



Annual Report 2020

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Throughout this challenging year, Education International drove union solidarity across borders and shaped the global agenda on education.

Scroll through the timeline below to find out more about our work in 2020.

January

Headlines

1. The privatisation of education under the spotlight in the Caribbean

On January 11-12 leaders of Education International member organisations in the Caribbean came together in Bridgetown, Barbados to develop a deeper understanding of Education International's Global Response to the privatisation and commercialisation of education and to consider the situation across their region.

During the two-day meeting, leaders from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago shared their experience with commercialisation and privatisation trends in education in their countries.

The privatisation and commercialisation of education in the Caribbean will be mapped in a new research project, which will inform the development of national campaigns by member organisations of Education International. The research project will be a key element in helping to confront the threats posed by commercialisation and privatisation in education in the region.

"No part of the world is immune to the threat posed by commercialisation and privatisation," said Angelo Gavrielatos, Global Response Project Director. "In the interests of our students, members, and quality education for all, the expansion of Education International's Global Response to the commercialisation and privatisation of education across the globe is a priority."

Education International thanks the Canadian Teachers' Federation for the solidarity and support (financial and logistical) which has made this possible.

Over the last four years, Education International's Global Response has driven the fight against the growing privatisation and commercialisation of education with member organisations in every region of the world.

2. Kenya: Union calls for increased security as four teachers are killed in the first weeks of 2020

With several teachers killed in Kenya since the beginning of the year, concerns over teacher security are increasing, pushing unions to demand government protection for education workers.

Disgruntled parents attacking educators

In a statement to the Ministry of Education, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), a member of Education International (EI), highlighted a pattern of attacks on teachers and head teachers perpetrated by parents and communities angry over allegedly poor school results.

The KNUT reported several instances where parents entered schools and attempted to evict head teachers. On 6 January, Daisy Mbathe, a teacher at Ndooni Primary School, was attacked and killed by a group of people that allegedly included students' parents.

Denouncing the “most barbaric attack”, KNUT Secretary General Wilson Sossion stressed that the emerging culture where communities and parents can assault teachers without fear of consequence must be stopped in its tracks.

Teachers targeted by terrorists

On 13 January, three teachers were killed by Al-Shabab terrorists in Kenya’s Garissa County. The three teachers - Caleb Mutangia Mutua, Titus Sasioka Mushindi, and Samuel Mutua – were not local to the area. Al-Shabab has targeted non-local teachers serving in public schools in the past.

Responding to the news, the KNUT condemned the attacks and reminded the government of its promise and duty to protect teachers in areas threatened by terrorists.

A climate of fear

According to the KNUT, attacks on teachers are an increasingly common phenomenon, causing “panic, fear and anxiety among teachers”. The situation has affected the quality of teaching and the academic performance in several schools.

Teachers who feel unsafe should promptly “vacate the insecure areas without any delay to save their lives”, the KNUT outlined. The union requested a meeting with the Ministry of Education and the Teachers’ Service Commission to discuss the situation of teachers under threat. Collective action will follow if the government fails to meet this demand for dialogue.

The demand for increased security was echoed by David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, who stated: “The whole education community mourns the victims of this mindless violence. The Kenyan government must work with educators and their union and ensure teachers and all education workers have the protection they need.”

3. India: Outcry from international education community over violent attacks on university students and staff

Education International has strongly condemned the violent attacks against students and educators at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India and supports students’ demands for affordable quality education and the right to freedom of expression.

New Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has been the epicentre of student activism in the country since November 2019. Students and staff have protested against a hike of approximately 300 per cent in tuition and hostel fees by JNU administration and the government’s decision to revoke Article 370 in Kashmir. They have also called for the repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act which discriminates against Muslims. The university came to a complete standstill as students and staff boycotted classes, examinations, and registrations for the winter semester.

To date, Vice-Chancellor Jagadesh Kumar and the JNU administration have refused to engage with students and staff, worsening the situation and going against [UNESCO’s 1997 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#). The Recommendation clearly stipulates that higher-education teaching personnel should have the right and opportunity to criticize the functioning of higher education institutions, including their own. In addition, the Recommendation states that the principles of collegiality include “the policy of participation of all concerned in internal decision making structures and practices and the development of consultative mechanisms”.

On 5 January, JNU students and staff held a peaceful protest demanding affordable quality education for all and an end to violent incidents on campus. During the protest, a mob of 50 to 60 masked persons were able to get past university security, enter the campus and attack protesting students and staff with stones, iron rods, and bricks. The assault left more than 39 protestors severely injured and university property vandalised.

Education International: solidarity with JNU students and staff

Education International issued a [statement strongly condemning the attack](#) on the peaceful campus protest and expressing solidarity with the demands of students and staff. David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, highlighted that recent attacks targeting universities in India “make it increasingly difficult for students, staff, and their organisations to voice their opinions on government policies, politics and socio-economic issues, including their right to demand access to and provision of affordable quality education for all”.

Education International calls on the government of India to:

- Conduct a thorough independent inquiry into the violence and bring the culprits to justice;
- Immediately remove Jagadesh Kumar from the position of Vice-Chancellor of the University for his continuous failure to maintain a safe academic environment;
- Ensure that universities uphold democratic values and human rights for all;
- Pressure the JNU administration to engage with the JNU students’ union and teachers’ union to find a solution to their demands.

NTEU: Universities have a special role in democracy

The Australian union, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), has also condemned the violence in JNU. “Recent events at Jawaharlal Nehru University raise serious concerns about the integrity of the institution and its commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and the defence of its role as a community of scholars,” wrote NTEU General Secretary Matthew McGowan in a [letter to JNU Vice Chancellor Professor Jagadesh Kumar](#).

Reaffirming that “universities have a special role in a democracy” and “are key democratic institutions that should operate independent of the political debates and contests around them”, McGowan insisted that violence of any sort has no place in a university. When that violence is politically, racially or religiously motivated, and where there is a suggestion that the university administration has condoned or enabled that violence, it brings the legitimacy of an institution into question, he explained.

The NTEU also expressed concern over events unfolding in India more broadly. The Australian union urged the JNU Vice Chancellor and the Government of India to condemn these attacks in the interests of a strong and vibrant democracy, and to take all necessary actions to bring the perpetrators of these attacks to justice.

Police crackdown on campus protests

In December 2019, students held protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act at the Aligarh Muslim University and the Jamila Milia Islamia University. The protests were violently suppressed by the Indian Police Service. The crackdown was condemned by the Commonwealth Students’ Association.

In a [statement released on 31 December 2019](#), the CSA expressed its support for the solidarity march held by students and alumni of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata – the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. This march aimed to shed light on the harsh treatment of Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University students by the Indian Police Service during peaceful protests.

4. International Day of Education: the world needs another 69 million teachers

On the International Day of Education, unions warn that the world is not facing a global learning crisis, but a global education funding crisis. The only way to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and ensure inclusive and equitable education for all is to fund free quality public education.

Today, Education International brings the perspective of educators to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, drawing attention to the key areas for action and the dire need for funding in public education. At the current pace, the world [will fail to achieve Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4 on education by 2030](#).

Massive teacher shortages must be addressed

The global union federation for teachers and education workers is putting the spotlight on the importance of education for both economic and social development, and the key role played particularly by teachers in the education system as a whole. According to official data, 69 million teachers are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the poor working conditions, precarious situation and status of many education workers do not attract new professionals. Worse still, many trained teachers are leaving the profession after just a few years on the job.

Attending the UN event marking the International Day of Education, David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: “Without better investment in education, the right of every child to quality public education cannot be guaranteed. Many countries fall beneath the recommended 20 percent of their budget and 6 percent of GDP as an investment in education. This crisis can be turned around with political will”.

Creative funding solutions are not the answer

Educators are equally warning against the effects of privatisation on education. According to a survey conducted by Education International in 2018, 91% of education unions said that education privatisation was expanding in their country, with detrimental effects on access to and quality of public education, which is often neglected by policy makers. Numerous governments are relinquishing their responsibilities and supporting private actors to enter the profitable education market.

Meanwhile, 263 million children and young people are currently out of school and, at the current rate of progress, their number will only decrease to 231 million by 2030. This means the world will miss SDG4 by 88%. The global trend to privatise education works against ensuring quality education for all, by undermining public education and deepening segregation and inequality.

Underlining that education is a human right and a public good, Edwards noted that, “in a world facing countless challenges, from climate change to attacks on human rights and democracy, quality education and quality educators with professional autonomy and sufficient support are more important than ever. By supporting teachers to teach, we support students to learn and together, through education, we can shape the future.”

5. Holocaust remembrance: Education unions come together for Auschwitz memorial ceremony and Holocaust education conference

Education International member organisations from 17 countries in Europe, North America, Latin America and Africa are in Poland this week for the official ceremony marking 75 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. The ceremony will be followed by a conference on Holocaust education organised by unions from Germany, Israel, and Poland.

One of the most infamous Nazi concentration and extermination camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated on 27 January 1945. Of the at least 1.3 million people who were imprisoned here, 1.1 million Jews, Poles, Romani, Russians and prisoners of other nationalities were murdered by the Nazi regime. Educators from around the world are determined to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

Hosted by Poland's ZNP, the Holocaust education conference is the latest event in a long-standing partnership between education unions in Germany, Israel, and Poland, whose members have been meeting regularly for the past 50 years to explore the best ways to combat antisemitism, racism and xenophobia and promote peaceful coexistence.

During the four-day event, educators will have the opportunity to visit the Auschwitz museum, attend the commemoration ceremony and then come together to exchange best practices and innovative ideas for teaching the Holocaust to new generations. Museum educators, scientists and artists will provide insights into better understanding and commemorating the Holocaust while Matjaž Gruden, Director of Democratic Participation of the Council of Europe, will bring an institutional perspective to the table.

Attending the remembrance ceremony and the conference, David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: "At a time when the far right, antisemitism, racism and discrimination of all kinds are surging across the world, when attacks on basic democratic values and human rights have become commonplace, it is heartening to witness the undaunted spirit of educators in Poland, Israel and Germany working together to bring the lessons of the Holocaust to classrooms in Europe and beyond. Colleagues from four continents have made the long journey to Krakow to share ideas, encourage and inspire each other so that new generations never forget and never repeat the mistakes of the past."

February

Headlines

1. Malawi: International solidarity helps union to lead post-natural disaster relief activities for teachers

With the financial assistance of Education International and its affiliates, the Teachers' Union of Malawi spearheaded diverse relief and support activities for teachers affected by the devastating Cyclone Idai, which struck the country in March 2019.

Destruction

In March 2019, the intense tropical Cyclone Idai caused severe flooding throughout Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe resulting in over 1200 deaths. Idai ranked as the second-deadliest tropical cyclone on record in the Southern Hemisphere, an area that includes the Australian, South Pacific, and South Atlantic basins. More than three million people experienced the direct effects of the cyclone, with hundreds of thousands in need of assistance. Total damages from Idai across Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and Malawi were estimated to be at least US\$2.2 billion (€1.98 billion), with US\$1 billion (€900.000.000) alone in infrastructure damages, making Idai the costliest tropical cyclone in the South-West Indian Ocean basin.

Global solidarity

On 25 March 2019, after contacts with the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association, and the Organizaçao Nacional dos Professores/Mozambique, Education International (EI) appealed to all member organisations to contribute to the Idai Solidarity Fund to assist affected colleagues, their families, students, and school communities in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi.

Funding

Education unions globally responded to the call and the Teachers' Union of Malawi subsequently used part of the Idai Solidarity Fund to set up post-cyclone relief activities to help its members.

Firstly, it organised union solidarity visits to severely affected teachers and schools in four districts, i.e. Chikwawa, Nsanje, Rumphu, and Mzimba. It brought support to 302 severely affected teachers, providing them with psychological-social support and reassuring them.

Representatives from the Teachers' Union of Malawi also lobbied district authorities and companies for further material support for affected teachers.

"It is undeniable that this activity increased union membership in the visited districts, and it improved union visibility and the general public perception of the union, as well as the working relationship between district union leaders and district education authorities in the districts," stressed Pilirani Kamaliza, Programme Coordinator at the Teachers' Union of Malawi.

The union also secured a commitment from district councils to include affected teachers when distributing disaster relief aid.

Study undertaken

In addition, the Teachers' Union of Malawi undertook a study entitled Flood preparedness factors influencing teachers' participation in teaching and learning in public primary schools in Malawi - The case of Chikwawa, Nsanje and Rumphu.

The research aimed to:

- Ensure teachers are prepared to act in cases where floods affect their teaching and learning.
- Determine how the damage to school infrastructures and subsequent poor working environments affect teaching and learning.
- Assess mitigation measures that influence teachers' coping mechanisms.
- Set a basis to produce a documentary "The effect of Cyclone Idai on quality of teaching and learning" in public schools, to be used for future lobbying and advocacy activities.

The findings showed that, given the history of flooding in Malawi, the country needs to ensure that teachers are prepared to respond effectively to the negative impact of flooding on the teaching and learning process. In addition, public authorities and communities should undertake mitigation measures to counter other effects of cyclones or floods on infrastructure and the school environment.

The study also made recommendations for the Ministry of Education on how disaster preparedness of teachers in public primary schools can enhance their teaching and learning in Malawi's flood-prone areas. One recommendation was that the education ministry should include disaster preparedness in the curriculum.

Students may also increase their understanding and awareness of flood-related risks, thanks to this research, enabling teachers to work more effectively and efficiently.

The report's recommendations included that:

- Schools in disaster-prone areas should develop and implement disaster management plans such as school safety manuals, and so on.
- School management committees should engage qualified professionals to assess the structural safety of damaged school buildings, and design, construct and maintain school facilities to be resilient whenever a disaster such as floods happens.
- Teachers' unions should advocate for adequate hardship risks/allowance and insurance for teachers working in flood-prone areas and disaster preparedness should be integrated into the primary school curriculum.
- Trainings on flood preparedness and early warning systems should be delivered to teachers in disaster-prone areas.
- Affected teachers should receive compensation.

Other prevention activities

The Teachers' Union of Malawi also conducted a two-day teacher training on flood preparedness mechanisms and early warning systems, to:

- Create teacher awareness on early flood-warning signs and disaster-coping mechanisms whereby teachers are able to discharge their duties effectively in times of disasters
- Develop initiatives aimed at reducing the risk of damage to schools' infrastructure
- Build teachers and school leaders' capacity to engage in disaster risk reduction activities

The union also developed a disaster response – targeting climate change – and a strategic plan for its membership.

A presentation on the Malawi's union's activities, undertaken with financial assistance from EI and its affiliates, is available [here](#).

2. Syria: EI condemns the targeting of schools in the war

At least 20 civilians, including children and teachers, were killed in the Idlib region of Syria in airstrikes. Many more were wounded. The attack took place on 25 February and targeted eight school facilities.

Six schools and two nurseries were bombed in a single day, during opening hours, when casualties would be highest. They are the latest in a long list of schools targeted in the conflict, with 22 educational facilities bombed in the last two months alone.

Education International condemns these attacks in the strongest possible terms. David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, said: "Targeting school children and teachers is unforgivable and cannot be tolerated. Schools must be safe sanctuaries, places of learning and peace, even in war zones. They are never legitimate targets. We call on the international community to do the right thing and protect innocent civilians."

Education International has sent an official letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres, stressing that schools are protected by international law, that education is a fundamental right irrespective of the circumstances, and that the international community has a moral duty to do everything in its power to protect students and teachers.

In 2009, Education International adopted a Declaration that [Schools Shall Be Safe Sanctuaries](#). The organisation has been engaged in advocacy initiatives urging the international community to prevent violations of the right to education, to ensure the safety of learners, teachers, education personnel, and academics everywhere, to strengthen international law and end impunity.

March

Headlines

1. Empower to lead: EI's Development Cooperation Network meets in Brussels

The meeting of the Development Cooperation Network is taking place in Belgium from 2-4 March and brings together 50 union representatives from 25 countries across the world. Participants are joining forces to identify opportunities to work together and effect change in their countries and communities.

Opening the event, Education International's Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst praised the large turnout and the increased interest in development cooperation among education unions. Holst highlighted that "Education International supports cooperation and solidarity between its affiliates and development cooperation is a great way to come together, share ideas and build our capacity so we can deliver real change for educators and students in our countries."

During her intervention, Holst presented Education International's plans to achieve the objectives adopted by its member organisations during the 8th World Congress held in July 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. The four main areas of focus until 2023 will be:

- System: promoting and protecting equitable, inclusive free quality education for all;
- Status: promoting and protecting the status and autonomy of the profession;
- Rights and democracy: promoting and defending democracy, human and trade union rights;
- Renewal: Renewing, strengthening and growing inclusive membership.

A survey conducted among Education International affiliates and presented at the meeting clearly shows that member organisations are working intensively on union building, growing their organisational capacities in their respective countries. Education unions also run activities and projects focusing on rights, children's welfare, social dialogue and gender issues.

Over the next few days, participants will have many opportunities to reflect on how to broaden and strengthen the Development Cooperation Network. The meeting features sessions dedicated to assessing needs and identifying priorities, cooperation for increased union membership; project evaluation; mapping needs and resources for international cooperation, and more. Participants will also join side meetings to review ongoing cooperation projects focusing on specific countries and topics.

Education unionists meeting in Brussels will also bid farewell to Assibi Napoe who will retire from her position as Chief Coordinator of Education International's African regional office. In her role, Assibi has been a tireless champion for development activities, especially on trade union unity, all over the continent.

2. States must provide for teaching indigenous and minority children in their own language

Education International warmly welcomes the declaration by the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues that children of linguistic minorities must be taught in their own language where possible. This would help to achieve inclusive and quality education, and respect the human rights of all children.

“Education in a minority’s mother tongue, combined with quality teaching of the official language, is more cost-effective in the long term,” said Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, in a [report presented to the Human Rights Council](#) on 11 March.

Such education “reduces dropout rates; leads to noticeably better academic results, particularly for girls; improves levels of literacy and fluency in both the mother tongue and the official or majority language; and leads to greater family and community involvement,” he said.

Inclusive

Numerous studies agreed that an appropriate and proportionate use of minority languages in education can increase inclusion, communication and trust between members of minorities and State authorities, de Varennes said.

“Children from indigenous or minority backgrounds will have better academic results and will stay in school longer when they are taught in a language with which they are most familiar – usually their own,” he noted. “When this happens, especially when they stay longer in school, they will not only acquire a stronger basis and literacy in their own language, they will also be able to gain greater fluency in the official or majority language.”

Discriminatory

In addition, the failure to use minority languages where this is reasonable could be discriminatory or in breach of the human rights obligations of States, including the right to education, he said. Such a failure would be inconsistent with the [UN Sustainable Development Goal 4](#), which calls for inclusive and quality education for all.

“Inclusive and quality education for members of linguistic minorities means, as far as it is practicable, education in their own language. Not using a minority language as a medium of instruction where this is possible means providing an education that does not have the same value or effect,” he insisted.

The Special Rapporteur has called for the drafting of practical guidelines to provide concrete guidance on the implementation of the human rights of minorities and the use of their languages in the field of education.

Education International: Enriching cultural heritage of humankind

Since its inception, Education International has recognised that the distinct cultures and languages of indigenous people enrich the cultural heritage of humankind and deserve protection as vehicles of culture and identity. It also underlines the crucial role that teachers, education support personnel, and their organisations in the education system have in ensuring the promotion and preservation of the cultural identity of indigenous peoples.

“We deeply acknowledge that the ability of each individual to learn about, access, and participate in his or her culture is the basis for sustaining and promoting cultural diversity,” said Education International’s General Secretary David Edwards. “We also firmly believe that, by teaching respect for the diversity of human cultures, educators can promote amongst the peoples of the world tolerance, dialogue, and cooperation, which are the best guarantee of peace.”

Educators globally are committed “to combatting all forms of racism and of bias or discrimination in education and society due to gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, political opinion, social or economic status or national or ethnic origin”, he added.

Headlines

1. Teachers' struggles pay off: World Bank to freeze investment in private for-profit schools

Education International welcomes major reform commitment from the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Financial Corporation (IFC), to freeze any investments in private for-profit K-12 schools.

The US House Financial Services Committee yesterday announced that the IFC will freeze on any direct or indirect investments in for-profit primary and secondary schools, with a consultative process to decide on a permanent policy.

In [letters addressed to the leader of the World Bank](#), in November 2016, January 2017, April 2017 and May 2018, Education International and its affiliates repeatedly urged the organization to put students before profit and stop their sponsorship of Bridge International Academies (BIA), a for-profit school chain with illegal operations in Africa and Asia.

The IFC had invested more than US\$ 10 million in BIA operations in Africa and supported the company's expansion elsewhere.

Commenting on the Bank's decision, EI General Secretary David Edwards stated: "EI welcomes this decision, which has been a core demand from teachers, and hopes it will be permanent. This is a major win for Education International and its member organisations. It is a result of years of union and civil society campaigning against private for-profit education through the Global Response to privatisation and commercialisation of education campaign and various advocacy efforts."

"As we have consistently conveyed to World Bank leaders, using aid to fund private actors for the provision of education clearly contravenes the global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. In a world where so many children are denied access to education, allocating scarce funding to anything but public education is totally unacceptable."

Edwards went on to say: "The assumption that private actors would take on public sector obligations with respect to the provision of quality education for all flies in the face of a growing body of evidence, which shows that privatisation does not improve access to, nor outcomes in, education but rather deepens inequality and segregation, denying the right of all children to quality education."

The IFC's commitment [can be found here](#)

To find out more about BIA illegal operations [please go here](#)

EI's letters to the WB [can be found here](#)

2. Iran: Leading teacher unionist arrested again

Education International and UK's NASUWT, the Teachers' Union have condemned the re-arrest of Tehran education union leader Esmail Abdi.

Released on furlough on 17 March 2020, Mr Abdi had to report to prison on 21 April and was kept in detention. This is obviously dangerous given the uncontained spread of COVID19 in Iran and the particularly poor health conditions in detention centres.

Mr Abdi has been mostly held in detention in the Evin prison since June 2015 when he led teacher marches in Tehran and applied for a visa to participate in the Education International World Congress. Education International and Amnesty International have campaigned on his behalf ever since.

Education International also campaigns for the unconditional and immediate release of another Tehran teacher association leader, Mr Mohammad Habibi. He was arrested on 3 March 2018, initially condemned to ten and a half years prison (commuted to seven and a half) and 74 lashes. He was condemned for pressing for improved learning and teaching conditions in Iran. A few days ago, the family of Habibi received his termination letter from the education service (although is he far from retirement age) and a meagre severance pay.

This and the new arrest of Abdi and of many human rights activists is seen as a new wave of repression aimed to keep heads down before May Day. “We condemn the suppression of rights of dedicated teachers and union leaders and will advocate tirelessly for their release,” stressed David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

Headlines

1. EI African Regional Committee adopts statement of COVID-19 impact and re-opening of schools

The Education International Africa Regional Committee, in a virtual meeting held on 20 April 2020, adopted a statement that focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in the region and urged governments to consult teachers and education support personnel (ESP) through their representative organisations to ensure that school re-openings are safe.

As in other regions, the pandemic meant the expansion of distance learning. However, in Africa, it is estimated that internet access is only 24 percent as opposed to 47 percent at global level. Access is particularly difficult in rural areas and in zones of conflict. Efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on schooling have been “impromptu, diverse, and riddled with discrepancies”.

The Committee emphasised that precarious and unprotected staff suffered greatly from the economic dislocation of the crisis. Most part-time teachers and education support personnel as well as those on temporary contracts have been on compulsory leave without compensation.

Stressing that safety on re-opening of schools is not yet assured and that the process needs to be well-prepared, the Committee recommends that governments step up the fight against the virus and engage educators through their representatives in back to school strategies.

In addition to safety measures for education workers and students, including protective equipment and other emergency precautions, governments are called on to ensure that clean water and electricity are provided in schools. The Committee also urges that governments make available resources so that teachers in private institutions can be paid as is the case elsewhere in the private sector.

Education unions are urged to encourage their members to use the EI Guiding Principles on COVID-19, to follow strict health measures, and to seek to be involved in any innovations and adaptations related to education during the pandemic.

[The full statement of the EIARC is available here.](#)

2. EI Asia-Pacific Regional Committee adopts statement on COVID-19

The statement adopted by the Asia-Pacific Regional Committee cites the divergent approaches of governments to the impact of COVID-19 on health, workers, and the economy. It also stresses the lack of consultation of education unions, with rare exceptions, on questions related to the pandemic in the region.

It focuses on disparate effects of the crisis on different groups, on the future of public services, in particular, education. It concludes with recommendations to EI, member organisations, and governments on further efforts to combat the pandemic and deal with its aftermath.

Some governments have taken effective measures that have limited the spread of the infection, while others are still facing a rising number of cases despite restrictions.

A third group have adopted emergency measures that concentrate power in the hands of a few officials. The statement also mentions the uneven ability and capacity among countries to put into place distance learning and the lack of consultation with trade unions on the introduction and use of that technology.

The statement highlights mass unemployment that is likely to continue that will “disproportionately affect marginalised sectors the hardest and will further deepen existing inequalities.” The continuing crisis, according to the Committee, “will drastically affect the low-income countries, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalised populations; increase gender disparities in education, especially disadvantaging girls, and intensify the divides among students.”

Although awareness has grown of the importance of public health systems, the Committee was concerned that the implementation of SDG 4 on education will slow and that badly needed financial assistance to schools will not be forthcoming. If that is the case, it may, in effect, encourage the growth of private, for-profit education.

Rather than accepting that this severe setback must reduce the quality and availability of education, the Committee argues, “it is the time to turn this global crisis into an opportunity to rethink the existing education policies, whose inadequacies are now being exposed and worsened, and to envision how the future of education and the teaching profession should look after the pandemic.”

The Committee recommends that Education International should not only continue its efforts to monitor the COVID-19 situation and share information, but also intensify its efforts to defend “rights of educators and all workers and the protection of fundamental human rights”, develop policy guidelines on distance learning and ICT, and work to incorporate health care personnel in schools. It also stresses the importance of cooperation with the international community on planning the future of education and the teaching profession following the pandemic.

The Committee urges member organisations to continue to lead the fight to limit the impact of COVID-19 on teachers, students and parents, to protect the terms, working conditions and rights of educators and education support personnel, to assess and respond to the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable and marginalised groups and women and to fight for increased funding of education. Following the pandemic, it will be especially important to have the means to “address the lost time and to bridge existing gaps among learners”.

Governments are encouraged, in cooperation with education unions, to ensure the safety, health and well-being of students, teachers and ESP, to minimise the health risks of re-opening by putting adequate measures and protections in place, to fully fund education, to prevent the entry of private, for-profit education actors into education and to guarantee the rights and protections of all education workers. They are urged to ensure that government actions during and after the pandemic are “holistic, comprehensive, and inclusive”.

[The statement can be downloaded here.](#)

3. Council of Global Unions Statement | LGBTI rights are a union issue

Today is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT). The Council of Global Unions, a group of independent trade union organizations that represent over 200 million workers around the world, reaffirm our commitment to building respect and dignity for all workers. We believe every worker is entitled to work free from discrimination and violence regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics.

30 years ago today, the World Health Organization removed homosexuality as a mental disorder from the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. Since that historic day, the LGBTI community has worked to eradicate harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender expression through laws and policies as well as through activities that celebrate diversity. 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.

However, despite the many achievements, homophobia and transphobia still exist. LGBTI workers still suffer labor disparities and discrimination because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. These range from income disparity to workplace harassment, from unfair treatment at work to discrimination when applying for a job.

In times of crisis, such as the one we are currently experiencing, this situation worsens. From barriers to access health services to stigmatization; from the rise of online cyberbullying and hate speech to domestic violence; [LGBTI workers are facing an unprecedented situation that places them at a higher risk](#) of poor mental and personal health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the livelihoods of LGBTI workers as they are disproportionately represented in industries and sectors which are hardest hit by the pandemic such as retail, hospitality and tourism. This will expose them to higher levels of economic hardship and unemployment which will have ramifications for their health and well-being.

Today, we stand up for LGBTI workers and their rights, which are human rights. We will continue to fight for workplaces free of discrimination and harassment, we will mobilize to protect them and to raise their issues and needs.

To achieve this, we have set up a CGU working group on LGBTI rights. We will adopt an LGBTI Solidarity Charter and will continue to work with our affiliated unions to improve LGBTI structures and policies to build a stronger and more inclusive global trade union movement.

Let's stand up to intolerance and discrimination where we see it. Let's keep working to ensure our unions are more LGBTI inclusive. Let's go beyond single days of action and tackle systemic gender, income and racialized inequalities every day.

Global Unions commit to continue fighting for the rights of all workers and call on their affiliates around the world to support the campaign to end violence and discrimination in the workplace.

#RatifyC190

#StandUp4HumanRights

Headlines

1. Educators against child labour: best practices to help eradicate child labour post Covid-19

On the World Day Against Child Labour, Education International launches a report documenting best practices identified in its projects against child labour. With Covid-19 set to increase the number of child labourers, these lessons are essential to future efforts to ensure all children are in school, not in work.

Together with its member organisations and project partners, Education International has been developing and implementing projects against child labour at the community level for several years. The latest projects have focused on vulnerable communities in 13 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

The results have been outstanding: decreased school dropout rates, increased enrolments, a growing awareness among community members of the negative impact of child labour and the essential role of education for children's future.

The best practices identified during these projects have been collected in one publication launched today, on the World Day Against Child Labour. [*Transnational Best Practices and Union Impacts*](#) features findings from six project countries: Albania, Mali, Morocco, Nicaragua, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The report identifies the elements that were key to the success of the projects:

1. Professional development for teachers

The projects featured tailor-made professional development courses for teachers and school heads. Participants received training on child-centred pedagogy, active learning techniques, children's rights, and definitions of child labour. Gender aspects were central to the training, with a specific focus on the girl child. Education unions provided resource manuals and developed new national teacher training curricula to include information on child labour, relevant national legislation, pedagogical training modules and information on active learning techniques.

During the training, participants also discussed how to set up school-monitoring structures supported by union coordinators at district and national levels.

After the trainings, teachers reported feeling better equipped and ready to act as multipliers and change agents in their schools. Teachers also developed a new sense of confidence and a clear mission that empowered them to rally the entire community to the cause of eradicating child labour.

2. Creating a school environment conducive to learning

In schools, teachers succeeded in creating a caring and safe environment that encouraged student participation. Corporal punishment was abandoned in favour of listening and engaging with students, a change that teachers also promoted among parents. School absenteeism began to be closely monitored, and absences now trigger further investigation by teachers.

Another important element of the projects was increasing communication with parents. Home visits by teachers have proven very effective in changing attitudes on the importance of education.

3. Incorporation of gender perspectives

The projects featured a special focus on the girl child and how to overcome the obstacles girls face in staying in school, especially after puberty. Gender awareness was mainstreamed into the projects, with teachers working to eliminate barriers by ensuring safe routes to school, providing separate washrooms for girls, countering the practice of early marriages and the incidence of teenage pregnancy, among others.

4. Sustainability in the long term

Sustainability was built into the projects in order to ensure a positive impact beyond the project period. The outcomes have been very encouraging. Project activities have continued in the schools, with teachers sharing their knowledge with colleagues and the wider community. Monitoring and assessment systems have also continued to operate.

One innovative aspect is the formation of multi-stakeholder committees tasked with ending child labour. Established at the local, regional, or national levels, these committees include a wide cross-section of local authorities and institutions and have an important advocacy role on issues of quality education and the rights of the child. Their activities continue even after the end of the project.

Growing support for education unions

In the schools where the projects were implemented, the education unions leading the work saw a marked increase in membership as teachers demonstrated their solidarity and commitment to advancing quality inclusive education. Union members also became much more engaged in their unions.

In addition, union capacity for advocacy and social dialogue has grown considerably thanks to the multi-stakeholder approach the projects introduced.

Unwavering union commitment to the fight against child labour

In a video message marking the World Day Against Child Labour, David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: “For many years, education unions have been fighting against school dropout and child labour with outstanding results. This World Day Against Child Labour, we must take all the lessons we have learned in the fight so far and redouble our efforts. We must not allow vulnerable children to forgo their education and slip into a life of hardship. In our classrooms, in our unions and in the highest fora of power, let’s mobilise to end child labour and make education for all a reality.”

Watch the full video message below.

July

Headlines

1. Council of Global Unions Joint Solidarity Statement | Justice for Lee Cheuk Yan and ensuring fundamental rights in Hong Kong

The Council of Global Unions (CGU) – representing more than 200 million workers from across the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Global Union Federations and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) – wholeheartedly condemns the unlawful arrests of trade union and prodemocracy leaders and activists by the Hong Kong police, attacks on working people in Hong Kong, and proposals for a new National Security Law.

On 15 June 2020, Lee Cheuk Yan, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), and fourteen other pro-democracy leaders and activists appeared in court, charged with participating and organising illegal assemblies demanding the withdrawal of the extradition bill and universal suffrage in 2019. Similar charges were made against Lee on 28 February 2020, and on 11 June 2020 for his leading role in the June Fourth candle vigil.

The UN Human Rights Committee has repeatedly urged the Hong Kong government to revoke the prior notification to public assemblies and excessive restrictions under the Hong Kong Public Order Ordinance for contravention of Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Continuing assaults on journalists as well as prosecutions and open threats made by the Hong Kong government against trade union leaders, healthcare workers, teachers, social workers and civil servants for exercising their professional role and trade union rights are in contravention with the principle of freedom of association.

We oppose the adoption of the national security law on Hong Kong by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on 30 June. The legislative process failed to respect transparency and the basic right of the people of Hong Kong to participate and be consulted. The law has been inserted into the Basic Law of Hong Kong and shall take effect on 1 July.

The CGU shares the grave concerns held widely in Hong Kong and the international community about the broad scope of the crimes stipulated in the law, its enforcement and the accountability of the mainland Chinese national security apparatus to be established in Hong Kong. The legislation has seriously undermined the One Country Two Systems principle and poses tangible threats to the fundamental rights and freedoms which lie at the core of the principle of freedom of association.

We recall the ILO request that such legislation must be compliant with ILO Convention No. 87 on freedom of association. As the UN Human Rights chief Michelle Bachelet warned on 19 June, such laws must never be used to criminalise conduct and expression protected under international human rights law.

The CGU unreservedly supports the right to free speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of association for the independent Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) and the people of Hong Kong.

The CGU calls for:

- All charges against Lee Cheuk Yan and other pro-democracy leaders in Hong Kong to be dropped;
- Cessation of all restrictions on freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, the right to organise, and civil law abuse of peaceful protesters;
- Respect for trade union and other human rights by Chinese and Hong Kong authorities;
- Respect for the continued autonomy of Hong Kong and revocation of the national security law; and,
- Implementation of universal suffrage in Hong Kong.

In full support of the CGU statement, Education International's General Secretary Davis Edwards [reiterated Education International and its member organisations' solidarity with the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union](#) and praised "the bravery and perseverance of unionists, teachers and students to stand for democracy and human rights".

2. Public education – critical for preserving indigenous languages and cultures

El's Mexican member SNTE presented the Los Pinos Declaration at a virtual seminar on 15 July. It is the final document of the event that closes the International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019, held on 27-28 February 2020 in Mexico City.

The [Declaration](#) seeks to complete the incorporation of indigenous languages, language diversity and aspects related to multilingualism into the worldwide frameworks for sustainable development. It is also intended to be a national reference for the development of public policies that take into account cultural diversity in Mexico.

The Declaration identifies strategic directions for action to ensure the recognition of indigenous languages in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres, including:

- Inclusive, equitable education and learning environments for the promotion of indigenous languages. This includes the presence of these languages in the administration of justice and in public services, digital empowerment and the promotion of language technology and indigenous media.
- Safeguarding and protecting cultural and linguistic heritage: creating equality of employment opportunity in indigenous languages and for indigenous languages and using them to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Ensuring the availability of training and refresher courses for indigenous language teachers in their original languages.
- Guaranteeing the availability of sufficient educational materials, textbooks and guides for teachers in all original languages;
- Guaranteeing education for everyone;
- Confirming the participation of indigenous people in decision-making, consultation and planning processes and policy implementation.

The main elements of the Los Pinos Declaration will also constitute lessons and key points for the development of the future Global Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 18 December 2019.

August

Headlines

1. "Support staff are the infrastructure of the world", by Lorretta Johnson.

During this pandemic, it has become very obvious who the essential workers are. Let me be clear. I am not criticizing mayors, university presidents or school superintendents. But amid the COVID-19 contagion, we would be nowhere without custodians, paraprofessionals, food service workers, administrative assistants and school bus drivers.

School and college tech support workers alone have kept networks connected and students engaged in their studies, and they will become ever more important as we reopen schools.

In the United States, 370,000 school and college support staff who belong to my union, the American Federation of Teachers, joined their peers around the world in stepping up to face this public health crisis. They have cooked, assembled and delivered millions of meals; deep-cleaned schools and universities; ordered and distributed supplies; tutored; provided reading support and physical education online; conducted virtual study halls; and driven mobile hotspots to our most vulnerable children. They have risked their lives—and some have died—doing their jobs.

School and college support staff are the infrastructure upon which education's pandemic response is built.

Even in this time of crisis, the everyday creativity and dedication of support personnel shines through. Building on this proactive work by our members, our union was one of the first U.S. organizations to develop a plan to reopen schools safely; [here is our latest plan](#). We are pressuring Washington to rescue public services. We also are asking friends to sign [an international manifesto](#) on behalf of support staff. This proactive work is needed because already, furloughs and layoffs of education workers have begun.

Education support personnel have been supporting students and teachers virtually by tutoring, attending professional development webinars and leading book groups. There has been a huge learning curve, but AFT members are doing a fantastic job of supporting education every day.

Even as they continue professional development over the summer, education support personnel have shared their successes and looked to their international colleagues for new ideas in how [schools around the world](#) are facing the pandemic. The Netherlands cut class sizes in half and Canada is expanding its use of outdoor classrooms. Finland is keeping normal class sizes but has isolated classrooms from each other. Not one has seen a significant spike in COVID-19 transmission. The trouble is that the United States has failed to take the pandemic as seriously as these countries have.

At the same time, many governments around the world are falling prey to privatization schemes. For-profit services, brought in to provide what is perceived as a "new" service such as distance learning, unfortunately can walk away from their responsibilities—and they do.

Education International's [declaration on the rights of educational support personnel](#) is a demand for living wages and decent working conditions for paraprofessionals and school-related personnel

worldwide. The declaration states that support staff must have high-quality professional training; respect for their contributions to education; and protection from outsourcing.

Support personnel are flexible and quick-thinking. During the pandemic they have shown they are able to “turn on a dime,” as we say in America—adapting rapidly to new situations. We do this all the time and it has never been more essential than it is today.

I would like to commend one of my union sisters for something she said during a meeting to generate ideas for reopening schools. She noted how paraprofessionals are able to make wellness calls to families, finding out who needs such basics as food or diapers, or which families have an only child who needs extra support. She said paraprofessionals, together with teachers, should be included on calls or videos with parents of students with disabilities.

This paraprofessional said what all of us have been thinking: “Paras, we are valuable. We are valuable and much-needed. Our challenge is getting the school district to see that. I know it’s always our fight, but let’s continue that fight.”

2. Lebanon: International solidarity as education sector reels from impact of explosion

After the devastating explosion in the port of Beirut, Education International has expressed solidarity with the Lebanese capital’s inhabitants, including educators and students.

Education International (EI) and its affiliates have reacted swiftly to the devastating impact of the explosion in Beirut on 4 August. More than 200 people are now believed to have been killed in the Lebanese capital and many thousands have been injured.

EI’s General Secretary David Edwards said that, “with our affiliates around the globe, we are in full solidarity with the educators and population of Beirut recovering from the terrible explosion”.

One crisis after another

Manal Hdaife of the Public Primary School Teachers’ League immediately thanked the global union federation for its strong words of solidarity. Hdaife is a member of EI’s subregional committee for Arab Countries.

Rodolphe Abboud, General Secretary of the Teachers Syndicate of Lebanon (TSL), another of Education International’s national affiliates, highlighted the impact of the blast. “The consequences of the explosion are very painful for the Lebanese in general and the people of Beirut, especially those who were suffering from a suffocating economic crisis. This disaster increased their suffering.”

Impact of pandemic and blast on education

Calling for support, the education union leader said this incident occurred as educators were struggling with the global pandemic. The education sector in Lebanon, especially the private sector, which represents 70 per cent of education in Lebanon, “has been facing a major crisis as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and the economic and financial crisis, which has led many educational institutions to dismiss teachers”, he said.

The “painful explosion has exacerbated the situation and destroyed many schools in Beirut, making it difficult to resume teaching there and destroyed the homes of teachers living in Beirut who have no

financial means to repair their homes”.

The Union Center and the Teachers' Fund Center, which are, respectively, a teacher's support fund and a teacher's compensation and retirement fund centre, located within the affected area, also sustained major infrastructural damage.

International solidarity

EI will liaise with local education unions on how to best assist the affected population, especially the teachers and their students, and try to ensure that education is prioritised in financial aid coming from the international community.

EI's affiliates have also voiced their concerns and shown their readiness to help the Beirut population and their colleagues in education.

The French non-governmental organisation, Solidarité laïque - of which EI affiliate SNUipp-FSU is a member – has called for donations to help the residents of Beirut and victims of this unprecedented industrial disaster.

3. Haiti: Education International condemns arbitrary transfers of education trade union leaders

Education International has expressed deep concern at the sudden decision by Haitian authorities to arbitrarily transfer a number of union leaders and activists, including several from the education sector.

Education International was notified by member organisations in Haiti; the *Konfederasyon Nasyonal Anseyan Dayiti*(CNEH), the *Union Nationale des Normaliens d'Haïti*(UNNOH) and the *Union Nationale des Normaliens/Normaliennes et Éducateurs/Éducatrices d'Haïti*(UNNOEH), that the teaching union leaders [Magalie Georges](#) and Georges Franck had received transfer notices to areas located far from their places of residence, and that [Josué Merilien](#) had had his salary suspended.

Education International: Punitive measures

In a letter dated 17 August and addressed to the Haitian Minister of Education, Pierre Josué Agénor Cadet, the General Secretary of Education International, David Edwards, pointed out that “these punitive measures have been taken while education unions are mobilising in favor of a resumption of school activities that guarantees that the rights of teachers, students and parents are protected.”

He continued: “Such transfers and salary suspensions will prevent trade unionists from carrying out their legitimate activities, which are particularly necessary to protect workers in the context of a global health crisis that is severely impacting the living conditions of Haiti's citizens, as is the case elsewhere in the world.”

Consequently, Education International is calling on the Haitian government to immediately and unconditionally reinstate the educational employees to their current roles, if they so desire, and to initiate a constructive dialogue with the teacher unions so as to find a favourable outcome of the ongoing social conflict.

EI reiterated its previous requests, calling on the Haitian authorities to guarantee:

- the rule of law, peace and democracy
- a respect for international labour standards, particularly those related to freedom of association and collective bargaining
- the funding of high-quality public education, which has been seriously undermined by corruption and privatisation
- decent working conditions for teachers and other education employees

Broad opposition and response to transfers

In addition to the action undertaken by Education International and its member unions, an inter-union mobilisation took place across the country for three days, from August 17 to 19.

An administrative appeal will also be launched to contest the transfers.

Education International will continue to support its members in Haiti to enable them to fully exercise their role of advocating for education staff with the authorities.

4. Belarus: Condemnation of violence against peaceful protesters

Education International's European office, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), strongly denounces the violence used by the Belarussian authorities towards the peaceful protesters across the country.

Belarus has seen protests across the country since 9 August, following the Belarussian Central Election Commission's announcement that President Alexander Lukashenko had been re-elected with 80 per cent of the vote.

Many governments – and the EU Summit meeting on 19 August – criticise the national elections as neither free nor fair.

Suppression of information

ETUCE has strongly denounced the violence used on peaceful protesters by the Belarussian authorities. "We condemn the suppression of the internet and media, detentions and intimidation of journalists in order to stop the flow of information about the situation in the country, and the prevention of public discussion and any collective response to the electoral fraud," [stated ETUCE](#). "We deplore the attacks on workers and their human right to suspend their work in protest."

ETUCE has urged the Belarussian authorities to stop any violence, release all arrested and imprisoned protesters, and proceed against all the officials responsible for all forms of repression against peaceful demonstrators. It has also called for a launch of a new electoral process, under the supervision of the Election Commission, that can be trusted by all parties, including international observers.

Solidarity with education sector

"In these turbulent times and at the beginning of the new academic and school year, ETUCE expresses its firm solidarity with the teachers, school leaders and other education personnel as well as the students for a peaceful solution," said Susan Flocken, ETUCE European Director. "We wish the workers and people of Belarus strength and courage in their demands for change and a democratic society."

Freedom of assembly

Education International urges the authorities of Belarus to refrain from any attempt to suppress the right to freedom of assembly and from threatening public education employees wishing to take part in protests denouncing the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms. Education International will continue to closely monitor developments in Belarus.

September

Headlines

1. Korea: Supreme Court annuls decision to delegalise union

The decision to delegalise the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU) has been annulled by the Supreme Court of Korea. The government had ordered the delegalisation of the organisation in 2013.

KTU lost its legal status seven years ago on the grounds that it had allowed nine dismissed teachers to keep their union membership, said Hyunsu Hwang, International Director of the KTU.

This Supreme Court decision on 3 September follows an appeal filed by the KTU to rulings against it by lower courts in June 2014 and January 2016.

In his conclusions on the ruling in favour of the KTU, Chief Justice Kim Myeongsu invoked several times the Korean constitution and international labour standards.

Workers' trade union rights protected by the constitution

The Supreme Court ruled that the Korean constitution allows all workers to enjoy basic trade union rights. The provision used to cancel the KTU's union registration was a regulation for enforcement, an administrative order, which was subordinate to the constitution. He added that the national administration could not dissolve a trade union by administrative order. Therefore, the delegalisation of KTU was invalid.

Welcoming the Court's ruling, Hwang said the KTU had been the main target of attacks by the former Korean President, Park Geun-hye, who said that "unionised KTU teachers are making this nation RED".

Education International: Proud of KTU's relentless campaign

Saluting this great news for trade union rights in Korea, Education International's President, Susan Hopgood, said: "This win has happened because of the KTU's campaigning, perseverance, and determination over a very long time. Congratulations to the KTU leaders, current and past, and all the KTU members who have stood up against the draconian action taken in delegalising the union. I am proud that we have been with you on this long journey."

2015 Resolution

In its [2015 Resolution on Delegalisation of the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union \(KTU\)](#), Education International demanded that, amongst other actions, the South Korean government immediately withdraw its delegalisation of the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union. The Resolution stressed that this reversal of union recognition represented a serious violation of worker rights and called on the South Korean government to comply fully with international labour standards by respecting and promoting freedom of association for Korean educators.

In a [letter dated 7 September](#), KTU thanked Education International and its affiliates for their support, saying: "We will never forget that the solidarity shown by our sisters and brothers in teachers' unions under the banner of Education International was the most powerful force in the fight".

2. Education has a role to play in highlighting facts of climate change

As the impacts of climate change are being felt globally, Education International says teachers must be free to teach the facts of this issue

The United States: Unprecedented wildfires

Unprecedented and devastating wildfires have hit the west coast of the United States of America. And, although there are many causes for this disaster, scientists agree that climate change is a major contributor.

Drought and record hot temperatures, and unusual lightning strikes called “dry thunderstorms”, were among the elements that may have resulted from climate change. Strong winds, some generated by the fires themselves, made storms so rapid that it was difficult or impossible for residences to escape. The Governor of Washington State, Jay Inslee, called climate change “[a blowtorch over our states in the west](#)”.

Flooding due to hurricanes

However, extreme climate events have not been limited to fires. Hurricane Sally has flooded coastal communities in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. There have long been hurricanes in the US, but their frequency and severity seem to be increasing. In what seems to be an effect of climate change, the storms have slowed down. They are staying in one place longer and dropping more water. Heavy winds and flooding have also hit the Midwest.

Other countries and regions

Elsewhere in the world, many thousands of people have been displaced from their homes by the effects of climate change. Some [experts](#) consider that climate change will create the greatest flow of forcibly displaced persons in the next decade, more than refugees fleeing persecution as well as persons forced to leave by conflicts, violence, and extreme poverty; perhaps as many as tens of millions of people.

Droughts, storms, floods, tsunamis

Droughts have long displaced masses of people in Africa as well as causing starvation, but droughts are getting worse and relentless. Devastating storms, floods, or tsunamis, and rising levels of seawater have hit Japan, the Philippines, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands, as well as parts of Europe and North America. Latin America has also been hit by drought, rising waters, and increasing hurricanes and other storms (particularly Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean).

Australian bush fires

Australia had its worst and longest bush fire season in history, lasting from July 2019 to May 2020. The effects of the devastation will last for many years. As in other countries, destruction does not just take the form of physical damage to people and property, but also trauma and mental health problems. In Australia, as in the US, some top leaders have not accepted the judgement of scientists that climate change was a cause of the fires.

COVID-19 complicates emergency response

Responding to extreme weather events has been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in countries like the US, India, Brazil, and the Philippines where the virus is still spreading. Not only

has it made work more difficult for emergency personnel, but it has increased the risk for those who must be evacuated. Indoor shelters are often not large enough to be able to provide for social distancing.

Climate change and education

Climate change, like COVID-19, has “deniers”. Some challenge the scientific consensus and argue that climate change does not exist or that there is no connection with human activity. In some cases, that scepticism is encouraged by fossil fuel companies.

Education International General Secretary David Edwards said: “The massive wildfires on the west coast of the United States and other extreme climate events show that climate change is not just about the future. It is about the present. As California Governor Gavin Newsom said, ‘The debate is over on climate change; just come to the state of California’.

“Teachers must be free to teach the facts on climate change as on other issues. Teachers should never be expected to treat it as just one opinion, among others. As educators and as trade unionists, climate change is an urgent priority that is, by its nature, global. Irresponsible political leaders endanger their own citizens, but also all others who dwell on this planet. Education has a key role to play in ensuring that the facts of climate change are disseminated – and in ensuring the sustainability of our Earth.”

3. Education International joins initiative for climate literacy

Education International and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) joined global, regional, and national civil society, mostly environmental organisations, in the appeal responding to the initiative launched by EarthDay.org to convince governments to place a priority on climate literacy and to bring good quality, science-based climate change education into schools as part of civic education.

The campaign is designed to make climate education a priority for governments when they meet for COP 26 in November of 2021 in Glasgow.

[The letter](#) states that “the decades-long failure to provide quality and meaningful climate and environmental education and civic skills to primary and secondary students worldwide has undermined the effort to solve the climate crises and other critical environmental issues while hampering efforts to build a global green economy and to create the jobs of the future.”

In [the press release announcing the effort](#), EI General Secretary David Edwards, said that “our World Congress last year passed a resolution calling for education systems to ensure comprehensive climate change education—that is not happening, and we need to change it.”

Changing it is essential for new generations to make the best choices on the way that they live, work, and participate in government.

Edwards stressed that “climate literacy is part of a larger challenge for education. Teachers must be free, as professionals, to teach based on fact, not opinion. They should be allowed and encouraged to awaken the interest of students in fundamental issues like the human and environmental future of our planet and to stimulate and develop the skills for discussion and engagement.”

He concluded: “Active citizens determine their destinies in democracies. They are players, not innocent bystanders bearing witness to the influence and impact of others.”

Headlines

1. Global Unions call upon the World Bank and the IMF to support public investment

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will hold their Annual Meetings on 16-18 October. The International Financial Institutions can play a critical role in ensuring that there is a real and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The International Trade Union Confederation and Global Union Federations, while recognising positive action by both institution to the crisis, in a statement, call on them to lead an effort for global solidarity that reduces poverty and leads to more just development.

The [Global Unions statement](#) urges measures to provide long-term and comprehensive relief for the debt burden of developing countries as well as other actions to address the dangers of global inequality and stimulate employment.

It includes an emphasis on the importance of quality, fully-funded public services, saying, “COVID-19 should instil a shift toward supporting universal social protection, health coverage, and ensuring quality, equitable and inclusive education – not just today, but moving forward. The Bank can take a first step by making permanent the freeze on investments in for-profit K-12 schools.”

In a circular to all member organisations, Education International General Secretary David Edwards urged action at national level to support the Global Union position, including sharing it with governments and with the Executive Directors of the World Bank and the IMF.

Education International has also signed a [joint statement](#) with over 500 union and civil society organisations and academic in defence of public services that calls on the IMF to stop promoting austerity.

In the middle of the pandemic and associated crises, this year, the IMF has called on countries to return to austerity once the pandemic is over. Evidence indicates that up to 90 per cent of low-income countries were advised to freeze or reduce spending on public wages. There has already been a considerable slow-down in efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. Many countries will be thrown even further off track on Goal 4 on education.

Education International General Secretary David Edwards stressed that “the fault lines in global solidarity, in social justice, and in public services have become more visible and injustice has been accentuated by the pandemic and related disasters”.

“People in all regions of the world have learned or re-learned powerful lessons from these crises about the value of public services and of the contributions of education workers who make those services possible. Politicians, governments, and international institutions, especially the World Bank and the IMF, need to learn those same lessons and avert the plague of indifference to injustice and human pain. We must make that happen.”

The Global Unions statement can be found [here](#).

The Joint Statement by Education International with other trade union and civil society organisations and academics can be found [here](#).

On 13 October, Education International, Public Services International, and ActionAid hosted a [webinar](#) on the impact of public wage cuts and freezes.

2. IMF must support public investment and stop public sector wage bill constraints

Today, in a joint webinar with Action Aid and Public Services International, Education International called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stop advising countries to cut or freeze public wage bills.

IMF loans with “commitments” for governments to implement new or renewed austerity programmes

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, though the IMF was fast to respond to countries' urgent needs by providing short-term emergency loans, [new research](#) shows that the loans distributed from April to July this year, contain “commitments” for governments to implement new or renewed austerity programmes as soon as the immediate health crisis has peaked, with little provision for any recovery period.

So-called “efficiency” measures impede government’s ability to guarantee the right to education

Public wage bill constraints are a [key element of austerity policies](#) and have had disastrous impacts in the education sector. [In the webinar](#), Haldis Holst, Education International’s deputy general secretary, pointed out the multiple ways that wage bill constraints affect both education workers and students on the ground. She explained that, in the education sector, public wage bill constraints lead to teacher shortages, salary cuts, de-professionalisation, and ultimately, deterioration in education quality. This affects the most vulnerable students the most and can lead to increased privatisation of education. “It’s not just about budgets, it’s about people”, she argued, highlighting that these so-called “efficiency” measures impede government’s ability to guarantee children’s right to education.

Education International believes that the only way to exit the education crisis that has emerged due to COVID-19 and to get back on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by 2030 is to increase expenditure on education. Not only is urgent investment in education crucial to give every child the education they deserve but it is also important to invest in education to drive further economic and social recovery. Holst argued that “when it comes to education, we cannot cut costs. Rather, we must invest in education now for long term gains.”

IMF puts countries in a “straight-jacket”

Leo Baunach, director of the Washington Office of the International Trade Union Confederation and Global Unions, explained how, though the IMF no longer technically “requires” governments to cut wage bills, it nonetheless puts countries in a “straight-jacket” by putting pressure on them to suppress spending as part of broader economic adjustments.

Public Services International’s general secretary, Rosa Pavanelli, also highlighted that, ultimately, “this is a systemic crisis,” and Holst, in her closing remarks crucially reminded participants that

“economics is political”, and that when it comes to prescriptions for growth, one size does not fit all. Countries must determine their own paths to recovery, putting people at the centre of any plans.

Union statements for increased investment to achieve the SDGs and against austerity measures

As the IMF and World Bank Annual meetings will take place this weekend, Education International has joined Global Unions in making a [statement](#) calling for the international finance institutions to support public investments. The statement argues that the Annual Meetings should be a turning point, through an overarching plan to fully finance the SDGs. Importantly, it also calls for ending the promotion of public wage bill cuts that threaten the provision of quality education and for the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group, to make permanent the freeze on investments in for-profit primary and secondary schools.

Education International has also joined with trade unions and civil society organisations from multiple sectors in a [statement](#) to demand that the IMF stops promoting austerity around the world.

3. New Study Examines Privatisation of Education in the Dominican Republic

A new study published by Education International reveals the mechanisms that favour the privatisation of education in the Dominican Republic, exploring its impact on the education system and the right to quality education.

A new study published online today by Education International, entitled "Privatisation Trends in Dominican Education: Heterarchies, Networked Governance and New Philanthropy", focuses on the paradox of education privatisation in the Dominican Republic. In the document, D. Brent Edwards Jr, Mauro C. Moschetti, and Alejandro Caravaca outline the political and economic forces, rhetoric, and agendas and paradigms that have led to an alarming increase in educational privatisation in the country in recent decades.

The study includes a historical analysis within the framework of globalisation, a review of the existing literature, and a case study about Fundación Inicia Educación, which illustrates the influence of philanthropy in the education sector.

Heterarchy

The researchers argue that processes of privatisation in Latin America take on complex, "multi-faceted" forms that must be studied in the context of multiple factors and actors. The study details how government disinvestment has been a significant historical factor contributing to the growth of the private sector in the Dominican Republic's education sector.

Paradoxically, although the government has once again focused on promoting and financing public education since 2012, there are already pronounced trends towards privatisation, with non-state actors assuming an increasing role in the definition of educational policies. This is known as heterarchy, as opposed to the usual hierarchy in which the government determines public policy above other actors and serves as the guarantor of the human right to education.

The analysis will help to understand the significance and role of new actors concerning the right to education both in the country and at the international level, as this trend is observed in many other Latin American countries.

The study is available on [Education International's Isuu page](#).

4. Executive Board adopts resolution on the role of education in stimulating critical thinking and freedom of expression and promoting democracy

The 56th meeting of the Education International's Executive Board, meeting virtually on 27 October, adopted a resolution in support of teaching about freedom of expression, free discussion, and critical thinking, all of which equip students to be active citizens. The resolution was adopted following the atrocious murder of French history and geography teacher Samuel Paty on 16 October for having exercised that vital education responsibility.

After reaffirming that “teachers must enjoy professional autonomy, academic freedom, and the right to choose the teaching and learning methods and materials they use, thereby defining, through the democratic process, the criteria for the quality of their work”, [the resolution](#) resolves:

- “To give its full support to French affiliates, and to all education workers around the world who are subject to acts of violence directed against education and its role as an engine of democratic emancipation.”
- “To call on Ministers of Education worldwide to take concrete measures to protect and support education staff, including improved initial and continuing training, to put mechanisms in place to foster solidarity among the education community, and to identify and respond rapidly to threats and violence at all levels of the education system.”
- “To call on States to promote living together in harmony and to take strong measures to reduce social inequality, unemployment, and poverty, which lead to despair and provide a fertile breeding ground for the growth of violence and fanaticism.”
- “To call on member organisations to integrate even more strongly into their national and regional activities and demands the issues of teachers' pedagogical freedom, e.g. the teaching of critical thinking as a fundamental objective of the school curriculum.”
- “To request Education International to provide their affiliates with access to research and analyses on critical thinking and freedom of expression issues and to exchange good practices.”

Introducing the resolution, General Secretary David Edwards reported on [the wave of international solidarity shown by member organisations and others with Education International's French affiliates](#). He reflected that, in these dark times, this atrocity forces all who care about rights and democracy to focus on the crucial role of teachers in supporting critical thinking, freedom of speech, science, the truth, a broad vision of education, and the promotion of democracy.

Other members of the Executive Board supported the priority of defending teachers and the role of the profession and democracy which, in too many countries, is in danger. Education International will examine ways to gather and share information on these vital issues, continue the discussion, and take other action.

Edwards' blog post, “The Teaching Profession: The light that illuminates darkness”, is also available [here](#)

November

Headlines

1. Colombia: Campaign Launched to Combat Death Threats Against Trade Unionists

Renewed death threats against education union leaders in Colombia have prompted a global support and solidarity campaign in protest against the continued repression and deaths, which now number more than 6,000.

In a statement released today, 2 October, Education International (EI) called on its members and the global education community to express their outrage at the new death threats received by members of the Executive Committee of the Federación Colombiana de Educadores (FECODE).

New Threats

On 26 October, death threats were made against to all fifteen members of the Executive Committee of FECODE, as well as Diógenes Orjuela, president of the Confederación Sindical CUT and a former professor and leader of FECODE. The threats took the form of a funeral wreath with the words "Rest in Peace". Sixteen candles and obituaries with the name of each of the threatened union leaders were also delivered to the home of Carlos Rivas, Secretary of Legal Affairs for FECODE.

Repression of Union Activists and Defence of Education

The threats follow union-led nationwide efforts to address the country's social, health, educational and economic crisis. FECODE leads initiatives to defend public education and democracy and to promote schools as zones of peace by fostering inter-community dialogue. The teachers' union also remains firmly committed to the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Neoliberal Measures

Government measures to increase labour market flexibility, reduce the scope of collective bargaining and impose limits on the right to strike have been accompanied by a systematic campaign of defamation and hatred on social networks aimed at FECODE in an attempt to silence teachers and their unions.

Over 6,000 Deaths

According to [a new report published by FECODE and the Escuela Nacional Sindical](#) there were 6,119 violations of the right to life, physical integrity and freedom of education unionists in Colombia between 1986 and 2016. These include 990 murders, 78 forced disappearances and 49 attempted murders, in addition to over 3,000 threats and more than 1,500 forced displacements.

International Solidarity

[A campaign to raise awareness and show solidarity has been set up on Labourstart and can be accessed here.](#)

EI and its Regional Committee for Latin America have expressed serious concern over the chronic lack of safety measures for teachers and trade unionists in Colombia. They have submitted official letters to Colombian president Iván Duque demanding immediate protection for all members of the

FECODE Executive Committee, noting that more than 1,000 teachers and trade unionists have been killed in Colombia in the last 25 years.

EI has also alerted UN agencies, including the ILO, UNESCO and the UN Commission on Human Rights, and has relayed detailed information on the situation to the wider trade union and human rights community.

2. Statement | Education International Welcomes the First International Day against Violence and Bullying at School including Cyberbullying

No child should be afraid to go to school. But with one in three children bullied at school at least once in the last month, our education systems are failing students. The consequences are severe and far-reaching for individual students and for societies as a whole.

To address this issue, UNESCO member states have designated the first Thursday in November of each year the International Day against Violence and Bullying at School Including Cyberbullying. November 5th, 2020 is the first time the world marks this important International Day.

Any form of school-related violence infringes on the right to education, to health and to well-being. Despite increased levels of awareness and public debate around bullying in recent years, the issue is still prevalent around the world and affects the lives and futures of millions of children and teenagers. A [2019 UNESCO report](#) reveals that almost one in three students (32%) have been bullied by their peers at least once in the last month. Over 36% of students have been in a fight with another student and nearly 32.4% have been physically attacked in the last year. One in ten students has been the victim of cyberbullying, a phenomenon that is bound to increase with the constant rise in social media usage.

Boys and girls experience school violence and bullying in different ways. Boys are more likely to become involved in physical fighting and to be physically attacked than girls. Among girls, psychological bullying is more common. Although bullying diminishes between children as they mature, older students tend to be more at risk of cyberbullying than younger students.

Other factors also intersect with gender and make some children more vulnerable than others to bullying. These include physical appearance, race, nationality, and skin colour. Children from poor families, migrant children, and children seen as gender non-conforming, including those who are or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), are more at risk of school violence and bullying than those who fit into traditional gender norms.

The consequences of bullying and school-related violence cannot be ignored. Research shows that children who are frequently bullied are three times more likely to feel like outsiders in their school and twice as likely to skip class compared to their peers who are not subjected to bullying. They are also more likely to be unable to sleep at night and to have considered suicide. Bullying also affects students' educational outcomes and makes them more likely to leave formal education after secondary school.

Quality education cannot take place in an atmosphere of anxiety, fear and insecurity. Countries will not achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 – particularly target 4.a.2 on safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all - and its promise of quality education for all unless they address the issue of bullying and school-related violence.

While the problem is pervasive, it is not insurmountable. As UNESCO member states rightly recognise, the only way to overcome bullying and ensure all students feel safe at school is by building partnerships within the school community and across societies. We need to work together to address the root causes of school-related violence and foster a culture of respect for students' rights and a zero-tolerance policy for violence. This year's inaugural theme – *Together against Bullying in School* – aptly underlines the need for us all to join forces to eradicate bullying.

More needs to be done to accelerate the pace of change. School communities and the entire education sector must come together to develop evidence-based strategies and implement solutions. From robust policy frameworks and new curricula that foster a caring school climate, to teacher training and providing support for affected students – a whole-education approach is critical.

Educators will continue to do their part so that all students can enjoy safe and supportive school environments, free from bullying and violence.

[Click here](#) to read about education unions' work to end school-related gender-based violence in seven countries in Africa.

3. The Global Climate Literacy Campaign

In June 2020, the Education International Executive Board joined the global climate literacy initiative along with hundreds of other trade unions, education, civil society organisations, and individuals. The goal is to increase the understanding and knowledge of students of the climate crisis and to encourage action. The campaign is designed to make climate education a priority for governments when they meet for COP 26 in November of 2021 in Glasgow.

Organisations and individuals supporting the [campaign](#) signed a letter to governments and UN officials. There will be follow up actions at national and international levels. A virtual meeting was held yesterday, 18 October, as part of the Sustainable Innovation Forum, in order to galvanize Climate Action.

Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst spoke to the meeting. She stressed the urgency of action, as progress so far has been too slow. EI was pivotal in ensuring that governments committed to universalizing climate change education as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4.7). Yet, five years later, the world is way off track to include climate change education in education policies and frameworks, curriculum, teacher training and assessment. Recent monitoring shows that efforts to mainstream climate education across these four areas have been patchy and insufficient.

Holst stressed that teacher participation is essential in the campaign to universalise quality climate change education. "Climate change education is in teachers' DNA, as our purpose is to prepare students for the future. Teachers must give students hope" she said. However, she also underlined that, to do so, "the educators of the world need climate education too", as they need to be prepared to implement the climate curriculum.

Climate education is an important part of civic education, the transmission of democratic values, and the encouragement of active citizenship. However, sometimes teachers are not free to teach the facts - their professional autonomy is constrained by leaders or systems that deny climate science.

EI is working with UNESCO on a survey of teachers on SDG4.7. Topics include climate change. The survey seeks to identify the teaching challenges and the support teachers receive as well as identifying the different pedagogical strategies used to teach students the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to action to tackle climate change. The aim is that the results of the survey will inform governments and influence policy.

In her intervention, Holst stressed the importance of pushing for change by working from the ground up. EI member organisations all over the world are campaigning for change at the local and national levels. She also emphasised the need for synergies between multiple sectors, and for education to be recognised by governments as a powerful tool in the fight against the climate crisis. This recognition must be followed by the necessary financing and prioritisation.

A recent [PISA report](#) of the OECD, based on responses from 15-year old students in the 66 countries that responded showed that, as compared to other issues, the global issue where students felt that they were informed was climate change. Eighty-eight per cent were familiar with it and most of them attended a school where it was taught.

[Education International is calling for climate change education to be ensured for every learner – from early childhood to adult education.](#) Climate change education must be recognised as an integral part of quality education and governments must ensure that teachers are provided with the necessary time, resources, training and support they need.

[Click here](#) to find out more about the work of Education International in support of the global climate literacy initiative.

Headlines

1. Educators seek to influence UNESCO's 2021/22 Global Education Monitoring Report

Teacher unions have a key role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their voices must be heard. That's according to Education International in its latest contribution to the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report consultations on non-state actors.

On 30 November, representatives of Education International's member organisations from all over the world took part in a consultation meeting to discuss the [2021/22 Global Education Monitoring Report on non-state actors](#), and more specifically the impact of non-state actors on the education workforce.

The consultation was organised by the GEM Report team in collaboration with Education International and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030.

The role of non-state actors in education

Non-state actors refer to a wide range of non-governmental actors involved in education, including for-profit education providers, educational technology (EdTech) companies, non-government organisations (NGOs), religious groups, philanthropists, civil society, student organisations, and education unions. The 2021/22 GEM report will assess the implications of their increasing influence in the achievement of SDG 4 and provide key recommendations for governments and the global education community to reach the goal of quality education for all.

This is an important addition to the report as it is likely to influence international discourse and action in relation to non-state actors. In the context of Education International's Global Response campaign against the privatisation and commercialisation of education, the global union federation is particularly concerned about profit-making corporations' involvement in education. In addition, Education International would like to see the GEM report recognise the important role and contribution of education unions in influencing education policy and strengthening education systems through social and policy dialogue.

UNESCO: Teachers are the backbone of all education systems

Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO, stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the influence of non-state actors in education. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that "teachers are the backbone of all education systems, and that consulting them and involving them in the policy process is the key to formulating effective education responses", he said.

Education International: Educators, through their unions, should be involved in dialogue

Dennis Sinyolo, Education International's chief regional coordinator for Africa, emphasised the need for the GEM report to reaffirm education as a fundamental human right and a public good, in line with UN mandates, principles, and commitments. "Governments should take legislative, financing, and programmatic measures to guarantee this right, including the right to decent work for teachers and

education support personnel,” he said.

Noting that education unions are themselves non-state actors, he also stressed that “teachers are not just implementers of policy, they are also pedagogical experts, leaders and change agents. That is why educators, through their unions, should be involved in institutionalised and genuine social and policy dialogue”.

The consultation covered four key themes: working conditions in non-state schools; governance, regulations, and private supplementary tutoring; influence (social dialogue and EdTech); and teacher professional development.

Working conditions in non-state schools

Education International member organisations highlighted numerous important issues for the GEM report to take into consideration. Regarding working conditions in private institutions, it was made clear that health and safety standards applicable in the public sector must also be adhered to in the private sector. Furthermore, member organisations reported that many education workers had been laid off since the start of the pandemic.

Governance, regulations, and private supplementary tutoring

The group on governance, regulations, and private supplementary tutoring discussed the importance of ensuring that regulatory frameworks put equity and quality front and centre and that public systems are best equipped to ensure the right to education for all. The group also discussed the discrepancy between regulation and enforcement, the need to address and regulate private tutoring. It also highlighted the need to strengthen mechanisms such as social dialogue during COVID-19 when regulations for working conditions need to be negotiated.

Influence of non-state actors

Participants discussing the points of influence of non-state actors in education explained that EdTech companies had become increasingly involved in policy making and design in the context of the pandemic. In Latin America, for example, it was noted that EdTech companies often provided standardised curricular content, leading to longer-term curricular reforms that were not negotiated with the profession. Member organisations stressed that governments should ensure that digital solutions for public education are designed by public universities and other state actors and with the participation of teacher unions, and that they are free and public. It was further stressed that education unions, as representatives for the profession, should be consulted on all education policy decisions.

Teacher professional development

On the theme of teacher professional development, it was pointed out that the profit motive can overshadow quality, and that teachers should have the right to free professional development opportunities. Furthermore, it was argued that education unions should be recognised for their contribution in providing professional development to their members.

Additional input

If you have evidence you would like to share with the GEM report team, please send it to e.soto-echeverri@unesco.org by 14 December. Alternatively, you can send it to us at research@ei-ie.org – Education International will be providing further input to the GEM report authors.

2. Education International urges government intervention to stop union-busting in Kenya

Today, 9 December, Education International's Executive Board has adopted a resolution calling on the Government of Kenya to urge the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), the national employer authority in education, to desist from a campaign of discrimination against the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT). The Government must urge the TSC to respect international conventions, as well as the country's relevant court decisions and Parliamentary decisions.

In a prolonged, intense anti-union campaign, the TSC has discriminated against members of the KNUT, denied coverage of the Collective Bargaining Agreement to members, and deprived the union of member fees.

This systematic attack against the KNUT has decimated union membership and crippled trade union capacity to represent members. In addition, the TSC is attempting to revoke a trade union recognition agreement signed in 1968.

In the conclusion of its Resolution, Education International's Executive Board:

1. Calls on the Government of Kenya to intervene and ensure that the TSC reverses its anti-union actions against KNUT and engages in serious dialogue and in good faith to restore healthy industrial relations and a good environment for quality education.
2. Demands that the TSC restore KNUT's membership to that of June 2019; desist from discriminating against KNUT members concerning their remuneration, promotion and working conditions; revert to implementing the 2017-2021 Collective Bargaining Agreement; and implement all the relevant court orders and Parliamentary decisions.
3. Reaffirms Education International's unequivocal support for the KNUT in its fight for the full respect of trade union rights and the interests of its members.
4. Declares that the struggle of the KNUT to preserve and defend its trade union is Education International's fight and that of the global trade union movement.
5. Commits to mobilise solidarity to defend the rights and progress of teachers in Kenya.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Education International wrote to the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, citing the systematic discrimination against KNUT members and attacks on its leaders. They indicated that, as of September, over 86,000 primary and post-primary school teachers had been unlawfully stripped of their KNUT membership, including many elected union officials.

ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow and EI General Secretary David Edwards called for respect of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention 98 on the right to organise and collective bargaining (1949) ratified by Kenya. This Convention prohibits acts of anti-union discrimination "calculated to make the employment of a worker subject to the condition that he shall not join a union or shall relinquish trade union membership, cause the dismissal of or otherwise prejudice a worker by reason of union membership or because of participation in union activities outside working hours or, with the consent of the employer, within working hours".

The joint letter calls upon the government of President Kenyatta, “to direct the Teachers Service Commission to negotiate in good faith” with the union and restore the “rights of KNUT and its members to their status quo prior to May 2019”. It concludes that the Kenyan government “is solely responsible for ensuring that it respects its international obligations arising from the ILO conventions to which it is a party”.

Mugwena Maluleke, El Vice President and General Secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union, (SADTU), in moving the resolution, provided details on the targeting of the KNUT and the systematic effort to force members to quit, He stressed that, if such a large and powerful union is destroyed in a country with a long democratic tradition, other African governments may be tempted to attack independent trade unions as well.

[You can access the full text of the resolution by clicking here.](#)

3. Education International responds to terrorist attacks in Mozambique with support for member organisation ONP

On 9 December, Education International’s Executive Board adopted a resolution on terrorism in Mozambique and the need for international support and relief for teachers and other victims. The Education International member organisation, the Organização Nacional dos Professores (ONP), has reported the recent assassination of six teachers.

Terrorist attacks in Northern Mozambique have increased in recent weeks, causing more than 2,000 deaths and massive displacement, estimated at 350,000 persons, as well as the destruction of housing and infrastructure. Terrorists responsible for the attacks, who claim allegiance to the Islamic State, come from within the country, but also from neighbouring countries, elsewhere in Africa and from beyond the continent.

According to the ONP, violence has displaced 74,149 students and 1,486 teachers and 172 education institutions have been damaged or forced to close by the attacks.

Heads of State of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held an emergency meeting recently, but no visible response to the insurgency has yet been seen in the ground.

In the concluding paragraphs of its resolution, the Executive Board:

1. Calls on the Government of Mozambique, the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, and the international community to take urgent action to protect schools, educators, and students from attack, provide security and support for the victims of this carnage.
2. Expresses its solidarity with the ONP, teachers, students, and others subjected to violence.
3. Supports the provision of material assistance, including shelter, food, and clothing for displaced teachers and school supplies for students and appeals to member organisations to join in solidarity with the ONP.

Marième Sakho from Senegal and Manuela Mendonça of Portugal supported the resolution. They stressed the extreme violence and the constant danger of assassination of teachers as well as the damage to education. Sakho explained that the ONP has used up its resources in dealing with this emergency and has appealed for support from EI and its member organisations.

You can access the entire text of the resolution by [clicking here](#).

4. Colombia: Global Education Union condemns threats, harassment, and killings of unionists

The Executive Board of Education International has adopted a resolution condemning the human rights violations in Colombia that have led to thousands of deaths of trade unionists.

The decade-long attacks on human rights and the lives of more than a thousand unionists and social activists were at the core of a resolution adopted today, 9 December, by the Executive Board of Education International, which is meeting for the 56th time.

The attempts of groups controlling power in Colombia to wipe out social organisation and mobilisation, quell protests, and suppress the right to organise and proclaim the validity of the public education system has led to thousands of casualties, many of them educators who were actively engaged with their unions. Since 1986, more than 1,100 teachers have been assassinated during the armed conflict, according to the Colombian Federation of Educators (FECODE), a member organisation of Education International. According to the Institute for Development and Peace Studies (Indepaz) in Bogota, more than 280 social leaders have been assassinated in Colombia in 2020.

Ongoing violence

Despite the signing of a peace agreement in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the guerrillas, violence has been ongoing. The conflict has taken the form of a territorial dispute that has led to the persecution and stigmatisation of activists, without the government taking measures to protect their lives and guarantee their safety and the free exercise of their right to organise and disagree.

Educators, as well as social leaders, have been assassinated solely for raising their voices to defend their rights and the validity of the public education system. Every time the Executive Committee of Education International's member organisations in Colombia - FECODE and the Trade Union Association of University Professors (ASPU) - announce a mobilisation for the defence of rights, threats are issued to the lives of the members of their national or regional executive committees.

Government inaction

According to the Education International Executive Board, the Colombian President, Iván Duque Márquez, has kept a "a complicit silence" in the face of thousands of threats against FECODE and ASPU and the teaching profession. He has done this by removing or denying security measures for union leaders and social leaders, while allowing the party in government to attack the freedom of association and academic freedom that are guaranteed in the Constitution.

International solidarity campaign

A significant campaign of international solidarity has been waged in the face of these threats. More than 60 Education International members have already asked the Colombian authorities to protect union leaders and members.

Education International has called on its member organisations to strengthen their demands that the Government guarantees human rights and the right of trade unions and of the teaching profession to work freely in Colombia.

You can access the entire text of the resolution by [clicking here](#).

You can also click [here](#) for the LabourStart's campaign on Colombia.

5. Five years into the Paris Agreement – Education International calls for governments to step up action on the climate emergency and prioritise the implementation of climate literacy for all

Tomorrow, 12 December 2020, marks the 5-year anniversary of the Paris Agreement. As world leaders convene virtually to demonstrate their continued commitment, Education International calls for increased ambition and further acknowledgement of education's important role in combatting the climate emergency.

Not enough progress

Five years ago, world leaders came together and promised to tackle the climate crisis. They committed to ensure that global temperatures do not rise more than 2 degrees and to aim to limit global heating to under 1.5 degrees. However, action taken so far has been far from enough to avert imminent climate disaster. 2020 is set to be 1.2C warmer than pre-industrial temperatures, and increasingly frequent and destructive extreme weather events are causing unprecedented human suffering, especially for the most vulnerable.

Greater ambition needed

With [COP 26](#) postponed until next year, the UN, the UK and France, in partnership with Italy and Chile, are hosting a [Climate Ambition Summit](#). Leaders are being called upon to make new, more ambitious pledges to tackle climate change. Governments have been asked to submit updated NDCs (nationally determined contributions) that set out credible implementation plans to reach more ambitious targets.

Action for Climate Empowerment is key

Education International urges all governments to update their NDCs promptly and ambitiously, and to ensure that the NDC includes a commitment to implement the [Action for Climate Empowerment](#) (ACE) agenda (which aims to promote climate education as well as training, public awareness, public access to information, public participation and international cooperation).

Education International campaigns for universal compulsory climate literacy

Recently, Education International joined EarthDay.Org in its campaign calling for all governments to **make climate education compulsory, assessed and coupled with a strong civic component**. The campaign urges governments to make climate education a core subject in curricula, rather than a neglected add-on.

Education International members are invited to sign on to an [open letter](#) to the signatories of the Paris Agreement. The letter urges them to take bold action on climate and environmental literacy - ensuring that it is integrated and embedded across all grade levels and disciplines - and to support

poorer countries' efforts to meet their climate education goals.

Speaking about the campaign, Haldis Holst, Deputy Secretary General of Educational International, said: "The climate crisis is increasingly touching every country, community, and school across the globe. Teachers are reporting that many young pupils are showing signs of fear and of anxiety about their futures. A commitment to put climate education into the core of curricula is thus not just about equipping youth with the skills and the knowledge they will need as adults. It is also about healing, hope and engagement in the solutions that can, if the world steps up ambition, solve this crisis in time."

To watch the climate ambition summit, register here: [Climate Ambition Summit 2020](#)

To find out more about and join the Climate Literacy Campaign, see: [Climate Literacy | EARTHDAY.ORG](#)

To access EI's guide for education unions and educators on the climate emergency in education: "Education: A Powerful Tool for Combatting Climate Change", click [here](#).

6. Nigeria: Education International calls for immediate release of students kidnapped by jihadist group

On 13 December, at least 600 teenagers were kidnapped by Boko Haram at the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina State, northwest Nigeria. Education International, the global union federation representing educators, has joined the international community in calling for the safe release of the 300 teenagers still in captivity.

Education International joins the United Nations in strongly condemning the abductions of these boys from their school, and calls for their immediate and unconditional release. "The children must be freed immediately and returned unharmed to their families," said Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards.

NUT: Government must guarantee teachers' safety

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), the national organisation affiliated to Education International, informed the latter that 600 students had been kidnapped. About half of them were rescued by armed forces, leaving around 300 students still missing.

Additionally, the union said that two women teachers were kidnapped in a related incident in the same region and have not yet been found.

Confronted with these brutal incidents, the NUT has threatened to go on strike unless the government guarantees the safety of their members in northern Nigeria.

UNICEF: Attacks on schools are a violation of children's rights

UNICEF also "condemns in the strongest possible terms this brutal attack and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all children and their return to their families," said Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

She added that UNICEF was deeply concerned about these acts of violence, considering that attacks on schools are a violation of children's rights. However, she said UNICEF acknowledges the efforts

by the Government of Nigeria in undertaking all possible efforts for the safe return of the missing children.

Background

On 15 December, Boko Haram (which means “Western education is forbidden” in the Hausa language) leader Abubakar Shekau claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. More than 100 armed men on motorcycles attacked this rural public school. While some high school students managed to escape, others were caught, separated into several groups, and taken away by attackers, according to the international news agency, Agence France Presse.

More than six years after [the kidnapping of high school girls from Chibok](#), this new mass kidnapping challenges the Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari, who had promised to defeat the jihadist group.

Buhari, who is himself from Katsina and was visiting his home at the time of the kidnapping, condemned the attack and ordered that security be increased in all schools. Schools have also been closed. On 14 December, the army said it had located the kidnappers’ hideout, adding that a military operation was underway.

In addition to this campaign to secure the release of the kidnapped Katsina boys, Education International still demands the immediate release of the 123 Chibok schoolgirls who are still missing. In total, 276 schoolgirls were abducted in the mass kidnapping in Chibok in 2014.