be in school. There is hope for the future even in the midst of this war. Rebuilding the education system of Ukraine needs more than just Ukrainians. That's where international support, in terms of financing, in terms of solidarity is absolutely critical".

## **2. Eradicating child labour and getting children (back) into school: a fight waged by teachers and their unions around the world**

“One of my pupils, aged 9, had already left for Kayes, 750 km from our village, to work in a gold mine, because of his family's economic situation. His father told me that if I could go to Kayes, he would allow his son to return to school. I borrowed money from my brothers (22,000 CFA francs, or 33 euros) to pay for the bus journey to Kayes. The boy was ready to go back to school. Today, he's doing very well at school. I did this because these days, if you're not educated, you've got nothing.” This testimony from Tiecoura Bagayoko, a 58-year-old Malian teacher at Faradje Bamaro school, is an inspiring example of the commitment and key role played by teachers and their unions through various projects to ensure that children go to and stay in school, not at work.

After his training on child labour by the *Syndicat National de l'Education et de la Culture* (SNEC) in 2015, Bagayoko also worked hard to bring three other children who had dropped out in 2021-2022 back to his school.

Across the globe, projects to combat child labour implemented by teachers' unions with the support of Education International (EI) and its partners [1] have enabled more than 11,000 children to escape exploitation: 5,869 former child workers have returned to school, while 5,643 children at risk of dropping out have continued their education.

These results were achieved by 26 EI-affiliated trade unions active in projects to combat child labour in 15 countries in less than eight years [2]. However, these are only official figures, duly recorded, sometimes under difficult conditions. The real figures are undoubtedly higher.

EI President Susan Hopgood points out that “the eradication of child labour is one of Education International's top priorities. It is widely recognised that the most effective way to eradicate child labour is to improve access to and the quality of education. Universal quality education can break the intergenerational cycles of poverty and household dependency on child labour.”

She also notes that, for more than ten years, in close collaboration with its member organisations, EI has involved heads of schools, teachers, parents and the wider community in projects that have a holistic approach and cover issues relating to the quality of teaching, school safety, professional ethics, inclusive education, gender equality, and the status and conditions of employment of teachers.

“I would like to thank and congratulate the teachers and their unions who, without ever giving up, day after day, through their projects to combat child labour, bring girls and boys back to school, enabling them to build a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities”, Hopgood concludes.

### **Developing child labour free zones**

Most of the projects supported by EI and its partners involve developing [child labour free zones](#). Trade union training for teachers in the target area is always one of the first steps in these projects. This training generally covers definitions of child labour, as well as better teaching approaches. Teachers also learn how to communicate better with the community on the subject of child labour.

After the training, many teachers say that they are able to distinguish between [child labour](#), which harms the child's schooling, health or development, and which is prohibited, and “socialising” work, light work that can be done by a child at home or nearby without any negative consequences.

In most cases, the unions extend this training to prominent figures in the community, such as representatives of town councils, traditional chiefs, and parents' associations, so that they can support the teachers in implementing the project. One concrete example of this support is joint visits to the parents of children who have dropped out of school because of work, or whose schooling is being jeopardised by excessive workloads, in order to persuade them to change their behaviour.

### **Raising awareness at every level**

Awareness-raising activities on the importance of education and work-related risks are carried out in the community. Anti-child labour clubs are often set up in schools in the target area. Pupils who are members of these clubs develop street theatre, poems and songs that address all the themes linked to children's rights, including the right to go to school in good conditions.

Awareness is also raised through radio broadcasts, articles in the press and the creation of billboards with messages against child labour, which are placed in strategic locations in the community. In several countries, the project has set up associations of mothers of schoolchildren, whose members play an important awareness-raising role in preventing girls in particular from dropping out of school. Special days are organised in the project area to commemorate important dates, such as the World Day Against Child Labour (12 June) or the Day of the African Child (16 June).

### **Opening the eyes of the authorities**

The development of child labour free zones, limited to a few villages, is not an end in itself. Rather, the aim of these projects is to encourage authorities to take action, using methods developed by the teachers' unions. The free zone method also aims to place teachers and quality public education at the heart of solutions for the sustainable eradication of child labour. Numerous examples reported to EI show that authorities are following the lead of the unions thanks to this type of project.

In Togo, for example, the *Fédération des syndicats de l'Éducation nationale* (FESEN) has been developing a project in the canton of Kazaboua since 2019. "The FESEN project has had a major impact in the four schools selected in my canton, with a big improvement in the drop-out rate. I have therefore formed committees, raised awareness, and trained the heads of the ten other schools in the canton, so that they can follow the example" says Lanto Akaba-Abalo, head of this canton.

Moustapha Guitteye, Secretary General of SNEC, gives another example from Mali: "SNEC has created a 'space for social dialogue' in each of the villages where it is developing projects against child labour. This space includes representatives of the mayor, the local education authorities, pupils' mothers' associations, young people, teachers and school management committees. The members of these groups meet regularly to discuss the fight against child labour in their community, and they take the opportunity to address all the problems facing the school." SNEC has shared the positive experience of its social dialogue spaces with the Malian government, which has drawn on their example to extend the process to 270 villages, he added.

### **Trade union projects help set up school canteens**

In some of the poorest regions, malnutrition is a major factor in children dropping out of school. Some pupils arrive at school hungry in the morning, so they are not able to follow their lessons to the best of their ability, and some leave school halfway through the day and never come back. Many end up dropping out. Where national governments have not set up canteens in schools, trade union projects sometimes manage to mobilise local forces to meet this need.

This is the case in Malawi, where six school canteens have been created in the Chigudu area, out of the fifteen schools included in a project carried out over the past two years by EI member unions, the Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM) and the Private Schools Employees Union of Malawi (PSEUM). The canteens are organised by the schools, with the support of village chiefs. The food is served early in the morning, to encourage all pupils to arrive on time. This is the result of raising awareness of the importance of education and the momentum for education created by the project: the chiefs decided that the villages around the school would take turns to provide the food for the school food programme.

### **Social dialogue at the heart of the fight against child labour**

One of the common features of the projects against child labour supported by EI is the strengthening of social dialogue, initially at local level and then at national level. Including local authorities in the initial project training means that we can count on their support in raising awareness of the importance of education. In countries such as Malawi, Uganda, and Mali, local regulations are even adopted by traditional chiefs or other local authorities to punish parents who fail to send their children to school, with penalties ranging from fines to exclusion from community solidarity mechanisms.

### **Preventing child trafficking**

The momentum for education generated by these projects goes beyond the fight against child labour. In many cases, child trafficking can be prevented by the vigilance of all those involved in the community.

This is the case in Togo, where awareness campaigns carried out as part of the FESEN project in two communes in the Central Region have greatly contributed to a drop in the number of children trafficked from these communes to Nigeria.

In 2021, in Burkina Faso, Balkissa, a 7-year-old child enrolled in the first year of school in the village of Doh, escaped trafficking thanks to a trade union project set up by EI affiliates. Her aunt, who lived in Côte d'Ivoire, wanted to take her to Côte d'Ivoire, where she works on the plantations. Balkissa risked being exploited for labour, like many West African children trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire.

"She didn't want to leave her parents or the school, and her parents didn't want her to leave either, but in our tradition, an aunt has certain rights over her nieces, and the parents can't oppose her wishes", explains Amidou Bako, headmaster of the Doh school and local coordinator of the project.

He goes on to say that fortunately "Balkissa's mother, powerless in the face of this situation, approached the head of the school mothers' association set up by our project. She in turn alerted the school's anti-child labour club and the village committee to combat child labour, which had also been set up by our project. We were able to mobilise the entire village community to put pressure on the aunt. As a result, Balkissa was able to stay in our village and continue her education".

Some early marriages of young girls can also be prevented thanks to the increased vigilance of the teachers and communities involved in this type of project.

### **Trained teachers take lasting action**

Through regular contact with its affiliates, EI monitors project areas, sometimes years after all funding has ceased. Oftentimes, trained teachers continue to combat school drop-out and child labour, sometimes many years after a project has ended.

In Albania, for example, [a teacher from Levan](#) explains that she and her colleagues today continue to implement the methods for combating child labour that they learned at trade union seminars in 2010.

The enthusiasm for education generated by the development of areas free of child labour generally leads to an improvement in educational results in the schools targeted by the projects.

In many cases, these projects also help teachers' unions to improve their image with the public and the authorities, and even to recruit new members. [A study by EI and the Algemene Onderwijsbond \(AOB The Netherlands\) published in 2020](#) revealed significant increases in the number of union members in the target areas, ranging from 23% in Uganda to 47% in Nicaragua.

Principally [AOB](#) and [Mondiaal FNV](#) of The Netherlands, the Fair Childhood Foundation of the *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* in Germany, [Hivos](#) and the [Stop Child Labour](#) coalition.

[Albania](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Burundi](#), [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [India](#), [Malawi](#), [Mali](#), [Morocco](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Senegal](#), [Togo](#), [Tanzania](#), [Turkey](#), [Uganda](#), [Zimbabwe](#).

### 3. Madagascar: trade union solidarity with teachers affected by natural disasters

The Fédération Chrétienne des Enseignants et Employés de l'Éducation (FEKRIMPAMA) has spared no effort in distributing financial resources from the Education International (EI) solidarity fund to its affiliates most severely affected by cyclones Cheneso and [Freddy](#).

The FEKRIMPAMA General Secretary, Constant Andrianatrehy Marolaza, explained that as soon as the funding was received, the union office decided to distribute the aid to local teachers and members in the four areas affected by the natural disasters:

- North zone: Andapa.
- East zone: Mananjary, Manakara and Nosy Varika.
- West zone: Morondava.
- South-West zone: Tuléar I and II.

#### Organisation of financial aid payments

"Given the road and accessibility problems in some areas, some aid has been sent to disaster victims via online banking services. As for the regions accessible by car or motorbike, members of the national office and regional officers visited the affected areas to see the material damage for themselves and to distribute the aid granted by EI to teachers between 1 and 7 April," he added.

Seventy teachers each received the sum of 250,000 Malagasy ariarys, equivalent to around €50. For Marolaza in Madagascar, this sum will cover the living expenses of a family of four for 2 to 3 weeks.

As FEKRIMPAMA has a decentralised structure, it is the regional union leaders who have drawn up the lists of beneficiaries," he said.

"Many members have lost their homes and their crops. Teaching materials were also destroyed. We were not able to help everyone, and almost everyone was affected by the cyclone. The money was used to cover basic needs. Everyone decided to use the money according to their own priorities. We

comforted people as trade unionists".

Referring to the online money transfer as an alternative to delivering cash in person, which is sometimes impossible, Marolaza explained that the MVOLA system "makes it easier to work if there are problems with contact details. All the people we have helped have access to online money transfers, regardless of their location. This system is widely used in Madagascar because the SIM card is registered in the person's name, which is a guarantee of security. It's the right person who gets the money". Of the 70 teachers supported by the union, 39 received support in this way.

### **Contributing to the life and strength of the union**

The President of FEKRIMPAMA, Heriniaina José Rakotoarinosy, emphasised that the visit to the various regions was a good opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the FEKRIMPAMA office and the local members.

The FEKRIMPAMA office also met with mayors and local education officials, who thanked the union for the help it had provided.

In addition, Rakotoarinosy explained that the union had provided financial assistance to teachers who were not yet members of FEKRIMPAMA, but who decided to join as a result.

During the visits, the union was also able to recruit new members and collect membership fees and annual subscriptions. It was "a great opportunity to strengthen our union's base".

Finally, he concluded, "to strengthen the capacity of all members and further promote our union, we are considering organising a workshop next September, for which FEKRIMPAMA has requested technical assistance from EI".

## **4. ComNet: Communicators working together to change the narrative around public education**

Around 100 communicators working in education unions gathered online on June 1st as part of Education International (EI) Communicators' Network (ComNet). They reconnected, exchanged experiences and ideas, and got ready to bring the [EI "Go Public! Fund Education" campaign](#) forward.

### **Fighting fake news and strengthening educators' solidarity across borders**

"You are our movement's storytellers and so much of our world is shaped by the stories we tell. You bring to life the stories our people, their struggles, their victories and you make the world aware of the amazing work our educators do for their students in every corner of the world," expressed EI President Susan Hopgood addressing participants in the first session.

She also mentioned fake news as a key challenge, "actively warping people's perception of reality, 'alternative truths' are eating away at the very fabric of our communities, with constant attacks on democracy, on journalists and of course, on our unions. This is what you counter every day by lifting up the voices of educators everywhere, by telling our stories."

She added: "Through you, our movement tells stories of hope, dedication, and solidarity. The hope of children lifted out of poverty and exclusion through free quality public education. The commitment of teachers and education support personnel to their students and communities. The solidarity between

educators across the world coming together to support each other and build a better future for us all.”

Opening the second session, EI General Secretary David Edwards emphasised that “from Afghanistan, to Myanmar, to Iran, to Ukraine, from Türkiye to Sudan, you tell the stories of tragedy and solidarity. You make sure the world knows we don’t look away and never turn our backs to our colleagues and students. We live by our values. From South Africa to Argentina to the Philippines, you lift the voices of teachers and honor their work and commitment to education.”

He went on to note that “every day you help our movement speak truth to power. You counter lies and disinformation with the truth of what we do. You defend the right to education from ruthless profiteers. You protect educators’ right to decent work from cuts and austerity. You champion democracy and social justice.”

Edwards concluded by saying that this ComNet meeting “comes at a very important time for our global movement. Our Go Public! Fund Education campaign is gaining momentum and communicators are leading the way. Our success will depend on our capacity to tell the real story of public education and the educators who make it happen. I know you are all doing this work in your own contexts but this is a great opportunity to put our heads together, share insights, and strategise as a global movement.”

### **EI “Go Public! Fund Education” Campaign**

During both sessions, [this campaign was further highlighted through a presentation](#) and participants were urged to relay in their country this call for governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

The union communicators network, ComNet, was created in 2002, the first EI network ever set up. From its outset, it has aimed to increase solidarity among communicators and exchange valuable information. In a conversation between Dominique Marlet, former head of the EI Communications unit, Francine Fillion, former Head of Campaigns and Communications at the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, and Gemma Tuffy of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland, who participated in the first EI ComNet meetings, they explained the origins and purpose of the group.

Participants also received updated information about the upcoming EI 9th World Congress, to be held online in July, and were invited to send contributions to EI’s magazine, [Worlds of Education](#).

### **Sharing diverse union campaign and communication experiences**

During the first session, Ruby Bernardo, President of the National Capital Region branch of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers/The Philippines, presented the many diverse and festive activities, such as a Zumba contest, her union organises to raise awareness about the need to raise salaries, respect educators, and unionists’ rights.

Nicolas Anoto, Editorial Coordination Officer of the National Union of Autonomous Trade Unions-Education, also talked about his union communication around the Barometer of Education Professions, a survey of French educators allowing them to talk about their working conditions, their aspirations, and their vision of their profession.

The Zimbabwe Teachers’ Association Communications and International Relations Officer, Daisy Zambuko, explained how her union developed a campaign around the increase of teachers’ salaries,

and Gaëtan Kponoukon, General Secretary of National Union of Pre-Primary School Teachers/Benin, stressed how the union website helped spread information among the membership and made the collection of unions fees easier.

José Olivera, from the National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers/Uruguay started the second session presenting his union's campaign to transform education and increase education financing.

Nilka Julio, Organisational Specialist at the National Education Association/USA, advised participants that when planning and making decisions for a campaign, to ask selected questions to intentionally combat implicit or explicit bias.

Julien Farges, International Affairs Officer of the National Union of Secondary School Teachers-Unitary Trade Union Federation/France, also detailed the month-long campaign his union led with other union confederations to fight off the governmental pension reform.

In Morocco, the activities of the National Union of Education-Democratic Confederation of Labour to improve the living and working conditions of Moroccan educators, as well as its work towards a comprehensive reform of the country's education system to put an end to inequalities who persist there, were presented by the union's General Secretary, Younes Firachine.

Sylvie Lemieux, the Government Relations Advisor of the Union Confederation of Quebec/Canada, also underlined her union's major campaigns in recent years, focusing on pay equity and political involvement, saying they were successful campaigns by determining the right target audiences and multiplying communication platforms and strategies (for example, ads posted on key national media, radio, television, websites, etc. followed by decision-makers, or on billboards in big cities).

Participants were also able to exchange experiences. They will be working to organise future ComNet events to highlight the voice of communicators in telling union stories and promoting adequate financing for quality, inclusive public education systems, as well as good working and living standards for teachers and education support personnel at all education levels.

## 5. Uganda: Education International condemns the horrific attack on Lhubiriha Secondary school

Education International, the global federation of educators, strongly condemns the horrific attack on Lhubiriha secondary school in Mpondwe, Uganda and mourns in solidarity with the families and communities impacted by this devastating act of violence.

Education International further calls for the authorities to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for this massacre and calls for all armed groups to respect schools as safe sanctuaries where students can learn and thrive.

Officials report that at least 41 people, mostly students, were killed on June 16, during a late-night raid on the Lhubiriha secondary school dormitory in Mpondwe, Uganda close to the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Victims were hacked shot and burned according to witnesses and news reports. Some students are still missing and believed to have been kidnapped. The attack has been attributed to the militant group Allied Democratic Forces.

“All children have the right to education in a safe environment free of violence and harassment,” stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International. He added, “The authorities must act to prevent such attacks on schools, to protect the lives of children and to ensure their right to education. We stand in solidarity with our members in Uganda, the Uganda National Teachers’ Union and the whole education community as they mourn with the victims and families.”

Beyond the direct risk of violence and exploitation faced by students and teachers, such attacks on schools have a devastating impact on the right to education of children, especially of girls.

Education International's Regional Director for Africa, Dennis Sinyolo called on “education authorities across the continent to ensure teaching and learning environments that are supportive, comfortable, safe, and secure for all. This is a fundamental prerequisite if we want to achieve quality education and protect children’s right to education.”

The Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), member of Education International, [has issued a message](#) expressing its condolences and solidarity with all the people and communities affected. UNATU reiterated the need for safe schools and educational spaces where the values of non-violence, cooperation, tolerance, and respect are upheld.

Attacks in Uganda are rare, but in June 1998, 80 students were burned to death in their dormitories in a raid on Kichwamba technical institute near the same border. More than 100 students were abducted.

Education International reaffirms its commitment to advocating for "the right to education in safety and calls on the international community, governments, and all parties to conflicts to recognize and respect the right of all children and adults to a safe education in a peaceful learning environment, and demands they respect education institutions as safe sanctuaries."

As stated in the [Schools Shall be Safe Sanctuaries Declaration](#), EI urges "teachers, their unions, non-governmental organisations and civil society to join solidarity campaigns in support of victims of attacks and threats of attack, as a means to put pressure on governments and the international community to take action to end impunity; protect students, teachers, academics and all other education personnel; and make education institutions safe sanctuaries in which all students have equal opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and become advocates for peace in the world.

## 6. The government of the Jujuy province in Argentina must immediately stop attacking its people

For months, education workers in the province of Jujuy, Argentina, have been mobilising for decent wages and to defend public education amidst the regressive reforms of the provincial government. Peaceful demonstrations held by education workers and civil society groups supporting them are being violently repressed by security forces.

People have been seriously injured. A 17-year-old boy lost an eye after being hit with rubber bullets fired by local police and many demonstrators have been arbitrarily arrested and taken away in unmarked vehicles. The provincial police have also entered people’s homes and arrested them without warrants. The CTERA education workers’ confederation, affiliated to Education International, condemns this violent and arbitrary repression of demonstrators by the police and public authorities.

Jujuy is a province of Argentina in the far northwest of the country, on the border with Chile and Bolivia. It is rich in natural and mineral resources, particularly lithium. The local population comprises various communities of indigenous peoples who have resisted oppression and discrimination throughout history, especially in the defence of their ancestral lands. Poverty rates in Jujuy are nonetheless high, and its people have long suffered at the hands of authoritarian and repressive governments linked to the neoliberal right.

Jujuy's current governor, Gerardo Morales, has been holding Milagro Sala – leader of the Tupac Amaru social organisation and a member of the Mercosur parliament, PARLASUR – in prison since 2016, on the basis of irregular and politicised legal proceedings.

He has also violently repressed social protests and promoted constitutional reform that limits citizens' rights. His political ambitions have led him to run for the presidency of the country in the upcoming elections on 22 October 2023.

Governor Morales tried to restrict the right to strike and to dismiss the workers taking part in the protests but had to back down under social pressure. He is nonetheless pressing ahead with a constitutional reform that poses a threat to human rights, the environment, and national sovereignty. Education International expresses its solidarity with the education workers of Jujuy and is calling for respect for their demands and their right to freedom of association.

The repression of social and trade union protests by the government of Jujuy has been denounced by the CTA, the CGT and CTA-A union confederations, as well as by international human rights organisations such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

The IACHR has urged the state to respect the right to freedom of expression, to cease the use of force and to re-establish dialogue with indigenous peoples. The organisation has nonetheless reported that, since Saturday 17 June, excessive force, tear gas, and rubber bullets have been used to break up non-violent demonstrations, leaving many injured.

During the recent International Labour Conference of the ILO (Geneva, June 2023), Roberto Baradel, deputy general secretary of the CTERA (Education Workers' Confederation of Argentina) and international secretary of the CTA-T workers' union, filed a complaint with the tripartite agency regarding the Jujuy government's violations of human, labour, and trade union rights and the ILO Conventions ratified by Argentina.

Hugo Yasky, President of the Regional Committee of Education International Latin America and President of the Human Rights Committee of Argentina's National Chamber of Deputies, has denounced that the constitutional reform promoted by Morales violates ILO Convention 169, which establishes the obligation to consult indigenous peoples concerning legislative changes. The constitutional reform seeks to remove the limit on the governor's re-election and modify the electoral system. The opposition coalition Juntos por el Cambio has dismissed the IACHR's message and congratulated Morales for his firmness.

The conflict in Jujuy not only affects the people of Jujuy but has national and international ramifications. Morales' constitutional reform is a bid to impose an authoritarian and neoliberal model that benefits large corporations to the detriment of the most vulnerable groups in society. Among them are education workers, who are demanding better working conditions and salaries, and social leaders such as Milagro Sala, who has been imprisoned on political grounds for over five years.

Education International, which represents more than 32 million teachers worldwide, expresses its solidarity with the education workers and the people of Jujuy, calls for respect for human rights, the release of Milagro Sala, and an end to the repression and political persecution in Jujuy. Education International also calls on the international community to remain vigilant and mobilised in response to this grave situation that represents a threat to democracy and the rule of law in Argentina.

## 7. Toolkit to Build Union Strength

Education International has developed a "Toolkit to Build Union Strength – For more Effective Education Unions". This toolkit enables each Education International member organisation to engage in a process of self-assessment, proposing that they experiment with new activities to strengthen their organisations.

The toolkit has three distinct components that users can consult independently or chronologically. The first component focuses on a self-assessment process, the second component includes a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and the third component takes the user through a planning process based on the theory of change.

# July

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## Highlights

### 1. 9th Education International World Congress

From July 11th–13th Education International's member organisations around the world came together around the theme of 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.'

#### Related Items

#### **Education International's 9th World Congress: Ready to come together globally for inclusive education and stronger unions**

Union delegates representing Education International (EI) member organisations around the globe are getting ready to participate in the [EI 9th World Congress](#), from July 11th–13th with the theme 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.'

The EI World Congress, the supreme decision-making body of Education International, determines the policies, principles of action, programme and budget of the organisation. During the Congress, delegates will address proposed changes to the EI Constitution, take stock of the state of the world education systems.

This will be the first ever World Congress held online, as the result of a 2021 Executive Board decision that was made when pandemic travel and vaccine uncertainties prevented delegates from convening in person on the original dates. An in-person 10th World Congress will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2024.

"I am looking forward to welcoming delegates at this year's 9th World Congress. It promises to be a very different experience for us, but just as in other congresses we will come together in solidarity to continue our work for sustainable quality, inclusive public education systems, with teachers and support personnel who are the heart of education," explained Susan Hopgood, president of Education International.

"Since our last World Congress in Bangkok in 2019 so much has happened. The Covid pandemic has changed our world and our profession. But in the face of an unprecedented global health catastrophe we saw incredible compassion, dedication, bravery, and selflessness from our members around the world," she added.

Business at the 9th EI World Congress will be limited to what the constitution requires an ordinary World Congress to debate and decide, which means that elections and debates on resolutions will be postponed to the 2024 World Congress.

Delegates will be called on to decide on a clause in relation to times of crisis as an amendment to the EI Constitution and Bylaws, as well as an enabling resolution limiting the business of this ordinary session of the World Congress and extending the term of office of the Executive Board.

Delegates will also be encouraged to continue to engage in [EI's global campaign Go Public! Fund Education](#) which seeks to mobilise more funding for public education.

The presentation by EI General Secretary David Edwards of his Progress Report and of the Programme and Budget for the year 2024 will also be among the main topics at this 9th EI World Congress.

"Almost everything about this 9th World Congress is different than anything we've ever experienced. In 2019 it would have been impossible to even imagine the world of today. I'm excited about coming together with colleagues around the world and reconnecting around our shared commitment to quality public, inclusive education," stated Edwards.

"Here in our 30th year as Education International, we have built the knowledge, the reputation, the power and the alliances, to be a force for education and sustainable development and for human and trade union rights. The devastating pandemic has not stopped our solidarity or our commitment to our students and our communities," he added.

More information and updated reports on the 9th EI World Congress will be available on the EI website and social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#)). Stay tuned, spread the word, and join the conversation!

## **Educators must use their power to mobilise their unions, communities, and the world for quality education**

Education International (EI) President Susan Hopgood has formally opened the [EI 9th World Congress](#), the first-ever World Congress held online, where union delegates representing EI member organisations across the globe the world will meet from July 11th–13th around the theme of 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.'

### **A different world congress**

"It is hard to believe that when I last addressed World Congress, it was to close our very productive global gathering in person in Bangkok," Hopgood said. At that time, we set "a very ambitious and focused set of goals. We saw the world as it was and we saw the world that we wanted for ourselves and our students, families communities and nations, and we announced that we were taking the lead."

Then the COVID pandemic happened, and "none of us had ever imagined a global pandemic outside the realm of science fiction," Hopgood explained. "The decision to have two World Congresses one year apart was made by the Executive Board in 2021, at a time when COVID issues made it unlikely that delegates could convene in person on the original dates."

The EI Executive Board decided that the 9th online congress would be limited to only what the EI Constitution requires an ordinary World Congress to decide, which means elections and debates on resolutions will be postponed until the 10th World Congress to be held in person in Buenos Aires next year.

### **Persistent education professions**

Reflecting on the COVID period, Hopgood told delegates that “you can be very proud of the work of Education International over this period. No organisation on the planet convened more remote communications to its members, participated so forcefully at the highest levels of the United Nations or the World Health Organization or developed more timely and relevant interventions in collaboration with member and partner organisations to overcome the effects of this pandemic than did our profession through EI.”

“Colleagues, you were persistent, so we were persistent,” she added.

Noting that “the worst of COVID may be over, but the need for our persistence remains as a different and more chronic sort of emergency lingers”, she mentioned: “The crisis of the public sector; the ability of governments to maintain and advance the common good and the capacity of the people to hold their governments accountable.”

### Resource crisis in public education

Hopgood also deplored that the resources necessary for the public sector to meet the fundamental needs of the people are declining, adding that “the numbers are especially discouraging when it comes to education.” Education system resources have fallen in 65 percent of low- and middle-income countries and 33 percent of upper-middle and high-income countries since the start of the pandemic, she stated.

She lamented the fact that hundreds of millions of the most vulnerable children, young people, and adults remain excluded from education; and millions more don’t have learning opportunities because of inadequate environments, untrained teachers, and a lack of educational resources.

“We also know there is a teacher emergency, a shortfall of nearly 70 million teachers worldwide,” Hopgood said.

So where is the money? she asked. “In all the old familiar places, starting with debt. Too often as a condition of borrowing from global development authorities or national lenders, states are required to starve the public sector, including defunding education, health, and other public services. By deliberately constraining what is called the ‘teacher wage bill’ global financing agencies block teacher recruitment and salaries, further depleting the corps of professional educators.”

Hopgood underlined that billions of dollars in uncollected taxes prevent responsible investments in the public good and in economies that provide sustainable and broad-based growth.

“There is no lack of resources to fund public education, but a lack of political will to make education the priority the world needs,” she highlighted. “We need to ensure that public financing is directed to where it is needed most – ensuring that every student has a professionally-trained, qualified, and well-supported teacher, in a quality learning environment. Investment in the common good is fundamental to democracy and there is no better investment than quality public education with well-trained and well-compensated teachers.”

### UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession

Hopgood also reported that for the first time ever, a recently set-up UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession will examine the role of teachers and the support they need to do their work,

including addressing the global teacher shortage, elevating teacher professionalism and the importance of funding, calling it “a breakthrough”:

“Your message, our message, about teachers is leading the global education dialogue. That they must be supported, valued, and paid their worth; with workloads and working conditions that support mental and physical wellbeing; negotiated salaries competitive with those in comparable professions and an end to the hiring of contract or unqualified teachers.

Funding public education systems improves pay and working conditions and empowers teachers and education support personnel to stay and thrive in the profession they love. It also inspires a new generation to join the professions the world desperately needs.”

She went on to say that quality education requires quality teaching, for all students, in all circumstances, which means employing qualified teachers with the right standards and competences. “It’s more than just having enough teachers. Qualified teachers and education support personnel are at the heart of successful education systems. They must be recognised as key partners for transforming education systems and be involved in policy planning through collaboration between governments and education unions. This means social dialogue mechanisms that ensure the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining must be strengthened.”

She also called on teachers and their unions to raise their voices once again for “a new social contract, to exercise our ability to come together and unite behind a common goal; educate our colleagues; and mobilise our communities to connect the crisis in funding to the sustainable world we want to create.”

## Go Public! Fund Education

Presenting EI campaign, [Go Public! Fund Education](#), Hopgood explained that this campaign is “our opportunity to take the lead, to place our profession at the vanguard of real change in our nations and our communities. To make equity and inclusion in access to education a top priority. To guarantee student and teacher safety and wellbeing. To adequately and equitably finance quality, free public education for every student. To bring opportunity and technology together in an equitable way in public education, and to ensure quality climate change education for all.”

Adding that “by growing our unions and elevating our professions, we are building and defending democracy,” she also reasserted that “our values and our principles, represented in more than 400 unions with more than 32 million members in 178 countries, have become essential to maintaining and growing sustainable democratic systems”.

“We understand our power. Our power to mobilise our unions and our communities to engage our governments and hold them accountable to fund the future through quality education,” Hopgood concluded.

Susan Hopgood's full speech is available [here](#)

We will be reporting about the 9th EI World Congress on the EI website and on our social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#); Instagram: [eduint](#) ). Stay tuned, spread the word and join the conversation!

## **EI's 9th World Congress: Beyond the pandemic, educators and their unions continue to make a difference worldwide**

Education International (EI) General Secretary, David Edwards presented his Progress Report at the 9th EI World Congress, the first-ever World Congress held online, where union delegates representing EI member organisations around the globe are connecting from July 11th–13th around the theme of 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.'

"Almost everything about this 9th World Congress is different than anything we've ever experienced and this Progress Report is no exception," Edwards stated as he began his presentation of some of the work, accomplishments, and challenges of Education International in the past few years.

"When I last stood before you to mark our progress together in 2019, it would have been impossible to even imagine the world of today. Our profession has changed, the world has changed. The pandemic that infected the globe and killed up to 20 million also infected every aspect of our work," Edwards noted.

Acknowledging the friends and colleagues lost to COVID, "because they joined the millions of their colleagues who kept some form of education alive for hundreds of millions of students in the time of pandemic, he insisted that "for all of them we pledge a renewed sense of commitment and a sharpened mission."

### **Massive impact of COVID on education systems and unions**

"On nearly 200 occasions over these past four years, we gathered virtually online from one-on-ones, to small groups and global conferences, keeping each other close in mission and purpose and raising all of our spirits," he said, insisting that "no global organization outside of the primary health sector was more fully engaged in the global response to COVID than our federation. From the early months, EI was called upon to formally advise the World Health Organization."

The EI leader mentioned that "in 2020 after nearly two years of Covid, two years of isolation in front of our screens, we decided that EI and our member organizations needed to shake things up; to bring as many of us as possible together virtually for a sort of EI snapshot. And so, a 24-hour around the world celebration of solidarity on World Teacher Day."

In 2022, 700 education unionists came together online for the EI World Women's Conference, focusing on mobilizing and using women's power for change. EI is also a lead participant in the UN's annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. President Susan Hopgood addressed the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, highlighting the critical role of social dialogue and climate education for a just transition to a green economy, Edwards said.

He also highlighted that EI preceded the World Higher Education Conference with a virtual consultation highlighting the need to address diverse issues such as the casualization of academic labor and support personnel or academic freedom, and marked World Education Support Personnel Day, recognizing the contributions ESP make to quality education and to demand that these professional workers have quality working conditions.

Migration and refugees were a special focus for us during this period, from the US border to Turkey, Lebanon and Ukraine, Edwards also agreed.

He added that at the UN Child Labor Conference in South Africa, representatives of governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations renewed our commitment to prevent and eliminate child labor and forced labor.

Edwards reported on the EI delegation that visited Ukraine, and the work of solidarity and support of colleagues there in the midst of a terrible war. He also cited EI's solidarity with members in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Belarus, Eswatini, Uganda, Israel, Bahrain, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

### Never failing solidarity within the global education union movement

"I led a delegation to Turkey to bring solidarity to our members who are providing hope, housing and services for the victims of that terrible earthquake that has taken more than 50,000 lives," he went on to report.

In Haiti, working with DC partners we established a Solidarity Fund and rallied member organizations globally to help our Haitian member organizations, he also said.

For him, "sometimes, progress is the simple absence of war as in the hard-won ceasefire in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, obtained with the help of constant campaigning of teachers there. Sometimes it is simply a victory for the rule of law as in the defeat of the fascist insurrectionists in Brazil in January or in the victory of a coalition government in Fiji, where unionists were routinely jailed and assaulted by government forces."

Edwards also highlighted the Teach for the Planet campaign which presented world leaders with "our Climate Manifesto and have since held an unprecedented number of capacity building workshops for member organizations."

He went on to welcome, that, in 2014 and 2015, EI led the successful campaign to include education in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, alongside such issues as ending poverty and hunger, fighting gender inequality and climate change and others. "For each of the goals, education is the catalyst," he reasserted.

### Go Public! Fund Education

Edwards further explained that "under the banner of EI, the [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign launched earlier this year is putting a spotlight on education financing, on corporate irresponsibility and on government accountability."

Our global campaign to fund public education and the teaching profession is a fight for investment in the public sector, a new social contract focused on the value of collecting and deploying the people's money for the public good, he observed.

How do we make governments responsive? he asked. "We organize. We mobilize. The path to a sustainable future, to our rights as citizens of the world, is the same as our path to union rights.

That path is democracy.”

## High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession

At Education International’s urging, Edwards also said, the UN announced creation of a High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession to examine the role of teachers and the supports we need to do our work, including addressing the global teacher shortage, elevating teacher professionalism and funding public education systems. For the first time, there is high-level agreement that education is an investment, and the key component of this investment is in teachers, he stressed.

The EI leader was adamant that “a strong public education system is not inevitable. It must be fought for and defended. Here in our 30th year, together, we have built the knowledge, the reputation, the power and the alliances at the highest level to be a force not only for education and sustainable development, but for democracy itself. Thanks to you, we continue to make our influence felt and our leadership stronger.”

“So, I am reporting to you today, the 9th World Congress of Education International, that we are building upon this progress. We continue to make a difference worldwide. We will not stop,” Edwards promised in his conclusion.

The full Progress Report by EI General Secretary is available [here](#)

We will be reporting about the 9th EI World Congress on the EI website and on our social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#); Instagram: [eduint](#) ). Stay tuned, spread the word and join the conversation!

## **EI 9th World Congress: Educators connect to defend public education and elevate the profession**

Union delegates representing Education International (EI) member organisations around the globe connected online to participate in the [EI 9th World Congress](#), from July 11th–13th with the theme ‘Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.’

The EI World Congress, the supreme decision-making body of Education International, determines the policies, principles of action, programme and budget of the organisation. During the Congress, delegates will address proposed changes to the EI Constitution, take stock of the state of the world education systems.

This is the first ever World Congress held online, as the result of a 2021 Executive Board decision that was made when pandemic travel and vaccine uncertainties prevented delegates from convening in person on the original dates. An in-person 10th World Congress will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2024

Day 1 of the 9th Education International (EI) World Congress was very busy as members from around the world connected and engaged across regions, languages, and time zones.

EI president Susan Hopgood welcomed delegates, congratulated them for their courage and persistence during the COVID pandemic and challenged them to continue to organise and mobilise for quality public education in every corner of the globe.

Hopgood called on delegates to join EI in demanding governments ensure that "public financing is directed to where it is needed most – ensuring that every student has a professionally-trained, qualified, and well-supported teacher, in a quality learning environment. Investment in the common good is fundamental to democracy and there is no better investment than quality public education with well-trained and well-compensated teachers."

More on Susan's speech [here](#)

EI General Secretary David Edwards gave an update on EI's accomplishments and challenges around the world in the last few years, and invited members to continue to engage in EI's campaign [Go Public! Fund Education](#).

"On nearly 200 occasions over these past four years, we gathered virtually online; from one-on-ones, to small groups and global conferences, keeping each other close in mission and purpose and raising all of our spirits, he said, adding that "no global organization outside of the primary health sector was more fully engaged in the global response to COVID than our federation."

"So, I am reporting to you today, the 9th World Congress of Education International," Edwards said adding that "we continue to make a difference worldwide. We will not stop."

More on David's speech [here](#)

## Constitutional change

During the session, delegates adopted a new article in the EI Constitution which addresses times of crisis and now reads: "The Executive Board may extend the time required for fulfilling, or vary the manner of performing, any requirement under the Constitution and By-Laws, if the Executive Board determines it necessary as a result of extraordinary circumstances or widespread disruptions to operations. Decisions of this nature shall be made by a two-thirds majority of all members of the Executive Board".

## Enabling resolution

As the EI Executive Board, in December 2021, felt it would be unwise to have elections or even debates on resolutions or future strategies and orientations at the online World Congress, business at the 9th EI World Congress was reduced and restricted to what is necessary to maintain the needed level of activity and keep Education International running in accordance with its governing rules until the in-person 10th Congress, which will then be organised in normal conditions.

Delegates debated, voted on and adopted an enabling resolution limiting the business of the 9th ordinary World Congress and extending the term of office of the Executive Board.

We will be reporting about the 9th EI World Congress on the EI website and on our social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#); Instagram: [eduint](#)

). Stay tuned, spread the word and join the conversation!

## **9th World Congress: Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy**

From July 11th–13th Education International's member organisations around the world are coming together around the theme of 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.'

On the second day of [EI's 9th World Congress](#), education union delegates adopted several enabling resolutions which were brought about in relation to the COVID pandemic.

### **Enabling resolutions**

As the EI Executive Board, in December 2021, felt it would be unwise to have elections or even debates on resolutions or future strategies and orientations at the online World Congress, business at the 9th EI World Congress was reduced and restricted to what is necessary to maintain an ambitious level of activity and keep Education International running in accordance with its governing rules until the in-person 10th Congress, which will then be organised in normal conditions.

Delegates therefore debated, voted on and adopted the following enabling resolutions:

1. Enabling resolution substituting a simplified and clarified text of the Constitution and Bylaws.
2. Enabling resolution regarding the programme and budget 2024.
3. Enabling resolution on the extension of the mandate of the external auditors.
4. Enabling resolution extending the terms of office of members of the internal Audit Committee.

### **2024 EI Programme and Budget**

EI General Secretary David Edwards also presented a modified 2024 EI Programme and Budget, which will allow for EI to function properly and lead multiple activities until the EI World Congress meets again in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2024.

"As Education International and its members emerge from the pandemic period, a perfect storm of challenges is facing us," Edwards explained, adding that "while global education has moved up the agenda of many international agencies and global initiatives, and teachers and educator policy are increasingly placed at the centre of the education debates, we are not seeing education budgets and salaries keeping pace."

"Education unions in too many countries are increasingly operating in unfriendly, if not hostile, environments, where their views are ignored and where rights and professional freedoms are restricted, or even revoked. Climate change, natural disasters and conflict are exacerbating the problems requiring almost permanent level of emergency responses," he added.

Edwards stated that "EI will be on strong footing to achieve its core objectives and serve its members with fidelity and impact. Moreover, if we are successful at creating the enabling conditions, tools and resources for our members to grow stronger, defend those under attack and organize for a more democratic and equitable world, we will all benefit."

We will be reporting about the 9th EI World Congress on the EI website and on our social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#); Instagram: [eduint](#) ). Stay tuned, spread the word and join the conversation!

## **9th World Congress: Increasing education budgets to develop a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world**

From July 11th–13th Education International's member organisations around the world came together around the theme of 'Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.'

On the third and final day, the delegates committed to continue their engagement with [EI's Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#) which calls on governments to invest more in public education and in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

### **Go Public! Fund Education campaign**

[Launched on 24th January, International Day of Education](#), the EI Go Public! Fund Education campaign is a global mobilisation to fund public education and the teaching profession. It will support EI member organisations in their fight against budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation, and as they mobilise to build inclusive, quality public education for all.

Addressing delegates at the 9th EI World Congress, EI General Secretary David Edwards explained that “under the banner of EI, the Go Public! Fund Education campaign launched earlier this year is putting a spotlight on education financing, on corporate irresponsibility and on government accountability.”

He went on to highlight that this campaign represents “a fight for investment in the public sector, a new social contract focused on the value of collecting and deploying the people’s money for the public good. We are fighting international finance agency restraints on the public sector that block teacher recruitment and limit teacher salaries. Tens of millions of new teachers are needed globally. This is no time to divest from the public good, it is a time to invest.”

Large corporations and wealthy individuals can no longer be allowed to leverage the financial system for short-term profitmaking including the extraction and use of toxic energy sources like coal, while raising prices, hiding assets, and avoiding taxation, Edwards also underlined.

This campaign has already been endorsed and successfully launched by EI member organisations in [Africa](#), [Asia](#) and [Latin America](#).

In her closing speech, EI President Susan Hopgood thanked the delegates “for your thoughtful interventions and your patience, and for your time and attention, after all, the most valuable asset each of us has. Your online presence is a statement of permanence.”

She also stated that “we gave the organisation authority – by an overwhelming vote – to be prepared for the future as an organisation. We made the Constitution and Bylaws more inclusive, more user-friendly and more readable.”

We saw and heard great evidence of work done in the past four years, she said. “Even in the shortened version [of the Progress Report] that we received for this online Congress, the amount of work, the reach and impact of EI, has been quite remarkable.”

Emphasizing that much of the focus of the upcoming work will be on EI global campaign, Go Public! – Fund Education, Hopgood went on explaining that education unions around the world are joining forces to build inclusive quality public education for all.

“We are mobilising to fully fund public education systems and resist budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation. We are working together across borders to guarantee every student’s right to have a well-supported qualified teacher and a quality learning environment.”

She concluded: “You have represented the 32 million educators in 381 unions in 178 countries very well in this World Congress and I look forward to seeing you next year in person at the 10th World Congress in Buenos Aires.”

For more information on the 9th EI World Congress check the EI website and on our social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#); Instagram: [eduint](#)). Spread the word and join the conversation!

## **9th Education International World Congress: A testimony to the education professionals’ persistence**

From July 11th–13th Education International (EI) member organisations around the world came together the 9th EI World Congress around the theme of ‘Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy.’

Top education unionists representing 32 million educators in 381 unions in 178 countries met online to determine the policies, principles of action, programme and budget of the organisation.

This was the first ever World Congress held online, as the result of a 2021 Executive Board decision that was made when pandemic travel and vaccine uncertainties prevented delegates from convening in person on the original dates.

[Day 1 of the 9th EI World Congress](#) was very busy as members from around the world connected and engaged across regions, languages, and time zones.

[EI President Susan Hopgood](#) welcomed delegates, congratulated them for their courage and persistence during the COVID pandemic and challenged them to continue to organise and mobilise for quality public education in every corner of the globe.

Noting that “the worst of COVID may be over, but the need for our persistence remains as a different and more chronic sort of emergency lingers”, she mentioned: “The crisis of the public sector; the ability of governments to maintain and advance the common good and the capacity of the people to hold their governments accountable.”

Progress Report

Delivering a shortened version of the Progress Report, [EI General Secretary David Edwards](#) gave evidence of work done and of the remarkable reach and impact of EI in the past four years.

"On nearly 200 occasions over these past four years, we gathered virtually online; from one-on-ones, to small groups and global conferences, keeping each other close in mission and purpose and raising all of our spirits, he said, adding that "no global organization outside of the primary health sector was more fully engaged in the global response to COVID than our federation."

### Constitutional change and enabling resolutions

The delegates also gave EI authority – by an overwhelming vote – to be prepared for the future as an organization, by making the Constitution and Bylaws more inclusive, more user-friendly and more readable.

The delegates adopted a new article in the EI Constitution which addresses times of crisis and they also debated, voted on and adopted an enabling resolution limiting the business of the 9th ordinary World Congress and extending the term of office of the Executive Board.

### Programme and Budget

EI General Secretary David Edwards also presented a modified 2024 EI Programme and Budget, which will allow for EI to function properly and lead multiple activities until the EI World Congress meets again next year.

He stated that "EI will be on strong footing to achieve its core objectives and serve its members with fidelity and impact. Moreover, if we are successful at creating the enabling conditions, tools and resources for our members to grow stronger, defend those under attack and organize for a more democratic and equitable world, we will all benefit."

### EI Go Public! Fund Education campaign

[On the third and final day](#), the delegates committed to continue their engagement with [EI's Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#) which calls on governments to invest more in public education and in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

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He went on to highlight that this campaign represents "a fight for investment in the public sector, a new social contract focused on the value of collecting and deploying the people's money for the public good. We are fighting international finance agency restraints on the public sector that block teacher recruitment and limit teacher salaries. Tens of millions of new teachers are needed globally. This is no time to divest from the public good, it is a time to invest."

In her closing speech, EI President Susan Hopgood thanked the delegates "for your thoughtful interventions and your patience, and for your time and attention, after all, the most valuable asset each of us has. Your online presence is a statement of permanence."

Emphasizing that much of the focus of the upcoming work will be on EI global campaign, Go Public! – Fund Education, Hopgood went on explaining that “we are mobilising to fully fund public education systems and resist budget cuts, austerity, and privatisation. We are working together across borders to guarantee every student’s right to have a well-supported qualified teacher and a quality learning environment.”

## Buenos Aires, Argentina, ready to host the 10th EI World Congress

Preparations have started to welcome delegates in-person at the 10th EI World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2024. In the meantime, they will keep the momentum going, mobilise their communities, and advocate for free quality public inclusive education worldwide.

For more information on the 9th EI World Congress check the EI website and on our social media platforms ( [#EICongress](#); Twitter: [@eduint](#); Facebook: [Education International](#); Instagram: [eduint](#)). Spread the word and join the conversation!

## Happy 30th anniversary, Education International!

A panel discussion on 14 July brought together Education International (EI) President Susan Hopgood, EI General Secretary Emeritus Fred van Leeuwen, and EI co-founder Robert Harris to reflect on the creation of Education International and take stock of the progress accomplished by the global federation representing teachers and education support personnel, as well as the way ahead towards quality education for all.

Fred van Leeuwen, former EI General Secretary and International Federation of Free Teachers' Unions (IFFTU) Secretary, and Robert Harris, former EI Executive Director (Intergovernmental Relations) and World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) General Secretary, discussed the efforts that led to the merger of the WCOTP and IFFTU at a convention in Stockholm to form EI in 1993.

For Hopgood, “the success of Education international was never inevitable”.

There were practical and political reasons for the creation of EI, highlighted van Leeuwen. We created EI to be the voice of the teaching profession in the international community, he explained.

“30 years ago, globalisation and neo-liberal policies started to have effects on national education budgets. And we thought that it was important to help our member organisations cope with these international developments. There were also structural development policies imposed by the World Bank on low-income countries which devastated entire education systems in these countries. This led to the idea of bringing our two organisations together.”

There was also the staggering illiteracy rate, he recalled. “Millions of children unable to go to school, and governments and the international community not really doing their work in our opinion. So we thought that we needed a strong, powerful instrument do deal with all these matters, and we thought that we were in a good position to do that because our organisations were already present in the intergovernmental bodies supposed to deal with these issues.”

Another reason was a financial one: “We saw the work expanding and we realised also that for each international federation individually it would be very difficult to get the required resources.”

“Prior to that era, for about a hundred years, various groupings of teachers were trying to work out how they could develop unity, and often that failed. There were four international organisations in the eighties. We used to meet to organise a common statement to the international meeting of education ministers in Geneva every two years. That was not enough. There was much more to it. We had to develop resources, concentrate our resources, overcome competition, which was consuming resources which were better directed towards advocacy on behalf of teachers and unions generally. In the late eighties, we saw this window of opportunity and we all thought it was time to go for it. That’s what we did,” Harris noted.

### Agreeing on the new organisation’s structures

“We took elements from our two internationals,” van Leeuwen added. “It was not easy to get to get an agreement on the final draft of that constitution, because every participant in the meeting thought that the structure of their national union or their national association was the best there was. For example, concerning the roles of the President and General Secretary: Should the General Secretary be elected or appointed? Another hurdle was: Should there be regional structures and should these structures be independent? There was also the question of term limits.”

### Need for clear membership criteria

Another very important issue was setting up membership criteria, the conditions for membership of the new global union federation, he said.

“There was no difference of view on that the organisation should be democratic and independent from governments, political parties, the Church, etc. But the question was how do you determine whether an organisation meets those standards?”

“EI Founding President Al Shanker came up with the idea that this was not something that we could actually determine ourselves, to leave that to a group of wise people, the Committee of Experts,” van Leeuwen said.

Then [the Committee of Experts was set up and chaired by the former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke](#), Harris added. The committee advised the organisation’s board, made clear recommendations and came up with a clearly defined set of criteria that enabled the new organisation to grow, he continued. Finally the World Confederation of Teachers (WCT) ended up joining EI in 2006.

According to van Leeuwen, “everybody on the interim Executive Board, which served from 1993 until the First World Congress in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1995 was very aware that success was not a guarantee, and that we had to operate very carefully. We needed to learn to work with the ideological diversity that this new organisation represented, and it was in the beginning quite breakable, it was not a given that it would work, and particularly difficult was the establishment of regional structures.”

“We had to develop our advocacy with international agencies – United Nations, International Labour Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO, the World Health Organization, among others – and it is just fantastic to be here today and hear about the UN Panel on the Teaching Profession. This is the culmination of work done and needs to be carried forward into the future,” Harris also stressed.

He noted that, “at the same time, the new organisation had to develop its services for members, addressing current and serious issues, and the new organisation had to be able to provide the solidarity to address that. So it was working at both levels.”

Harris was noted that civil society was very active around the time when EI was created.

By the turn of the century, he reminded, the 1995 Copenhagen Social Summit developed the concept of the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted in the year 2000 “at the greatest meeting of world leaders ever held under Kofi Annan as Secretary General of the United Nations, and there was at that time a sort of optimism that we can actually move forward on some of the big issues of poverty and justice and the future of the planet.”

However, he warned: “Then we had 9/11, we had the Iraq war, we had a whole series of things. So history does not just go in a straight line. Unfortunately it has ups and downs and I think 30 years later it is much more challenging actually than the time when EI was created.”

### A democracy factor

“I do believe that it is very important that we have been able to change the narrative about education and teachers in the international community,” van Leeuwen further emphasised.

“We have successfully achieved that education moved to the top of the international agenda. This has been very essential because it ultimately led to the United Nations adopting education as an important Millennium Development Goal and, 15 years later, a Sustainable Development Goal.”

“And let's not forget the breakthrough in development of democracies the Arab Spring, he went on to say. “Teachers’ organisations played a very important role in the Arab Spring and the influx of teachers unions from the Arab world in Education International.”

For him, when we look at the future, one of the most important challenges is to protect democracy. “I believe that protecting democracy, helping our children to understand how important democracy is, is possibly one of the most important tasks that we have today.”

“Mary Futrell said at the beginning: ‘The struggle never ends’, and that's truer than it ever was. Thirty years later, we have to have to keep struggling. And beyond,” Harris echoed.

### A gender equity champion

Asked by EI President Susan Hopgood if, for women, EI now is a different organisation, a better one in relation to women's participation, than it was 30 years ago, van Leeuwen observed that in terms of numbers, the participation of women in the governing bodies of Education international is much higher than it was at it in 1995.

“There has been a lot of progress, but the important point is that you need to have young women joining the ranks of women currently running union decision-making bodies.”

He also said that, beyond supporting women and gender equality, EI has been among the first international organisations to clearly support also minority groups, such as the Indigenous peoples and the LGBTI community.

Harris also said that for WCOTP and some of its major affiliates, it was critical to have guaranteed positions for women so that we have gender balance on the world executive.

“It's almost one of those self-evident truths, and I think it is part of our DNA now as Education International. That is one of the major issues on our agenda - at the Executive Board, the World Congress and at the national levels. And that's the way it should be.”

He added: “Shortly after the creation of Education International, a World Bank's report, based on solid research, said that if there is any single investment that can be made for a country, the best investment of all is in the education of women and girls.”

Read Fred van Leeuwen's reflections on EI's 30th anniversary [here](#).

EI President Susan Hopgood also shared her thoughts on the role of women in their unions and in Education International in the past three decades. Read her article [here](#).

## Headlines

### 1. Inclusive, quality education: the key to ending child labour

From India to Senegal, from Albania to Uganda and Mali, Education International (EI) members raised their voices in support of quality education to commemorate World Day Against Child Labour on June 12th.

#### **More funding for public education is required to eradicate child labour**

In the Asia-Pacific region, the All India Primary Teachers Federation (AIPTF) organised a High-Level Conference on the role of teachers and their unions in the fight against child labour in Delhi starting on June 9th. Specific actions carried out by Indian unions were given as examples.

The conference took place as part of [WNBC](#), a programme to combat child labour that brings together AIPTF and other Indian organisations. AIPTF used the event to denounce the non-application of the Right to Education Act adopted in 2009, which mandates free and compulsory education.

In her speech at the conference, Education International's President, Susan Hopgood, emphasised the close links between the lack of quality education and child labour, as well as the vital need for better funding for public education.

She also introduced Education International's "[Go Public: Fund Education!](#)" campaign which calls on governments to invest in public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and invest more in teachers, who are the single most important factor in achieving quality education.

Hopgood added, "We know that poverty is an important factor in the child labour crisis but it is not its sole cause. Poverty itself is the complex result of interconnected factors such as inequality, discrimination, segregation, colonialism, lack of access to quality education, the prevalence of informal employment, and limited access to decent work."

The EI President also stressed that child labour is a highly gender-specific condition, as reports from the International Labour Organization highlight that girls in India are more likely to be in child labour than boys, with 8.3 million girls aged 5 to 17 in child labour, compared to 6.2 million boys.

#### **Preventing school dropout and supporting Roma children to return to school**

In the European region, in Albania, the Independent Education Union (SPASH) and the Federation of Education and Science Unions (FSASH) organised a conference on June 12th in Tirana, which showcased best practices from projects against child labour that they have been implementing for over 20 years. Albanian unions have distinguished themselves by their ability to involve their members in activities that prevent school dropout and promote the return to school of children from the Roma ethnic minority. They have also showed that involving teachers in two- or three-year projects has long-term effects: members who were trained more than 10 years ago in child labour prevention techniques continue to prevent school dropout today. Nine national television channels covered the SPASH and FSASH union conference on June 12th which was attended by representatives from the Education, Science, and Culture Union of Kosovo (UESCK-SBASHK), the Education Union of Montenegro (TUEM), the Fair Childhood Foundation of the German Education and Science Union (GEW) and Education International.

## **African Regional Symposium on Promoting the Area-Based Approach**

In Africa, in Kampala, Uganda, the Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM) and the National Teachers' Union of Uganda (UNATU) took part in the [African Regional Symposium on Promoting the Area-Based Approach in Pathfinder Countries for the Elimination of Child Labour](#) on June 13th. The symposium was organised by the Global March Against Child Labour and brought together unions, employers' associations, and other civil society organisations from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda. Delegates shared their experiences and urged members of [Alliance 8.7](#) and governments of pathfinder African countries to "prioritise the area-based approach in planning, policies, and actions to eliminate child labour."

## **The first exchange visit between Ugandan educators**

In Northwestern Uganda, for the first time UNATU organised an exchange visit from June 13th to 16th involving school principals, teachers, union leaders, and education authorities from three regions where the union has been implementing projects against child labour. Delegates from Entebbe and Karamoja had the opportunity to spend two days in the districts of Zombo and Nebbi (Western Nile sub-region), where UNATU has extensive experience of developing child labour-free zones. They were impressed by the results achieved in some schools, such as the elimination of school dropouts among girls, parents mobilising to provide lunches, using exclusively non-violent disciplinary methods and meticulously monitoring any early signs of absenteeism. Delegates returned to their respective regions with new ideas on how to improve their own child labour prevention programmes.

## **Day of the African Child**

Education International's affiliate in Mali, the National Union of Education and Culture (SNEC), celebrated both World Day Against Child Labour on June 12th and Day of the African Child on June 16th. The June 12th celebrations took place in Ouelessebouyou, where 104 former child labourers (55 girls, 49 boys) had been reintegrated into the school system during the 2021-2022 school year through a project by the Malian union. Certificates of recognition were awarded to those individuals who were most actively involved in the fight against child labour and promoting children being in school. On June 16th, SNEC organised a conference in Kabalabougou on the topic of children's rights in the digital environment to mark the Day of the African Child. Local authorities, parents associations, and local representatives from the Ministry of Education supported SNEC during both celebrations.

In Senegal, Education International members made the most of the World Day Against Child Labour and organised, on June 15th an awards ceremony for the best students in the municipality of Bambilor, where they are implementing a project to combat child labour. This event took place at the town hall and was attended by local authorities and local media. It provided an opportunity for the unions to reinforce their awareness raising messages about the risks associated with child labour among the population and to inspire people to support education at the municipal schools.

## **2. Education International's Executive Board: World Congress, 30 years of mobilising, artificial intelligence in education, addressing the global teacher shortage**

The Education International Executive Board met online on July 6 and July 14. EI's 9th World Congress held online on July 11 to 13, as well as the organisation's strategy on the use of artificial intelligence in education, and the launch of the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession dominated the agenda of the two Board meetings. The Executive Board also attended a special session dedicated to the organisation's 30th anniversary.

### **Education International's 9th World Congress**

The Executive Board met on July 6, in the run up to the [9th World Congress](#), in order to finalise preparations for EI's first ever online Congress. The 9th World Congress addressed matters of governance, while resolutions on policies will be discussed in 2024, at the 10th EI World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Board members reviewed the Congress agenda and the progress report giving member organisations an overview of the work EI has undertaken since the previous World Congress in Bangkok in 2019.

Board members also received reports on the three solidarity missions that EI has undertaken over the past six months to [Türkiye](#), [Eswatini](#) and [Ukraine](#). David Edwards, EI General Secretary, stressed the importance of being on the ground with members, a thought echoed by the Board Members who participated in the solidarity missions.

The 9th World Congress was also discussed at the Executive Board meeting on July 14. Taking place after the World Congress, the meeting gave Board members the opportunity to reflect on a successful Congress and look ahead to the 10th World Congress to be held in Argentina in July 2024.

### **Artificial intelligence in education: opportunities and pitfalls**

During their meeting on July 6, Executive Board members discussed a new EI project looking into the use of artificial intelligence in education and aiming to map out the opportunities new technological developments bring, as well as the risks they may pose.

Board members noted the rapid progress in terms of AI tools and stressed the need for Education International and its member organisations to understand all the implications of these new tools and develop relevant policies.

### **High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession to begin work to address global teacher shortage**

The EI Executive Board also discussed the launch of the [High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#), a United Nations initiative aiming to produce a set of recommendations to address the global teacher shortage of nearly 70 million teachers.

The Board welcomed the strong presence of education unions on the High-Level Panel, with EI President Susan Hopgood representing the teaching profession.

The EI Executive Board also discussed the Panel's upcoming meetings and the best ways to ensure that the realities and voices of teachers everywhere inform the work of the Panel in order to produce real change for educators and students around the world.

### **30 years of Education International**

The Executive Board meeting on July 14 featured a special session celebrating the 30th anniversary of Education International. Executive Board members had the opportunity to listen to a conversation between two EI founding figures - Fred van Leeuwen, EI's General Secretary Emeritus, and Bob Harris, EI co-founder. The conversation was moderated by EI's President Susan Hopgood and provided a wealth of insight into the origins of the organisation, its core principles and achievements, and the way forward.

Read Fred van Leeuwen's reflections on EI's 30th anniversary [here](#).

EI President Susan Hopgood also shared her thoughts on the role of women in their unions and in Education International in the past three decades. [Read her article here](#).

# August

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## Headlines

### 1. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2023

On 9 August, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Education International reaffirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples and youth to quality, culturally relevant education at all levels. The ability of Indigenous Peoples to control and implement their own education systems in Indigenous or traditional languages is an exercise of their right to self-determination. The perspectives of Indigenous youth are key and their participation and consultation on decisions related to them is more critical than ever.

For the last 30 years, Education International and its member organisations have been working to advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples at local, national, regional and global levels. In this time, we have seen significant movement at the international level, with the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the creation of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education, and several Recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

More recently, after nearly 20 years of collective actions and advocacy, on 26 October 2022, the Indigenous women's movement succeeded in getting the CEDAW to develop a specific recommendation, [General Recommendation 39](#) on Indigenous women and girls. General Recommendation 39 promotes the voices of Indigenous women and girls as leaders both inside and outside their communities, addresses the different forms of intersectional discrimination frequently committed by State and non state actors, and guarantees explicit protections to Indigenous women and girls worldwide.

Despite these key advances, there remains a gap between what these instruments guarantee and how States implement these rights, particularly regarding the rights of Indigenous children and youth. Without sustained political will, funding, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples continue to be marginalised socially, economically and politically across the world, impacting Indigenous youth particularly.

Structural discrimination and racism against Indigenous youth is embedded in constitutions, laws and policies, as well as government programmes, action and services. This is experienced in education most acutely. Brutal colonial histories and current neo colonial realities create varied challenges to the ability of Indigenous children and youth to fully enjoy their right to education. They often do not have enough qualified teachers to provide culturally relevant instruction and curriculum in Indigenous languages. These challenges vary depending on region and their individual situations, and may be compounded by intersecting vulnerabilities, including for girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and two-spirit children, children with disabilities and those in remote or nomadic settlements or urban settings [1].

At the same time, Indigenous human rights defenders, many of whom are children and youth, face arrests, harassment, and violence, especially when defending their sovereignty and rights to land, territories, and natural resources from the expansion of extractive industries and militarisation.

Despite these challenges, Indigenous youth are playing an active role in exercising their right to self-determination.

Indigenous youth have been changing this reality by leading and organising diverse activities to strengthen and promote their cultural identities, participating in assemblies, and sharing cultural spaces with Indigenous elders, and creating solidarity networks in the global climate action movement, peace building, and digital cooperation. Indigenous youth have been demonstrating how social media and online platforms can be harnessed to raise awareness, build solidarity, and mobilise a narrative shift.

Education International and its member organisations stand in solidarity with Indigenous youth and their communities in these endeavours.

As the right to education is fundamental to the exercise of many other rights, Education International and its member organisations call on governments to:

- Prioritise the full participation of Indigenous communities in formulating, defining, and implementing quality education, especially in the recruitment and training of teachers.
- Ratify and implement the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169, key human rights treaties, and national corresponding legislation and incorporate those instruments into national implementation plans, with the participation of, and in consultation with, Indigenous Peoples, including children and youth.
- [Go Public and Fund Education](#) at all levels to strengthen the delivery of quality, culturally relevant education to Indigenous Peoples including in their traditional languages.
- Establish and fund national mechanisms to implement the International [Decade of Indigenous Languages](#) (2022–2032), including through the provision of educational materials in Indigenous languages, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

To explore the ways education unions and Indigenous education experts, activists, and teachers are working to ensure quality education that centres Indigenous youth and furthering the rights of Indigenous Peoples in and through education, Education International will feature [a blog series](#) that brings together the voices of Indigenous Peoples and their allies from across the world this month.

[A/HRC/48/74: Rights of the indigenous child under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | OHCHR](#)

## 2. Empowering Women Education Workers: Summary of the EILA Regional Network Meeting

The meeting provided an opportunity for analysis of the current situation, workshops and discussions between colleagues from all over the region.

Initiatives such as the campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 and the launch of the [Network's Observatory: Sumemos Igualdad \(Let's Ad Equality\)](#).

On 24, 25 and 26 July, more than a hundred teachers gathered in San José, Costa Rica, for the Regional Meeting of the Network of Women Education workers of the [Internacional de la Educación para América Latina](#) (IEAL) [Education International for Latin America].

This meeting was part of the dynamics of the Network and was the second to be held after the pandemic and the resumption of face-to-face events. On this occasion, more than 100 teachers from all over the region, mostly women, and representatives of 18 organisations affiliated to IEAL, actively participated.

The event was moderated by Fátima Silva, General Secretary of the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE) [National Confederation of Education Workers of Brazil] (CNTE) and Vice-President of the Regional Committee of the IEAL; Sonia Alesso, General Secretary of the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (CTERA) [Confederation of Education Workers of the Republic of Argentina] and member of the Education International (EI) Global Executive Committee; and Gabriela Sancho, Coordinator of the EILA Regional Office. In addition, the event was attended by two congresswomen from Brazil in a guest capacity.

This year, the meeting was divided into three days in which the participants shared the situation of their countries and organisations learned about the most recent initiatives of the network and participated in two training sessions.

The first day began with a presentation on Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work by Larraitz Lexartza, ILO Gender Officer for Central America, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The ratification of this convention was promoted by the IEAL through a campaign that was also on the agenda of the event. During the rest of the day, participants from each organisation had the opportunity to present the political situation in their countries and the situation regarding women's rights and gender equality.

The second day began with a plenary session in which the group of Brazilian congresswomen shared their experiences with the participants. This was followed by the presentation of the Network's Observatory: Sumemos Igualdad [Let's Add Equality], a new website where people can find information and stay abreast of issues relating to gender equality in the world of work and specifically for the education sector.

The rest of the day was dedicated to two workshops. One of them was called "Public opinion is also ours: communication for women trade unionists", which focused on providing participants with basic communication tools to enable them to position their issues and agendas inside and outside their organisations and to generate a reflection on the need to make women's work in organisations more visible.

Entitled "Playing, dancing and singing in a unionist key with Tocá el Tambó", the other workshop sought to explore the potential of music in spaces of social protest and enabled the participants to come up with a slogan that was shared with the rest of the plenary session at the end of the day.

Finally, on the last day, there was a presentation on EI's campaign "Por la Pública! Creamos Escuela" [ [Go Public! Fund Education](#)], which opposes the privatisation of education and the

education trade and seeks to demand more state funding for public education. The presentation was given by the Observatorio Latinoamericano de Políticas Educativas (OLPE) [[Latin American Observatory of Educational Policies](#)].

Before the closing of the activity, the Regional Office officially launched Volume 9 of the [RED Magazine](#)[Network periodical] dedicated to women's work overload and the challenges of reconciling work, trade union and family life.

[Click here](#) to see the pictures of the meeting.

The Network of Women Education Workers is a joint work structure that was set up by the IEAL Regional Committee in 2005 to bolster unions by implementing union policies that promote and guarantee the effective and politicised participation and activism of women teachers. This initiative is based on the recognition that at least 70% of education unions are made up of women.

### 3. Concerns mount over teacher detentions and threats in Angola

Education International has expressed grave concerns to Angolan authorities following distressing reports of illegal detentions of teacher unionists and threats against educators. Threats include negative evaluations, terminations, and the exclusion of unionised probationary teachers from employment opportunities. Particularly troubling is a letter from a provincial education director, urging national police intervention against educators.

Education International has reminded authorities that educators in Angola have rights guaranteed by national law and international conventions ratified by the Republic of Angola. These rights enable them, and morally encourage them, to advocate for improved teaching and learning conditions for the nation's children and youth.

Despite recognising the complexity of the challenges faced by Angola's education sector, Education International deplores the persistently inadequate working conditions. Even amid economic growth, Angolan classrooms grapple with overcrowding and resource shortages.

Education International calls upon the Ministry of Education in Angola to collaborate with the teacher union, the *Sindicato Nacional de Professores* (SINPROF), in addressing these critical issues and ushering in transformative changes within the education system.

### 4. Resisting and reimagining Artificial Intelligence

In light of the recent hysteria around Chat-GPT, Education International member organisations might well groan at having to read yet another post about Artificial Intelligence and education. However, unfortunately AI is not a topic that educators can afford to completely tune out from. Indeed, there are a lot of people wanting us to surrender to the hype and accept that we have all now entered the 'AI age' ... that teachers and students simply need to accept it and make the best of the AI being handed down to us. As such, one of the main reasons that ongoing debates around AI have become so boring and repetitive is the seemingly inescapable nature of the situation. Regardless of how optimistic or pessimistic the conversations around AI are, the underlying presumption is that 'There Is No Alternative'.

In contrast, EI member organisations hopefully remain suspicious of being told to put up and shut up. Indeed, there are many powerful voices working hard to keep us passively resigned to the changes currently being ushered in under the aegis of 'AI' – not least the likes of Google, Open AI, OECD and others who stand to gain most from this technology. Rather than give in to these vested interests, the education community needs to step up and work out ways of pushing back against the current received wisdoms around AI and education.

So where to start with thinking *against* the current forms of AI currently being so relentlessly sold to us? This blog piece presents a range of persuasive critiques of AI that are beginning to emerge from those who stand to lose most (and gain least) from this technology – Black, dis/abled and queer populations, those in the global south, Indigenous communities, eco-activists, anti-fascists, and other marginalised, disadvantaged and subaltern groups. Any educator concerned about the future of AI and education can therefore take heart of this growing counter-commentary. Here, then, are a few alternate perspectives on what AI is ... and what AI might be.

## Ways of thinking differently about AI

### Black, Crip & queer perspectives on AI

Some of the most powerful critiques of AI are coming from traditionally minoritized groups – not least Black critics calling out racially-related misuses of the technology across the US and beyond. These range from well-publicised cases of facial recognition driving [racist policing practices](#), through to systematic racial discrimination [perpetuated by algorithms](#) deployed to allocate welfare payments, college admissions, and mortgage loans.

Condemnation is growing around the double-edged nature of such AI-driven discriminations. Not only are these AI technologies being initially trained on data-sets that reflect historical biases and discriminations against Black populations, but they are then being deployed in institutions and settings that are structurally racist. All of this results in what [Ruha Benjamin](#) (2019) terms 'engineered inequality' – i.e. the tendency for AI technologies to result in inevitably oppressive and disadvantaging outcomes "given their design in a society structured by interlocking forms of domination" (Benjamin 2019, p.47).

Similar concerns are raised by critiques of AI within dis/abled and [queer](#) communities. As scholar-activists such as Ashley Shew argue, there is a *distinct air of 'techno-abilism'* to the ways in which AI is currently being developed. Features such as eye-tracking, voice recognition and gait analysis all work against people who do not conform to expected physical features and/or ways of thinking and acting. Shew points to a distinct lack of interest amongst AI developers in designing their products around disabled people's experiences with technology and disability. At best, AI is developed to somehow 'assist' disabled people to fit better into able-bodied and neuro-typical contexts – framing disability as an individual problem that AI can somehow help overcome.

Such perspectives on AI should certainly make educators think twice about any claims for AI as a force for making education fairer. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that AI systems implemented in already unequal education contexts will somehow lead to radically different empowering or emancipatory outcomes for minoritized students and staff. Instead, it is most likely that even the most well-intentioned AI leads to amplifications and intensifications of existing discriminatory tendencies and outcomes.

### Feminist approaches to AI

Such concerns are echoed in feminist critiques of AI. These stretch back decades to writers such as [Alison Adam](#) in the 1990s highlighting how AI is founded on deeply problematic understandings of intelligence, and profound insensitivities toward social and cultural aspects of thinking, acting, and living. Since then, feminists have continued to call out AI developers and the technologies they produce as lacking any genuine concern for core human attributes such as empathy, ethics, solidarity, and care for others and the environment.

In raising these issues, feminist critics highlight how many of the problems associated with current uses of AI relate back to how power and privilege operate in modern capitalist conditions. For example, feminist activists were quick to protest against the reliance of AI development on low-paid and unpaid [‘invisible labour’](#) performed by women, people of colour, and often outsourced to non-Western workers. Feminist thinking reminds us that these injustices cannot be simply avoided, neutralised, or fixed. Instead, these are issues that need to be resisted, challenged and worked around in ways that rebalance the outcomes of AI tools along more equitable lines.

All of this leads to calls for the development of new forms of AI that are informed by feminist principles and can be used for feminist ends. Examples include projects where local communities take time to create their own data-sets to then train AI models on. This means that the functioning, intentions and parameters of the eventual AI tool are [visible to everyone](#) involved in its development and use – in contrast to the deliberate ‘black box’ opaqueness of most commercial AI. Other feminist forms of AI are being developed to deliberately combat the discriminatory and misogynist forms of AI that currently predominate – such as alternate forms of predictive AI that alert law enforcement to crimes such as gender-based violence and femicide. As Sophie Toupin [concludes](#), “The promise associated with feminist AI is that a fairer, slower, consensual, collaborative AI is possible”.

## Indigenous perspectives on AI

Allied to this is growing interest in reconceptualising AI through the lens of Indigenous epistemologies, cosmologies, and ways of being and doing. One initial attempt to do so is offered by Luke Munn’s [recent article](#) ‘Designing and evaluating AI according to indigenous M?ori principles’, which applies the work of anthropologist, historian, and noted M?ori leader Sir Hirini Moko Mead to current Western framings of AI technologies as they are starting to be applied across various societal domains.

As Munn explains, these M?ori principles, values and understandings offer a distinct break with the current dominant assumptions around AI as promoted by Western IT industry and policy interests. For example, Indigenous framings of AI raise concerns around human dignity, collective interests and communal integrity, as well as contextualising impacts according to local norms. Crucially, these approaches also foreground the ways in which AI is entwined materially with natural environments – from the imposition of water-hungry data centres in [drought-ridden regions](#) through to problems of [e-waste](#) and the [exploitative depletion of rare metals](#) and minerals to construct computer hardware.

From an Indigenous standpoint, therefore, the current Western push for AI appears dangerously unbalanced and removed from the needs of people and land. When set against the Indigenous framings outlined in Munn’s paper, current dominant IT industry rhetoric such as the complete AI-led ‘transformation’ of society, and extreme visions of an omnipotent ‘general artificial intelligence’ appears decidedly arrogant, hubristic, disrespectful, and destructive.

## Recurring issues and concerns

These are just a few aspects of a fast-growing counter-commentary on what AI is, and what AI can be. Indeed, a variety of alternate standpoints and perspectives are now being brought to bear on AI. Alongside growing calls to rethink AI along [decolonialist](#) and [eco-justice](#) lines, another emerging set of arguments against the politics of current AI draw attention to the clear “resonances between fascist politics and AI’s base operations” ( [McQuillan 2022](#), p. 97).

While all these ideas and agendas offer very different – and sometimes contradictory - takes on AI, they do contain some common sensibilities and ambitions. For example, these critiques are usually not afraid to make radical demands. One central conclusion from many of these viewpoints is that specific forms of AI should simply not be developed and/or should be immediately discontinued and outlawed. For example, there are persistent arguments for the complete banning of facial recognition technology – or, at the very least, tight control and regulation over its use similar to controlled substances such as plutonium. As noted legal-activist [Albert Fox Cahn](#) has reasoned: “Facial recognition is biased, broken, and antithetical to democracy. ... Banning facial recognition won’t just protect civil rights: it’s a matter of life and death”.

Elsewhere, are common concerns over placing marginalised and alternative perspectives at the front and centre of future AI design. In the short term, it is argued that future design of AI technologies and tools should be built around the needs of those least likely to benefit from the technology (what designers sometimes refer to as ‘edge cases’). Instead of being an afterthought, the experiences of Black, disabled and/or Indigenous communities should guide the decisions of AI designers and developers. This is reflected in calls for [disability-led design](#), [feminist AI design](#), [Indigenous AI design guidelines](#), and [design justice](#) approaches to conceptualising AI.

In the long-term are calls for these principles (and others like them) to be mandated as a basis from which to advance the sustained fundamental reform of AI along anti-discriminatory, genuinely inclusive and decolonised lines – forcing IT industry, policymakers and other drivers of AI to ground their actions and ambitions around larger questions of justice, inequality, and coloniality. This would require the AI industry to give up their current preoccupations with technological speed, scale, novelty, and wilful disruption. Instead, this promotes an approach to AI that is “slower, more considered, and more considerate of life in its various forms” (Munn 2023, p.70).

### **So where now? Reimagining what we want educational ‘AI’ to be**

Rather than being set in stone, there are plenty of reasons to believe that the ongoing AI-ification of education is something that can be resisted, and perhaps even reimagined in radically different ways. All the different perspectives just outlined should inspire us to slow down and recalibrate current discussions around AI and education – reflecting on what these technologies cannot do, and calling out what is lost and what harms occur when these technologies are used. These are certainly not unreasonable requests. Indeed, it is telling how we have quickly descended to the point where calls to consider issues relating to social inequality, humanity and the environment somehow appear to be so radical and totally unachievable.

We are still at a moment when there is time to speak out against the harmful forms of AI currently being pushed so relentlessly. Seen in this light, then, it seems crucial that the education community makes concerted efforts to push such values, ideals and principles into debates and decision-making around what forms of AI we collectively want to see in education. The critiques outlined in this post from Black, feminist and Indigenous perspectives suggest that the future of AI and education does not have to be a foregone conclusion that we simply need to adapt to. Instead, the incursion of AI into education is definitely something that can be resisted and reimagined.

## 5. Destroyed schools, bomb shelters, air-raid sirens: Ukraine's children begin another school year in wartime

UNICEF reports that over 1,300 schools in Ukraine have been completely destroyed since the start of the full-scale invasion launched by Russia in February 2022. Most Ukrainian students are forced to continue their studies online, far from teachers and friends. As a new school year begins in September, students and teachers face continued violence, uncertainty, and apprehension.

“Schools are never legitimate targets of war yet in Ukraine they have been attacked over and over again. Our colleagues and their students persevere despite the violence unleashed on them, but we cannot underestimate the devastating effects of the invasion. Education unions around the world stand with Ukraine and will continue to support Ukrainian teachers in all their efforts.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

### **Education under attack**

Ukraine's education system has been severely affected by the full-scale invasion. Nearly 7 million students have seen their lives and education brutally interrupted. More than 1,300 schools have been completely destroyed since February 2022 and many others have been severely damaged.

According to the latest enrolment data, only around one third of students in primary and secondary education are learning fully in-person. Two thirds of Ukrainian students have to attend classes partly or fully online because their schools have been destroyed or lack a bomb shelter to protect them in case of attack.

According to national survey data, two-thirds of preschool-age children are not attending preschool. In frontline areas, three-quarters of parents report not sending their children to preschool.

### **Going to school underground**

Ukrainian authorities are working to provide safe infrastructure for education in the country. Many times this means building bomb shelters for schools.

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city and home to 1.4 million people before the full-scale invasion, local authorities have begun [building classrooms in metro stations](#) to protect students from missiles. The city's proximity to the Russian border means that missile can reach their targets within minutes, leaving little time for children to get to the safety of a shelter. After years of online learning, over 1,000 students in Kharkiv will soon be able to attend school in person in the 60 classrooms being built in the city's underground.

### **Long term impact on learning and well-being**

While the experience with online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has allowed education to continue despite the war, the prolonged lack of contact with teachers and peers has affected millions of students in terms of learning and wellbeing.

According to UNICEF, up to 57% of Ukrainian teachers report a deterioration in students' Ukrainian language abilities, up to 45% report a reduction in mathematics skills, and up to 52% report a reduction in foreign language abilities.

Furthermore, millions of children who have already experienced loss, violence, and displacement are now also deprived of the safety and healthy routine of a school environment surrounded by friends and teachers. Ensuring their safe return to classrooms is imperative.

### **Low enrolment rates among Ukrainian refugees**

Refugee children from Ukraine have also seen their education affected. UNICEF reports that more than half of the children of preschool to secondary age are not enrolled in national education systems across seven countries hosting Ukrainian refugees. Language barriers and overstretched education systems are often the cause of the low enrolment rates.

Some refugee students are likely to be studying online using Ukrainian distance learning platforms and resources available on the Internet. However, some may have abandoned their education.

“The safety of the educational process, motivated teachers, and quality education for our children have been and remain our priority.”

Georgiy Trukhanov | President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine

### **Education unionists continue to work for Ukraine’s teachers and students**

The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU), Education International member organisation, has come to the aid of teachers and students in the country since the first days of the full-scale invasion.

At the beginning of this new school year in wartime, TUESWU’s President Georgiy Trukhanov stressed that “the issue of safe working and learning conditions for teachers and children is a top priority for all of us, for the entire country”.

The union leader also expressed concern regarding the growing teacher shortage: “Due to the full-scale war in Ukraine, a significant number of teachers are abroad, and there are also teachers who cannot conduct the educational process for various reasons - destroyed houses, lack of gadgets, lack of motivation. Now the issue of returning teachers from abroad and returning teachers to the profession in general is critical.”

The union is advocating for a salary increase for Ukraine’s teachers in order to keep them in the profession and motivate them to return to the country. Addressing the union’s efforts in this direction, Trukhanov explained that “today, more than ever, financial support is the most motivating issue for teachers. The budget process is currently underway and our trade union, in its proposals to the draft State Budget of Ukraine for 2024, insists on a significant increase in salaries, as well as the provision of guarantees in the legislation, and the preservation of safe and decent working conditions despite the extremely difficult situation in the country.”

### **Educators stand with Ukraine**

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, education unions around the world have mobilised in support of Ukrainian colleagues. Working closely with the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, educators everywhere have rallied to help teachers and students in Ukraine and abroad.

In May, an Education International delegation visited Ukraine's capital to deliver a strong message of solidarity and meet with colleagues from TUESWU, Education International member organisation in the country. The delegation also met with the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Mayor of Kyiv, as well as representatives of the Trade Union Federation of Ukraine, UNICEF, and UNESCO.

[Click here](#) to find out more about our visit and watch the video below.

# September

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## Highlights

### 1. Solidarity with colleagues in Iran

As the voice of teachers and education workers around the world, Education International stands in solidarity with the teachers and people of Iran and will continue to support their fight for rights and democracy. We are their voice!

#### Related Items

#### **Global Action Day in support of teachers and workers in Iran**

On 8 February, Education International joins trade unions all over the world for a Global Action Day in support of Iranian teachers and workers in their struggle for decent working conditions, union rights, democracy and freedom. Education International calls on its member organisations to show solidarity with the labour and democracy movements in Iran.

On this Global Action Day, Education International calls on the Iranian authorities to:

- immediately and unconditionally release all workers and unionists detained in connection with their union activities;
- immediately and unconditionally release students, teachers and other citizens detained for their participation in peaceful pro-democracy protests;
- guarantee and protect the right to freedom of association and assembly for all citizens.

Iranian teachers have long been advocating for their right to self-organize, better working conditions and free quality public education for all. They have also been at the forefront of pushing back against the increasing assaults of privatization on the education system. The teachers' legitimate demands have consistently been met with intimidation, repression and violence.

On May Day 2022 again, a wave of repression targeted teachers all over the country. More than 230 were arrested on baseless and false national security charges, in violation of their rights to freedom of association, to organise, and to freedom of speech. The authorities were desperate to stop the peaceful trade union demonstrations over teachers' poor wages, the inadequate education budget and the imprisonment of teacher trade unionists.

The death of Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish-Iranian woman killed by the Iranian morality police on 16 September 2022, has sparked nationwide protests in the country since September. The response of the Islamic regime to the Iranian people's aspirations to freedom and democracy was brutal. Hundreds of people have been killed, including 70 children. More than 18,000 people have been arrested and subjected to torture. Four protestors have been executed after sham trials, and many more are at risk of execution. The Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA) was the first to openly call upon educators and students to go on strike in support of Iranians fighting for democracy and human rights.

According to the CCITTA, at least ten teachers' rights defenders and members of provincial teacher trade associations, remain currently arbitrarily detained, including:

- **Esmail ABDI:** Mathematics teacher and former General Secretary of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association. Detained since 2015 in the Evin prison and adopted as Prisoner of Conscience by Amnesty International.
- **Rasoul BODAGHI:** Board Member of the Eslamshahr Teachers' Trade Association and General Secretary of the CCITTA. Condemned to 4 years and 6 months of imprisonment in October 2022.
- **Jafar EBRAHIMI:** Board Member of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association and Inspector of the CCITTA. Condemned to 5 years of imprisonment in October 2022.
- **Mohammad HABIBI:** Teacher and Board Member of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association. Sentenced to 3 years and 7 months of imprisonment in October 2022.
- **Masoud FARHIKHTEH:** Board Member of the Eslamshahr Teachers' Trade Association and co-chair of the CCITTA. Arrested in May and in December 2022, currently held in solitary confinement in the Evin prison.
- **Mehdi FATHI:** History teacher and member of the Teachers' Trade Association in the Fars province. Arrested in June 2022 and sentenced to 8 years prison.
- **Hashem KHASTAR:** Retired teacher and Board member of the Teachers Trade Association in Mashhad. Detained since July 2022.
- **Eskander LOTFI:** Board Member of the Teachers Trade Association of Mariwan, Kurdistan province, and Spokesperson for the CCITTA. Arrested in October 2022 and currently released on bail as he awaits a new trial and possible conviction.
- **Shiva MAFAKHERI:** Mathematics teacher and member of the Teacher Trade Association in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province. Arrested around mid-November, her whereabouts is currently unknown.
- **Hamid RAHMATI:** Retired teacher and member of the Teacher' Trade Association in Shahreza, Isfahan Province. Arrested in October 2022.

In November 2022, the EI Executive Board adopted a [resolution in support of Iranian women and girls in Iran](#) in their struggle for rights and freedom. EI had previously adopted a [resolution on Iran](#) in December 2021, demanding respect for the "rights of teachers and education workers to organise and to freedom of association and freedom of speech including the right to peaceful assembly, without fear of intervention by the authorities."

As the voice of teachers and education workers around the world, Education International stands in solidarity with the teachers and people of Iran and will continue to support their fight for rights and democracy. We are their voice!

### **Iran: Repeated chemical attacks on schools highlight gender-based violence and barriers to girls' education**

[New research published by Education International](#) maps the incidence of gas poisoning attacks on girls' schools in Iran during the nationwide protests for "Woman, Life, Freedom."

From December 2022 to April 2023, there were 358 instances of gas poisoning attacks noted by this research, which were part of the ruling powers' campaign to suppress the movement for women's rights.

Education International, in partnership with the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations (CCITTA), researched the incidents of the chemical attacks in the report “Chemical Attacks on female students in Iran.”

These attacks took place at girls’ schools, disrupting their education, their health, and instilling fear, forcing parents to keep girls at home. The students reported experiencing physical symptoms including sore eyes and throats, difficulty breathing, headaches, stomach aches, low blood pressure, weak legs and heart palpitations.

“Ensuring that all students have access to a safe, quality and equitable education is one of EI’s priorities. The repeated chemical attacks on girls’ schools in Iran is a threat to students’ health and safety as well as to their right to education and is a manifestation of a deeply patriarchal system,” says David Edwards, EI General Secretary.

He added that “EI stands in solidarity with the students, teachers, education support personnel and others in the education community in Iran who are navigating a response to these horrific events and persevering in the effort to develop a safe and inclusive learning environment for all.”

## Woman, Life, Freedom

In September 2022, people in Iran and around the world used the slogan “Woman, Life, Freedom” to protest the death of Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who died after arrest by Iran’s ‘morality police.’ The morality police enforce rules around dress, including the wearing of hijabs.

While government officials declared that the cause of Amini’s death was a heart attack, Iranian medical officials and Amini’s family argue that based on Amini’s symptoms in the hospital, including bleeding from her ear and bruises under her eyes, the more likely cause of her death was a blow to the head in the morality police van<sup>1</sup>.

People across Iran stood in solidarity with Amini and her family and protested for justice for Amini, calling for a broader need for women’s rights in Iran. As a part of the protests, some Iranian women cut their hair short and burned their hijabs in resistance to the Islamic Republic and morality police<sup>2</sup>.

The protests evolved into part of an ongoing movement for women’s rights in Iran, advocating against gender-based violence and for equality.

## Chemical attacks

During the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, a series of chemical attacks took place with increasing severity in provinces across Iran. On March 13, 2023, the Deputy Director of Health Ministry acknowledged that 13,000 girls across Iran had been treated for poisoning.

The chemical attacks are a demonstration of the severe barriers to girls’ education in Iran. Discriminatory practices rooted in religious political movements and the establishment of an authoritarian regime after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 has suppressed women in the education system, through gender segregation, biased textbooks, and restrictive dress codes, among other measures.

The attacks began to peak in early 2023. On February 6, 2023, 13 schools were attacked, and on March 5, 2023, 50 schools were attacked. The research report describes how “the poisoning of female students during protests highlights the ruling powers' attempts to suppress resistance and instil fear. Chemical attacks on schools disrupt the education of female students, and the lack of official data and transparency from the ruling powers suggest their involvement.”

The CCITTA, an affiliate of EI, advocates for access to quality education and the rights of teachers and education support personnel in Iran. Its goal in publishing a report on the chemical attacks on girls' schools is to raise awareness and advocate for action which ensures girls' right to education is respected and realised.

"Education is the antidote to oppression, and the CCITTA will relentlessly advocate for access to quality education and the rights of teachers and education support personnel in Iran," the CCITTA explained. "This report on the chemical attacks on girls' schools empowers us all to raise awareness, capture the attention of the media, and fight relentlessly for transformative change."

You can read the full report [here](#).

### **Iran: Education International calls for urgent medical leave and release for imprisoned teacher trade union leader Jafar Ebrahimi**

The health of Jafar Ebrahimi, a Board Member of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations (CCITTA), has deteriorated considerably during his unjust imprisonment in Iran. Education International has appealed to Iranian authorities to grant an urgent medical leave for the teacher trade unionist.

#### **Update 15 September 2023**

Friends and family of imprisoned teacher unionist Jafar Ebrahimi gathered in front of Qezal Hesar prison to demand information on his whereabouts and welfare. After many hours of waiting, prison officials informed them that Jafar had in fact not been taken to hospital after the brutal attack by a prison guard. Instead, he has been kept in the prison infirmary. The family was allowed a 20-second call with Jafar to confirm his situation. Jafar informed his family that he is refusing to take any medicine to protest the beatings and the fact that he has not been transferred to hospital. Education International reiterates its call to Iranian authorities to grant Jafar an urgent medical leave.

#### **Update 12 September 2023**

Information has come to light that Jafar was physically assaulted by a prison guard in the Qezal Hesar prison infirmary on 12 September 2023. He sustained severe injuries. While prison authorities claim Jafar has been transferred to hospital to receive medical care, friends and family cannot find any trace of him in hospitals in the region. Education International calls on Iranian authorities to immediately reveal Jafar's location and grant him urgent medical leave.

Jafar Ebrahimi has been imprisoned in Iran for the last twenty months. He has been suffering from an intestinal disease and his condition has significantly deteriorated during his confinement. He was only permitted access to a hospital once, and the treatment was done under severe security, denying him the right to comprehensive medical care.

His diabetes has worsened and information from fellow inmates suggests that Ebrahimi's eyesight is at risk. Without immediate and proper hospitalisation, he may completely lose his sight.

However, instead of granting the requested permission for Ebrahimi's hospitalisation, authorities transferred him from Evin prison to Qezal Hesar detention facility outside Tehran on 3 September. The authorities have also pressed new charges against him, accusing him of "threatening the security of the nation" and "disturbing the convenience of society".

Together with 12 other prisoners transferred to Qezal Hesar, Jafar Ebrahimi has begun a hunger strike, demanding his return to Evin prison and the dismissal of all new charges. Ebrahimi is not allowed contact with his family who is very worried about his health in the new detention facility.

"Jafar Ebrahimi, along with other imprisoned teacher union leaders, has not violated any national or international laws. Their arrest, imprisonment and continued detention are a violation of the fundamental right of workers to freedom of association and expression."

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

On September 6, Education International (EI) submitted a protest letter to the Iranian authorities, calling for an urgent medical leave for Ebrahimi, so that he can receive prompt specialised medical attention and proper care. EI stressed that it holds the Iranian government accountable for any harm that may befall teacher unionists while incarcerated in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Education International and its affiliate CCITTA call for the immediate release of all imprisoned teacher trade unionists in Iran.

### **Global Unions condemn the escalating violations of human and labour rights and civil liberties in Iran**

The Council of Global Unions (CGU), representing over 200 million workers through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Global Union Federations (GUFs), and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), condemns the escalating violations of trade union leaders' and activists' human and labour rights and civil liberties by various Iranian authorities.

The CGU expresses deep concern about the intensification of repressive measures targeting teachers, journalists, trade union activists, student activists, and women's rights defenders, especially in light of the approaching anniversary of the extrajudicial death of Jina Mahsa Amini on 16 September. We denounce this repression and urgently call for its cessation, thereby enabling trade unionists to defend and uphold workers' rights in Iran, a cornerstone of any democratic society.

We are also concerned about the increasing influence of the Gasht-e-irshad (“morality police”) and their enforcement of the mandatory hijab law to harass women and prevent their access to education.

Notably, affiliates of Education International (EI), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), namely the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teacher Trade Associations, the Union of Workers of Tehran and Suburban Bus Company (Vahed Union) and the Association of Iranian Journalists (AoIJ), face relentless harassment, arrests, prolonged detentions, and torture in prison. Affiliated organisations, individual leaders and workers in the sectors of different global unions report similar violations, which include:

- Targeting and dismissal of teachers and trade union rights activists: the unjust targeting and dismissal of teachers and labor rights activists in Iran gravely imperil their livelihoods; conducting physical and psychological torture during detention, including publicly broadcasting forced “confessions”; imprisonment under arbitrary and indeterminate sentences, in horrendous conditions, and without access to medical care.
- Attacking workers’ rallies and peaceful demonstrations, intimidating labour activists, journalists and protesting workers, doing arbitrary and summary dismissals, arresting trade union activists and prosecuting under charges such as "disrupting public order", "propaganda against the state", and "acting against national security" which can carry severe sentences, including capital punishment;
- Preventing the free circulation of news about union activities; sabotaging bona fide trade unions by setting up parallel regime-backed bodies and attacking on attempts by unions to hold public events, including those related to May Day;
- Violations of prisoners' rights: all detainees, including trade union activists, should be treated with the respect and dignity stipulated by international law. Illegally detained teachers, students, trade union activists, and human rights defenders must be released. Torture should be banned from all detention centres.
- Pressures on the families of union leaders: the escalating pressure on activists' families is a deeply distressing development. Families deserve to live in peace, free from the fear of reprisals.
- The right to organise and hold union meetings: Iranian trade unionists must be granted the fundamental right to organise and conduct general assemblies without the threat of persecution.
- Government's hostility to labour demands: The indifference to the legitimate demands of workers and retirees’ demands is unfair. We stand in solidarity with all workers and retirees, who deserve equitable treatment and a dignified livelihood.

We call on the Iranian authorities to respect international labour standards, in particular freedom of association, and ensure that principles of human rights, justice, dignity and fairness prevail. The CGU expresses its particular solidarity to women’s rights defenders in their struggle for a democratic and secular society.

We stand united in our commitment to defending the rights of workers, women, educators, journalists, rights’ defenders and activists in Iran and around the world.

**Iran: Release teacher union leaders voicing legitimate workers’ demands!**

Education International (EI) calls on its member organisations to urge the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately and unconditionally release jailed Iranian teacher unionists and to respect trade union rights.

For years, Iranian teachers have been voicing their legitimate demands for decent working conditions and the recognition of their fundamental rights and freedoms as workers and as citizens. Since May Day 2022, several teacher union leaders have been unjustifiably arrested, detained, and tortured for conducting peaceful trade union activities authorised by national and international laws.

In recent weeks, Iranian authorities cracked down on teachers and their union representatives to suppress a resurgence of last year's rallies as the first anniversary of the extrajudicial killing of Jina Mahsa Amini will be marked on 16 September.

Education International is particularly concerned about the situation of the following individuals, listed by affiliation to regional teacher associations. All provincial and county teachers' associations belong to the national umbrella Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations, which is EI's affiliate:

- **Alborz** provincial Teachers' Trade Association: Masoud Farhikhteh
- **Tehran** Teachers' Trade Association (including **Eslamshahr** county): Esmail Abdi, Rasoul Bodahi, Mohamad Darkesh, Jafar Ebrahimi, Mohammad Habibi, Zeinab Hamrang, Farzaneh Nazaranpour, Fatemeh Tadrissi, Mohammad Taghi Falahi, and Sara Siah Pour
- **Kurdistan** provincial Teachers' Trade Association:
  1. **Diwandareh** county Teachers' Trade Association: Omid Shahmohamadi
  2. **Marivan** county association: Shiva Amelirad, Eskander Lotfi, Shaban Mohammadi, Tahsin Mostafa, Massoud Nik Khah, and Sayvan Solaymani.
  3. **Sanandaj** Teachers' Trade Association: Loghman Afzali, Mokhtar Asadi, and Majid Karimi
  4. **Saqez** county Teachers' Trade Association: Solaiman Abdi
- **Bushehr** provincial Teachers' Trade Association: Mahmoud Melaki
- **Khorasan Razavi** province Mashhad county Teachers' Trade Association: Hashem Khastar and Ateke Rajabi
- **Khuzestan** provincial Teachers' Trade Association: Pirouz Naami
- **Isfahan** province Shahreza county Teachers' Trade Association: Hamid Rahmati
- **Gilan** provincial Teachers' Trade Association: Anoush Adeli, Fariba Anami, Aziz Ghasemzadeh, Hasan Nazarian and Mahmoud Sedighipoor
- **Fars** provincial Teachers' Trade Association: Mohammad Ali Zahmatkesh, Abdolrezagh Amiri, Asghar Amirzadegan, Moghan Bagheri, Zahra Esfandyari, Mehdi Fathi, Abolfal Khoran, Gholamreza Gholami Kondazi, Iraj Rahnama and Afshin Razmjoo
- **Chahar** Mahal and Bakhtiari province and Shahrekord Teachers' Trade Activist: Mohammad Saeedi Abul al-Shaghaqi
- **Khorasan Shomali** province **Esfarayen** county Teachers' Trade Activist: Saeid Motahari

These union leaders have faced a series of severe violations of their rights since May 2022, including:

- Dismissals from teaching positions
- Demotions and salary reductions
- Arrests and detentions, often in solitary confinement for extended periods

- Torture to extract false confessions and force renunciation of union work.
- Prolonged detention beyond the initial prison sentences
- Exorbitant bail amounts, some as high as \$50,000 USD, for temporary release
- Inadequate access to medical treatment
- Limited access to legal counsel
- Restricted family visitation rights
- Spreading of false information about them on social media
- Harassment of their family members
- Facing unreasonable charges
- Transfer of judicial cases to the Islamic Revolutionary Court, typically reserved for highly political cases.

These actions represent various forms of illegal and unsubstantiated harassment against these union leaders.

EI invites your organisation to take action now in support of our Iranian colleagues

- [Click here](#) to sign the petition on LabourStart.
- Send a letter of protest to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran asking for the release of jailed teacher unionists and for the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms in the country. You can use this [model letter](#).

*H.E. Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran:  
info\_leader@leader.ir or contact@leader.ir*

*To EI: headoffice@ei-ie.org*

- Please forward your letter to the Iranian diplomatic representatives accredited to your country and to the permanent UN mission. Please also forward a copy to EI.

*Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN: iran@un.int*

- Inform your government about the trade union rights violations in Iran.
- Send messages of solidarity which EI will transmit to its affiliate the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Associations and to the families of the detained colleagues.  
*headoffice@ei-ie.org*
- Share messages on social media to give visibility to the situation of Iranian teachers and unionists. Feel free to use the following samples:

Teachers belong in their schools and communities, not in prison! We strongly condemn the arrest of Iranian teacher trade unionists and demand their immediate and unconditional release.

#IranTeachers #WeAreTheirVoice #WomanLifeFreedom @CoordinatingA

Educators in #Iran are peacefully demanding better conditions for teachers and students. Their rights must be respected. We stand in solidarity with teachers jailed in connection with union activism and demand their release!

#IranTeachers #WeAreTheirVoice @CoordinatingA

We join @eduint and condemn the crackdown on Iranian teacher trade unionists and demand their immediate and unconditional release. The targeted repression against teachers in #Iran must end.

#IranTeachers #WeAreTheirVoice @CoordinatingA

Thank you in advance for your solidarity in support of our Iranian colleagues.

### **Iran: Education International demands an end to all violations of human and trade union rights!**

This September 16th, 2023 marks one year since the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini at the hands of police in Iran. Her death sparked widespread protests across Iran and gave rise to the Woman Life Freedom movement. Since then, the repressive state apparatus has worked to silence all dissent, increasing its attacks on Iranian citizens, teachers, and unionists and incurring in serious violations of human and labour rights and civil liberties.

Teachers and education institutions have been the target of increased repression and control because of the large participation of young people in the protests. The global education community demands the release of all imprisoned teacher trade unionists and calls on the Iranian authorities to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all workers, including the freedoms of association and speech, as well as the right to engage in peaceful assembly without state interference.

[Click here](#) to sign the petition calling for the release of all teacher trade unionists!

#### **Poisoning female students**

During the nationwide protests for Woman Life Freedom, hundreds of gas poisonings were reported in girls' schools. Education International joined forces with its member organisation in Iran - the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations - to document 358 instances of chemical attacks. [Read the report here](#).

From December 3, 2022, to April 29, 2023, there were 358 chemical attacks on 325 girls' schools. Some schools were attacked multiple times. Deputy Director of Health Ministry, Saeed Karimi, announced on March 13, 2023, that 13,000 students had been treated during the chemical attacks on schools. Additional attacks occurred from March 13, 2023, to April 29, 2023. The exact number of injured students has not been announced. There are concerns that similar attacks may happen again when the school year resumes on 23 September.

The ruling powers demonstrated a notable lack of responsibility by failing to provide a clear and transparent response to this alarming situation. The poisoning of girls' schools aimed to suppress resistance and instil fear in families, leading parents to keep their daughters at home and disrupting their education.

#### **Attacks on teachers and their unions**

For years, Iranian teachers have been voicing their legitimate demands for decent working conditions and the recognition of their fundamental rights and freedoms as workers and as citizens. Since May Day 2022, several teacher union leaders have been unjustifiably arrested, detained, and tortured for conducting peaceful and legal union activities.

"Imprisoned teacher union leaders have not violated any national or international laws. Their arrest, imprisonment, torture, and continued detention are a violation of the fundamental right of workers to freedom of association and expression."

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

In recent weeks, Iranian authorities cracked down on teachers and their union representatives to suppress a resurgence of last year's rallies for the first anniversary of the extrajudicial killing of Jina Mahsa Amini.

Education International is particularly concerned about the situation of the following individuals, listed by affiliation to regional teacher associations. All provincial and county teachers' associations belong to the national umbrella Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations which is EI's affiliate:

- **Alborz** provincial Teachers' Trade Association: Masoud Farhikhteh
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These union leaders have faced a series of severe violations of their rights since May 2022, including:

- Arrests and detentions, often in solitary confinement for extended periods;
- Torture to extract false confessions and force renunciation of union work;
- Prolonged detention beyond the initial prison sentences;
- Exorbitant bail amounts, some as high as \$50,000, for temporary release;
- Inadequate access to medical treatment;
- Limited access to legal counsel;
- Restricted family visitation rights;
- Spreading of false information about them on social media;
- Harassment of their family members;
- Facing unreasonable charges;
- Transfer of judicial cases to the Islamic Revolutionary Court, typically reserved for highly political cases;
- Dismissals from teaching positions;
- Demotions and salary reductions.

These actions represent various forms of illegal and unsubstantiated harassment.

Education International has launched an urgent action appeal, calling on its member organisations across the world to mobilise in solidarity with Iran teacher unionists. [Click here](#) to find out more and raise your voice in support of colleagues in the Islamic Republic of Iran!

On September 6, Education International also submitted a protest letter to the Iranian authorities, calling for an urgent medical leave for Jafar Ebrahimi, a Board Member of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations. Unjustly imprisoned for his legal union activities, Ebrahimi has been in jail for the last 20 months. During this time, his health has deteriorated significantly and he is now at risk of losing his sight if not given immediate access to proper medical care. [Find out more here](#).

The global trade union movement stands with the people of Iran

On September 12th, the Council of Global Unions that represents over 200 million workers worldwide, released a statement condemning the escalating violations of trade union leaders' and activists' human and labour rights and civil liberties by various Iranian authorities.

“The CGU expresses deep concern about the intensification of repressive measures targeting teachers, journalists, trade union activists, student activists, and women's rights defenders. We denounce this repression and urgently call for its cessation, thereby enabling trade unionists to defend and uphold workers' rights in Iran, a cornerstone of any democratic society.”

Council of Global Unions

[Click here](#) to read the full statement from the Council of Global Unions.

**Iran: Education International denounces harassment of teachers at United Nations Human Rights Committee**

Education International (EI) denounced the arbitrary detention and torture of teachers and students, particularly girls, in Iran, to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on October 9 in Geneva. As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Iran is obligated to uphold rights related to freedom of association, assembly, and expression.

EI's focus was on the repression of teacher union leaders from the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations (CCITTA), who have been detained for exercising international legal union activities. Speaking on behalf of EI, Mrs. Dominique Marlet, Research, Policy, and Advocacy Senior Coordinator at EI, highlighted [the persistent violations of freedom of association for teachers within Iran](#).

### **Violation of Union Rights in Iran**

EI's submission outlined the harsh prohibition and suppression of demonstrations, the unjust arrests and arbitrary detentions of peaceful protestors, and the detention and torture of trade unionists. Iranian law severely restricts the right to freedom of association and assembly, making it difficult for workers to join organizations of their choice and creating obstacles for unions in their administrative, rule-adoption, and leadership election processes. Strikes are prohibited, and there are no legal safeguards against anti-union discrimination. These issues extend beyond education to affect unionised workers in various industries, including oil, gas, iron, steel, and sugarcane, where workers face unlawful harassment, detention, and torture.

EI also presented its [research documenting 358 chemical attacks against girls' schools](#) during the protests for "Woman, Life, Freedom", which were part of the ruling powers' campaign to suppress the movement for women's rights.

### **Call for Action**

International workers' organisations and independent unions within Iran are calling for legislative changes that protect fundamental labour rights, echoing previous recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Committee. Additionally, a unified call for the immediate and unconditional release of any trade unionists detained solely for peacefully exercising their internationally recognised union rights is made.

During the 139th session of the UN Human Rights Committee on October 9-10, Committee members raised questions to the Iranian delegation. These questions covered charges against detained teachers and unionists, the duration of preventive detention, instances of torture, and whether authorities had initiated investigations into reported rights violations. Specific questions were also asked about chemical attacks against girls' schools and the widespread discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in their access to education, health, and work.

### **Iran's Response**

The Iranian delegation provided superficial responses and denied allegations of police brutality, arbitrary detention, and the existence of torture. Iran also denied discrimination against women and minorities.

This examination of Iran's human rights record brought numerous concerns to light, with education prominently positioned. While it may not provide an immediate solution to pressing issues for teacher unionists, it underscores the importance of international scrutiny and

accountability.

For years Iranian teachers have been voicing their legitimate demands for decent working conditions and the recognition of their fundamental rights and freedoms as workers and as citizens. Education International stands in solidarity with teachers, unionists, and others in the education community in Iran who are working to ensure develop a safe and inclusive learning environment for all.

## Headlines

### 1. A cry for justice: Solidarity with teachers in South Korea

Education International extends its unwavering support to the teachers in South Korea who in increasing numbers have been demonstrating every Saturday united under the common cause of public education. Education International stands in solidarity and denounces any and all attempts by the government to deny their rights.

#### **A cry for justice**

This September 4th marks 49 days since a young teacher tragically took her life due to bullying and violence against her. In Korean culture, this day is chosen to honor her memory and to demand change. Her tragic story shines a light on the daily struggles faced by teachers in South Korea, as highlighted in reports from Seoul over the past three years.

"The teachers of South Korea are not just mourning a tragic loss; they're demanding real change. Our teachers educate, but also change lives. This is a call for the rights and recognition they rightfully deserve. These teachers shape students; they shape the future. They embody the value of unity, the power of collective action, and the resilient spirit of educators. They remind us why it's vital to protect the sacred spaces of teaching and learning," stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International.

#### **A call to action**

Despite threats of dismissal from the Ministry of Education, teachers have declared September 4th as 'The Day Public Education Stops,' directly confronting government restrictions.

By choosing this day, teachers are highlighting the urgent need for change and challenging the government to acknowledge and address the systemic issues undermining quality education in the country. It is a courageous stand that underscores their commitment to fostering a brighter and more equitable future.

#### **Restricted freedom**

For Korean teachers, the right to unionize and political freedom are still distant dreams. The government's strong control over unions and political expression silences their voices, leaving them vulnerable to external pressures. This lack of agency undermines their ability to advocate for better working conditions, fair pay, and a more equitable education system. It also hampers their capacity to resist the growing privatization and commercialization in the education sector. Ultimately, these barriers hurt not only the teachers, but also the quality of education for the students.

"It's time for the world to stand in solidarity with South Korean teachers, who rise against legal constraints, and the denial of their basic rights, in their fight for justice and equity in education," Edwards added. Education International believes that the struggle of Korean teachers mirrors the battles fought by teachers globally. Only through global unity and collective action can we break down these barriers and create a more just and equitable education system for all.

Education International urges its affiliates to stand with South Korean teachers, to work together, to transform the world through global solidarity.

### 2. Libya: Solidarity Statement Following Deadly Floods

We stand together, united in grief and hope, as we bear witness to the devastating floods of Storm Daniel that have already claimed 11,000 lives and over 10,000 missing in Libya, and destroyed the livelihoods of thousands of others.

About 30,000 people have been left homeless, the UN's International Organization for Migration says.

Education International has extended our condolences to the grieving families of teachers and students through our contacts in Libya which include the Libyan Workers Federation.

We call upon the international communities and NGOs to provide the necessary assistance and resources to those affected by the floods. The country has already suffered decades of political turmoil which have set aside investment in infrastructure and quality public services. Such services are always much needed after such natural calamities that particularly impact disadvantaged communities.

This natural disaster also forces us to recognise the urgent need for climate action. Climate change is an existential threat that knows no borders. The most vulnerable populations are always disproportionately impacted despite having done the least to cause climate change. Education International calls again on the international community to redouble efforts to address the root causes of climate change and mitigate its impacts, including in and through education.

### 3. Education trade unions and Indigenous Peoples: A firm commitment in Latin America

Teacher trade unionists from various Indigenous Peoples, members of organisations affiliated to Education International Latin America (EILA), gathered in Panama City on 4, 5 and 6 September for the 10th Regional Meeting on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples. The event marks the continuation of a process initiated in 2009 in Antigua, Guatemala, and follows on from the most recent edition held in Asunción, Paraguay, in 2022.

#### **Dialogue and reflection on public education and Indigenous Peoples**

During the opening session, the common challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in Latin America were discussed, including the struggle for recognition of ancestral territories and access to public education that respects and values the diverse cultures and traditions of Indigenous Peoples. Authorities from the Panamanian Ministry of Education also took part, highlighting the importance of public education in bridging gaps and promoting gender equality in policymaking.

Combertty Rodriguez, senior coordinator of the EILA regional office, emphasised the importance of building strong ties between trade unions and Indigenous Peoples. The main aim is for education unions to understand and effectively address the needs of Indigenous teachers and Indigenous populations as a whole.

Fátima Silva, Vice-President of the EILA regional committee and General Secretary of the CNTE (National Confederation of Education Workers, Brazil), led an introductory activity in which each participant shared information about their identity, their trade union, and their training and experience in education, highlighting the diversity of the participants and the importance of understanding the realities of Indigenous Peoples in the region.

A presentation was also given by the Latin American Observatory of Educational Policies (OLPE), led by researcher Gabriela Bonilla, focusing on education policy in the region and its impact on Indigenous populations. As part of this session, the participants were provided with a document with relevant information on the subject. The OLPE presentation included group discussions in which participants shared their perspectives on educational curricula, the role of teachers from an Indigenous perspective, and the debate between face-to-face and virtual education models. These views will be incorporated into the working paper that will be distributed to participating trade unions.

### **Marking International Indigenous Women's Day**

The second day of the gathering, 5 September, was dedicated to marking International Indigenous Women's Day, established in memory of Bartolina Sisa, an Aimara Indigenous woman who fought against Spanish rule and was assassinated in 1782. A panel discussion was held on the situation of Indigenous women teachers, during which representatives from various countries shared their perspectives.

The speakers reflected on the inequalities and discrimination faced by Indigenous women in education and employment, highlighting the need to open up spaces for Indigenous women's participation in political and decision-making processes. They also denounced the violence faced by Indigenous girls and women, as well as their exclusion from education systems.

Edi Serigy, an Indigenous education worker from the Tipinambá people of Brazil, shared details about Indigenous education and the gains and setbacks in Indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil. The breakthroughs highlighted include the founding of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and the National Committee for Indigenous School Education.

Fátima Silva rounded off the presentation with details of the political context in Brazil and the gains promoted by the progressive government amid political polarisation.

### **New demands regarding education and Indigenous Peoples**

A declaration of the 10th Regional Meeting on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples was also developed during the event. [Click here to read the full declaration \(in Spanish\)](#).

The declaration calls for a fundamental transformation of public policies in the region, with the aim of guaranteeing free, quality, and culturally relevant public education for all Indigenous Peoples in Latin America. It defends the integrity of Indigenous territories and calls for their autonomy, as well as a significant increase in state funding for Indigenous education.

The text underlines the importance of training and hiring Indigenous teachers, placing special emphasis on teaching in mother tongues, and proposes the creation of school curricula based on Indigenous world views, with an inclusive and regionalised approach that reflects the diversity of Indigenous peoples' cultures and traditions.

It identifies the active participation of Indigenous women in decision-making and the fight against gender-based violence as key priorities, as well as fair pay and decent working conditions for Indigenous education workers, acknowledging their fundamental role in the transmission of knowledge and culture.

It also highlights infrastructure and access to basic services in Indigenous schools as essential to ensuring quality education. And, warning of the digital and technological divide affecting Indigenous

communities, it underlines the need to bridge this gap by ensuring access to technological tools and training.

The declaration also stresses the dangers of the privatisation and commercialisation of education, which can lead to the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from education systems. The decolonisation of curricula and educational funding is encouraged, to ensure an education that is genuinely inclusive and respectful of Indigenous identities.

The responsible use of digital technologies and the inclusion of artificial intelligence in Indigenous education must be guided by the principles of equality, human rights, and cultural diversity. The regulation of artificial intelligence is essential to avoid bias and discrimination.

Finally, the declaration calls for a stronger participation and representation of Indigenous Peoples in education trade unions, recognising the importance of maintaining a united and powerful voice in the defence of their rights and aspirations.

The 10th Regional Meeting on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples in Panama was a crucial opportunity for dialogue and reflection on the educational and social challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in Latin America.

The declaration represents a firm commitment to the promotion of Indigenous education and the defence of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the region.

#### 4. Caribbean educators develop their skills on trade union organisation and gender issues

Twenty-seven education unionists participated in the Trade Union and Gender Education workshop hosted by the Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT). The event's main goal was to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to become effective leaders of teacher trade unions.

In his opening address, CUT President Dr. Garth Anderson stated that the regional workshop aimed at building the trade union capacity of CUT affiliates and enable them to strategically defend teachers, promote human rights and advocate for the implementation of policies and principles that will enhance quality public education.

The Minister of Public Service, Home Affairs, Labour and Gender Affairs of St. Lucia, past CUT Vice-President and former EI Regional Coordinator for North America/Caribbean, Dr. Virginia Albert-Poyotte, reminded attendees that "one of the CUT founding principles was the advocacy for the recognition of human and trade union rights of all workers" and she encouraged them to "become active participants in defense of this principle". She expressed her satisfaction concerning the continued excellent relationship between CUT and EI, as well as their cooperation partner CTF.

The workshop, sponsored by Education International with financial contribution from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario through the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), was held from March 20-23, 2023, in Castries, St. Lucia.

Over the course of the four days, sessions were held on the following topics:

- The objectives, function and structure of trade unions.

- The history of the Caribbean trade union movement.
- Achieving the SDGs – The role of the trade union movement.
- Current issues facing the trade union movement.
- Trade union recruitment and mobilisation.
- Climate change – Implications for the future of work and the trade union movement.
- The trade union work in education - The national, regional, and international perspective.
- Gender equality: Sustainable Development Goal 5.
- Gender equality: The Caribbean context.
- The issues of gender and leadership in the workplace.
- Confronting mental health: the gender dimension.
- The role of gender in team development and performance.
- Developing a work plan.

At the end of the workshop, participants were presented with certificates.

For CUT Programme Officer and workshop moderator, Julian Monrose, “the general feedback of participants about the workshop was very positive. They indicated that the training and its content were very helpful. The general feedback of participants about the presenters and their knowledge level was also very positive.”

Adding that the topics covered during the workshop were well-received by the participants, he underlined that they “were very excited about returning to their unions to share gained knowledge”.

He went on to note that among key topics/ideas for future workshops provided by participants were leadership, project proposal writing and collective bargaining.

Participants were representatives of education unions members of the CUT, i.e. the Anguilla Teachers' Union, the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers, the British Virgin Islands Teachers' Union, the Dominica Association of Teachers, the Grenada Union of Teachers, the Montserrat Union of Teachers, the Nevis Teachers' Union, the St. Kitts Teachers' Union, the St. Lucia Teachers' Union (SLTU), the Windward Islands Teachers Union (St. Maarten) and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers' Union.

## 5. Urgent Action Appeal: Earthquake in Morocco

Education International (EI) is launching a call for solidarity in support of colleagues in Morocco.

EI reacted swiftly and expressed solidarity and condolences with the Moroccan educators and students who are still grappling with the crisis following the devastation of a 6.8 magnitude earthquake which hit on Friday night 8th September. You can find an article about it on the EI website [here](#).

Member organisations in Morocco welcomed the global solidarity from EI and decided to join efforts to support the education community in the affected areas. EI has made an initial financial contribution to help with immediate needs.

The death toll continues to rise. Currently more than 2,900 people have died and more than 5,500 are injured. Fortunately, no local representatives of EI's member organisations have been injured, but

many have lost at least one family member.

The earthquake struck poor mountainous regions. Entire villages, including the schools, were destroyed and remain totally inaccessible. Survivors are having great difficulty finding shelter and food, and now fear the spread of epidemics. In these areas, there is still no internet or electricity. The population is still in shock, and psychological support is required.

EI has been informed of the deaths of 19 teachers and over 100 pupils in the Taroudant region. Around 530 schools have been destroyed, as well as 55 boarding schools. This jeopardises the schooling of many children, especially girls.

In this context, member organisations are mobilising to identify the needs of their members and put in place mechanisms to deliver assistance.

EI immediately expressed our global solidarity with our members affected by this catastrophe.

In response to this tragedy, EI is issuing this urgent call for solidarity and seeks financial support to help sister organisations in Morocco. You can contribute to the Solidarity Fund according to your financial capacity by making a donation to:

Education International

ING Bank

24, Avenue Marnix 1000 Brussels

IBAN: BE05 3101 0061 7075

Swift: BBRUBEBB

With the indication: Morocco - Earthquake Solidarity Fund

## 6. Higher Education in the International Digital Economy: Effects of Conflicting Copyright Regimes on Cross-Border Teaching

This study investigates how clashing copyright regimes affect the work of cross-border teaching in higher education. It explores constraints on pedagogy both from copyright policies at the national level and from conflicts between regimes internationally. As the recent pandemic demonstrated, and as previous research has shown, pedagogy requires flexibility that tests existing copyright laws and institutional norms, including when dealing with online environments. However, little is known about actual professorial practice in working across jurisdictions. Thus, this research is guided by the question, “How do teachers in higher education who work across borders experience obstacles to accomplishing their mission from copyright-related issues?”

## 7. Tanzania: EI requests the Government to stop meddling in the internal affairs of the Tanzania Teachers Union

Education International is concerned by the disruption of legitimate union activities and meetings of the Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU) by the police, including a TTU Council meeting on 25 September. The intimidation and intervention in the internal affairs of the union by government

authorities is a serious violation of international labour standards and ILO Conventions, for which Tanzania is a signatory.

In addition to these actions, the government has refused to extend the secondment of the General Secretary of TTU, Mr. Maganga Japhet, to fulfill his duties as union official. According to the TTU, the government strategy aims to suspend or remove the current leadership of the union, including President Leah Ulaya and General Secretary Maganga Japhet. Education International has called on the Government of Tanzania to ensure that TTU can carry out its activities without any form of interference.

"Education International stands with our members and the teachers of Tanzania as they organise to ensure the right to quality education for all students. Their trade union rights must be respected in accordance to national and international laws. We call on the authorities to respect and value the role of education unions by supporting their engagement in social dialogue", stated EI General Secretary, David Edwards.

This is not the first time that the Tanzanian government has tried to impede the functioning of the union. Earlier this year, the authorities had appointed the TTU President and General Secretary to the position of District Commissioners. These appointments would have left the union without senior elected officials, effectively paralysing the TTU. Following an intervention by EI, [the appointments were eventually rescinded](#) and the TTU leaders were allowed to go back to their union duties.

Education International also wrote to the TTU to convey the solidarity and unequivocal support of the African and global teaching community to the TTU leadership and membership. Together TTU and EI are compiling a submission to denounce the unlawful moves of the Government to the International Labour Organisation. Tanzania has ratified ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and ILO Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining. The Government of Tanzania is obliged to ensure full implementation of these conventions, including TTU's right to elect its own leaders and carry out its activities without interference.

# October

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## Highlights

### 1. World Teachers' Day

This World Teachers' Day, Education International called on governments everywhere to invest in teachers and in quality public education.

#### Related Items

#### **Aloyo Stella's Classroom: a reflection on the education we want**

“Despite the terrible conditions, we continue to support our students because we know our work is critical for millions of the most vulnerable children around the world. But we cannot do it alone.”

[Aloyo Stella Oryang](#), refugee teacher.

At the heart of Uganda's Palabek Refugee Settlement, [Aloyo Stella's classroom](#) stands as a vivid reminder of how educators persevere despite systemic negligence and disregard. Born in South Sudan, Aloyo Stella lived through a decade of conflict before seeking refuge in Uganda at the age of 13. Now a committed refugee teacher, Stella embodies the tenacity of educators everywhere. As we mark World Teachers' Day, and reflect on her daily challenges, her story underscores the broader racial, economic, and structural inequities that educators face across the globe.

#### Overworked, underpaid, and undervalued

Teachers around the world are overworked, underpaid, and undervalued. They are exiting the profession, not out of lost passion, but due to an environment that barely sustains them. Deteriorating working conditions, stagnant wages, overwhelming workloads, and stifling bureaucracy are pushing teachers out of the profession they love and that the world needs. With fewer young people seeing teaching as a viable career, and [a shortage of 69 million teachers](#) reported by UNESCO to reach universal basic education by 2030, the crisis is clear and present.

The [2023 International Barometer of Education Staff \(I-BEST\)](#) further describes the crisis contributing to the alarming teacher shortage, rising resignations, and a decline in those aspiring to teach. Based on a survey of over 26,000 educators including teachers, school principals, and support staff from 11 countries across four continents, the findings of the Barometer reveal an alarming rise of workplace violence, coupled with insufficient psychological and health support for educators, and significant issues related to work-life balance.

To reverse this trend, decisive political action is needed. It is imperative to fund public education, invest in teachers, guarantee their labor rights, and ensure they have good working conditions. Investing in education is not only about funding; it is about respecting the profession, valuing pedagogical expertise, and involving teachers in decision-making processes.

Yet, amidst these challenges, the Barometer, a collaborative effort with the Education and Solidarity Network, partnering with Education International and others, reveals an unwavering dedication: the majority of educators would willingly embrace their profession again.

Last year, the United Nations Secretary General spotlighted the teacher shortage, highlighting its potential negative implications for our future. The leading role of Education International in the work of the [United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#) ensured that the voices of teachers like Aloyo Stella were heard loud and clear. The Panel unanimously urged governments worldwide to develop economic and social policies to transform the role, status, and future of the teaching profession.

Education International, representing 380 organisations with 32 million educators in 180 countries, stands as the collective international voice of teachers. We are a movement. We're not merely highlighting the problem; we're steering the narrative towards solutions. Our global campaign, [Go Public! Fund Education](#), emphasises the urgent need for governments to fully fund public education systems and invest in the teaching profession.

### A Call to Action: 'Do your part'

Aloyo Stella's voice echoed powerfully when she spoke at the [Education Cannot Wait High Level Forum](#). "I wish you could stand in my shoes for an hour. You would understand where I am coming from," she implored.

Her journey, though deeply personal, is emblematic of a broader struggle. Despite facing tribal tensions, inadequate infrastructure, and an unresponsive system, she perseveres. Her commitment, mirrored by countless educators worldwide, underscores the transformative power of teaching.

But her individual resilience should not blind us to systemic failures. On the occasion of World Teachers' Day, let's commit to structural change, ensuring that every Aloyo Stella, in every corner of the world, receives the resources, respect, and recognition she deserves.

For those shaping education policies: the future rests with our teachers. Stand with us. Advocate for increased public funding in public education. Ensure teachers are central figures in dialogues and decisions. Echoing Aloyo Stella's poignant close: "-I am doing my part. **Do your part.**"

### **World Teachers' Day 2023: Growing teacher shortage puts the right to education at risk**

World Teachers' Day is celebrated on October 5th every year. This year's event is marked by increased global concern about the scale and impact of the teacher shortage around the world. According to UNESCO, the world needs 69 million more teachers by 2030 to achieve universal basic education yet current trends see this deficit increasing, with many teachers leaving the profession. New research from Education International and partners points to the main factors driving this exodus and the solutions to turn the tide.

### Overworked, undervalued, and underpaid

Convened by Education International, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF, the 2023 edition of World Teachers' Day highlights the global teacher shortage under the theme "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse

the teacher shortage”.

“Today, teachers are overworked, undervalued, and underpaid, and more and more are forced to leave the profession they love and the world needs. At the same time, fewer young people aspire to be teachers. It’s easy to see why. Working conditions have deteriorated, pay has not kept up with inflation, workloads have skyrocketed, and professional autonomy has been steadily replaced with never-ending controls and bureaucracy. Urgent action is imperative because the right to quality education is at stake,” explained David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

EI’s General Secretary will speak at the opening ceremony of World Teachers’ Day celebrations hosted by UNESCO in Paris on October 5th, from 14:30 CEST. [Click here to register](#) for the event and tune in online.

The upcoming 2023 International Barometer of Education Staff sheds further light on the conditions driving teachers out of the profession. Based on a survey of over 26,000 educators including teachers, school principals, and support staff from 11 countries across 4 continents, the Barometer findings reveal a concerning rise of workplace violence, coupled with insufficient psychological and medical support for educators, and significant issues related to work-life balance. A vast majority of educators surveyed reported that they didn’t feel their profession was valued by society at large. Despite these challenges, the majority of teachers would choose teaching again as a profession. The 2023 edition of the International Barometer of Education Staff will be released on October 10. [Click here to register](#) for the online launch event and tune in on October 10, from 14:00 CEST.

## Teachers call on governments to Go Public! Fund Education

Teachers everywhere are mobilising for change through Education International and its [Go Public! Fund Education](#) global campaign. The campaign emphasises the urgent need for governments to fully fund public education systems and invest in the teaching profession to end the teacher shortage and guarantee every student’s right to have a well-supported qualified teacher and a quality learning environment.

The call has been echoed at the highest international level. In 2022, in the context of the Transforming Education Summit, the United Nations General Secretary drew the world’s attention to the teacher shortage and the critical danger it poses. The [United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#) was created to address this crisis and to put forward clear recommendations for governments to implement.

“To reverse the global teacher shortage, decisive political action is needed: it is imperative to fund public education, invest in teachers, guarantee their labour rights, and ensure they have good working conditions. Investing in education is not only about funding; it is about respecting, valuing pedagogical expertise, and involving teachers in decision-making processes,” stressed Susan Hopgood, Education International President and member of the United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession.

The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession has drafted over 50 recommendations that governments must implement in order to reverse the teacher shortage and ensure the right to quality education for all.

## **Africa honors its teachers, key transformation agents of education and the continent**

Several events were organised in different parts of Africa on World Teachers' Day (WTD), October 5th, acknowledging the crucial role of teachers who provide the youth of the continent quality education and a peaceful, sustainable future. African Governments must invest in teachers, motivate, and support them.

At the Regional/African WTD's commemoration event in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, co-organised with UNESCO, the African Union (AU) and UNICEF, Dr. Dennis Sinyolo, Director of the Education International Africa Regional Office (EIRAF) stated that "poor salaries and working conditions have impaled the dignity of the African teacher. We welcome the recommendations of the United Nations' High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession calling on governments to address the global teacher shortage and to restore the dignity of the teaching profession by providing long-term funding for well-qualified and well-supported teachers."

### **EIRAF's five-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa**

He went on to propose a five-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa, calling on African governments to:

1. Train and recruit enough qualified teachers. Every student has the right to a highly trained, professionally qualified, supported, and motivated teacher.
2. Trust and respect teachers by giving them the professional autonomy and freedom they need to teach creatively, collaborate, and carry out research.
3. Make teaching an attractive and a first choice profession by ensuring decent salaries and working conditions of teachers.
4. Involve teachers in genuine and institutionalised social and policy dialogue through their unions.
5. Invest in education and teachers by meeting the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks of allocating at least 20% of the national budget or at least 6% of Gross Domestic Product to education.

Stressing that, through the ongoing [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign, EI will continue to press on African governments to provide quality public education for all, Dr. Sinyolo reiterated: "A quality education delivered by highly trained, professionally qualified, trusted, valued, supported, and motivated teachers."

### **African Union's continental teacher award ceremony**

[Eight teachers](#) hailing from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa were recognised during the African Union's (AU) continental teacher award ceremony and webinar on teaching profession.

AU Monica Idinoba, on behalf of Professor Mohammed Belhocine, the AU Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI), started her welcome remarks by

reminding that “the transformation of education begins with teachers,” and “every profession is developed through the teaching profession.”

Teacher development, she said, is a key priority of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-25.

She also said that while Africa has made significant progress in terms of access to education, there are still gaps within and among African countries: “If nothing is done to transform education, the targets set by CESA, the AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, and UN sustainable development goals won’t be met, with a long-term impact on children’s learning and on different aspects of human development on the continent.”

For the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Ethiopia, Roland Kobia, a former teacher himself, “teachers are at the heart of education systems” and “COVID showed how resilient and adaptative education systems are.”

He added that when they renewed their partnership, the EU and the AU reaffirmed that education was a joint priority.

“The imprint teachers leave on children’s minds has no prize, makes a lasting impact on their lives,” he concluded.

The UNESCO-International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) Director, Quentin Wodon, also underlined that his organisation released on October 5th a [Regional Training Guide](#) to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for pre- and in-service teachers in Africa.

The training guide he said, shows that the outbreak of COVID-19 negatively impacted teachers, teacher educators, and learners and the entire education system was impacted and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, frustration, and stress were exacerbated.

“As an institute whose mission is to empower teachers for all learners to thrive, we remain committed to strengthening teachers’ mental health and psychosocial well-being on the African continent. Teachers are undoubtedly at the heart of the realisation of quality education; therefore, their well-being is key to improved learning outcomes,” he agreed.

### **Addressing the overlooked plight of refugee teachers**

As we mark [World Teachers Day 2023](#), it is essential that we peel back the curtain on an issue that remains largely ignored: the plight of refugee teachers. Since 1994, we've come together every year to celebrate the remarkable contributions of teachers worldwide. But how often do we pause to consider the unique challenges faced by those teachers who have been forcibly displaced from their homes? This year's theme, "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage," presents a critical moment to shine a light on these unsung heroes.

“You can teach without a classroom, but you can’t teach without a teacher. Those are the areas we mostly forget. We focus on our students...in a class, but we forget the teachers most of the time.”

– Participant from Malawi, *Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Policies, Practices & Pathways for Improving Teacher Quality & Workforce Sustainability* (UNHCR, forthcoming)

### Persistent challenges beyond “classroom walls” for refugee teachers

Imagine, for a moment, that you suddenly have no choice but to leave behind your homeland and everything you know. Now, picture arriving in a new country, only to discover that the teaching credentials you worked so hard for are no longer recognized. You are rendered invisible in your professional capacity. Even if you are fortunate enough to secure a teaching position, it comes with severely diminished professional status, minimal support to pursue qualifications and enter the national system, and reduced pay as the struggle to secure predictable multi-year funding for teachers or refugees continues to be one of the greatest challenges facing host country education systems. In many situations, refugee teachers are simply not accounted for at all in national planning around increasing the teacher workforce, budgeting or reforms in remuneration, retention or professional development.

UNHCR's forthcoming *Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Policies, Practices & Pathways for Improving Teacher Quality & Workforce Sustainability* study reveals that teachers in forced displacement settings frequently navigate complex classroom environments with limited qualifications, support or remuneration [1]. In particular, for those teachers who are also refugees, opportunities are additionally limited because their work as teachers is infrequently protected by the labour standards of host countries. This lack of recognition and institutionalised support for teachers in refugee-hosting areas has negative implications for refugee and host community children's schooling, achievement, and well-being.

For teachers living and working in refugee camps around the world, these challenges are not hypothetical—it's their daily reality.

We often laud the resilience of refugees for their courage and determination. But what about those who, despite being thrown into such challenging circumstances, rise to educate the next generation? They aren't just educators; they're beacons of hope, pillars of stability and symbols of normalcy for children traumatized by war and displacement. Their stories, from places like Chad and Uganda, tell of systemic challenges—whether it's inadequate pay leading to teacher attrition, insufficient teaching resources or limited training opportunities. And let's not forget female refugee teachers grappling with unique, added hurdles but who are crucial to increasing the likelihood of access to education for girls as well as providing immense academic and protective benefits.

### The crucial role of teacher unions

Against this backdrop, the study accentuates how teachers' unions can be instrumental in bolstering refugee teachers' recognition and support. Survey results revealed the commendable efforts of teachers' unions across countries like Cameroon, Chad, Malawi, Pakistan, Uganda, and Syria in safeguarding teachers' rights, ensuring timely remuneration, and prioritizing teacher welfare. The European context offers us tangible examples of the impact of union interventions.

During the tumultuous times of the Syrian crisis and more recently in the Ukrainian crisis, unions actively rallied behind Syrian and Ukrainian teachers, providing information on access to training, social services, and teaching opportunities.

Still, more needs to be done. The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) emphasizes the importance of burden and responsibility sharing, urging support for refugee-hosting countries in ensuring refugees' inclusion in national education systems. Herein lies an opportunity for teachers' unions to advocate for refugee teachers' integration into national systems, supporting their improved conditions of service and opportunities for professional growth. By doing so, not only do they strengthen the teaching fraternity but also enhance the educational experiences of refugee students, providing them with relatable role models who mirror their experiences.

The [2023 Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) presents a golden opportunity. We need international collaboration, a pooling of resources, and an exchange of expertise. The GRF's Teacher Task Team led by Educational International (EI) provides a [blueprint](#) for proactive measures — from establishing financial mechanisms that ensure continuous funding for teacher salaries, to promoting dialogue that involves educators in decision-making processes. And here, teachers' unions can actively engage with refugee teachers, listen to their experiences and challenges, and advocate for their rights and inclusion at all policy levels and ensure that that refugee teachers are not just seen but also heard, valued, and empowered.

As we recognize and applaud the monumental contributions of teachers globally, it is time to ensure that refugee teachers, supported by the robust framework of unions, are at the forefront, championing quality education for all.

UNHCR commissioned this study to explore and better understand the different profiles of teachers working in refugee and displacement settings – across the dimensions of teacher management, professional development, and well-being – to enable UNHCR, partners and state actors to provide teachers in these contexts with more targeted and impactful support, resources and capacity development.

## 2. Advocating for peace in Israel and Palestine

Education International continues to advocate for an end to the war between Israel and Hamas, the release of all hostages, and an end to indiscriminate violence. EI also reiterates its call for an immediate United Nations enforced and guaranteed ceasefire, the establishment of humanitarian corridors to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe and loss of civilians and genuine efforts towards sustainable peace.

### **Joint EI-ETUCE Statement on Israel and Palestine**

Education International and the European Trade Union Committee for Education condemn the severe attack Hamas launched against Israel. Education International stands in solidarity with the teachers, students, and communities in the region and calls on the international community to do their utmost to stop the bloodshed and avoid a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

"The Hamas attack on Israel is unacceptable. Educators around the world stand with our colleagues, students, and communities in Israel and Palestine and denounce the violent aggression. The violence must end. Our hearts go out to the families of all who have lost their lives. The international community must stand united in condemning any form of violence and in supporting lasting peace negotiations," stated David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

Susan Flocken, Director of ETUCE, the European Trade Union Committee for Education, the European Region of Education International said: "Teachers, academics and their unions in Europe are shocked by the new outbreak of violence in Israel and Palestine. ETUCE condemns the military aggression and expresses its support and solidarity with colleagues, teachers, academics and students and all people in the region. This new outbreak of war and retaliation puts the lives of millions of people at stake. The war must end. We call on the international community to do their utmost to support a peace agreement."

Education International reiterates the call of the 2019 EI World Congress urging both Hamas and Israel to: "Renounce violence and commit to engage in direct negotiations". We have engaged with member organisations in Israel and Palestine to promote the importance of dialogue and of preserving the values of education and peace. We affirm our unwavering commitment to our member organisations in the region - the Israel Teacher Union (ITU) and the Association of Secondary School Teachers in Israel (ASSTI) as well as the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT), the General Union of Workers in Kindergartens and Private Schools (GUWKPS) and the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE).

For too long the loss of human life has threatened the security of the entire region. The far-reaching consequences of war cannot be understated. The people in the region have a right to a future free of violence and war. The world must stand with them and redouble efforts to ensure peace. There is an urgent and imperative need for the international community to support, in every way possible, the realization of a peaceful and sustainable solution.

### **Education International calls for an immediate stop to the disproportionate and indistinct retaliation in Gaza**

*In the face of escalating violence in the Gaza Strip, Education International called upon the Israel War Cabinet to end the suffering and destruction and to respect the principles of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law. The appeal reminds the parties to return the captives, protect the lives of civilians and preserve civilian infrastructure, including educational and medical facilities, throughout all Palestinian territories.*

A situation of grave concern has arisen from the indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardments launched by Israel across the Gaza Strip, spanning from air and sea to land. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that at least 88 educational institutions have been directly targeted. This includes the destruction of 18 UNRWA schools and 70 Palestinian Authority schools. The result is the denial of safe education to more than 600,000 children in Gaza, and now, the Gaza population is being asked to evacuate to the south, with nowhere truly safe to seek refuge.

Education International supports the United Nations agencies and human rights organisations in condemning this disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force, wherein civilian populations and buildings have been subject to direct targeting by airstrikes. Parties to a conflict should distinguish between combatants and civilians and between military objectives and civilian objects. Proportionality dictates that any attack on a military objective must not cause excessive harm to civilians or civilian objects compared to the military advantage expected.

Education International previously [denounced the terrorist attack](#) launched by Hamas against Israeli civilians. To break the cycle of violence, Education International emphasized the necessity for the international community to unite in a resolute denouncement of all forms of violence. The consequences of armed conflict are far-reaching and devastating, with profound impacts on the people in the region, who have the right to a future free from violence and war.

Education International expresses unwavering solidarity with the teachers, students, and communities in the affected region. We have consistently engaged with our member organisations in both Israel and Palestine, emphasising the critical importance of dialogue and the preservation of the values of education and peace. Our commitment to our member organizations in the region remains steadfast. However, the severe repercussions for civilians alarm us, prompting a plea to the warring parties to respect international law.

Education International will continue to monitor and document violations, submitting reports to the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

### **Education International calls for urgent humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza**

Education International (EI) calls on the international community to urgently implement a humanitarian ceasefire to stop the killing of students, teachers, and all civilians in Gaza. EI also calls for an end to the Israeli bombardments and military actions which have caused the death of thousands of civilians, including over 130 teachers as reported by EI members on the ground.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA) reported that more than 10,000 people, including over 4,000 children have been killed in the past month. In addition, approximately 2,260 individuals are reported missing in Gaza, and at least 42 per cent of all housing units in the Gaza Strip have been either destroyed or damaged. The bombings have also destroyed 219 educational institutions and 9 Universities.

The General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT) and the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPPE), members of Education International, reported at least 130 teachers killed.

Education facilities remain closed, denying more than 625,000 students access to education. Many educational facilities are used as shelters, despite being unsafe due to damage or the threat of further attacks. Movement restrictions and violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem further hinder access to schooling.

EI calls for the implementation of a genuine peace agreement that ends the bombardment, secures the release of all hostages including children, and restores the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

### **Immediate humanitarian ceasefire**

"The bombardments launched by Israel across Gaza have been indiscriminate and disproportionate. The hostages must be released and the bombings must stop. We condemned the attack by Hamas against civilians in Israel, and we condemn the military assault against the civilian population in Gaza," declared David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International.

"We will continue to engage with our member organizations in both Israel and Palestine, emphasizing the critical importance of dialogue and the preservation of the values of democracy, education and peace," he added.

Education International is also deeply concerned about the rise in hate speech and of antisemitism and anti-Islamic acts exacerbated by the violence in the region. EI reiterates that all educational institutions must remain free from hate, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, teachers, and learning communities.

Especially during times of war and conflict, teachers and education support personnel should receive guidance and support in addressing discrimination within educational settings. They play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity, diversity, and respect, and are key to creating environments where students and staff can learn, grow, and thrive without fear of hate and discrimination. Moreover, educators can help students develop critical thinking skills and media literacy to counter the spread of disinformation.

EI extends its unwavering support to all students and educators in the region and remains committed to advocating for a peaceful resolution, the protection of schools, universities, and educational personnel, and the prioritization of education in relief efforts.

Education International reiterates the call of the 2019 EI World Congress urging all parties to: "Renounce violence and commit to engage in direct negotiations."

## **3. International Barometer on Education Staff**

The 2023 International Barometer on Education Staff (I-BEST) draws from the experience of over 26,000 teachers, school principals and education support personnel across 11 territories: Argentina, French-speaking Belgium, Cameroun, Canada, France, Japan, Morocco, Spain, Switzerland (Cantons of Vaud and Geneva), United Kingdom and Quebec.

The I-BEST is a collaborative effort, brought to life by key organizations, including the Education and Solidarity Network, Education International, and the UNESCO Chair Global Health & Education, all committed to elevating the well-being and status of education personnel worldwide. The second edition of I-BEST underscores the challenges education personnel face, from feeling undervalued to being overwhelmed, and underlines the urgent need to tackle these issues to ensure future of the teaching profession and thus guarantee the quality of education.

## **Educator well-being in focus: International report reveals alarming challenges**

A milestone report launched on World Mental Health Day, offers a comprehensive look at the health and well-being of education personnel worldwide.

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The survey delved into various aspects of education staff's professional lives, including their satisfaction with working conditions, the physical environment of schools, decision-making autonomy, and experiences with workplace recognition and support. The survey also examined their physical and mental health, as well as the impact of digital tools.

David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, stressed the urgency of the situation: "The environment and working conditions of teachers have a direct impact on the quality of education. When educators face overwhelming workloads, lack of recognition, experience psychological distress, and are not consulted about the tools they use, this impacts their ability to teach effectively and motivation to remain in the profession. Addressing these challenges is essential for the well-being of education personnel, and pivotal for ensuring quality education for all."

### **Key takeaways**

Some of the main takeaways from the I-Best 2023 survey include:

- Despite a diversity of realities and contexts worldwide, there is a concerning trend of education professionals feeling undervalued. This sentiment is exacerbated by an overwhelming workload, challenging work environments, a lack of recognition and limited career advancement opportunities.
- The report also found an alarming rise in the incidence of workplace violence, indicating a pressing need to establish supportive and respectful environments for education personnel worldwide.
- The poor state of psychological health is evident in many countries, as well as insufficient support systems, including occupational medicine, for education personnel across the globe. This highlights a critical need for a more uniform and comprehensive approach to addressing the health and well-being of education personnel.

Despite these challenges, the majority of educators would choose their profession again, a true testament to the dedication, commitment, and passion of teachers to the profession they love and that the world needs.

### **A Renewed Call to Action**

Reflecting on these findings, Edwards emphasized the need for decisive political action: “There's an urgent need to design and implement policies focused on improving the health and well-being of our educators. Alongside our main partners, like the Education and Solidarity Network, the UNESCO Chair Global Health & Education and others, we urge political actors in education, both national and global, to respect, value, and trust the pedagogical expertise of teachers and education personnel and to take action to address these critical issues.”

You can download the 2023 International Barometer on Education Staff (I-BEST) and related materials [here](#).

### **Teacher wellbeing – a global challenge**

The publication of this year's [International Barometer of Education Staff \(I-BEST 2023\)](#) offers the unusual opportunity to hear directly from over 26,000 educators from around the world. Whilst the profile and context of the countries involved varies significantly, I am struck by how much commonality there is in the broad trends reported by researchers. Of course there are meaningful differences in the experience of autonomy at work, access to healthcare and salary across participating countries, but there is convergence in key themes related to the wellbeing of the workforce.

At Education Support, we argue for a systemic approach to workforce wellbeing in education. The results of I-BEST 2023 reinforce that belief, highlighting the need for improvement at the level of national education policy-making and in school level decision-making.

To begin, we must celebrate the fact that if they had their time again, the majority of education staff would still choose to work in schools. The passion and commitment of education staff is perhaps the greatest asset we have in our education systems worldwide. Follow up qualitative work might inquire about the lower scores in Morocco, Cameroon and Japan, but overall this finding provides hope in what is otherwise a gloomy picture of the health of the profession around the globe.

My organisation routinely researches the health and wellbeing of education staff [1]. In that sense, much of what is reported here is familiar to me from our work locally in the United Kingdom as well as through recent research we undertook on behalf of Education International (forthcoming). In particular, three findings give me cause for concern.

Firstly, poor work/life balance is a consistent theme across the world. The I-BEST research reports troublingly poor scores for France, Belgium, UK and Canada. Whilst Argentina, Morocco, Switzerland and Cameroon do better on this metric, there are still more than a third of teachers in those countries reporting an unhealthy imbalance. This matters because of the significant impact that poor work/life balance can have on those affected. According to the World Happiness Report

2017 “Those who have a job that leaves them too tired to enjoy the non-work elements of their lives report levels of positive affect in their day-to-day lives that are substantially lower than those who do not. [2]” This in turn can be correlated to stress, burnout, intention to leave the profession and a negative impact on outcomes from children and young people [3].

Secondly, I am struck by the convergence in responses around the perceived low status of the education profession. There is further work to be done to understand how Japan bucks the trend positively here (and relativity to other professions), but the experience of educators in France and Belgium is particularly concerning. Covid-19 illustrated just how much communities need teachers, but needing is not the same as valuing. Professor Tanya Overden-Hope highlights that “agencies that control teacher recruitment and oversee teacher retention have not realised the importance of ‘status’ in establishing a set of circumstances that contribute to declining trainee teacher numbers and increasing teacher attrition.” [4]

Thirdly, the emergence of violence in the education workplace is a theme that ought to disturb policymakers in all settings. Again, Japan is an outlier with 4% of staff experiencing violence at work. In all other territories, an astonishing 22-40% of those surveyed report that they have been a victim of workplace violence. Most perpetrators are pupils, colleagues and parents, though notably in Morocco and Cameroon violence is coming from actors external to the school community.

These factors are interconnected in a variety of ways across the different national and regional contexts. The fact that educator job satisfaction is so low though, speaks to the corrosive effect that these factors have in all settings. Less than half the workforce experience job satisfaction in Cameroon, Morocco, UK and France.

At Education Support, we argue for a systemic approach to workforce wellbeing in education [5]. The results of I-BEST 2023 reinforce that belief, highlighting the need for improvement at the level of national education policy-making and in school level decision-making. Alongside that, we hope that educators can be supported to attend to their own wellbeing in the face of excessive work demands.

Reading this report and data, it is not hard to join the dots to serious teacher recruitment and retention problems. Over time, the attractiveness of the profession is diminished by the negative experiences of working in schools. The thanklessness of the task is apparent to children and young people and few parents will encourage their children on a teaching career path.

In the short term, we delude ourselves if we imagine that professionals with poor work/life balance, poor professional status and exposure to workplace violence are going to be able to do their best work.

It is time for some fresh thinking on raising the job satisfaction of teachers, while we still have them.

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#### 4. 12th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference

The 12th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference, co-hosted by Education International and its member organisation Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), took place in Mexico City from October 24 to the 26.

##### **Go Public! Leading further and higher education and research for the common good**

The 12th International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference, co-hosted by Education International and its member organisation Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), is taking place in Mexico City from October 24 to the 26.

The Conference provides a space for member organisations in further and higher education and research to exchange experiences, analyse key issues and emerging trends impacting the workforce in the sector, and discuss ways to address these.

Against the backdrop of post-pandemic recovery, the event sheds light on the current landscape of public financing for further and higher education and research, and the impact of privatisation and commercialisation in the sector. The Conference explores the ongoing and emerging trends specifically impacting teachers, researchers, and other personnel in further and higher education and research and examines the obstacles preventing staff and communities from fully delivering on their public mission.

Running over three full days, the Conference offers a mix of plenary and group discussions, allowing participants to share and discuss union strategies to respond to these challenges through collective action, including in the framework of the EI [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign.

[Watch the livestream here!](#)

Opening ceremony

**Go Public! Advancing Further and Higher Education and Research for the Common Good**

*On 24-26 October, Education International (EI) member organisations convened in Mexico City for EI's 12th Further and Higher Education and Research Conference. Together, they adopted the following statement:*

## **Go Public! Advancing Further and Higher Education and Research for the Common Good**

The landscape of further and higher education and research is complex, shaped by national specificities and diverse funding models. Every system presents its unique challenges and there are huge disparities between systems; however, chronic underfunding, increasing privatisation, precarity and inequalities are universal concerns. Addressing these challenges and achieving equal access to quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 4.3, requires a unified approach rooted in core principles, ensuring that higher and further education, along with research, serve their true purpose: the common good.

### **Principles We Stand For:**

#### **■ A Human Right, the State's Responsibility:**

Further and higher education and research is a human right, integral to the advancement of society. It serves the collective good by preserving and advancing knowledge and culture. As such, it is the duty of the State to guarantee robust public funding, allowing these sectors to fulfil their public mission.

Yet, alarmingly, many countries are not allocating adequate public spending to further and higher education and research. Furthermore, the allocation of funds is increasingly driven by a narrow approach, often focusing on serving labour market needs. Some countries are cutting funding to particular subjects such as arts and humanities, thereby undermining education's broader purpose. To truly uphold the principle that knowledge should be freely and universally available, governments must shoulder their responsibility towards well-funded further and higher education and research, and fund all subjects, recognising the sector's broad societal benefits beyond preparation for the labour market.

#### **■ Public Funding to Fight Inequalities:**

The introduction and escalation of tuition fees pose significant threats to equitable access to further and higher education. They create financial barriers and often result in crippling student debt, disproportionately impacting women, minorities, indigenous communities, disabled persons, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, international students, and economically marginalised groups. In some countries, financial support for students is becoming more selective and harder to access. Increasingly, inadequate public funding also obliges teachers and researchers to bear costs related to publishing, accessing research and teaching material, and participating in academic conferences.

Further exacerbating inequalities is the growing trend of privatisation and commercialisation, particularly through the rise of ed-tech industries and public-private partnerships, that threaten the public nature of education and research. Governments must actively work to counter privatisation and marketisation trends in the sector and ensure that public funding is used for the public good and not to bolster business profits. A human rights-based approach to further and higher education and research is best upheld through increased public funding, allocated

equitably.

■ **Quality Terms of Employment and Working Conditions:**

The quality of further and higher education and research depends on quality terms of employment and decent working conditions for all workers in the sector. These should be determined through collective bargaining. Many countries face staffing shortages leading to high faculty-to-student ratios, while evolving funding models in the sector promote employment casualisation and the outsourcing of certain roles. The development of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence threatens some functions within the sector and may result in positions being cut.

The shift towards performance-based and external funding threatens the quality and breadth of education and research, and undermines the academic freedom, rights, and status of teachers and researchers. It also contributes to skyrocketing workloads, leading to burnout, and low salaries. All these factors are pushing many out of the profession, further exacerbating the challenges faced by the sector, with women and equality-seeking groups disproportionately affected.

To achieve quality further and higher education and research, governments must ensure security of employment including tenure or its functional equivalent, decent work, academic freedom, quality professional development and training opportunities, collegial and democratic governance and institutional autonomy. Further and higher education and research institutions must be free from discrimination. Pay equity as well as targeted measures to support and retain staff from equity-seeking groups are crucial to ensure a diverse workforce.

## Conclusion

Central to these principles is a profound conviction: quality public further and higher education and research, accessible to all, requires sustainable public financing. Funding of the sector must be predictable, recurrent and unconditional. Progressive tax reforms, ending austerity, and debt relief initiatives are key steps forward. Fostering international cooperation, decolonising further and higher education and research systems, and ensuring open access to resources and knowledge is essential.

We urge governments to recognise the magnitude of these challenges and to respond decisively. It is crucial that they commit to engaging with unions in the sector through meaningful social dialogue and collective bargaining. Only through such collaborative efforts can we truly ensure inclusive, sustainable, democratic and peaceful futures for humanity.

## Headlines

### 1. Africa honors its teachers, key transformation agents of education and the continent

Several events were organised in different parts of Africa on World Teachers' Day (WTD), October 5th, acknowledging the crucial role of teachers who provide the youth of the continent quality education and a peaceful, sustainable future. African Governments must invest in teachers, motivate, and support them.

At the Regional/African WTD's commemoration event in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, co-organised with UNESCO, the African Union (AU) and UNICEF, Dr. Dennis Sinyolo, Director of the Education International Africa Regional Office (EIRAF) stated that "poor salaries and working conditions have impaled the dignity of the African teacher. We welcome the recommendations of the United Nations' High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession calling on governments to address the global teacher shortage and to restore the dignity of the teaching profession by providing long-term funding for well-qualified and well-supported teachers."

#### **EIRAF's five-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa**

He went on to propose a five-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa, calling on African governments to:

1. Train and recruit enough qualified teachers. Every student has the right to a highly trained, professionally qualified, supported, and motivated teacher.
2. Trust and respect teachers by giving them the professional autonomy and freedom they need to teach creatively, collaborate, and carry out research.
3. Make teaching an attractive and a first choice profession by ensuring decent salaries and working conditions of teachers.
4. Involve teachers in genuine and institutionalised social and policy dialogue through their unions.
5. Invest in education and teachers by meeting the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks of allocating at least 20% of the national budget or at least 6% of Gross Domestic Product to education.

Stressing that, through the ongoing [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign, EI will continue to press on African governments to provide quality public education for all, Dr. Sinyolo reiterated: "A quality education delivered by highly trained, professionally qualified, trusted, valued, supported, and motivated teachers."

#### **African Union's continental teacher award ceremony**

[Eight teachers](#) hailing from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa were recognised during the African Union's (AU) continental teacher award ceremony and webinar on teaching profession.

AU Monica Idinoba, on behalf of Professor Mohammed Belhocine, the AU Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI), started her welcome remarks by reminding that “the transformation of education begins with teachers,” and “every profession is developed through the teaching profession.”

Teacher development, she said, is a key priority of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-25.

She also said that while Africa has made significant progress in terms of access to education, there are still gaps within and among African countries: “If nothing is done to transform education, the targets set by CESA, the AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, and UN sustainable development goals won’t be met, with a long-term impact on children’s learning and on different aspects of human development on the continent.”

For the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Ethiopia, Roland Kobia, a former teacher himself, “teachers are at the heart of education systems” and “COVID showed how resilient and adaptive education systems are.”

He added that when they renewed their partnership, the EU and the AU reaffirmed that education was a joint priority.

“The imprint teachers leave on children’s minds has no prize, makes a lasting impact on their lives,” he concluded.

The UNESCO-International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) Director, Quentin Wodon, also underlined that his organisation released on October 5th a [Regional Training Guide](#) to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for pre- and in-service teachers in Africa.

The training guide he said, shows that the outbreak of COVID-19 negatively impacted teachers, teacher educators, and learners and the entire education system was impacted and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, frustration, and stress were exacerbated.

“As an institute whose mission is to empower teachers for all learners to thrive, we remain committed to strengthening teachers’ mental health and psychosocial well-being on the African continent. Teachers are undoubtedly at the heart of the realisation of quality education; therefore, their well-being is key to improved learning outcomes,” he agreed.

## 2. France: Education International stands in solidarity with the education community following the murder of a teacher

Following the murder of a teacher in the town of Arras on 13 October 2023, Education International (EI) and the ETUCE have expressed their profound consternation and sent messages of solidarity to their affiliated organisations in France. This tragedy comes almost 3 years to the day after the death of Samuel Paty, a history and geography teacher who was brutally murdered in front of his school in disturbingly similar circumstances.

Fifty-seven-year-old Dominique Bernard was a French teacher at the Gambetta-Carnot secondary school. On Friday 13 October, he was fatally stabbed inside the school by a [radicalised former pupil](#).

Another teacher and two support staff were also seriously injured.

This terrorist attack has sent shockwaves through the teaching profession and French society as a whole. It came as France was preparing to honour the memory of Samuel Paty, the 47-year-old [victim of a terrorist attack near his school](#) in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine on the outskirts of Paris. Samuel Paty was murdered and beheaded on 16 October 2020 by a young man aged 18 following an online campaign against the use of a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed in his class.

Gatherings have been organised across France in recent days to pay tribute to Dominique Bernard and Samuel Paty.

“I can assure you of the unwavering solidarity of Education International and education staff around the world at this time of suffering. All teachers, wherever they are in the world, identify with the educators attacked yesterday in Arras, in the very heart of an educational establishment, in front of pupils,” said EI General Secretary, David Edwards, in a letter of solidarity to all EI affiliated organisations in France.

Stressing the role of the teaching profession in the face of obscurantist ideologies, he added that “only young people who are rigorously guided along the path of knowledge and critical thinking will be able to contribute actively to building fairer, more democratic societies, and to meeting all challenges.”

Susan Flocken, the Director of ETUCE – EI’s regional organisation in Europe, also sent a message of support, saying: “We stand in solidarity with all ETUCE affiliated organisations in France as we remember the deceased teacher and offer our support to all those affected by this senseless act of violence.”

Following the killing of Samuel Paty, the EI Executive Board adopted a [resolution on the role of education in fostering critical thinking and freedom of speech and promoting democracy](#).

More than ever, the teaching profession is [the light that illuminates the darkness](#).

### 3. The Unintended Consequences of Artificial Intelligence and Education

This report sets out to provide an analysis of the current state of artificial intelligence and education, including its potential benefits and risks, as well as the role of teachers and teacher trade unionists in ensuring that teaching with and about artificial intelligence is aligned with the principles of social justice and human rights.

### 4. Teachers and technology

The Global Education Monitoring Report and Education International have developed an advocacy brief for teachers based on the [2023 GEM Report, \*Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?\*](#)

This advocacy brief has two objectives. On one hand, it aims to highlight some of the main findings of the 2023 GEM Report for teachers; on the other, it aims to provide recommendations for teachers

and education support personnel to ensure that the use of technology in education keeps learners and teachers at the centre.

In partnering with Education International, the Global Education Monitoring Report hopes to ensure that the decisions on the use of technology in education are on the terms of the 32 million teachers and education support personnel from around the world and that technology does not supplant but rather complements human interaction in education.

## 5. EI's Research Network: Critical dialogues on teacher status and artificial intelligence in education

The profound implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and the status of teachers globally were at the forefront of discussions during Education International's (EI) 18th annual Research Network (ResNet) meeting. Held virtually on 19 October, the event continued the tradition of fostering global solidarity and research-driven strategies among education unionists worldwide.

### A global perspective on teacher status and rights

The morning session featured a presentation by Mark Rahimi and Ben Arnold from Deakin University, Australia. Rahimi and Arnold delved into the findings of the upcoming edition of EI's triennial report on the Global Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession, to be launched at EI's World Congress in July 2024.

Based on an extensive survey of EI member organisations from all regions, the report collects data on various aspects of teacher policy and serves as a reference for unions' advocacy work. It also provides a basis for EI's Report to the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART).

The 2023 survey's results shed light on several critical areas affecting teachers worldwide.

- **Teacher shortages** : One of the key findings is the severe teacher shortage across educational levels globally. This deficiency is most pronounced within special education sectors, followed by secondary education, early childhood education, and primary education. The geographical breakdown of the data points to particularly acute shortages in Africa and Europe, underscoring a universal challenge that transcends borders.
- **Underlying factors**: The survey delved into the reasons behind these shortages, with low salaries, excessive workloads, poor career progression, and a diminished perception of professional status emerging as universal grievances among educators. These factors varied in intensity across regions, hinting at the necessity for region-specific solutions. Notably, in the contexts of Europe, North America, the Caribbean, and the Asia Pacific, career progression deficiencies were especially prominent. In contrast, Latin America highlighted workload, and Africa pointed to the low societal valuation of the teaching profession.
- **Perception of authorities' response**: The responses from the survey participants painted a picture of educational authorities' perceived apathy or ineffective strategies in addressing these shortages. There was a global sense of dissatisfaction among educators regarding the efforts—or lack thereof—by authorities to promote teaching as a high-status career or to engage in meaningful strategies to retain teaching professionals. This sentiment was especially

strong regarding authorities' lack of interest in listening to teacher organisations on why teachers leave the profession.

- **Gender disparities:** An interesting dimension that the survey explored was the highly gendered nature of the teaching profession. Questions arose about whether this aspect played a role in the challenges faced, particularly concerning remuneration and professional status. The discussion hinted at a deeper, systemic issue that needed addressing within the educational ecosystem.
- **The need for targeted, informed solutions:** The survey presentation concluded with a call to action for the development of strategies informed by the rich, ground-level data provided by educators themselves. These strategies would not only address the symptoms, such as shortages, but also the underlying systemic issues that the educational sector grapples with. The need for nuanced, context-specific policies and initiatives was clear, pointing to a way forward defined by collaborative, informed, and decisive action.

## Navigating AI in education

The afternoon focused on technology, with Dr. Wayne Holmes from University College London, UK, presenting the new research commissioned by EI: "[Unintended consequences of Artificial Intelligence and education](#)". Holmes' comprehensive analysis debunks common misconceptions about AI, emphasising that these tools should complement the work of educators, not replace them. The report advocates for Ethics by Design in AI tools, a concept underlining transparency, privacy, fairness, and human agency.

Furthermore, the report proposes the following strategic recommendations for integrating AI into education systems ethically and effectively:

- **Democratic oversight:** Establish comprehensive regulations, ensuring AI adherence to human rights standards, and involve various stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- **Transparency in AI:** Implement mechanisms that make AI systems' operations understandable to users, fostering trust and accountability.
- **Safeguarding data:** Enforce robust data privacy measures to protect sensitive information of educators and students alike.
- **Teacher autonomy:** Ensure AI supports educators' instructional strategies, not replace them, affirming the professional discretion of teachers.
- **Training for educators:** Advocate for thorough professional development programmes that enable educators to harness AI effectively in their teaching practices.
- **Equity and inclusivity:** Mandate fairness in AI tools by eliminating biases and facilitating equal access for all students, inclusive of those with disabilities.
- **Continuous assessment:** Adopt regular monitoring and evaluation of AI's educational impact, refining its application for better outcomes.
- **Global collaboration:** Encourage international cooperation for sharing insights, research, and effective practices concerning AI in education.

The presentation was followed by a discussion where ResNet members explored the ethical questions at the intersection of AI and education. EI members emphasised the imperative need for educators' voices to guide AI integration into classrooms, ensuring alignment with educational values and objectives.

The discussion touched on a wide range of issues, from concerns over tech sector unionisation to AI's role in standardising education. These reflections, from diverse geographical and professional backgrounds, underscored the need for a united front in advocating for education policies that respect the teaching profession and prioritise the right to education.

### Advocacy brief on teachers and technology

During the last segment of the meeting, Manos Antoninis, Director of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, delivered an important presentation on the findings of the 2023 GEM report: *Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?* Antoninis stressed the need for technology that resonates with the pedagogical foundations of education, cautioning against solutions that disregard the role of educators. The presentation outlined the pitfalls of a one-size-fits-all approach to EdTech, advocating instead for technology that is responsive to the diverse and dynamic needs of both educators and learners.

The GEM Report and EI have recently published a [new advocacy brief](#) on the main findings of the 2023 GEM Report, highlighting the nuanced challenges and opportunities presented by technology in education, and also offering tangible recommendations for teachers and education support personnel, emphasising the human aspect in technology integration.

### Go Public! Moving forward with collective resolve

The 18th EI ResNet Meeting concluded on a note of global solidarity. Participants reaffirmed Education International's commitment to forge the way forward with collective responsibility, advocating for educational environments where technology meets ethical pedagogy, and technological advancements serve the fundamental right to education.

## 6. Gender, education, and a global view on the 'crisis of care'

The global pandemic that swept across the world just a few years ago was a grim reminder of the fragility of human lives. Widespread illness and death, economic disruption, mobility restrictions, and lockdowns precipitated by the unabated spread of Covid-19 was shocking, almost unbelievable for many of us.

At its crux, the pandemic sent a stark message about the significance of our health and wellbeing for the functioning of our societies and economies. Ultimately, what contributed disproportionately to our survival during this unprecedented event was "care".

Care, in this context, refers to the [life enhancing labour](#) done "in part as unpaid work by families, friends, and community members, and in part as paid labour by workers such as doctors, nurses, teachers, home healthcare workers, nannies and domestic workers".

Despite its centrality to our lives, care work is often a complex subject to grapple. How is care work of economic significance? How does care work impact upon individual workers' lives? What challenges do care workers face globally? And how do all these questions relate to education professionals, who

work in a prominent sector of the global care economy?

This short article will address some of these questions, with a global focus on gender and the education sector. This will be further explored in a policy brief, coming later this year.

### **What is the care economy and why gender matters**

Care work refers to the complex web of activities that sustain and reproduce life. Such work is wide-ranging and crucially, it underpins all economic activity. Taken together, the term “care economy” captures the relationship between economic and reproductive activities that sustain human societies.

One striking feature of the care economy is that it includes both unpaid and paid forms of labour. The work done by early childhood education and care personnel and schoolteachers, healthcare professionals, cleaners, and other household service providers are paid forms of care labour. At the same time, the time and energy spent on household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and washing performed for oneself and others can be both paid and unpaid domestic labour.

It is impossible to talk about the care economy without recognising the gendered dimension of both paid and unpaid care work. Globally speaking, women perform an inordinate amount of such labour in the world. The [United Nations estimates](#) that women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid household and care work than men. Unpaid care labour comprises 41 percent of the total global work hours.

The devaluation of care is a structural source of gender inequality and is simultaneously rooted in gendered logics. Without recognising this, we will be unable to address the crisis that continues to negatively impact all aspects of our collective development.

Paid care work is also dominated by women globally. The International Labour Organization (ILO) [estimated](#) that in 2018 the global care workforce of 381 million workers was comprised of 248.9 million women and 132.1 million men. This implies a feminisation rate of 65.3 %. In health-care, the most prominent sector of paid care work, [women comprise 70 percent of workers globally](#).

Measuring this invaluable labour is complex, but assigning monetary value to it may help us understand its astounding economic contribution. [Research indicates](#) that women’s unpaid contributions to care equates to US\$11 trillion or approximately 9 percent of the world GDP. These estimates are based on time-use survey data gathered from 53 countries (63.5 percent of the global working age population) and were valued at the hourly minimum wage of each country.

### **Gender, care, and education**

The education sector [\[1\]](#) is a central pillar in the [care economy](#). In developed economies, where the care workforce tends to be the largest, education and healthcare sectors are sizeable and relatively proportionate. Among poorer countries, care work is generally smaller and is concentrated in education, while healthcare sectors are more minor.

The education sector is a bigger source of employment for women than for men. Around 7.4 percent of all women employed in the world find [jobs in education](#), compared to 3.1 percent of men. However, there are important regional differences, in Africa and the Arab States [\[2\]](#), men tend to dominate the education sector overall. In regions where the education sector is larger, such as developed

countries, women's employment also tends to be higher.

Gender dynamics of employment in education are quite closely related to care work. For instance, the [concentration of women teachers](#) tends to be in the earlier years of schooling and their share of employment shrinks with each successive level of education. This suggests that mainstream gender roles that associate women more closely with reproductive work and childcare are mirrored in their workforce participation. This in turn produce inequalities in the way this work is valued.

Early childhood education exemplifies this stark overlap between the gendered nature of paid care work and its devaluation. Women make-up 85 percent of pre-primary school (typically between ages 3 and 5 years) teachers in all countries with [available data](#). ILO analyses find that in both developed and developing countries, the pay and benefits for teachers for early childhood educators overall is lower than teachers at other levels. This has been [linked](#) to the high number of women represented in this category, the low recognition of their work, and the low rates of unionisation. Education International's [research on early childhood systems in 17 countries](#) from almost all world regions found that early childhood education teachers, particularly in the private sector, remain largely nonunionised.

### **Understanding the 'crisis of care'**

The ongoing struggles towards achieving gender justice and equitable, healthy, thriving societies are encapsulated in what is often termed the 'crisis of care'. This crisis which has long simmered under societal and economic structures, refers to a) the chronic public underfunding and global devaluation of paid care work in economies, including but not limited to the education sector and b) the unequal participation in unpaid care work, where women and girls carry the largest burden. Undoubtedly, those further marginalised due to class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or migration status, often face worse and more exacerbated impacts of this crisis.

The issue of chronic public underfunding of paid care work should come as no surprise to educators. In figures released by [UNESCO](#) in 2023, 9 percent of primary school teachers quit their jobs in 2022 (almost double the rate of 4.6 percent in 2015). According to these data, this trend is also visible among pre-primary school teachers, where annually a global average of 5 percent of workers leave the profession. The UN agency estimates that 44 million additional teachers need to be recruited if every child is to be provided education in the world.

[The shortfall of teachers is global](#)—in sub-Saharan Africa there is a need for 15 million teachers to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of education for all by 2030 (SDG 4), while in Europe and North America, 4.8 million teachers are needed. This global shortfall is closely related to the deteriorating conditions, including pay and work-life balance for educators, which can only be ensured through sustained public funding of education. [The ILO finds](#) that “between 2005 and 2015, teachers' statutory salaries decreased in real terms in one-third of the countries with available data.”

At the same time, considering women make up much of the education workforce globally, the dynamics of unpaid care labour are of equal importance here. The rising pressure to perform unpaid care labour is an acute problem due to issues such as the lack of affordable childcare and healthcare in many countries.

During the pandemic, lockdowns and other policies restricted worker mobility and the debilitating impacts of unpaid care work on teachers became increasingly visible. The [Feminist Center for Information and Action's study](#) of the care crisis for teachers from eight countries in Latin America

during the pandemic found that women teachers experienced a “deepening of the care crisis” during the pandemic, with 1 in 4 women teachers stating that the time spent on care labour for non-dependent adults increased.

This is in line with EI’s [global findings](#) on women union members during the pandemic, which noted that due to increased burden of care work, members “were forced to leave teaching because of the uncertainty of loss of income, not to mention those who left due to stress caused by the shift to online teaching modalities.”

The quote below from a key informant interviewed in this study, explains the relationship between unpaid care work and teaching during the pandemic:

"Single parents are drowning in tasks constantly, no time for anything but childcare, work, and housework. Out of hours working, lack of prep time, precarious work, having to cover classes, all of these things existed from before, so women’s lack of equality, but what we saw during the pandemic was that this really impacted members’ mental health."

Key Informant - Europe

This statement captures what is at the heart of the crisis of care: the compounding impact of unsustainable working conditions for teachers, and the unjust, unequal burden of care work that disproportionately affects women.

## **Conclusion**

The centrality of care work in sustaining, protecting, and enhancing our societies and economies is no longer up for debate, particularly after what we have endured during the global pandemic. Despite this, there remains much to be done in terms of recognising, valuing, and supporting care work in its myriad forms in our global system.

The education sector globally speaking is feminised, devalued, and underfunded. This presents the prospect of a crisis in no uncertain terms. Education International, alongside several other organisations advocating for the rights of teachers and other care workers have drawn attention to the disastrous consequences the continuation of current patterns of underfunding and negligence of care work could have for sustainable development, global poverty, and inequality.

This brief overview has demonstrated that no discussion of the care economy can afford to ignore gender. Gender roles that strongly impact societal and household divisions of labour, are a salient lens for understanding the care economy in its paid and unpaid dimensions. Gendered societal expectations that assign women with the primary duties of childcare, housework, and other forms of caring responsibilities, ensure that women around the world spend an undue amount of time performing unpaid work. This directly contributes to their participation in paid employment- including their pay, benefits, job security, and progression. As we have seen, women’s overwhelming presence in sectors such as early childhood education, is directly correlated with lower pay, worse conditions, and high attrition rates. The devaluation of care is thus a structural source of gender inequality and is simultaneously rooted in gendered logics. Without recognising this, we will be unable to address the crisis that continues to negatively impact all aspects of our collective development.

This sector is defined to include “education and childcare comprised of schools, pre-schools, family day care centres and other structures for the caring for the youngest children” (Duffy & Armenia, 2021, p. 4).

Arab states, according to the International Labour Organization’s definition, include Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian territories, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

## 7. New research informs union work to overcome copyright obstacles for teachers and teaching

On September 28, the International Day for Universal Access to Information, Education International hosted an online event entitled Pathways to pedagogy: Overcoming copyright obstacles for teacher resource access. The event launched three new pieces of research commissioned by Education International on copyright regimes and their impact on education and educators in Kenya, Fiji and the Philippines, and in contexts of cross-border teaching.

### **Researching the impact of copyright restrictions on education**

The event featured presentations of recent research findings from across the globe on access to and use of teaching and learning materials from a copyright perspective.

Dara Dimitrov and Rogena Sterling from the University of Waikato, New Zealand presented their findings on [Access and Use of Teaching and Research Materials from A Copyright Perspective in Fiji and the Philippines](#). Having surveyed educators in both Fiji and the Philippines, the researchers noted that while all teachers wanted to provide the best learning experience for their students, they were faced with outdated material that affected their ability to prepare for classes. Educators in both countries reported that it was impossible to teach without infringing copyright in some way and that the cost and access to materials were a constant challenge. The researchers recommended that international copyright laws be revised for educational purposes, in order to provide greater concessions for accessibility and to eliminate cost barriers for developing countries.

Catherine and Charles Nandain from the Technical University, Kenya gave event participants an overview of their research on [Access and Use of Teaching and Learning Materials from a Copyright Perspective in Kenya](#) and further research undertaken in Senegal. The studies revealed that teachers in both Kenya and Senegal face challenges related to the cost and accessibility of educational materials which impact the quality of education. In addition, teachers often struggle to understand copyright laws or lack awareness of the legislation, which can lead to legal risks. The researchers recommend that copyright laws are regularly updated to account for technological advancements. Efforts must also be made to simplify the language of the legislation, provide clear guidance, and raise awareness among educators and other stakeholders of the provisions related to copyright exceptions for education.

Aurora Escudero from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the University of Glasgow presented the results of a brief review of copyright legislation and its impact on education in Latin America. Experts interviewed for the study stressed that copyright legislation in the region is outdated and exceptions are very rigid. While high-income countries are moving towards a more flexible system of exceptions for educational purposes, medium-income countries are lagging behind.

Experts highlighted that exceptions for education are essential in order to ensure equity in education, eliminate the risk of legal penalties for educators, remove current limitations on pedagogy, and clarify uncertainty around the intellectual property of educational resources created by educators.

Kimberly Anastacio from the American University in the United States presented [Higher Education in the International Digital Economy: Effects of Conflicting Copyright Regimes on Cross-Border Teaching](#), a new study commissioned by Education International. The study features a survey of 214 teachers from across five regions, adding the voice of teachers themselves to existing research. Over 50% of teachers reported either having encountered copyright problems or being unsure that was the case. Confusion about applicable legislation was widespread. Teachers were shown to prioritise the education of their students but were resentful about being forced to find workarounds, to make second-best choices, and to forgo rewarding pedagogical experiences. Changes to copyright legislation that expand exceptions and limitations for educational use across jurisdictions were recommended, along with other measures to address the issues teachers face.

### **Unions taking the lead**

Elizabeth Fong (AUSPS, Fiji), Grace Nyongesa (UASU, Kenya), David Robinson (CAUT, Canada), and Miriam Socolovsky (CONADU, Argentina) discussed the implications of the new research on the work of education unions going forward.

Welcoming the new research on the impact of copyright legislation on education in Fiji, Elizabeth Fong stated that unions must now use this evidence to inform their work, stressing that “our children and young people are being deprived of access to the best information due to copyright restrictions and legislation that has failed to take into account small and developing economies. Unions have much to do in the area of copyright.”

Addressing the situation in Kenya, Grace Nyongesa highlighted the role of unions in both raising awareness of copyright laws among educators, and actively participating in the revision of these laws to ensure they meet the needs of students and teachers.

Miriam Socolovsky reflected on the importance of ensuring universal access to knowledge and professional autonomy for education workers.

David Robinson shared his union’s experience in advocating for better copyright legislation. Working alongside teachers and students, the union succeeded in bringing significant amendments to Canada’s copyright legislation that now explicitly recognises education as a purpose for fair use. CAUT has also intervened in several legal disputes recently, making the case that copyright legislation needs to balance the rights of the creators and the rights of users. The union has also used collective bargaining to ensure academics retain the copyright of the work they produce.

Education unions attending the Education International event committed to continue their work at the national and international levels to ensure copyright exceptions for education.

### **International advocacy**

Education International is a member of the [Access to Knowledge \(A2K\) Coalition](#), a group that represents educators, researchers, libraries, and other knowledge users around the globe. The Coalition has recently published an analysis of key issues on the agenda at the upcoming meeting of the World Intellectual Property Organization Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights. [The analysis](#) opposes the proposed broadcast treaty, proposes a way forward on limitations and

exceptions, and urges the removal of work on a 'pay to lend' fee by libraries. Education International will participate in the Committee meeting that will take place in Geneva on 6-8 November 2023.

# November

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## Highlights

### 1. 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

From the 25th of November to the 10th of December, Education International mobilised to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

#### Related Items

#### **Education and schools are key to end gender-based violence**

According to the [Violence Against Women & Girls Guide](#), developed by the World Bank, 818 million women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner. This is almost the total population of sub-Saharan Africa. On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it is crucial to articulate and address the intrinsic link that exists between access to education and the effective elimination of gender-based violence.

#### Violence against girls and schools, a global issue

Historically, schools have been identified as safe spaces that provide free meals, clean and safe access to bathrooms, emotional and physical help from educational support personnel such as nurses, access to basic health, and opportunities to become independent human beings. But, too often still, girls and young women remain out of school, and educational institutions have even become a dangerous place for them.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) refers to threats or acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools. [UNESCO and UNGEI](#) define school violence and SRGBV as "including corporal punishment, sexual abuse and assault, bullying, denigrating sexual comments, physical fighting and psychological violence by peers or adults such as harmful taunting, insults, exclusion or denial of resources, bullying with words or images or property damage".

SRGBV prevents millions of children and adolescents worldwide – especially girls – from exercising their right to a safe, inclusive and quality education. It is a result of gender norms and stereotypes, as well as unequal power dynamics between men and women: while men and women, boys and girls can all be affected, girls and women are most vulnerable to this type of violence. In the specific context of school, the students, teachers and education support personnel alike can be both victims and perpetrators of SRGBV.

#### Transforming social norms and reshaping our systems

Gender inequalities and violence against children are a global problem, existing in every society.

Gender discrimination, racism and patriarchy have shaped our education systems and social structures. As a result, our education systems and schools play a role in the reproduction and perpetuation of such forms of violence. By designing and implementing policies that ensure

schools are safe spaces for all, with trained teachers and educational support personnel, it is possible to break the cycle of violence and injustice. Safe schools can empower students in all their diversity, creating strong generations of active citizens ready to take the transformation further.

### Creating safe schools, protecting safe spaces

The World Bank's Safe Schools programme [1] identifies five focus areas to assist countries in designing and implementing sustainable safe school policies and practices:

- **Physical Safety:** Safety from risks that can cause bodily harm in school or on the way to and from school.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Prevention of negative stress and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other negative thoughts and feelings; as well as protection from psychological violence.
- **Instructional practices and environment:** Safety derived from the practices and environment in which learners, teachers, content, equipment, and technologies interact to enhance learning engagement and inclusion.
- **Interactions and relationships:** Positive interactions that promote social and emotional learning (SEL) and inclusion.
- **School connectedness:** Partnerships and engagement of school with the a) families; b) community; c) other schools in the cluster.

Mitigating risks and accelerating learning opportunities in education systems must be prioritised by policymakers, practitioners, school leaders and teachers to make schools the safest spaces for young people and children. This holistic approach must include a focus on the needs of the students, the needs of teachers and education support personnel, and on the involvement of families and communities to ensure that the efforts are shared and long-term.

Creating safe spaces also entails providing training on SRGBV for teachers and education support personnel in order to equip them in prevention, protection, reporting and (re)integration of SRGBV survivors in schools and classrooms.

### The crucial role of unions

Education unions have a strong track record in supporting education professionals to end SRGBV. For decades, activists and education unions have actively worked to oppose social norms and political decisions that aimed at making schools a forbidden space for girls and women. That is the case in Iran, where more than [1,200 schoolgirls were poisoned in chemical attacks targeting their schools](#) which led to a massive withdrawal of girls from schools in fear of further violence. In collaboration with the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations, a [research](#) was conducted in the summer 2023 to examine the sexual discrimination and oppression experienced by girls and women students in Iran and document 358 instances of gas poisoning in girls' schools that aimed to suppress resistance and instil fear.

As the global voice of education employees, Education International has played a key role in building momentum for action against SRGBV across the education union movement. In 2014, an event on SRGBV held at the EI World Women's Conference showed that many EI member organisations across the globe were keen to work on eradicating SRGBV. In 2015 the 7th Education International World Congress adopted the [Resolution on School-Related Gender-](#)

[Based Violence](#) calling on EI members to take action against SRGBV in their respective contexts. In response, a group of education unions in Africa launched a programme called *Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* [2]. Between 2016 and 2019, nine education unions in Southern, East and West Africa representing over a million workers actively engaged in a Gender Action Learning (GAL) Process, facilitated by Gender At Work, to test different strategies to empower and mobilise teachers and education staff as active agents of change to address SRGBV in their respective contexts.

Ending SRGBV is one of the best ways to protect our democracies and societies by ensuring that safe learning spaces and knowledge-sharing are prioritised within all education systems. Despite being perceived as taboo and a challenging topic, SRGBV must be tackled through the involvement of trade unions, key stakeholders, teachers, and educational support personnel. This holistic approach is an effective strategy to address gender discrimination and segregation and act for gender equality.

### [Safe Schools: Supporting the Future of Learning through Safe Schools](#)

*Unions Take Action to End SRGBV - An Innovative Partnership* The *Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV* programme was launched in January 2016 with the goal of putting teachers, education personnel and education unions at the forefront of efforts to end SRGBV. With financial support from Global Affairs Canada, this four-year programme built on a strategic partnership between the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) and Education International (EI).

### **Education Trade Unions Leading the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence and Harassment**

On November 25th, we draw attention to one of the most prevalent human rights violations: [violence against women](#), affecting one in three women worldwide.

Susan Flocken, European Director of ETUCE, emphasizes the pivotal role of education in nurturing citizens who embody respect and tolerance for each other's rights. She underscores the significance of investing in education as a means to foster a society without gender-based violence and harassment, aligning with the global theme of this year's [16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence: "UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls."](#) Susan adds, "Education is the cornerstone for building a society that rejects gender-based violence, and our investment in it shapes the future we want to create."

Celebrating the International Day against Violence Against Women, ETUCE underscores that it is through collective bargaining that education trade unions can effectively draw attention to the changing dynamics of sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This is particularly crucial in adapting to the shifts brought about by changing working conditions, such as the surge in domestic and cyber violence associated with the growing trend of teleworking. According to the ETUC's latest survey implemented in the project 'Tackling Violence and Harassment against Women at Work' education trade unions have only recently begun to address these concerns, recognizing, and starting to prioritise them. This survey has also shown the significant effort that

education trade unions have devoted to information and awareness-raising activities, as means of countering gender-based violence. Even though, collective bargaining is still a limited tool in addressing gender-based violence in education, some education trade unions succeeded to criminalize violence against teachers (e.g. the Bulgarian Union of Teachers) or working together with the public sector confederations, secure the paid leave for victims of violence in the collective agreement or obtain funds from the national health and safety institute for training health and safety representatives, with a portion dedicated to gender-based violence and harassment (e.g., UIL in Italy). The final conference of this ETUC project takes place in Brussels on 14-15 December 2023 and will produce guidelines for trade unions on addressing gender-based violence at the workplace.

The International Day against Violence Against Women is widely celebrated around the world among education trade unions. EI has released a video with all members of the Status of Women Committee, calling for the end of violence against women. At the same time, the role of education in ending gender-based violence is highlighted in their latest article. Joining the [UN's 16 days of activism preventing violence against women and girls](#) (25 November- 10 December), EI is releasing a social media campaign. In the European region, education trade unions are also organising and campaigning around this crucial topic. In Spain, a noteworthy campaign is unfolding led by FECCOO (La Federación de Enseñanza de Comisiones Obreras) called the #25N campaign. This initiative aims to spread messages advocating for the elimination of gender-based violence. Through powerful messages such as "¡No te calles!" (Don't stay silent!), they endeavour to raise awareness about gender-based violence and encourage women to openly discuss the issue.

Seeking further change, UIL in Italy released a social campaign strongly supported by the UIL-Scuola, challenging the normalisation of gender-based violence, an enduring and widespread issue.

In France, a united collective, [including education trade unions](#) joining the FSU federation, will mobilise for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, demanding action, resources, and combatting sexist and sexual violence. Initiatives and marches are planned nationwide, including a demonstration in Paris.

European institutions are also actively prioritising the issue of violence against women, with ongoing negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of the EU on the [European Directive on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#).

Discussions involve critical elements such as the potential inclusion of rape as an EU-level crime.

## 2. Teach for the Planet

EI's Teach for the Planet campaign works to ensure that climate education, based on science and with a civic action focus, becomes as fundamental as teaching reading and writing. Launched in 2021, the campaign continued to gain momentum in 2023.

**The need to green schools: Climate change and gender inequality at the top of the Global Partnership for Education**

Climate change is a human rights crisis that threatens education and global efforts toward gender equality. Education International (EI) welcomes the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) strategy to develop education systems that are climate resilient and mindful of the impacts of the environmental crisis on girls' education.

## Climate crisis and education

As the climate crisis has accelerated, weather and climate extremes have brought severe and long-lasting disruption. Natural disasters have destroyed schools, and the costs to rebuild a community after an environmental crisis have diverted resources from education. Environmental emergencies have forced the displacement and migration of families and education support personnel, which has limited access to quality education for children.

The adverse effects of climate change are often heightened in countries that are the least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. There is an overlap between the countries that are most vulnerable and those that are low income, causing existing human rights disparities, such as access to education, to widen globally.

For young girls, disasters triggered by climate change can be fatal. Environmental crises lead to reduced income and quality of life, causing families to depend on children for extra support. In the aftermath of a disaster, girls are at times expected to take on more household chores or supplement family income. Families may resort to child labour, marriage or trafficking for money in dire situations. Children with disabilities and special needs are at a higher risk of discrimination and exploitation, which may further limit their access to quality education.

In some countries, the intersection of environmental crises and national security further puts education at risk for children.

"Far too many children are deprived of education and far too many students and teachers find themselves under attack due to armed conflict," explained Haldis Holst, Deputy General Secretary of Education International. "Education is an important tool in preventing conflict as well as important in any first response following a conflict or crisis situation."

Education is critical to youth development, and developing education systems that are climate-resilient is essential to preserving children's right to education.

## The GPE's efforts toward climate-resilience

Holst is a board member of the GPE, an alliance of lower-income countries, international and civil society organisations, donors, and foundations that aims to transform education systems and achieve better outcomes for children and youth. As the global voice of teachers and education support personnel, EI is a partner organisation of the GPE and supports its initiatives to improve access to quality public education.

Acknowledging the relationship between climate change and access to public education, the GPE met in Brussels in June 2023 to discuss strategies for building climate-smart education systems. The three goals of climate-smart education systems are to protect the quality of public education, preserve the planet's life systems and promote climate justice.

Gender equality is at the core of the GPE's efforts towards greening education systems.

"Gender equality in and through education is a priority for the GPE and there was a strategic discussion on how to tackle the complexity of challenges Partner Countries face in moving forward," said Holst.

The GPE's strategy for improving education access involves a seven-dimensions framework to address gaps within education systems at a national level and by doing so strengthen the resilience of education to climate change. The framework emphasizes the need to build education systems that center the interactions between education and the earth's ecosystems.

"The framework for action aims to support countries in developing action plans based on their specific context and is currently being piloted in Zimbabwe and Malawi," Holst stated. "The Climate Smart Education Systems initiative aligns well with Education International's Teach for the Planet Campaign,' and we encourage our member organisations in partner countries to engage at country level."

The seven dimensions of the framework include data and evidence, policy and planning, coordination, finance, infrastructure, teaching and learning, and schools and communities. Each dimension provides a strategy that each country can apply to building climate-smart education systems relevant to the needs of its community.

For example, working with the Malawi government, UNICEF established 64 solar-powered water systems that provide water to 40 schools, 24 health care facilities and 64 communities. While being sustainable methods of supplying water, these water systems have also improved student attendance at school, especially for girls [1]. The water systems in Malawi provide an example of how components of the seven-dimension framework, in this case infrastructure, can be used to both improve the sustainability of education systems and girls' education outcomes.

## Teach for the Planet

As a partner organisation of the GPE, EI welcomes the GPE's climate strategy and its 7-dimensional framework. EI's [Teach for the Planet](#) campaign focuses on the intersection of climate and education by ensuring that students become climate literate and that schools around the world put sustainability at the heart of their development. EI's "[Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All](#)" aligns with the GPE's priorities, including the provision of climate change education to children and youth and the transformation of learning environments to be climate resilient.

"EI's member organisations play a crucial role in advocating for quality climate change education," explained Dennis Sinyolo, GPE Board Member and Regional Director of the Africa Region at EI. "EI member organisations in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, for example, have persuaded their governments to come up with an early-warning system and to integrate climate change education into the curriculum," he continued.

By continuing to work alongside the GPE, EI emphasizes the need to involve education unions in rolling out the strategy so that all education systems become sustainable and can provide high

quality public education.

“The importance of involving educators and their unions as well as training teachers is emphasized by Education International,” said Holst. “All students should receive an education which is inclusive, relevant, and respectful.”

Global Partnership for Education. (2023). Toward climate-smart education systems: A 7-dimension framework for action.

## **Pacific educators stand in solidarity for climate justice and a just transition in first-ever climate conference**

Pacific educators affirmed their commitment to climate justice and to advance a just transition during a conference hosted by Education International Asia-Pacific (EIAP) and the Council of Pacific Educators (COPE) in Lautoka, Fiji on May 23-25, 2023.

In a first of its kind in the region, Pacific education unionists gathered to strengthen capacities and build solidarity among education unions in response to the intensifying challenges presented by the climate crisis. Moving forward, the union representatives committed to implementing climate action plans for their respective unions and communities.

"Aggravating climate change means that educators are also experiencing some of its worst impacts, especially those living in frontline communities such as low-lying islands in the Pacific. Therefore, educators must be involved as stakeholders in a just transition."

Susan Hopgood | Education International President

With the theme ‘Educators Stand for Climate Justice and a Just Transition,’ various field experts, union allies and leaders delivered inspiring keynote speeches and lectures to more than 50 Pacific unionists. In her opening speech, Education International (EI) President Susan Hopgood said that aggravating climate change means that educators are also experiencing some of its worst impacts, especially those living in frontline communities such as low-lying islands in the Pacific. Therefore, educators must be involved as stakeholders in a just transition. Likewise, EIAP Regional Committee Chair Tsukasa Takimoto said that educators and union members have a duty to advocate for policies that promote sustainable development and tackle climate change. The two EI leaders were united in reiterating the need for more [public funding in education](#) as a veritable form of climate action and a step towards realising [quality climate education for all](#).

"Pacific educators are ready to rise to the challenges of our global ecological crisis."

Luisa Fatiaki Tongatama | COPE President

Meanwhile, the guest of honor, Fiji’s Minister of Employment and former General Secretary of the Fiji Teachers Union Agni Deo Singh lauded EIAP and COPE for their initiative to promote climate action in Pacific education. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s

(UNESCO) Director and Representative to the Pacific States Nisha, another notable guest, said that she hopes this could be the start of the recognition of climate education as integral to curricula and the education sector in the region. In response, COPE President Luisa Fatiaki Tongatama said that Pacific educators are ready to rise to the challenges of our global ecological crisis. She noted that Indigenous Pacific peoples' cultures and traditional practices are already embedded with genuine solutions to the climate emergency.

Indigenous Pacific unionists led the discussions regarding the pressing threat of climate change on the well-being and survival of their communities. Laumata Lauvi of the Samoa National Teachers Association began the discussions by talking about the climate impacts already being experienced by frontline communities in the Pacific. Rakentai Momoe of the Kiribati Union of Teachers explained the hardships being faced by Pacific climate migrants. Meanwhile, Te Aomihia Tao-Glassie of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (NZPPTA) delivered a speech about the role of Indigenous Peoples' leadership in climate education and climate action. Esau Teagai of Tuvalu Teachers Union also shared about community-generated climate solution in Tuvalu. Toka Toka, youth coordinator for the Cook Islands Teachers Union, shared about their experience working with youth climate justice groups and the importance of collaborating with allies.

Education unionists also shared about how climate change is altering the education sector and the sector's just transition response. Michael Waller of the NZPPTA explained the mounting challenges being posed by climate change on the teaching profession from the perspective of his local school that is located near the Frans and Fox glaciers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Urmila Singh of the Fiji Teachers Union and Brad Hayes of the Independent Education Union of Australia discussed their respective unions' work on incorporating just transition concepts into the curriculum. Finally, Kevin Bates of the Australian Education Union reiterated the organising and bargaining skills that education unions bring to the climate justice movement.

There is a need to push for a feminist response in climate action because women are being disproportionately affected by climate impacts.

The COPE Women's Network also dedicated a session to climate change and women in the Pacific. Led by COPE Women's Coordinator Nanise Bale Kamikamica, Pacific women gathered to discuss the pertinent issues affecting women in the face of the climate emergency. According to the group, there is a need to push for a feminist response in climate action because women are being disproportionately affected by climate impacts. In the Pacific, women are responsible for the education of their communities and the preservation of traditional knowledge and practices, but lack the economic opportunities that would bolster their own resilience. For COPE's Women's Network, this means that women need to be empowered to take on leadership positions in national and local contexts so that women's concerns about climate change are prioritised. Furthermore, gender equality requires the commitment of men to promote gender justice in policymaking, the group said. Among unions, this must mean empowering women members by providing trainings and professional development.

Field experts and climate justice allies also discussed the science and public policies surrounding climate change. Elizabeth Holland, professor of ocean and climate change at the University of the South Pacific and longtime Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change author, explained the state of climate impacts in the Pacific. Professor Holland said that the threat of surging seas to the future of Pacific islands, as sea levels could rise to five meters in a high emissions scenario. Meanwhile, Maureen Penjueli of the Pacific Network on Globalisation discussed the importance of climate treaties such as the Paris Agreement in shaping the global response to climate change. Joy Hernandez of the International Trade Union Congress – Asia Pacific, via a video recording, spoke about the labor movement’s response to climate change through the concept of a Just Transition. Additionally, climate justice researcher and campaigner Alanah Torralba discussed the state of just transition among EI union affiliates; while independent researcher Richard Cornelio discussed the findings of EIAP’s Climate Consultation Survey, which detailed the baseline knowledge of Asia Pacific educators regarding climate change, climate justice and a just transition. Lastly, EIAP also launched its [animation video](#) based on the 'Teach for Climate Action' advocacy tool kit.

In his progress report, EIAP Regional Director Anand Singh noted the progress that the Educators for Sustainable Development (E4SD) programme has achieved since its inception in October 2021. Due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative was launched through a virtual conference that was attended by more than 300 unionists, he said. It was proof that Asia Pacific educators were eager to join the climate justice and just transition movements, Singh added. In 2022, during [EIAP’s 9th Regional Congress](#), educators passed a resolution on the climate crisis, which among others, called for the strengthening of educators’ capacities on climate change and the social justice and labor issues surrounding it. This conference is just one of many initiatives of EIAP to advance that mandate, he said.

“The climate crisis, as has been expressed so many times by prominent activists, scientists, and world leaders, is the defining existential threat of our time. I am confident that educators in the Asia Pacific are eager and ready to join the fray of climate action. Shaped by years of union work, international solidarity and a pledge to better the world, they are steadfast in their commitment to climate justice and a just transition.”

Anand Singh | EIAP Regional Director

### **Education unionists strategise action against fossil fuels**

The 9th meeting of the Education International Climate Network took place online on September 20. Fossil fuel subsidies and their impact on education, as well as education union strategies for fossil fuel divestment, and the continued mobilisation for climate education were on the agenda.

### **Strong education union response to climate change**

Education International’s Climate Network brings together union leaders and staff who drive their union’s work on climate change. The Network was formed in 2021 to guide EI’s [Teach for the Planet](#) campaign that calls for quality climate education and a just transition to a green economy for all.

The campaign is informed by Education International's [Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All](#) – a policy instrument that outlines the teaching profession's vision for quality climate change education and the policy framework necessary to implement it.

With members across all continents, the EI Climate Network continues to grow. New members join as more and more education unions make climate action a union priority.

### Fossil fuel subsidies undermining sustainable development

Researcher Zeynep Clulow from the University of Cambridge joined the 9th meeting of the Climate Network to introduce the findings of an upcoming study commissioned by Education International on fossil fuel subsidies and their impact on education. While the study will be published ahead of COP28, Climate Network members had the opportunity to preview the main findings and discuss their implications.

Supporting the production and consumption of fossil fuels with taxpayer money, fossil fuel subsidies amounted to nearly 6 trillion US dollars globally in 2021, according to the International Monetary Fund. Yet fossil fuel subsidies are detrimental to various aspects of sustainable human development and impact several Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 1 on eradicating poverty, Goal 3 on health and well-being, Goal 4 on quality education, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 7 on affordable and clean energy, and Goal 12 on responsible production and consumption.

Clulow's upcoming research analyses the impact of fossil fuel subsidies on selected SDG indicators with a specific focus on education, finding that fossil fuel subsidies are most detrimental to education completion in lower income countries.

The researcher also proposed a series of recommendations for education union action which were discussed by members of the Climate Network.

### Strategies to divest from fossil fuels

Climate researcher and EI consultant Alanah Torralba advanced the discussion on fossil fuels by presenting some of the highlights of her upcoming guide to fossil fuel divestment for education unions.

Having conducted interviews with education unionists from around the world, Torralba underscored the key role unions can play in dismantling the social license fossil fuel companies continue to enjoy despite causing irreparable damage to the planet.

Torralba revealed various ways in which the fossil fuel industry influences the education sector, from setting the agenda of science education and promoting a neo-liberal understanding of education, to funding academic research that changes the agenda to the benefit of fossil fuel interests. These efforts have resulted in the promotion of false solutions that prolong the world's dependence on fossil fuels, such as biofuels, the rebranding of natural gas as a bridge fuel, or legitimising carbon capture storage technologies.

Explaining the implications of concerted fossil fuel divestment, Torralba stressed that the brunt of the effects will not hit pension funds, as previously argued, but only the top 1% wealthiest people whose wealth might contract insubstantially.

Torralba also shared some of the union strategies that emerged from the interviews she conducted with union leaders and climate leads. These include:

- Investigate where union, pension, and other funds are being invested.
- Present alternative and sustainable (re)investment opportunities.
- Use the union's democratic processes such as a congress resolution to formalise fossil fuel divestment commitments.
- Empower a just transition champion in the union.
- Build your union's fossil fuel divestment talking points and arguments.

The study on fossil fuel divestment will be published in the coming months.

### Sustained *Teach for the Planet* advocacy

Members of the Climate Network discussed the next key moments in the Teach for the Planet campaign, including EI's participation in the Greening Education Partnership and opportunities to advocate for climate education around COP28.

The Greening Education Partnership is a global initiative to achieve quality climate change education for all and ensure education systems are adapted to be resilient and sustainable. The Partnership is governed by an advisory group which includes rotating UN member states, international organisations, and civil society. Education International is part of the advisory group.

The Partnership is working to establish a new Multi-Partner Trust Fund on Greening Education, aiming to mobilise 50 million USD in its first year, doubling it in three years' time, and growing further by 2030. The new financing instrument will act as a centre for thematic financing in greening education.

The Partnership's work is focused around 4 pillars:

1. Greening schools – to be climate proof and sustainable institutions.
2. Greening curricula – to ensure that all countries provide climate change education at all levels.
3. Greening teacher and system capacities – to ensure education systems and ministries have the capacity to deliver on sustainability and teachers receive quality initial teacher training and continuous professional development on climate.
4. Greening communities – to ensure climate education is accessible to all.

Education International is the joint lead of the working group on teacher and system capacities alongside the Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF. The working group's objectives include enhancing educator capacity to teach for climate action, improving cross-sectoral coordination and enhancing support for ministries, and increasing political will for climate change education.

To achieve these objectives, the working group will focus on organising capacity building and networking activities and engaging in advocacy to increase financing for climate change education. Importantly, the working group also aims to develop a set of principles to define what 'quality' means for teacher training on climate. This will be done through a participatory process, including consultation with EI member organisations.

**Call to action for COP28: Adapt, mitigate, invest!**

For COP 28, to be held in December in Dubai, Education International has joined forces with key partners such as the Global Partnership for Education and others, to put forward a joint advocacy position paper for education and climate. The three key demands are:

- **Adapt** - Countries must develop national education adaptation plans and conduct risk assessments in the education sector, with a focus on marginalised groups.
- **Mitigate** - Countries must include education in their nationally determined contributions, meet national targets for greening education as part of SDG benchmarking, and set national targets for net zero emissions in the education sector.
- **Invest** – Countries must invest sufficiently in climate change education through domestic budgets, unlock further climate finance for education, fund multilateral organisations such as the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait, fund the multi-partner trust fund, and fund loss and damage.

## **Towards a Just Transition in Education: A Strategic Guide on Fossil Fuel Divestment for Education Unions**

Every year, despite recording ‘hottest ever’ temperatures, the world consumes more fossil fuels than ever before. Consequently, climate disasters also continue to rise in frequency and intensity. In 2022, for instance, a third of [Pakistan’s land mass was under water for several months](#) following record monsoon rains and melting glaciers from the country’s northern mountain regions. It affected 33 million people, killed more than 1,700 and caused \$15 billion in economic damages. In Europe, a [deadly heatwave caused 16,000 excess deaths](#), and affected 185 million people. Meanwhile, between 2013 and 2022, [global sea levels have risen twice the rate](#) since the first decade of measurement from 1993 to 2002. At 4.62 mm of increase per year, rising sea levels are becoming an existential threat to small island nations such as Tuvalu and Vanuatu in the Pacific region.

Unsurprisingly, the fossil fuel industry amassed astronomical profits amidst climate chaos. Last year, the top five western fossil corporations registered combined profits of \$200 billion, making it their most profitable year yet. This means that while ordinary people were being battered by extreme weather events all over the world, the fossil fuel industry was gaining record-high profits from a crisis of its own historical making. In addition, the industry received \$1 trillion in subsidies despite operating a business model built on planetary destruction.

The fossil fuel industry continues to flourish, in part, because of a social license that normalizes its destructive business model as legitimate and inescapable. A “social license to operate” is instrumental in preserving the fossil fuel industry’s hegemonic power, which is a critical component in its regime of obstruction against progressive climate action. Education is an important tool through which the industry perpetuates this regime of obstruction, which includes corporate dominance of the energy industry, political interference and pedagogical manipulation. In what has been termed “petro-pedagogy,” the industry exerts influence upon the education sector through a set of seemingly innocuous teaching techniques and resources that reproduce fossil fuel industry narratives. For instance, in the education systems of the US, UK, Australia, and Canada, to name a few, fossil fuel actors and lobbyists have been known to distribute fossil fuel propaganda among school-age children. In higher education, the fossil fuel industry employs benevolent forms of influence such as donations and the provision of research funding in order to promote energy policy recommendations that are favorable to the industry, such as in the case of

unproven carbon capture storage technologies. The interference of the fossil fuel industry in education cannot be denied. Hence, mounting a fossil fuel divestment campaign to disentangle the industry's web of influence needs to be on the agenda of education unions.

Fossil fuel divestment aims to achieve two things: abrogate the fossil fuel industry's social license to operate; and signal that public funds and private financial institutions must redirect much needed finances to renewable and cleaner energy sources. Given that global pension fund assets exceeded \$21 trillion in 2021, a global fossil fuel divestment campaign can have a substantial impact on the fossil fuel industry.

Relatedly for education unions, fossil fuel divestment can also provide a long-term political strategy on climate action. Even with the growing influence of the fossil fuel industry in the education sector, it can be fertile ground for resistance against fossil fuel hegemony. Education unions are encouraged to initiate their own fossil fuel divestment campaigns, which not only seek to sever financial ties with fossil fuel entities but also reject the industry's broader goal of entrenching neoliberal values in education, a longstanding advocacy among education unions. Below are a few [recommendations on fuel divestment strategies by unions, for unions](#).

**Investigate where union, pension and other funds are being invested.**

Raising awareness on where funds are invested is the first step in any divestment campaign. Unions can generate awareness among members by initiating a thorough accounting of their investment portfolios, taking care to investigate if and how much of their funds are currently invested in fossil fuel industries. These findings should be disseminated to members as widely as possible.

**Present alternative and sustainable (re)investment opportunities.**

Providing alternative and sustainable re-investment opportunities should be part of any fossil fuel divestment proposal. Unions can consult with members as well as credible fund managers on possible options. Additionally, presenting the potential economic and health benefits from an energy transition via fossil fuel divestment such as jobs generation, lessening pollution and energy security demonstrates long term benefits for members and their communities.

**Utilise the union's democratic processes.**

The democratic process is key in advancing divestment dialogue. During a congress or general meeting, unionists can propose a resolution on fossil fuel divestment to formalise commitments and present a just transition action plan. Democratic consultations with members should also be conducted to address concerns and generate recommendations.

**Empower a "just transition" champion within the union.**

Survey the membership for an expert who can lead conversations regarding a fossil fuel divestment and its relevance to a just transition for the education sector. Empower these members to lead just transition related campaigns.

**Build your union's fossil fuel divestment talking points and arguments.**

Build a set of fact-based and data-driven talking points on fossil fuel divestment that is context appropriate to your union, target community and country. Provide trainings and workshops to

members as part of your campaign.

Highlight the granular connections between a fossil fuel divestment campaign and longstanding campaigns against privatization in education.

To build discursive cohesion within unions, fossil fuel divestment should also be connected to longstanding campaigns against privatization. Forging the granular connections between a just transition, fossil fuel divestment and the fight for more resilient public education systems can only generate higher engagement among members and build synergies on existing education union campaigns.

Know and build relationships with allies in the community.

In campaigning for fossil fuel divestment among publicly held funds such as pension and Superannuation funds, allies will be crucial. As public funds are usually governed by trustees, consultants and fund managers, ordinary workers and unions have limited power over investment decisions. However, concerted efforts among trade unions, climate justice groups, youth groups and allied politicians can have the potential to advance fossil fuel divestment in legislation, as in the case of the New Zealand Superannuation fund which has committed to fossil fuel divestment from fossil fuels by 2050 [1]. Good faith implementation of these pronouncements, however, should be monitored by concerned citizens and social movements.

Fortify international solidarity.

Building international solidarity in pushing for fossil fuel divestment will also be key. Strengthening the movement's capacity for demanding governments, education institutions and industries to forge international cooperation is critical in addressing a transnational problem like climate change. The trade union movement, for instance, has been a key player among social movements active in international climate negotiations, where multilateral cooperation regarding climate finance, net zero policies and just transition programmes are being discussed.

Sharpen your union's social dialogue tactics regarding climate action.

As a social movement, unions have a unique tool in their arsenal in pushing for climate action: social dialogue. Hence, unions are well placed to access government and education officials and demand climate action at varying levels.

***Author's Note:***

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*John McLeod, EIS – Scotland*

*David Hughes, AFT – USA*

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## **Fossil fuel subsidies and educational performance**

Around the world, companies, NGOs, policymakers, academics and national publics are increasingly calling on governments to phase-out fossil fuel subsidies (FS) - measures that support the consumption and production of natural gas, coal and oil – as a vital step for combatting climate change and building a more just and sustainable world.

In the lead up to the Dubai Climate Conference, or COP28, as it is known in the jargon, 48 countries have signed up to the World Trade Organization's [Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform Initiative](#) to eradicate inefficient subsidies. [1] As part of its drive to become the global leader on climate action, the European Council highlighted the need for global phase-out of unabated fossil fuels as part of its negotiating position for COP28, announced in [October 2023](#). To date, over 131 companies representing nearly \$1 trillion in global revenue have signed an [open letter urging governments to phase-out fossil fuels](#) and ramp up clean energy.

Countries that spend more of their national income on FS tend to perform badly on multiple indicators of educational performance such as investment in education and educational attainment.

Yet despite the nominal commitment to subsidy reform, the share of world income spent on FS continues to rise. According to a [2021 report](#) from the International Monetary Fund, FS globally accounted for 6.8% of GDP (or 5.9 billion US\$) in 2020 and is expected to increase to 7.4% of GDP by 2025. The growing lag between nominal commitment to phase-out and actual funding for FS has resulted in increased efforts to understand the implications of FS for the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development that underpin the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

In a [recent report for Education International](#), I explored the relationship between FS and education and found that countries that spend more of their national income on FS tend to perform badly on multiple indicators of educational performance such as investment in education and educational attainment. Globally, FS tend to be associated with poor educational outcomes. However, the worst effects appear to be experienced by low-income countries, where even small increases in FS spending (relative to GDP) are associated with clear declines in primary and secondary school completion rates, in contrast to high-income countries, where FS spending is not usually associated with poor educational outcomes. The educational consequences of FS are ultimately shaped by prevailing conditions such as a country's level of fossil resource endowment, reliance on fossil rents and economic development, which demonstrates the need for a case by case approach to understand the (unique) obstacles to and opportunities for phase-out in individual countries.

## **Recommendations for the global education movement**

With links to local agents who could enable new skills development and knowledge transfer around the world, education unions are well placed to support FS reform in five key areas:

### **1. Education and green skills development**

Successful reforms are often underpinned by extensive education campaigns that teach stakeholders about the potential costs and benefits of FS and reform. Yet beyond this, multiple actors including young people, engineers, natural scientists, energy providers, policymakers and, at some level, publics at large, will need to develop a range of key 'green skills' for navigating and regulating the broader socio-economic changes that would accompany phase-out.

### **2. Trust-building**

By helping stakeholders understand the trade-offs associated with reform, education unions could help stakeholders formulate well-informed opinions towards FS, which would increase engagement and help ensure that reform was implemented through deliberative inclusive process. Educators could further improve transparency by disseminating accessible information relating to countries' performance on phase-out.

### **3. Organise reform beneficiaries**

Beneficiaries of FS tend to consist of well organised groups such as fossil fuel lobbies and recipients of consumer subsidies whereas pro-reformers, such as renewable energy companies, environmentalists, education and health services and the poor, tend to be more widely dispersed. Education unions could use their links to educators to unite potential beneficiaries of phase-out and foster synergies.

### **4. Pick low-hanging fruit**

Reformers need to make critical decisions about: which sector(s) to target first, the level of ambition (i.e. is the goal to eradicate FS completely or reduce to a certain level?), choice of compensatory measure and priority beneficiaries of reform. Education unions could use their local connections to access vital ground-knowledge to help policymakers design tailored strategies that address the specific (short and long-term) reform challenges within their country.

### **5. Tap into international fora**

The drive for global decarbonisation and net-zero has increased the drive of several international organisations to promote phase-out. In [November 2022](#), the UNEP, OECD and IISD developed a methodology to assist governments collect and share FS statistics (though few have actually submitted data). Other complementary developments include the creation of the WTO FSRI, OECD and IISD [Fossil Fuel Subsidy Tracker](#) and inclusion of FS data in the IEA annual World Energy Outlook database. Yet recent events such as the COVID pandemic and Ukraine war have driven many governments to adopt new subsidies to shield their economies from rising energy prices and supply shortages. At this critical moment of increased reform impetus, on the one hand, and contradictory disincentives against phase-out on the other, education unions can help tip the scale in favour of reform by working with international organisations to raise awareness about the costs, benefits and reporting requirements of phase-out. With links to local NGOs and educators, education unions are well placed to act as an interlocuter for disseminating emerging international norms surrounding fossil phase-out and global data needs. They can also provide a channel for local stakeholders to provide international organisations with valuable

ground knowledge about the specific costs and benefits of reform and reporting challenges in their own country, which could help steer necessary (international) funding and expertise for supporting national reform pathways.

Namely: Albania; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; European Union; Fiji; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Mali; Moldova, Republic of; Montenegro; Netherlands; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Panama; Paraguay; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Samoa; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Tonga; United Kingdom; Uruguay and Vanuatu.

## Headlines

### 1. Decolonising education unions' development cooperation projects

How to avoid unbalanced relationships between unions engaged in development cooperation (DC) projects? This is the key question DC partners belonging to Education International (EI) member organisations set upon answering during an online meeting held on 20 October. Participants gave examples of projects they were involved in, concrete measures they took to 'decolonise' cooperation work, and positive impact they observed.

The meeting was organised by the Capacity Building and Solidarity unit of EI around the assertion that decolonisation is about “changing structures and changing narratives, innovating in our practice. It invites us to reflect on who we are and raise questions around where we come from in our histories, including our union history and our colonial history.”

#### **South Africa: South-South partnerships can be facilitated by decolonising DC projects**

Paul Komane of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) explained that in their last Congress in 2019, they debated around the theme of decolonisation, “claiming our right to have our human dignity and safety protected and respected in pursuit of a decolonised quality public education.”

He also stressed that SADTU believes that “as a continent, we need to initiate and fund partnerships between our unions, and the decolonisation approach provides an opportunity for critical engagement.” This change in perspective is a new framework that SADTU has adopted in its solidarity and DC work with the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the Lesotho Association of Teachers (LAT), [the Zambia National Union of Teachers \(ZNUT\)](#) and the Organizaçao Nacional dos Professores (ONP)/Mozambique. Komane reminded of the principles on which SADTU's cooperation work is based, namely equality, mutual respect, appreciation, commitment, ownership and accountability. “We say that the higher accountability is, the higher the commitment of recipient organisations to the goals of a DC project is.”

#### **Norway: A new understanding of power and responsibility**

Reminding DC Café participants that Norway was both a coloniser and a colonised country before becoming independent in 1905, Ole Otterstad of the Union of Education Norway (UEN) underlined that this knowledge “is interesting for our historical understanding of ourselves and others.”

He added that his union when engaging in DC projects considers: “the power balance when we engage in cooperation with other organisations. We always engage when our partners express the wish, so it is not parachuting down ideas. It needs to be a shared will.”

Highlighting that “our DC work and projects are long-term projects, to be able to build trust and mutual respect,” he said: “We focus on sustainability and organisational development. We put the emphasis on the partners' own contributions, so that it is not a one-way cooperation. It is not UEN making all the decisions, it is a group of people discussing ideas, instead of one side having ideas and moving forward into implementation.”

#### **Canada: Cooperation projects are solidarity projects**

Presenting on the Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ) work Luc Allaire explained that “we can define international cooperation as ‘collaborative initiatives between two or more entities’,” noting that “practices have evolved significantly over recent decades, and current reflections on the decolonisation of the DC sector, in particular anti-racism, will bring further transformations in years to come.”

Although international solidarity is a form of international cooperation, it also represents a form of mutual aid based more on the establishment of egalitarian relationships between partners and rooted in the principles of equity, self-determination, reciprocity and social justice, he stressed.

He then gave the example of CSQ DC work in Colombia, where the objectives of the project ‘Schools as territory of peace’ done with the Federación Colombiana de Educadores (FECODE) were to support teachers by consolidating 33 educational circles, one per municipality selected.

“After about 60 years of war, they are trying to build peace in the country. During a mission in October in the north of Colombia where one of the indigenous nations lives, I visited a school where each classroom elects a mediator among the students. This mediator, called a *putchipu*, is an expert in conflict resolution. This is for me a good example of what decolonising cooperation projects can be,” Allaire reported. “They mixed the Wayuu cultural heritage with the objectives of the project Schools as territory of peace, because the work of the mediator is to find ways to resolve conflicts without violence.”

### **Research on the deconstruction of power dynamics**

Researcher Gabriela Bonilla, who is leading research on decolonising education and the deconstruction of power dynamics commissioned by EI, also informed that this study represents a follow-up to the [resolution on decolonising education](#) adopted at the 8th EI World Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2019.

“We are reviewing literature, have a participatory approach and are sampling some cases from EI member organisations to produce a document on how a colonial influence can be found in the very design of public policy”, she underlined. “We are trying to figure out how much of the power dynamics in the classroom reproduce the idea of colonial hierarchy,” she added. Surveyed education unions are all focusing on pedagogical transformation because pedagogy is what is keeping racism a central problem in education, Bonilla further reported.

### **EI African region: Taking the lead on decolonising**

EI Africa Regional Office Director Dennis Sinyolo also informed that the 10th EI Africa Regional Conference, to be held 19-24 November in Johannesburg, South Africa, will tackle the topic of decolonisation, “so it will be another opportunity to carry on this conversation.”

He concluded: “We are supporting and strongly encouraging South-South cooperation, like the one the SADTU representative presented, and we therefore want more member organisations to be able to support other member organisations in the global South. I believe in the long run all of us would benefit from it.”

## **2. Copyright limitations and exceptions for the use of digital materials in teaching and learning environments**

The policy brief examines a broad range of empirical data and reveals the urgent need to intervene on current copyright laws to respond to teachers' needs regarding access to and use of digital materials in the physical and online environments. It includes key recommendations that aim to enhance current international and national legal frameworks.

### 3. We stand with France Castro. Education International firmly condemns the death threats against the Filipino congresswoman

France Castro has received repeated death threats from Rodrigo Duterte, former President of the Philippines. The lawmaker has filed a formal complaint against Duterte, making this the first criminal case against Duterte after the end of his mandate.

"We stand in solidarity with France Castro, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, and all human rights activists in the Philippines. France is bravely taking a stand against Duterte and his violent repression tactics. Duterte must be held accountable and activists like France must be protected."

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary

France Castro is the former Secretary General of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Education International member organisation in the Philippines, and a member of the Philippine House of Representatives for the 19th Congress.

In her role as Congresswoman, Castro has opposed the request of Vice President and Education Minister Sara Duterte, daughter of Rodrigo Duterte, for confidential funds in the education budget. Castro's position on the education budget has triggered vicious attacks from Rodrigo Duterte who falsely accused Castro of being a communist and threatened her life on national television.

At the end of October, Castro filed a legal complaint against Rodrigo Duterte over the death threats. After the court issued a subpoena ordering Duterte to appear before the Office of the City Prosecutor in December, the former President threatened Castro's life again.

"Duterte's grave threats, and the fact of their continued spread even until today, present dangers to my life, liberty, and security," Castro stressed in the complaint. "With that knowledge, I now live in constant fear that I will be a victim of such extrajudicial killing, forced disappearance, illegal arrest or detention that he repeatedly admitted having perpetrated in the past."

The global education community stands with France Castro and all human rights defenders in the Philippines and calls on the justice system to hold Rodrigo Duterte accountable for his actions.

### 4. Education International's Executive Board meet and address the progress and challenges of educators worldwide

"This has been one of the more pivotal periods in our history. Influenced and essentially guided by Education International (EI), the United Nations (UN) is in the process of urging its member states to act decisively to address the global education crisis. And to do this specifically by elevating and transforming the role and status of the teaching profession." With these words, EI General Secretary David Edwards started his progress report during the 64th EI Executive Board meeting held from

November 13th-16th in Brussels, Belgium.

### **EI General Secretary's progress report**

Stressing work done by [UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#), where EI and teacher unions are represented, he explained that this body agreed that governments worldwide must act decisively to address the global education crisis by elevating and transforming the role, status, and future of the teaching profession.

The Panel is now finalising a set of recommendations which are forecasted to be launched early next year.

### **Go Public! Fund Education campaign**

He went on to highlight that the EI ["Go Public! Fund Education"](#) campaign is reaching all regions of the world, focusing on raising awareness and engagement on the importance of investing in the profession and fully funding public education by engaging members, research, communications, and capacity building.

About the [2023 International Barometer on the well-being of Education Staff \(I-BEST\)](#) launched in October, by EI and its partners – the Education and Solidarity Network and UNESCO, he explained that this report draws from the experience of over 26,000 teachers, school principals and education support personnel across multiple territories. Despite the challenges and deteriorating working conditions, most of the respondents to the survey would choose teaching again as a career. The survey pointed out that education professionals feel undervalued and report overwhelming workload, challenging work environments, a lack of recognition and limited career advancement opportunities.

On human and trade union rights, Edwards underlined that [EI and its affiliates denounced the terrorist attack launched by Hamas against Israeli civilians, and, in the face of escalating violence in the Gaza Strip also called upon the Israel War Cabinet to end the suffering](#) and respect the principles of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law.

EI and affiliates further brought support to and stood in solidarity with colleagues and populations in [France, Iran, Iraq and Syria, Eswatini, Nepal and Sri Lanka](#), among other countries.

This year, [World Teachers' Day \(WTD\), October 5th](#), focused on the ramping and concerning global teacher shortage, Edwards also noted. Joining the WTD celebrations in Delhi, [E I President Susan Hopgood addressed Indian education unionists as they successfully concluded their month-long 'Bharat Yatra' campaign](#), demanding the re-instatement of pension benefits for all teachers and government employees.

The EI General Secretary added that EI went on working on development cooperation projects – via DC Cafés focusing on diverse themes –, [climate change education, formative assessment practices, LGBT rights, research](#). EI also opened a [new Asia-Pacific regional office](#) in Bangkok, Thailand.

Edwards concluded with "another really exciting development": The proposal of the Lusophone group of EI member organisations to request from UNESCO that the transactional model of education, the relationships between teachers and students be considered World Heritage.

### **Progress report for the EI Africa region**

It also received a presentation about work undertaken by the EI African region (EIRAF) from EI regional Director Dennis Sinyolo, who underlined that the region faces serious challenges: coups d'état – 7 coups in 3 years –, many teachers lost to COVID-19, climate change, conflicts and ramping violence.

Sinyolo also reminded that UNESCO data shows that Sub-Saharan Africa is furthest away from achieving SDG 4 and that, according to UNICEF, ¼ of all children in the region are in conflict-affected countries.

The education financing and teacher shortage crises – due in no small part to inadequate public investment in education, widespread privatisation and commercialisation of education and the irregular payment of teacher salaries – threaten the achievement of the sustainable development goal 4, regional and national education goals, he insisted.

Despite these challenges, he added, EIRAF continues to intensify advocacy for quality public education for all, to respond to violations of human and trade union rights and to build the capacity of member organisations – fostering South-South cooperation, e.g. [the South African Democratic Teachers' Union supporting the Zambia National Union of Teachers](#) in its efforts to recover from the damaging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector.

Sinyolo went on stressing that the [EI Go Public! Fund Education campaign](#) has now been launched in 14 countries in the region and that the Regional Conference, to be held from 19th-24th November in Johannesburg, South Africa, will move the campaign forward.

EIRAF will intensify advocacy with the African Union, regional economic communities, and governments, he also said.

The EIRAF Director finally reported that the region launched a regional research network in 2022 and a regional communicators' network in 2023.

### **Need for unity of the trade union movement**

The newly elected International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary Luc Triangle addressed the executive board, celebrating a win for workers and the trade union movement. On 10 November, [the International Labour Organization's Governing Body voted in favour of seeking a resolution from the International Court of Justice](#) over a long-standing dispute between workers' and employers' representatives related to the right to strike.

For nearly 10 years, Triangle said, “the work of the ILO has been paralysed,” as there has been an impasse on the issue at the ILO between the worker representatives, who support the ILO jurisprudence – meaning that the right to strike derives under international law from ILO Conventions 87 (Freedom of Association) and 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining) –, and the representatives of employers.

The ITUC leader went on calling for the unity of the trade union movement at global level, “because the international context is extremely difficult,” none the least with the eventual enlargement of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) economic bloc to six more countries (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and Argentina).

Acknowledging that democracy is under threat worldwide, he was adamant that the global trade union movement must fight for it, “because it is connected to our values, such as inclusion, public services or gender equality. The decline of democracy is linked to the decline of workers’ rights, trade union rights, LGBT rights and women’s rights.” Reaffirming that “we are the largest social movement defending democracy,” he informed that fighting for democracy will be the main campaign theme for ITUC for 2024.

On the economic system, characterised by growing inequalities and poverty, Triangle noted that a world based on richness, rights for all and inclusion is possible, only a matter of political choice. How to finance that? he asked. “Fair taxation is key. Trillions of dollars are available but not taxed.”

The EI Executive Board also paid [tribute to All-India Primary Teachers’ Federation \(AIPTF\) President Ram Pal Singh Ji](#) who recently passed away after “dedicating his life to upholding the rights of teachers and fighting for quality education for all.”

Before meeting again in March 2024, they further thanked outgoing member Steffen Handal of Union of Education Norway for leaving an “indelible mark” to global education unionism and always “staying true as a principled teacher union activist”, during the two mandates he served on the EI Executive Board.

## 5. Morocco: Education unions rally to support earthquake victims

Two affiliates of Education International (EI) in Morocco, the SNE-FDT and SNE-CDT, have rallied to the aid of people in remote areas of the High Atlas Mountains that were hit by a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on 8 September 2023. Local trade union representatives organised the distribution of school supplies, games, and books in several of the villages affected.

Parcels with exercise books, stationery, and school books were taken to villages such as Talat N’Yaaqoub, in Al Haouz province. Fifty-five kilometres south-west of Marrakech, this village of 8,000 inhabitants was completely destroyed by the earthquake and access to it is still difficult. During phase two of the assistance provided by the SNE-CDT and SNE-FDT, additional school supplies will be distributed in a targeted manner, in line with the recommendations of the local trade union branch. Psychological support will also be provided to teaching staff and their pupils. The disaster claimed the lives of 12 teachers. Many others lost relatives, their homes, and belongings.

The media was particularly moved by the tragic story of Nesreen Abu EIFadel, [a teacher from the village of Adaseel, whose 32 pupils all lost their lives in the disaster](#). She described her students as respectful children who were eager to learn. Despite the difficulties posed by poverty and the rising cost of living, the children and their families saw school as “the most important thing in the world”.

The earthquake left around 3,000 people dead and damaged 530 schools and 55 boarding schools, according to the authorities. In around forty municipalities in the hardest-hit provinces of Al-Haouz, Chichaoua, and Taroudant, children are now being schooled in temporary tents. Although the conditions are challenging, going back to school provides the students and their teachers with a semblance of normality.

Living conditions for those affected by the earthquake remain extremely difficult. Many are still without proper shelter, despite the bitterly cold weather. For all the efforts made by the Moroccan government, over 300,000 people are still waiting to be rehoused.

## **International solidarity**

EI reacted swiftly to the tragedy, demonstrating the global teaching community's solidarity and support for our sister organisations in Morocco. EI made an emergency aid donation and launched an appeal for solidarity, inviting its affiliates around the world to contribute to the solidarity fund to help Moroccan unions respond to the urgent needs of the teachers affected by the earthquake. Additional resources will be transferred to step up support.

EI and its affiliated organisations in Morocco are deeply grateful to education unions around the world for the solidarity they have shown and the contributions received.

## **6. Early childhood educators: New data on the challenges they face raises the alarm about an education sector at risk**

[Research by Education International](#) reveals that early childhood education (ECE) personnel have been among the education workers whose employment conditions were most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary findings of an ongoing research also identify this chronically underfunded sector as one of the most threatened by the global teacher shortage.

Recently, the findings of the [International Barometer of the Health and Wellbeing of Education Personnel \(I-BEST\)](#) highlighted the worrying state of the psychological health, working conditions, and professional recognition of education workers. Over a sixth of the 26,281 survey participants in France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Quebec, and Cameroon work in the ECE sector. The vast majority of the 4,254 ECE teachers and education support personnel (ESP) from the nine countries and territories who participated in the survey are women. This proportion is significantly larger than that of participants working in the primary education sector and bears considerable implications when interpreting the findings, as the low status, low salaries, and poor working conditions in the sector have been linked to the high level of feminization and gender inequality in the ECE workforce (UNICEF, 2022).

The [findings of the I-BEST provide valuable information about the perceptions of ECE workers](#) on their working conditions and environment, job satisfaction, health and wellbeing and sense of security at work.

### **Working conditions and environment**

While the majority of ECE personnel describe the school climate as good and rate the quality of their relationships with their pupils, parents, colleagues, and school leadership highly, they are less satisfied with their working conditions and the physical environment of their schools.

Across territories, over a third of ECE teachers and support personnel are dissatisfied with the material conditions in their schools and more than a fifth are not satisfied with the facilities in their schools. In Cameroon, Belgium, Spain, and Quebec, ECE staff are also concerned with the sanitation and amenities, including drinking water and electricity in their schools, as well as the air quality and sound levels outside of the buildings.

Over a third of ECE personnel from all nine participating countries and territories evaluate their salaries poorly and state that they are not informed about important decisions in advance. In fact, over half of the participants from the United Kingdom and Canada warn that important decisions are

not made as a team in their schools.

Overwhelmingly, workers in early childhood education feel that their profession is not valued by society. In most surveyed countries and territories, they felt that the advantages of their job did not outweigh the disadvantages. A significant number, varying from about a quarter to over half of the respondents across jurisdictions, also expressed that they would not choose their profession again and are not satisfied with their jobs.

With the exception of ECE personnel in Argentina, participants also noted a severe lack of opportunities for promotion. ECE staff from France, Canada and Belgium also highlighted a lack of training opportunities, which stands in contrast to the high levels of professional autonomy reported by ECE personnel across countries and territories.

### **Health and wellbeing**

In most countries and territories, ECE workers are unable to attain a good work-life balance, have worked while sick, and feel that their job has been stressful since the beginning of the school year.

While the majority of ECE workers across the surveyed territories rated their health highly, more than one in three tend to experience feelings of imbalance and more than one in four experience negative feelings often. Around half of the participants also reported limitations in their daily activities because of health problems and most often, this was due to significant fatigue.

In most territories, the majority of participants feel that the leadership in their workplaces is not concerned with the health and wellbeing of staff. In line with the fact that most participants have never had an occupational medical appointment, ECE workers in France, Belgium and Cameroon feel ill-informed about health issues and many across all territories feel that they are not well informed about occupational health.

### **Violence and security at work**

A particularly concerning issue is that of violence. While in most territories, ECE personnel feel safe at their workplace, at least one in four in Canada, Quebec, France, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Spain have been the victim of workplace violence in the last year and even more have witnessed violence in their workplace. Most often, the perpetrators of violence are pupils, other members of staff, or parents. The only exception is Cameroon, where, concerning, persons from outside the school are most often the perpetrators of violence against ECE teachers and personnel.

As a whole, the findings of the 2023 I-BEST survey paint a picture of an undervalued, stressful, and often insecure profession in the ECE sector. The surveyed ECE teachers and personnel relayed that when needed, they are supported by their colleagues. Some also get support from their superiors and unions or associations. In order to provide much needed support to ECE personnel, education unions can turn to the [ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood personnel](#). However, the non-binding and relatively unknown status of the Guidelines hinders their effectiveness in safeguarding the rights of ECE workers.

Considering the severe teacher shortage in the early childhood education sector, as well as the dire state of salaries, sense of low value and recognition, scarce career progression opportunities, job dissatisfaction, inadequate work-life balance, and the overall precarious wellbeing of ECE personnel, it is both timely and imperative to evaluate the impact and ability of existing international instruments to foster a well-supported, fairly remunerated, and valued ECE workforce and consider developing

new pathways towards this goal.

# December

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## Highlights

### 1. Promoting the rights of migrants and refugees

Our work promoting the rights of migrants and refugees continued in 2023. Significant moments include the Education Cannot Wait High-Level Financing Conference (February 2023), World Refugee Day (June 2023), and the Global Refugee Forum (December 2023).

#### Related Items

#### **Overwhelmed, undervalued, and underpaid: Governments must act to support teachers in contexts of displacement**

Working as a teacher in an emergency situation is challenging but it can also be very rewarding. The opportunity to be a positive influence on my students, watching a student learn, grow and become a good person, knowing that I can be part of this process gives me a wonderful feeling and fills me with motivation to continue my work. But there are also many challenges that require a lot of resilience to overcome.

I am a refugee teacher working in the Palabek Refugee Settlement in the Lamwo district of Uganda. Originally from South Sudan, I came to Uganda as a refugee in 1994 and trained as a teacher in primary education.

As is the case for many other teachers in emergency situations, the salary I receive does not match my workload and is not enough to cover basic costs. The monthly salary of USD 120 cannot cover the needs of a family and worse still, it's often not paid on time.

Underfunding education is also evident in our classrooms. Many of our schools have an untenable pupil-teacher ratio, as high as one teacher for 200 pupils, and teaching materials are hard to come by. In these circumstances, catering to each student, achieving learning targets, and ensuring quality education for all is impossible, no matter how hard we try every day.

As the only refugee teacher in my school, my workload is often overwhelming. I am expected to handle every issue - bad behaviour, language gap, cultural differences – and offer guidance and counselling. I am the first contact for many of our students and, as much as I enjoy doing this work, it leaves very little time for teaching and it leaves me feeling exhausted and overwhelmed.

“Despite the terrible conditions, we continue to support our students because we know our work is critical for millions of the most vulnerable children around the world. But we cannot do it alone.”

I also often feel unsafe in the school environment. Tribal tensions run high and affect our school community. Parents who are not from the same tribe as I am accuse me of discriminating against their children. For example, one of our students caused some damage to school property and

during the disciplinary hearing, I recommended that the child pay for repairs. The child's parent then attacked me and accused me of discrimination because we were from different tribes. The refugee community expects me to defend refugee students, even when they are in the wrong.

Addressing tribal conflicts as part of my teaching is also dangerous. Once when I was discussing the causes of tribal conflicts with my class, students gave examples of tribal conflicts in Uganda and I mentioned similar conflicts in South Sudan. I mentioned a tribe who kidnapped children in South Sudan and despite this being a well-known fact, students who were part of this tribe confronted me after the lesson demanding that I not speak about their tribe because I'm not a member.

The situation is further complicated by poor school facilities with too few classrooms, a lack of shade, and insufficient sanitary facilities. Because our classrooms are so packed, teachers can't move around the classroom and attend to all students. These conditions expose the school community to risk factors such as disease, infection, sexual abuse and harassment.

In addition to all these challenges that make life as a refugee teacher hard enough, refugee teachers also feel unappreciated in the education system and worry about job security. Everyone assumes that refugee teachers with South Sudan certificates are underprepared. Refugee teachers also cannot access opportunities that Ugandan colleagues have, including further studies. If they cannot further their education, they risk losing their jobs.

Despite the terrible conditions, we continue to support our students because we know our work is critical for millions of the most vulnerable children around the world. But we cannot do it alone. Governments must step up and invest in education and in teachers through domestic and development funding so that we can continue to give our students the hope and the tools they need to achieve a better future for themselves and their communities.

### **World Refugee Day: The imperative to save lives and give hope**

*The recent shipwreck in the Mediterranean that claimed hundreds of lives highlights once again the plight of those fleeing conflict, poverty, and persecution. Education International and education unions around the world call on all governments to respect the rights of all refugees without discrimination of any kind. Lives must be protected, and hope must be restored.*

"We cannot stand by and allow the Mediterranean or any border region in the world to become a place of hopelessness and death. It is our moral and legal duty to welcome all those fleeing hardship and violence and restore their hope for a better future. This World Refugee Day and every day, we call on governments everywhere to respect the rights of all refugees and ensure their protection and inclusion in host communities."

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

On June 14th an overcrowded boat carrying as many as 750 refugees and sailing from Libya to Italy sank about 80 km off the Greek town of Pylos. Only 104 people survived. More than 500 people are believed missing, including many children. Relatives from Pakistan, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt are desperately searching for their loved ones.

This is the second deadliest refugee and migrant shipwreck, after a similar capsizing killed up to 1,100 people in 2015, on the same route from Libya to Italy.

Perilous journeys across the Mediterranean have become tragically common, endangering the lives of thousands of vulnerable people desperate to get to safety. Smuggling networks are taking advantage of people's desperation and lack of opportunities to apply for asylum in the European Union.

Education International calls on the European Union and its member states, as well as all governments in the world to respect the rights of all those fleeing violence, persecution and hardship and provide safe and accessible paths to refugee status.

Education International denounces any type of discrimination against refugees. All people fleeing their homelands must be treated with dignity regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, or any other background.

Furthermore, Education International calls on governments to ensure the inclusion of refugees into host communities, with a particular focus on access to quality education for refugee children and young people.

### Supporting the teachers who bring hope through education

The [Global Refugee Forum](#), which will take place in Geneva in December 2023, is an opportunity to accelerate progress in advancing the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees and deliver on the promise of inclusion for millions of refugees worldwide. Those in situations of forced displacement cannot afford any more delays.

Education International is working with partners around the world to advocate for the rights of refugees. EI is committed to mobilising support for teachers teaching refugee students as well as displaced teachers, who build inclusion through education and bring hope to their communities.

The lack of recognition and inadequate support systems for teachers in situations of forced displacement has negative implications for teachers' job satisfaction, engagement and well-being, which has a negative effect for refugee children's schooling, achievement, well-being, and future prospects.

It is thus critical to address the challenges facing teachers in refugee hosting areas and enable them to deliver quality education to their students.

Education International advocates for:

- Fair recognition of refugee teachers' qualifications in countries of exile, so that refugee teachers can be included in national education systems and access full professional status, including access to continuous professional development initiatives. Legal and policy barriers that restrict refugee teachers' right to work and employment must be removed.
- The improvement of the professional status of all teachers by ensuring adequate compensation, working conditions, terms of employment and access to quality and continuous professional development. Through social dialogue with national education unions, national strategies should be designed towards this aim, which include refugee teachers/teachers in refugee settings.

- The provision of predictable, reliable, and sustainable multi-year financing. This financing must include refugee teacher salaries and associated incentives to improve refugee teacher recruitment, integration within national education systems, and retainment. Adequate financing must ensure that refugee teachers enjoy employment terms and conditions for fair and decent work.

### **Aloyo Stella's Classroom: a reflection on the education we want**

“Despite the terrible conditions, we continue to support our students because we know our work is critical for millions of the most vulnerable children around the world. But we cannot do it alone.”

[Aloyo Stella Oryang](#), refugee teacher.

At the heart of Uganda's Palabek Refugee Settlement, [Aloyo Stella's classroom](#) stands as a vivid reminder of how educators persevere despite systemic negligence and disregard. Born in South Sudan, Aloyo Stella lived through a decade of conflict before seeking refuge in Uganda at the age of 13. Now a committed refugee teacher, Stella embodies the tenacity of educators everywhere. As we mark World Teachers' Day, and reflect on her daily challenges, her story underscores the broader racial, economic, and structural inequities that educators face across the globe.

### **Overworked, underpaid, and undervalued**

Teachers around the world are overworked, underpaid, and undervalued. They are exiting the profession, not out of lost passion, but due to an environment that barely sustains them. Deteriorating working conditions, stagnant wages, overwhelming workloads, and stifling bureaucracy are pushing teachers out of the profession they love and that the world needs. With fewer young people seeing teaching as a viable career, and [a shortage of 69 million teachers](#) reported by UNESCO to reach universal basic education by 2030, the crisis is clear and present.

The [2023 International Barometer of Education Staff](#) (I-BEST) further describes the crisis contributing to the alarming teacher shortage, rising resignations, and a decline in those aspiring to teach. Based on a survey of over 26,000 educators including teachers, school principals, and support staff from 11 countries across four continents, the findings of the Barometer reveal an alarming rise of workplace violence, coupled with insufficient psychological and health support for educators, and significant issues related to work-life balance.

To reverse this trend, decisive political action is needed. It is imperative to fund public education, invest in teachers, guarantee their labor rights, and ensure they have good working conditions. Investing in education is not only about funding; it is about respecting the profession, valuing pedagogical expertise, and involving teachers in decision-making processes.

Yet, amidst these challenges, the Barometer, a collaborative effort with the Education and Solidarity Network, partnering with Education International and others, reveals an unwavering dedication: the majority of educators would willingly embrace their profession again.

Last year, the United Nations Secretary General spotlighted the teacher shortage, highlighting its potential negative implications for our future. The leading role of Education International in the

work of the [United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#) ensured that the voices of teachers like Aloyo Stella were heard loud and clear. The Panel unanimously urged governments worldwide to develop economic and social policies to transform the role, status, and future of the teaching profession.

Education International, representing 380 organisations with 32 million educators in 180 countries, stands as the collective international voice of teachers. We are a movement. We're not merely highlighting the problem; we're steering the narrative towards solutions. Our global campaign, [Go Public! Fund Education](#), emphasises the urgent need for governments to fully fund public education systems and invest in the teaching profession.

### A Call to Action: 'Do your part'

Aloyo Stella's voice echoed powerfully when she spoke at the [Education Cannot Wait High Level Forum](#). "I wish you could stand in my shoes for an hour. You would understand where I am coming from," she implored.

Her journey, though deeply personal, is emblematic of a broader struggle. Despite facing tribal tensions, inadequate infrastructure, and an unresponsive system, she perseveres. Her commitment, mirrored by countless educators worldwide, underscores the transformative power of teaching.

But her individual resilience should not blind us to systemic failures. On the occasion of World Teachers' Day, let's commit to structural change, ensuring that every Aloyo Stella, in every corner of the world, receives the resources, respect, and recognition she deserves.

For those shaping education policies: the future rests with our teachers. Stand with us. Advocate for increased public funding in public education. Ensure teachers are central figures in dialogues and decisions. Echoing Aloyo Stella's poignant close: "-I am doing my part. **Do your part.**"

### Addressing the overlooked plight of refugee teachers

As we mark [World Teachers Day 2023](#), it is essential that we peel back the curtain on an issue that remains largely ignored: the plight of refugee teachers. Since 1994, we've come together every year to celebrate the remarkable contributions of teachers worldwide. But how often do we pause to consider the unique challenges faced by those teachers who have been forcibly displaced from their homes? This year's theme, "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage," presents a critical moment to shine a light on these unsung heroes.

"You can teach without a classroom, but you can't teach without a teacher. Those are the areas we mostly forget. We focus on our students...in a class, but we forget the teachers most of the time."

– Participant from Malawi, *Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Policies, Practices & Pathways for Improving Teacher Quality & Workforce Sustainability* (UNHCR, forthcoming)

Persistent challenges beyond "classroom walls" for refugee teachers

Imagine, for a moment, that you suddenly have no choice but to leave behind your homeland and everything you know. Now, picture arriving in a new country, only to discover that the teaching credentials you worked so hard for are no longer recognized. You are rendered invisible in your professional capacity. Even if you are fortunate enough to secure a teaching position, it comes with severely diminished professional status, minimal support to pursue qualifications and enter the national system, and reduced pay as the struggle to secure predictable multi-year funding for teachers or refugees continues to be one of the greatest challenges facing host country education systems. In many situations, refugee teachers are simply not accounted for at all in national planning around increasing the teacher workforce, budgeting or reforms in remuneration, retention or professional development.

UNHCR's forthcoming *Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Policies, Practices & Pathways for Improving Teacher Quality & Workforce Sustainability* study reveals that teachers in forced displacement settings frequently navigate complex classroom environments with limited qualifications, support or remuneration [1]. In particular, for those teachers who are also refugees, opportunities are additionally limited because their work as teachers is infrequently protected by the labour standards of host countries. This lack of recognition and institutionalised support for teachers in refugee-hosting areas has negative implications for refugee and host community children's schooling, achievement, and well-being.

For teachers living and working in refugee camps around the world, these challenges are not hypothetical—it's their daily reality.

We often laud the resilience of refugees for their courage and determination. But what about those who, despite being thrown into such challenging circumstances, rise to educate the next generation? They aren't just educators; they're beacons of hope, pillars of stability and symbols of normalcy for children traumatized by war and displacement. Their stories, from places like Chad and Uganda, tell of systemic challenges—whether it's inadequate pay leading to teacher attrition, insufficient teaching resources or limited training opportunities. And let's not forget female refugee teachers grappling with unique, added hurdles but who are crucial to increasing the likelihood of access to education for girls as well as providing immense academic and protective benefits.

### The crucial role of teacher unions

Against this backdrop, the study accentuates how teachers' unions can be instrumental in bolstering refugee teachers' recognition and support. Survey results revealed the commendable efforts of teachers' unions across countries like Cameroon, Chad, Malawi, Pakistan, Uganda, and Syria in safeguarding teachers' rights, ensuring timely remuneration, and prioritizing teacher welfare. The European context offers us tangible examples of the impact of union interventions. During the tumultuous times of the Syrian crisis and more recently in the Ukrainian crisis, unions actively rallied behind Syrian and Ukrainian teachers, providing information on access to training, social services, and teaching opportunities.

Still, more needs to be done. The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) emphasizes the importance of burden and responsibility sharing, urging support for refugee-hosting countries in ensuring refugees' inclusion in national education systems. Herein lies an opportunity for teachers' unions to advocate for refugee teachers' integration into national systems, supporting their improved conditions of service and opportunities for professional growth. By doing so, not only do they

strengthen the teaching fraternity but also enhance the educational experiences of refugee students, providing them with relatable role models who mirror their experiences.

The [2023 Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) presents a golden opportunity. We need international collaboration, a pooling of resources, and an exchange of expertise. The GRF's Teacher Task Team led by Educational International (EI) provides a [blueprint](#) for proactive measures — from establishing financial mechanisms that ensure continuous funding for teacher salaries, to promoting dialogue that involves educators in decision-making processes. And here, teachers' unions can actively engage with refugee teachers, listen to their experiences and challenges, and advocate for their rights and inclusion at all policy levels and ensure that that refugee teachers are not just seen but also heard, valued, and empowered.

As we recognize and applaud the monumental contributions of teachers globally, it is time to ensure that refugee teachers, supported by the robust framework of unions, are at the forefront, championing quality education for all.

UNHCR commissioned this study to explore and better understand the different profiles of teachers working in refugee and displacement settings – across the dimensions of teacher management, professional development, and well-being – to enable UNHCR, partners and state actors to provide teachers in these contexts with more targeted and impactful support, resources and capacity development.

## **Education International puts teachers in the spotlight at the Global Refugee Forum**

The Global Refugee Forum is taking place in Geneva from 13 to 15 December. Education International (EI) is spearheading global efforts to support the rights of teachers in contexts of forced displacement and crises.

Teachers are the cornerstone of quality inclusive education - the right to education means the right to a qualified and well supported teacher. Teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring the right to education—a right that persists across borders, for refugee children and youth. Despite their essential work and difficult circumstances, teachers working in contexts affected by displacement and crisis are all but invisible in global refugee and education policies, strategies, and frameworks.?

In order to correct this critical gap, Education International has been working to highlight the plight of teachers in refugee and crisis settings at the Global Refugee Forum. In the lead up to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) 2023, thematic task teams have been established within the GRF Education Alliance which brings together a range of stakeholders working together to operationalise the education-related provisions of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#). Education International leads the GRF Education Alliance Task Team on Teachers.

## **Rallying support for teachers and teaching in situations of forced displacement**

The GRF Task Team on Teachers developed a [guidance for States and other pledging entities to effectively address the needs of teachers working in contexts of displacement and crisis](#). The guidance includes 10 key actions that stakeholders should consider to include in their pledges at the Global Refugee Forum.

The guidance is the basis of the [multistakeholder pledge “Supporting Teachers and Teaching in Forced Displacement Situations”](#) that the GRF Task Team on Teachers collectively developed and submitted at the Global Refugee Forum, with the aim to mobilise concrete support for teachers and teaching over the next period.

Education International also submitted an individual pledge committing to rally support for an international financing mechanism to provide ‘bridge funding’ for teacher salaries when crises occur, to support education union engagement in policy and social dialogue around the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, and to support peer-learning among member organisations in countries facing a large influx of refugees.

### From pledges to action

On December 12, at the Global Refugee Forum - Education Campus, the GRF Task Team on Teachers convened a conversation about the urgent need to prioritise teachers in education responses in refugee and crisis settings. Moderated by EI’s Sonia Grigt, the event featured contributions from Chris Henderson (Geneva Graduate Institute and NORRAG), Fatou Niang (UNESCO, International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030), Marianna Knirsch (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), Heather Saunders (Global Partnership for Education), Itaf Alawawdeh (Save the Children Jordan), and Anfal Saqib (Education Cannot Wait).

The event kicked off with the testimony of Stella Oryang Aloyo, a South-Sudanese refugee teacher working in the Palabek Refugee Settlement in the Lamwo district of Uganda. Aloyo highlighted the dire reality of teachers in refugee contexts and their commitment to their students and called on the international community to do their part and support teachers, just as teachers are doing their part to support students.

Echoing Aloyo’s testimony, panelists stressed the critical challenges teachers in situations of forced displacement are facing, including difficulty in having their qualifications recognised across borders, low salaries that are delayed for long periods of time, poor working conditions, a very high teacher to pupil ratio, and a lack of continuous professional development opportunities to name just a few. All these factors contribute to the high attrition rate among teachers in contexts of forced displacement and fuel the teacher shortage.

Panelists discussed the actions needed to improve the situation of teachers in emergency contexts, including increased funding for teachers, their inclusion in national education systems in host countries, their participation in social and policy dialogue that can inform government responses, the recognition of their qualifications and experience across borders and more.

While it is encouraging to see the plight of teachers in situations of forced displacement gaining increased attention at the international level, pledges are not enough. Education International will continue to push for effective action to support teachers on the ground doing their utmost to keep hope alive for their students.

## Headlines

### 1. PISA global survey: Investing in teachers and education systems helped mitigate the impact of Covid

Delayed by a year because of Covid, the OECD's PISA is back, with a major focus on the impact of the pandemic on schools. Used as a benchmark by governments to evaluate their education systems, this [latest version of PISA](#), the Program for International Student Assessment, is the most comprehensive yet with 81 countries taking part, the majority nations outside the OECD.

Its findings are stark. It is the OECD countries, (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a group of 38 mostly market-based high income nations) in particular, which have experienced the greatest overall declines in mathematics and reading literacy since PISA started 20 years.

In contrast PISA reports that some of the low- to middle-income countries including the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, and Cambodia have improved their performance over the past four years. Only a few countries, such as Singapore, Japan, Korea, Italy, and Taipei are reported not to have declined in performance.

Education International takes the PISA findings seriously, highlighting findings that support educational justice, while reserving the right to criticise the OECD's interpretation of the data. By far the most prominent global evaluation of education systems, the basis of PISA research is its focus on equity, evaluating education systems' ability to educate all their students successfully.

EI agrees with the OECD's finding that 'the unprecedented drop in mathematics and reading point to the shock effect of Covid in most countries'. What is clear is that Covid impacted severely those countries which did not invest the time and resources necessary to make their systems resilient and in making sure their teachers are well supported with the tools to do the job.

While the OECD points to other long-term reasons behind the decline in some countries, it is obvious to EI that Covid is the central factor. Indeed, both EI and the OECD itself have led the way in stressing that proper long term Covid educational recovery packages are vital if education systems were to recover from Covid; recovery packages that never materialised in many countries according to EI's own research.

PISA's focus on the ten actions necessary to improve education system resilience is welcome. It's shocking to read that only four education systems had shown resilience in the three areas of learning, equity, and well-being and that no country performs well in relation to all aspects of student well-being.

Other insights are important, including how food insecurity affects close to 10 percent of students in OECD countries, the prevalence of anxiety, loneliness, and depression among students during lockdowns, and how students' interest in working in the health sector has decreased in countries experiencing high levels of Covid deaths. Mental health problems persist among many students, post Covid, as well as a cost-of-living crisis which affects students in many countries.

Crucially, PISA reports that School Principals say the main barrier to student achievement is the shortage of qualified teachers; confirming EI's own initial findings from its latest Global Status of

Teachers survey.

Particularly, welcome therefore is the emphasis in their proposed actions on the need for sufficient highly-qualified teachers in schools and the need to establish schools as hubs for social interaction. Also welcome is the OECD's emphasis on the need for additional support for struggling students, student well-being and removing early student selection. Also, teachers will welcome PISA's emphasis on the importance of teachers being in control of students' smartphone use in schools which may include banning them if they are likely to disrupt learning.

However, where EI and OECD part company is on school funding. EI can't agree with the OECD's statement that after USD74 thousand per pupil there is almost no relationship between extra investment and student performance.

Of course, the main message must be that countries which give education the highest political priority and spend funding wisely are more likely to have excellent education systems. But that doesn't mean that additional targeted resources aren't vital. They were in the case of the Covid. Indeed, the OECD's own Education at a Glance 2023 noted that while education spending only grew in line with the trend from previous years prior to Covid, 'other government expenditure grew rapidly to address the consequences of the epidemic.' It's a finding which actually underscores the importance of countries adopting long-term post Covid education recovery packages which address the effects of Covid on students' learning and well-being.

Unfortunately, what is missing from PISA are the voices of teachers. During Covid, teachers were often on their own without external support, yet we will have to wait two years before OECD publishes its Teaching and Learning Survey to find out teachers' views on how they could have been better supported during the pandemic and its effects on their well-being.

In fact, as the OECD itself recognised in a joint paper with EI on post-Covid recovery, teachers worked heroically during Covid, initiating a host of micro innovations that supported students. Indeed, as the OECD said at the launch of PISA, teachers are on the front line. It's something that the OECD needs to consistently emphasise.

## 2. Our global solidarity is imperative to defend human rights

On International Human Rights Day, Education International reaffirms our collective commitment to defending human rights around the world. We must remain firm and united around the principles of peace, justice, equality, democracy, and dignity for all. It is our shared responsibility to stand resolutely against all human rights violations and strive for a world where every person can live free from fear, discrimination, and oppression.

This year, we observe the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10th, 1948 and enshrining human rights into law around the world. As we mark this date, we are concerned by the undermining of democratic values and democracy in many countries and regions. We will not turn a blind eye to the ongoing violations of human rights that impact millions worldwide, from war to social injustice, and systemic discrimination.

Our global solidarity is critical to addressing pressing human rights issues affecting our communities. As the global voice of education workers, Education International reaffirms its

commitment to building fair, safe, equitable, and inclusive societies for all. Realising the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires our continued dedication, mobilisation, and steadfast solidarity.?

Education is key to enabling the rights that strengthen people's ability to reflect, engage in critical thinking, make informed decisions, and reach their full potential. None of the crises the world faces can be overcome without education. This is why our global mobilisation and advocacy for free, quality public education for all as a universal right and a public good is imperative and must continue. ?

Freedom of association and trade union rights are essential rights and the cornerstone of any democracy. We will continue to mobilise and organise to defend the rights of education workers around the world and the rights of all workers everywhere.

### 3. Decent work for early childhood personnel: 10 years since the adoption of the ILO Policy Guidelines and the way forward

On November 30, Education International hosted an online event to assess the progress made in implementing the [International Labour Organization Policy Guidelines on decent work for early childhood education personnel](#) 10 years after their adoption and reflect on new developments in the sector. The discussion was informed by the special edition of the I-BEST survey that explored the health and well-being of early childhood education workers across 9 territories in 2023.

#### **The majority of early childhood educators feel undervalued and underpaid**

The 2023 edition of the [International Barometer of the Health and Well-being of Education Personnel \(I-BEST\)](#) provides fresh insights into the main challenges facing early childhood educators. The I-BEST is a semiannual global study conducted by the Education and Solidarity Network and the MGEN Foundation for Public Health, in collaboration with Education International and the UNESCO Chair Global Health & Education. A total of 4,254 ECE personnel from France, Spain, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, Argentina, Quebec, Canada, and Cameroon responded to this survey. Of those, 80% are teachers, 90% are women, and 90% work in the public sector. All work with children aged 3 to 5.

The results reveal educators' dissatisfaction with their quality of life and work-life balance. Over half of respondents reported high levels of stress. The lack of opportunities for promotion, low salaries, and the perceived low status of the profession in society also emerged as serious challenges for the sector. Alarming, more than a third of participants in most countries have been victims of violence in the past 12 months.

“Early childhood education must no longer be something for the privileged but should be a right for all. To ensure that every child receives quality early childhood education, we need highly qualified and motivated personnel that enjoy decent working conditions.”

Haldis Holst | EI Deputy General Secretary

#### **Maximising the impact of the ILO Policy Guidelines**

In 2013 the International Labour Organization (ILO) brought together government, employer, and worker representatives to agree on a set of policy guidelines to promote decent work for early childhood education (ECE) personnel, with the aim of ensuring universal access to quality ECE.

Since then, several developments have had a significant impact on the working conditions of those who work with the youngest children. ECE personnel have been among the education workers whose employment conditions were most affected by the pandemic, facing dismissals, loss of income or being forced to take annual leave.

In her opening remarks, Haldis Holst, Education International's Deputy General Secretary, noted the progress made in the sector over the last decade and stressed the connection between decent working conditions for educators and the quality and accessibility of early childhood education. "Early childhood education must no longer be something for the privileged but should be a right for all. To ensure that every child receives quality early childhood education, we need highly qualified and motivated personnel that enjoy decent working conditions," Holst highlighted.

Moderated by EI's Director of Policy, Research, and Advocacy, Antonia Wulff, the panel included

- Mathias Urban, Desmond Chair of Early Childhood Education, and Director of the Early Childhood Research Centre at Dublin City University;
- Lasse Bjerg Joergensen, Head of International Relations of BUPL, EI member organisation representing education workers in Denmark;
- Oliver Liang, Head of Public and Private Services unit at the ILO;
- Carlos González-Sancho, Policy Analyst of the Early Childhood Education and Care Division at the OECD;
- Rolla Moummé, Coordinator of the Programme on Right to Education at UNESCO. ??

Panelists discussed the importance of the ILO Policy Guidelines and the progress made over the last decade in the sector, notably the broad international consensus on the importance of early childhood education. The adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education with target 4.2 on early childhood education specifically is a testament to this important change of mindset.

Notable challenges remain, including the fragmentation of the sector, the high teacher to pupil ratio, the shortage of qualified teachers, low salaries compared to other sectors of education, and poor working conditions.

Panelists welcomed the attention given to early childhood education by the United Nations' High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession which is working to put forward a set of recommendations to address the global teacher shortage.

Panelists also warned that the ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel are not widely known and used by relevant stakeholders. While some education unions such as BUPL have championed the Guidelines throughout their work, many unions and stakeholders remain unaware of this important international instrument.

Education International has commissioned a report on the implementation of the ILO Policy Guidelines and is working closely with researchers Mathias Urban and Mercedes Mayol Lassalle and their team on this project. Preliminary findings indicate that more needs to be done to promote the Guidelines among education unions and international organisations. Going forward, it is essential that

relevant data on the sector is collected and a mechanism that monitors and evaluates the implementation of the Guidelines is agreed and deployed.

The report will be launched in 2024. Education International will host an online event to discuss the findings.

## 4. International solidarity in the face of regressive actions by the government of Argentina

The Education International Regional Committee for Latin America (IEAL) has expressed concern regarding the recent decision taken by the Government of the Republic of Argentina, under resolution 943/2023 of the Security Ministry. This measure restricts the right to social protest, freedom of speech, and restricts people's ability to exercise their right to petition government authorities.

The IEAL Regional Committee has denounced Argentina's Security Minister, Patricia Bullrich, for introducing elements that are contrary to the rule of law as they allow intelligence to be gathered on trade union, social, student or political leaders and organisations involved in protests.

The IEAL Regional Committee deplores the fact that the government of President Milei has begun its term with a containment strategy against social and trade union organisations, with the aim of implementing economic restructuring policies, even if this leads to violating union and social rights enshrined in national and international conventions.

In this context, both the Government of President Milei and the Minister, Patricia Bullrich, are being accused of violating the Constitution of the Republic of Argentina, as well as resolutions from the Interamerican Court of Human Rights.

The Education International Latin America Region vehemently rejects this repressive policy and is committed to remaining vigilant against any repressive act carried out by the government, underscoring the importance of defending fundamental freedoms and freedom of speech at this crucial time for Argentinian society.