



Annual Report 2021

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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 2021.

January

Headlines

1. Jordan: Education International condemns dissolution of teachers' union and detention of leaders

[Update] Education International is calling on workers and unionists to urge the Jordanian authorities to immediately stop harassing the leaders of the Jordanian Teachers Association (JTA) and threatening its very existence. At least 18 JTA teacher unionists were arrested in Irbid, Jordan on Monday 15 February.

The teachers had announced their intention to peacefully demonstrate against the dissolution of their organisation and the judicial harassment targeting the 13 board members of the teacher organisation.

In an excessive and disproportionate use of force, the police circled and locked the area around the Culture roundabout where the offices of the union branch for Irbid province are located to prevent the protest march from taking place. They arrested teachers who tried to gather despite the police presence.

Amongst the arrestees are two JTA board members, Ghaleb Abu Qadi and Mutassim Al-Bashtawi, as well as the head of the union branch in Irbid, Sharaf Obeidat.

EI renews its call for solidarity with the JTA and the teachers of Jordan. We call on all EI member organisations to take action now:

- Please sign and give visibility to the [EI/ITUC LabourStart online petition](#); and
- Send a [protest letter](#) to the Jordanian authorities.

Background

On 31 December, the Amman Magistrate's Court authorised the dissolution of the JTA and the detention of all 13 teacher association board members for a year. The detained union leaders have been released on bail while the JTA Board appeals the judicial decision.

According to Education International, the dissolution is illegal and due to an improper interpretation of the legal provisions. The sentence against the board members is also unfair, because they were prevented from presenting evidence against the charges.

LabourStart petition

Education International urges you to sign the [LabourStart petition](#) requesting that teachers and education workers in Jordan can exercise their fundamental rights fully.

The Jordanian authorities must refrain from harassing the leaders of the JTA. In addition, Education International believes that this legitimate professional organisation should not be dissolved for the sole reason that its demands are inconvenient for the authorities.

Education International reaffirms that workers should be allowed to enjoy freedom of association and their right to collective bargaining as guaranteed by the national constitution as well as international treaties to which Jordan is a party.

Ongoing harassment of education unionists

Unfortunately, these actions are just the latest developments in a series of actions undertaken by Jordanian authorities against teacher unionists.

For example, in October 2020, Jordan's authorities imposed a [ban on a JTA public press conference](#) called to discuss the situation of education in Jordan and the conditions experienced by teachers. The press conference also sought to reach out to JTA members as the organisation had been forcefully closed for two years. The ban was implemented with security forces delivering an order from the Governor of Amman to prohibit the union's press conference.

In August 2020, after a concerted global campaign highlighting their situation, [JTA board members were freed from jail](#), having been imprisoned since July. The JTA leaders had been arrested by security forces on 25 July, and Education International had urged the Jordanian authorities to release the unionists.

2. Morocco: repeated government attacks on educators' human and trade union rights

Education International is alarmed about ongoing violations of trade union freedoms and the rights and acquis of teachers in Morocco as reported by the Syndicat national de l'enseignement–Confédération démocratique du Travail (SNE-CDT).

On 5 January, the SNE-CDT informed Education International of "the strong tension resulting from the unilateral decisions of the Minister of National Education that affect the social acquis of teachers, their constitutional right to strike and their trade union freedom, given the lack of responsible social dialogue".

Non-fulfilment of promises by the Minister of Education

The Moroccan union also recalled that the last dialogue meeting took place in February 2019, a meeting during which the Minister of National Education, Saaid Amzazi, made several promises to resolve some of the issues that have been outstanding for years.

However, the SNE-CDT deplored that not all promises were kept and that the Minister did not honour his commitments, despite repeated requests from the union, taking instead "more retrograde decisions that undermine the rights of teachers".

It therefore decided on a programme intended to deal with the adverse effects of the situation, a plan presented at a press conference held on 5 March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting closure of educational establishments, however, forced the teacher trade unionists to postpone all planned activities.

The union subsequently criticised the fact that, during this health crisis, the Ministry of National Education continued to freeze dialogue and did not involve the trade unions in managing the crisis and thinking about ways to ensure educational continuity. Instead, it made unilateral decisions. It also cited shortcomings in terms of health and safety conditions for teachers and education support staff, and for pupils.

Trade union demands presented at sit-ins on World Teachers' Day

On 5 October 2020, the SNE-CDT also transformed World Teachers' Day into a day of demonstrations and demands by organising sit-ins of union leaders in front of provincial government departments, and in schools for its members.

Following a meeting of its National Council, it agreed on a new plan of action, which began with a national general strike on 1-2 December. The strike was accompanied by sit-ins in front of regional government departments and demonstrations in front of the administrative councils of the regional academies chaired by the Minister of National Education.

According to the union, "the most dangerous decision taken by the Ministry of National Education during this period was that of depriving strikers of their right to promotion by reducing their administrative grades, which we consider to be a dangerous restriction on the right to strike and trade union freedom".

The final stage of the trade union activities programme was a sit-in of members of the SNE-CDT National Office and trade union officials on 22 December in front of the headquarters of the Ministry of Education in the country's capital, Rabat. However, the trade unionists condemned the authorities for illegally banning it; citing exceptional circumstances and the law on health emergencies. They explained that the authorities mobilised security services to surround the activists before they could reach the Ministry's headquarters, and used force to disperse them.

For a serious and responsible dialogue on trade union demands

The SNE-CDT also argued that this "demonstrates that Morocco does not respect its commitments and this behaviour contradicts the international Conventions that the country has ratified, as well as national laws and especially the constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and the right to strike and demonstrations, which proves that the country lives in a flagrant contradiction between the discourse and the practice of freedoms".

This is why its fundamental demand today is "to open a serious and responsible dialogue on the outstanding demands from 2014 to today, and the respect of trade union freedoms and the right to strike".

Education International: Solidarity with Moroccan teacher trade unionists

Education International expresses its full solidarity with its Moroccan affiliate, strongly supports this demand made by teacher trade unionists, and calls on the public authorities to respect the human and trade union rights of teachers. It will continue to examine the situation in the country.

3. Cambodia: Educators join global trade union wave of solidarity with union leader Rong Chhun

Education International is joining with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to express solidarity with Cambodian union leader Rong Chhun prior to his trial on 15 January.

Rong Chhun is the president of the independent Cambodian Confederation of Unions (CCU), a member of the Cambodia Watchdog Council, and former president of the Education International affiliate, the Cambodia Independent Teachers' Association (CITA).

Rong Chhun was arrested on 31 July 2020 for the [alleged offence of inciting to commit felony](#) based on comments made on the controversial lost farmlands on the border with Vietnam in Tbaung Khmum province. Another union leader, Sor Saknika, president of the Cambodian Informal Labour's Association (CILA) affiliated to the CCU, was also arrested on 7 August for joining solidarity protests.

International campaign

A [LabourStart campaign](#) was quickly launched by ITUC and [Education International](#), demanding the trade unionists' release. The international trade union community stresses that the unlawful arrest and detention of Rong Chhun and the criminalisation of his opinions is another dangerous blow against the exercise of the right to free expression and opinion and the right to freedom of association in Cambodia.

"We are also worried about the unhygienic conditions in overcrowded prison cells during the long pre-trial custody of the union leaders," said David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International.

"The lack of proper public health precautions against COVID-19 raises serious health concerns for Rong Chhun and the other detainees."

4. 76th anniversary of Auschwitz liberation: German, Israeli, and Polish trade unions unite to say "Never again"

To commemorate the 76th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz, Education International's member organisations in Germany, Israel, and Poland organised an e-seminar on 27 January entitled "A child witness of history".

ZNP: Education about Holocaust vital

The importance of teaching about the Holocaust and developing learning resources to that effect is hugely important, said Sławomir Broniarz, president of the Polish Teachers' Union (ZNP) and a member of Education International's Executive Board. ZNP played a central role in organising the e-event.

Showing a school journal from 1933-1939 written by Jewish students from the Municipal General School for Girls No. 15 in Krakow and recording important school events, he stressed:

"As I read this journal, I cannot help but think about how much we adults have failed these wonderful girls. I cannot help but think about the fact that, when they entered their last report in the journal, they were looking forward to the upcoming summer holidays with great curiosity, that they were full of empathy and enthusiasm and wanted to live in their country and contribute to building it."

Adding that he was thinking about how they felt thrown out of their homes, driven to the ghetto through the streets of their beloved Krakow, deported to extermination camps, Broniarz recalled that out of the 50 girls in the class that kept the journal, only 7 survived the war.

"We are here today, and we will be here next year. We owe it to them!" he concluded.

GEW: Unions advocate for a society in which there is no room for anti-Semitism

Marlis Tepe, president of the German *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft*(GEW) and Education International's Vice-President, said: "I am glad that, even if the pandemic prevents us from

meeting each other personally in Auschwitz and Krakow, we can come together again this year - online at least. We as trade unionists and as educators see it as our task to stand up to ensure that Auschwitz never repeats itself.”

Reminding that the eyewitnesses who survived the horror of Auschwitz are important for the memories of the Holocaust in schools, and that in the future, fewer and fewer such personal encounters with Holocaust survivors will be possible, she said. “Technology opens up many possibilities for us to depict Jewish life, to remember our Jewish neighbours, and to keep the memory of the crimes of the Nazis against Jews alive in the younger generation and to accompany them on their way to becoming active democrats.”

She added that educators “see with concern that anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racism are on the rise again in Germany. As education unions, we advocate for an open, tolerant and free society in which there is no room for anti-Semitism”.

VBE: Conspiracy theories can be debunked via remembrance events

The president of the German *Verband Bildung und Erziehung*(VBE), Udo Beckmann, made it clear that the “rise of conspiracy theories should cause us all great concern. Again and again, groups of the population, especially Jews, are targeted by theories which are pure fantasies. A lively culture of remembrance supports society in countering such fantasies”.

Given society’s global connectedness, when issues such as the harassment of Jews arises in a country, it must also be of concern for citizens in other countries around the globe, he explained.

He went on to highlight that “children know and can understand what’s right and what is wrong. We must support teachers for them to help children do that.

“National socialism brought incomparable suffering. 'Never again!' must not be an empty phrase, but the key theme of political education. ”

ITU: Education to be based on the respect for children

The Israel Teachers’ Union (ITU) general secretary, Yaffa Ben David, honoured the memory of educator and doctor Janusz Korczak, whose educational and value-based ideas are the basis for countless education conceptions and the foundation for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Korczak was Jewish-Polish and ran a Jewish orphanage which was later to be relocated to the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw. He was famous and could have been saved from the deportations to the death camps. He chose, however, to go with the children towards a certain death in the gas chambers.

Ben David stressed that “education must be based on the respect for children, not the adults’ will. You cannot pass on values if children are experiencing the feeling of the superiority of adults, especially teachers.”

She also insisted that education unions must help to develop and adapt resources according to the children’s age.

The seminar was followed by a [broadcast of the celebration held at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum](#).

Background information

The main theme of the 76th anniversary of the liberation is “The fate of children in Auschwitz”.

“Over 200,000 children were murdered in Auschwitz,” said Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, the director of the Museum. “Completely innocent, good, curious about life, loving their closest ones, trusting children. The adult world - after all, so often unjust and cruel - has never demonstrated so much of its heartlessness, its evil. This cannot be justified by any ideology, reckoning, or politics. This year, we want to dedicate the anniversary of liberation to the youngest victims of the camp.”

At least 232,000 children and young people were deported to Auschwitz. Of these, 216,000 were Jews, 11,000 were Roma, about 3,000 were Poles, more than 1,000 were Belarusians, and several hundred were Russians, Ukrainians, and other nationalities. Slightly more than 700 were liberated from the Auschwitz camp in January 1945.

February

Headlines

1. Education unions defend and promote academic freedom around the world!

Academic freedom is in a dire state globally, according to attendees at the recent International Further and Higher Education and Research Conference (IFHERC). Organised virtually by Education International, the conference also expressed its solidarity with harassed and imprisoned academics worldwide, especially in Myanmar and Hong Kong.

On the last day of the conference on 10 February, panellists from different EI regions highlighted the experiences and challenges of higher education staff and institutions in their respective countries and regions.

Ireland: Centralised approach and corporate voices edge out academics

During the session entitled “Unions defending and promoting professional rights in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”, Annette Dolan, Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) Deputy General Secretary, underlined the importance of academic freedom for scientific progress, the pursuit of truth, research, collaboration among academics, and quality higher education.

She also said that the COVID-19 pandemic had clearly demonstrated the importance of safeguarding academic freedom as academics have played a major role in addressing a wide range of responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

However, serious violations of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are on the rise, as is evidenced in the [Free to Think Report 2020](#), which documents 341 attacks on higher education communities in 58 countries around the world, between September 2019 and end-August 2020.

“While my own country of Ireland rates very highly on the academic freedom index, there are still worrying trends in relation to the undermining of academic freedom,” she said. A [recent case study on Ireland, written by Kirsten Roberts and Elizaveta Potapova](#), put a spotlight on the very centralised “top-down” regulatory nature of Irish higher education institutions, added Dolan. Furthermore, after the financial crash of 2008, huge reductions and restrictions (including cuts to the salaries of new entrant lecturers), have been put on the public funding of higher education, while student numbers have increased significantly. However, there has been no corresponding increase in academic staff numbers, resulting in larger class sizes and overworked staff, she said. In addition, there has been an increase in precarious and casual employment, in particular for researchers.

There is also a concern in Ireland, as in many other countries, which researcher Michael Shattock, in his research refers to as the rise of the managerial class in higher education institutions, where the academic voice is marginalised, as the voice of corporate culture replaces the collegial academic one in university governance, Dolan said.

USA: Segregation, a historical threat to academic freedom

Derryn Moten, Vice Chair of the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) Higher Education Policy and Planning Council explained that attacks on academic freedom were not new. In the US in the 1950s-1960s, academic freedom was under attack because of the segregation policy, sending white

and black students to different schools and educational institutions, before the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* put a halt to it.

Back then, academics and students were threatened with non-renewal of contracts or removal of their teaching certificates if they expressed pro-integration views. They had to resort to action, like in Alabama, where they organised sit-ins in February 1960.

Moten also stressed that freedom in research is fundamental, and that the [American Association of University Professors](#) (AAUP) remains a watchdog of academic freedom. University staff benefiting from academic freedom can better advocate for civil and social change, he said.

Malaysia: Level of academic freedom dependent on the government

Suat Yan Lai, of the Malaysian Academic Movement (MOVE), said that academic freedom in the Asia-Pacific region depends on a country's type of government, be it a democracy or an authoritarian regime.

In Malaysia, she said, education unions have joined NGOs to push back the declaration of state of emergency made by the government following the COVID-19 outbreak, in reality an attempt to stay in power. This declaration undermines citizens' political and civil rights, she said.

MOVE has had the support from colleagues of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) of Australia, Suat Yan Lai recalled.

In Hong Kong, she said, imprisonment is the sanction for those exerting their freedom of speech. With the COVID-19 pandemic raging, a Beijing-imposed National Security Law (NSL) has been enforced: many protest slogans have been banned, a Hong Kong “national anthem” forbidden, and protesters have been arrested for holding up blank pieces of paper. The NSL is vague, outlawing secession, subversion, “terrorism”, and “collusion with foreign forces”, and forbidding people from “inciting hatred against the central and Hong Kong government”.

Colombia: international and national recognition of academic freedom and related rights

Pedro Hernández, President of the Asociación Sindical de Profesores Universitarios (ASPU) in Colombia, one of the most dangerous countries for academics, also addressed the session. He mentioned how the report by the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Irene Khan, acknowledged the special role played by academics and academic institutions in democratic society. It also notes that, without academic freedom, societies lose one of the essential elements of democratic self-governance.

For him, academic freedom means freedom of speech, freedom of critical research, critical thinking. These are rights recognised nationally and internationally. And “members of academic institutions must be protected from military bullets”.

He insisted that, in Latin America, in the higher education sector, there is another pandemic, linked to the COVID-19 one: precarious conditions for academics.

“We need more respect for higher education institutions for more democracy,” he stressed.

He also warned about the increasing power of transnational organisations providing education services. This situation leads to issues such as surveillance of classrooms and a drastic reduction in

the number of teachers, he said.

In a new report, he noted, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights explains that it is generally concerned about the rise of unemployment, as economies shrink because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the pandemic itself, he condemned the fact that researchers in Brazil who criticised the way the public health crisis has been dealt with have been harassed.

“We will continue pushing for freedom of research, of critical thinking, and teaching people critical thinking and critical citizenship, teaching students democratic values,” he concluded.

Ghana: Union action able to safeguard academic freedom from governmental interference

In Ghana and West Africa, there is academic freedom and freedom of association, and students can study whatever they want to study, stressed Charles Ofori Marfo, President of the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG).

He explained that, in Ghana, there is a system allowing teachers and academics to follow a programme approved by the government and to work within national committees. Higher education staff can research the topics they want and give the classes they want, he said.

However, the government tried to pass legislation that would have allowed the Education Ministry to give universities orders and to interfere in their operation, especially concerning the financing of higher education institutions.

Through strike and diverse actions, the UTAG was able to force the government to respect academic freedom and abandon the bill.

This respect for academic freedom and basic human and trade union rights does not exist in Eastern Africa, in countries like Sudan, Uganda, and Cameroon, he added. In these countries, it is safer to be cautious and not oppose the government views in order to avoid harassment and trouble.

“With the COVID-19 pandemic, we experience many challenges to teaching, in Ghana and throughout Africa,” he insisted. “With no proper equipment, unstable electricity and Internet connection, we cannot provide quality education online.”

Education International: International solidarity with academics in Myanmar and Hong Kong

In her concluding remarks, Education International Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst mentioned the “thought-provoking” research by Anna Hogan and Ben Williamson, [Pandemic Privatisation in Higher Education: Edtech & University Reform](#). “Both the students’ enthusiastic reaction to the report as well as the university sector’s assessment of the pandemic have shown that it is impossible to rely exclusively on edtech.”

“We need to decide on how we, as the educators, should move forward to ensure that edtech is led by our profession,” she said.

She reminded attendees that defending academic freedom was already high on the agenda for Education International and its affiliates in 2019, during Education International’s Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, with two resolutions adopted on higher education and academic freedom. Holst was adamant that, “in today’s world, the threats and violations have probably only increased. Part of

the reason is the new threats related to online teaching, but another part can only be explained by the sad nature of repressive regimes to use a crisis like COVID to their own advantage”.

Holst further said that “recent cases in Hong Kong and Myanmar show that repressive regimes won’t let go of a chance to accuse academics and teachers to ‘influence’ their students’ minds with liberal/progressive ideas”. Also, in Turkey, institutional nominations have been bypassed by direct appointments and/or dismissals directly from the President.

Holst adjourned the meeting by calling for support for democracy in Myanmar and Hong Kong. In support, participants turned on their cameras and held up 3 fingers – a sign of solidarity in the protests in Myanmar.

To access the full report: Pandemic Privatisation in Higher Education: Edtech & University Reform, by Hogan, A. & Williamson, B. (2021), please click [here](#). The executive summary can be found [here](#).

Watch the presentation of the report [here](#)

2. Fiji: Trade union solidarity as two cyclones hit Pacific island

Education unions in the Pacific region have stepped in to support Fijian colleagues in a country devastated by two tropical cyclones in December and January.

On 17 December 2020 in Fiji, a Category 5 severe tropical cyclone, Yasa, hit the island of Vanua Levu, north of the capital city, Suva. It caused hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of damage to infrastructure, buildings, schools, homes, and agricultural areas, according to the Government.

According to Govind Singh, General Secretary of the Council of Pacific Education (COPE), the UNICEF Pacific December report said an estimated 93,000 people, including 32,500 children, were directly affected.

In addition, Fiji’s Education Ministry performed an assessment that showed that 85 schools were damaged or destroyed by the cyclone. That means that around 1,000 students from these schools in Bua, Macuata, and Cakaudrove were affected, said Govind Singh. He added that, in these areas, most of the homes of teachers were badly damaged or destroyed.

High-level collaboration around disaster relief

While visiting the devastated island, in Labasa, the Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) General Secretary, Agni Deo Singh, met with the Minister for Education, Rosy Akbar, TISI Sangam – an organisation promoting Indian language and culture – and other stakeholders and private sector organisations interested in supporting students in the areas affected by Yasa.

The meeting was an opportunity to collaborate to assist and support the affected areas in an efficient and effective way.

Schools resumed on 18 January, with many children accommodated in tents hastily put up by the Australian Defence Forces, noted Govind Singh. School accommodation facilities have yet to be rebuilt, and the boarding students depend on the generosity of relatives and friends living near the schools.

It was agreed that FTU and TISI Sangam would give school backpacks for around 1,600 children in seven primary schools and one college. Each pack consisted of stationery and school bags. These supplies ensured that children were equipped with the resources they needed to attend school, learn, and grow, Govind Singh reported.

He also stressed that many of the affected children are located in remote communities, where most of these families had lost all their crops, large numbers of livestock, as well as their homes. The majority are still living in temporary shelters or tents provided by AUSAID, and basic needs like water or electricity will take weeks – in some cases months – to restore.

Practical support from trade union

“The opening of schools in areas affected by the tropical cyclone was an important step in the recovery process for our children,” said the COPE General Secretary. “Going back to school will provide a sense of security and help children overcome the emotional trauma and devastation caused by tropical cyclone Yasa.”

As they did for children of parents who lost jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FTU is planning to provide lunches to four primary schools and one secondary school in the worst-affected area for three days a week for four weeks. It is anticipated that other schools will have similar requests to improve attendance and avoid school absenteeism and dropouts, Govind Singh highlighted.

On behalf of development partners - other Education International member organisations in the region: the New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI), the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA), the Australian Education Union (AEU), the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) – COPE gave financial support to FTU and the Fiji Teachers Association (FTA), for the first round of assistance with stationery for students.

Second natural disaster setback relief efforts from the first one

Unfortunately, a second deadly tropical cyclone, Ana, struck Fiji on 30-31 January. While this cyclone was ranked as a Category 2/3, the heavy rain caused serious floods to both the main islands in the Fiji archipelago. This prevented the country from further recovering from the Yasa catastrophe, Govind Singh said.

The National Disaster Management Office reported that 10,259 people were sheltering in 318 evacuation centres across the country, with 5,776 in Fiji's northern division already badly hit by the December tropical cyclone, Yasa. Torrential rain and strong winds caused severe flooding and widespread damage to buildings, crops, and public infrastructure. Singh added that most of the country has been without electricity since 31 January, and there were also reports of widespread water disruptions.

He went on to explain that schools in Fiji were closed from 29 January and reopened on 8 February with many serving as evacuation centres. However, schools in the Northern Division remain closed until further notice by the Education Ministry. There are still three months remaining in Fiji's cyclone season, which lasts from November to April.

Poverty as area also struggles with pandemic

As was the case after the cyclone Yasa, the COPE solidarity fund, to which development cooperation partners contributed, was used to bring financial assistance for FTU and FTA to be able to work

towards the recovery.

Both Fijian unions have requested further funding to organise a food programme in schools for at least three months, before life returns to some sort of normality, the COPE leader underlined. The significant impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the tropical cyclones leading to massive flooding within a period of two months have aggravated an already precarious situation on the ground, leaving the school population in significant poverty, he concluded.

March

Headlines

1. Nigeria: students and schools must be protected from attacks

Attacks from armed groups against schools and students have been increasing in the last months in Nigeria, where kidnapping for ransom is a widespread criminal enterprise. Nigerian authorities must act swiftly to protect the right to education of children, especially girls.

On Friday 26 February, a large group of unidentified gunmen raided the Government Girl's Secondary School of Jangebe town in the Zamfara State in a night attack. They abducted 279 girls from the boarding school and took them to the forest. All girls were eventually released on Tuesday night after four days of fear and terror.

Education International had [immediately condemned the attack](#) and called for the immediate release of the schoolgirls kidnapped in Jangebe and all children currently in the hands of armed groups in Nigeria.

"All children have the right to education in a safe environment free of violence and harassment. We must especially defend the right of girls to a quality education at every stage", stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International. He added, "The Nigerian government must act immediately to prevent such attacks on schools, to protect the lives of children and to ensure their right to education."

Kidnapping is a too common issue in the north of Nigeria where extremist groups and criminal gangs resort to abduction in the hope of extracting ransom. The payment of such ransom is controversial in the country and authorities have repeatedly said that they don't negotiate with armed groups. The armed groups are more and more targeting schoolchildren and teachers.

The Jangebe attack was the third in a series of mass kidnappings targeting students and schoolchildren in Northern Nigeria in the last few months. In December, 344 boys were taken from their boarding school in the town of Kankara, in Katsina State and were released after 6 days. Another attack against a boarding school in Kagara occurred on 17 February, resulting in the death of a student and the abduction of 27 students, 3 teachers and 12 family members of the school personnel. All were freed 10 days later on 27 February.

[UN Secretary-General António Guterres strongly condemned the recent attacks](#) and reiterated that "attacks on schools and other educational facilities constitute a grave violation of the rights of children and human rights more broadly." He further stressed that "schools must remain safe spaces for children to learn without fear of violence."

These attacks are a painful reminder to the international community that 7 years after the notorious abduction of 276 girls by the Islamist group Boko Haram in the town of Chibok in Borno State, it's still not safe for students and schoolchildren to simply go to school in Northern Nigeria. In 2014, the events in Chibok sparked global outrage. While some of the girls were released following a global online campaign #BringBackOurGirls, more than 100 are still missing today.

Devastating impact on the right to education

Beyond the direct risk of violence and exploitation faced by abducted children and teachers, such attacks on schools have a devastating impact on the right to education of children, especially of girls. Many children have not returned to class in fear of new attacks and some schools have closed.

UN experts recently stressed that even after their release, victims are “at [an] increased risk of exploitation, trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of violence.” Those children often lack the necessary support from the authorities to overcome the trauma and recover their physical and mental well-being.

Last week, the Education International's Africa Regional Committee passed a resolution condemning the abductions and calling on the Nigerian Government to take immediate action to prevent attacks on schools and other education institutions.

Education International's Regional Director for Africa, Dennis Sinyolo, has called on the Nigerian Government to break the unending cycle of abductions and protect students and educators from attack: “Education authorities across the continent should ensure teaching and learning environments that are supportive, comfortable, safe, and secure for all. This is a fundamental prerequisite if we want to achieve quality education and protect children’s right to education.”

2. Biggest Development Cooperation Network meeting ever showcases union solidarity in action

Solidarity, joint action, climate education, and human rights were amongst the headline topics addressed at Education International’s Development Cooperation Network.

From 2-3 March, more than 150 participants from 60 Education International member organisations in 43 countries, gathered under the theme “Union Solidarity in Action. Strong in times of Crisis”. The meeting heard encouraging stories of union solidarity in action through a year of crisis and addressed needs and plans for the future.

Solidarity to achieve objectives

While the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way unions and the Development Cooperation Network work together, “solidarity has not stopped,” said Education International’s Deputy General Secretary, Haldis Holst. Solidarity will remain, she said, “no matter what the situation after the COVID-19 outbreak will look like”.

Holst stressed the importance of joint action to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, since the pandemic had deepened already pre-existing challenges. She also underlined EI’s campaign to provide educators with vaccines as frontline workers. Joint action could also advance achievement of the political objectives adopted by Education International at its 2019 World Congress.

Climate change priority

She also highlighted how climate education is one of Education International’s additional priorities. “The 26th UN Climate Change Conference in November 2021 in Scotland will have a special focus on climate education and Education International will launch a climate campaign on Earth Day in April 2021, with a capacity building component.”

Trade union and human rights priority

Holst also condemned increasing attacks on trade union and human rights around the globe. Mentioning the example of Myanmar, she explained that the “state of emergency opens the door to authoritarian rulers. We need to stand together to show solidarity and share the most precious assets we have: people, people with experience and knowledge”.

She concluded by encouraging participants to discuss “how we can collectively support each other and stand together to build capacity and solidarity”.

Education International’s COVID-19 Response Fund

On the first day of the Network, debates focused on “Taking stock of actions in 2020”. Participants heard about the impact of actions undertaken thanks to the Education International’s Solidarity Fund – established to assist member organisations in emergencies such as natural disasters, famine, war, persecution, or other life-threatening situations.

Participants also underlined how [Education International’s COVID-19 Response Fund](#) had helped educators worldwide to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in their communities and strengthened their unions. This special fund was established to assist member organisations in times of COVID-19 and receives contributions from affiliates. In total, 26 Education International affiliates had contributed to the fund, and 26 were assisted.

The tangible support brought to education unions via the COVID-19 Response Fund had four key components: visibility, capacity, social dialogue, and gender dimension.

Education International’s regional offices also reported on their actions and plans of action in terms of development cooperation.

Together, we are stronger!

On the second day, 3 March, participants addressed issues around the theme, “Stronger together. Building synergies for better results in 2021”.

They drafted plans and priorities for 2021 and focused on joint actions covering three areas: capacity building; communications, strengthening of the network; and solidarity actions.

Follow-up meetings with participants will be held to continue this work thematically and regionally.

3. COVID-19 impact continues to affect terms and conditions in education

Deepening inequalities across the education sector were revealed at a recent Education International webinar. Affiliates shared experiences of working to improve the terms and working conditions of teachers, academics, and education support personnel. The webinar aimed to inform Education International’s work in this area during the current public health crisis.

EI: Collective thinking around possible responses and policies to support education unions

Welcoming over 150 participants from 55 countries, Education International Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst stressed that this online event was “a great opportunity to share and learn from colleagues across borders”. One year into the pandemic, it was also beneficial “to have an overview and share what we know of the impact of this pandemic on our members’ terms and conditions of work”.

Holst encouraged participants to read the many stories collected by Education International, documenting the impact of this public health crisis on teachers and education support personnel.

Increasing inequality

Holst quoted a blog by Dianne Woloschuk, member of Education International's Executive Board, "[Take the Long View: Scaling the Staircase of Women's Equality](#)": "The pandemic has caused no shortage of ill effects, especially for women. According to UN Women, though women make up 39 per cent of employed persons globally, they suffered 54 per cent of the job losses. Seventy per cent of the health and social care workforce are women. Closures of schools and institutions of higher learning hit education support personnel, early childhood educators and women in the higher education sector hard."

Inequality has increased during the pandemic, Holst acknowledged, adding that rights are under threat, as is the case with contract teachers in [Morocco](#).

One year ago, she said, Education International conducted a survey to assess the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its members and educators. This survey showed that the COVID-19 crisis affected membership groups differently: those hit the hardest were education workers in private institutions, higher education personnel and researchers, supply teachers, early childhood education workers, and immigrant teachers.

A more recent survey by Education International on the future of work highlighted the concerns of education workers related to the digital world in which they are working, depending on access to digital tools. "We know that there is also a divide between those who have access or not. We know that there are teachers and education workers who are tackling new tools they have never worked with before, tackling on-site and online work, having issues with work-private life balance and health concerns. We know there is more work, more pressure for educators, and we must ask ourselves how we address this, as unions, what do we have in our toolbox to help our members."

She mentioned that, while some education unions have opened doors that were closed previously, others have seen doors slammed on their faces more than before. "We want to collect ideas on how we approach this, to know what the opportunities are, and what are the challenges," she said.

Latin America: Unions and citizens bravely fighting for their rights and education

In her presentation, Fatima da Silva, Vice-President of the Education International Latin America Regional Committee, stressed that Brazil is undergoing a lack of government. The federal government is in denial about the pandemic and behaves as if it does not exist, she said.

"If there are fewer deaths now, it is because the Supreme Court has called for decentralised action, it was the only way to proceed in Brazil to take action against the COVID-19 crisis. Over 3,000 deaths per day are due to Brazil being a federal state," she said.

States in the north-east of Brazil have formed a consortium to deal with the pandemic, with scientists and other entities regarding education and labour issues.

Da Silva's union, the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE) is "fighting with the parents, with the students, trying to give a voice to all of us in order to go back to school in a safe way".

Up to now, the elite has demanded that the economy remain open and has oppose measures taken against the spread of the virus by local government. But now, people on higher incomes are experiencing a lack of beds in hospitals, so they are finally pressuring the government to modify its actions.

“Only with the current federal government gone will we have another policy to preserve lives,” she said. “We are in a conflict with authorities, fighting for executive power, for judicial power and law-making. In the middle of this fight, people are dying of hunger because of huge unemployment rates.”

It has been a difficult time in terms of labour relations, she explained. In many municipalities, teachers have been laid off, with a huge impact in the private sector in Brazil. Workwise, educators work much more now, sometimes burning out.

However, there is hope, she underlined, thanking Education International and its affiliates that demanded a fair trial for and an immediate release of former Brazilian President Lula da Silva.

Da Silva concluded by saying that, across Latin America, people are fighting bravely for their rights and education.

Africa: Struggle to ensure quality remote education and respect for basic rights

The Chairperson of the Education International Africa Regional Committee (EIARC), Christian Addai Poku, presented the results of a study undertaken for the Education International Africa region, “COVID-19 and education: How education unions are responding”. Fifty-four unions from 34 African countries took part in the survey.

The study showed that:

- Almost all governments decided to close schools and tertiary education institutions as part of the strategies to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Distance education programmes have not been effective – Only a privileged few have access to online education
- Sexual violence, teenage pregnancies, and early marriages have increased
- Teachers lack necessary skills, training, and support to deliver distance and virtual teaching and learning
- Social dialogue has not always been regular, genuine, or effective
- Educators and their unions have taken concrete measures to respond to the crisis
- Too few measures have been taken by governments to ensure the health and wellbeing of teachers, education support personnel, and students

Teachers and education support personnel were affected in various degrees in terms of salary and conditions of service, Addai Poku said. He highlighted how 92 per cent of African education unions engaged in activities to raise awareness among members, 72 per cent in social dialogue with the government, and 38 per cent developed tools for their members.

In a majority of cases, African unions were consulted, and their views sometimes taken into consideration, he reported.

He went on to condemn increased attacks on schools and kidnapping of teachers, education support personnel, and students in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Ethiopia.

He also mentioned severe attacks against human and trade union rights in Kenya and Djibouti.

He recalled that, at its last meeting, the [EIARC had urged regional governments to act swiftly to ensure decent living and working conditions for educators](#). The committee adopted three key resolutions to protect quality education and teachers:

- [On the need to ensure quality education for all during and beyond crises](#)
- [On the situation in Ethiopia](#)
- [On the abduction of students, teachers, and ESP in the Niger State of Nigeria](#)

“Education International should continue to provide member organisations with capacity building, resources, tools and evidence, condemn attacks on school, kidnapping of students and killing of teachers and education support personnel and push governments to act,” the African education leader said.

He also called on Education International’s affiliates to make union renewal a priority and denounce violations of trade unions.

Education International: Solidarity

Summarising main takeaways from this online meeting, Holst explained that Education International “will take everything you have contributed, analyse it and see what we can do”.

She stressed the need to show solidarity for each other when colleagues are in difficult situations, as individuals or as member organisations, as is the case for the Kenya National Union of Teachers, under threat of being dismantled.

“Let’s continue to voice each other’s challenges, voice support, and we will continue to be strong together,” she concluded.

This was the second in a series of Education International webinars to take place in recent months on issues related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. The third webinar in the series will be held on 6 May and will focus on the implications of the pandemic on contractual conditions of employment for teachers and education support personnel.

Headlines

1. Europe: Study on industrial relations and privatisation

A study for the ETUCE, EI's European region, showed the impact of market ideology and management practices and privatisation on industrial relations and social dialogue. In addition to looking at the evolution of EU policy in the past decade, researchers studied different methods and results of industrial relations in Francophone Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Sweden.

Although the study placed national developments in the context of European education policy trends, similar "reforms" and conflicts can be found in other regions. Regardless of the varying national responses, changes in education take place in the context of a larger ideological shift. Governments increasingly promote the market and its actors in general and transplant private sector management approaches and methods and business involvement into public services.

Although the EU has stressed the importance of education to society and the economy, it has, at the same time, encouraged the involvement of private business in education policy, design, monitoring, evaluation, and delivery. Research also showed the impact of "new public management" in all countries studied. The timeframe of the study is the last decade.

As shown in the study, there have been persistent austerity measures, liberalisation, decentralisation and managerialist reforms in the education sector. They have focused on individual performance management, results-based accountability, and greater involvement of private actors in the provision of education. Such reforms are individualising the workplace. They may weaken collective bargaining and its solidarity and equity impact. In some countries, there has been a slide towards decentralised bargaining with growing disparities among school personnel, including at school level. Such shifts may limit the scope of bargaining and foster de-humanisation, fragmentation, and competition among workers.

The research shows variations in the impact of social dialogue and union bargaining power depending on national traditions and government attitudes. However, regardless of whether trade unions are at the table, similar reforms are on the agenda.

The full study, "Rhetoric or game changer: Social dialogue and industrial relations in education amidst EU governance and privatisation in Europe" can be found [here](#).

An Executive Summary of the research can be found [here](#).

A glossary of terms can be found [here](#).

2. Democracy in danger in Haiti: education unions mobilise

Despite the massive mobilisation of civil society, with the education unions in the front line, President Jovenel Moïse is eroding Haitian democracy a little more every day. The right to organise and the right to education are no longer respected. The country is sinking into violence, under the indifferent gaze of the international community. EI is today launching a solidarity campaign with its affiliates in Haiti.

For many months, Haiti has been threatened by widespread chaos, marked by the violence of armed gangs and the questioning of democratic foundations by the highest authority in the country.

Attacks on democracy are consecutive

Despite his presidential mandate ending on February 7, 2021, Jovenel Moïse has decided to hang on to power for one more year. While Parliament has ceased to function for over a year due to lack of elections, the country is now governed by decree. Jovenel Moïse also plans to hold a referendum aimed at changing the Constitution, even though this is explicitly prohibited by the country's Constitution. Faced with the proliferation of these authoritarian abuses, many trade unions and civil society organisations fear a concentration of powers in the hands of the President of the Republic. They believe that the risk of seeing Haiti fall once again into dictatorship is real and regret the far too timid reactions of the international community, and in particular of the representatives of the Core Group*.

Widespread violence sows chaos

Violence is now pervasive in Haiti. All unions and human rights organisations have seen the same thing as the use of armed gangs is enacted by the authorities. The kidnappings, assassinations and rapes perpetrated by these gangs are increasing alarmingly.

This widespread violence paralyses the country's activities and severely restricts the fundamental rights and freedoms of students, teachers, trade unionists and the entire Haitian population. The increase in the price of basic foodstuffs is also leading to a deterioration in the living conditions of many people, in one of the countries already among the poorest on the planet.

Significant impact on the right to education

Like all EI affiliates in Haiti, René Prével Joseph, Secretary General of the *Fédération Nationale des Travailleurs en?Education?et en Culture*(FENATEC), is seriously concerned about the impact of the security situation on children, teachers and on the right to education. He describes: "Children are exposed to gang violence on their way to school, one child has even been kidnapped in front of his classmates at the entrance to his school. Schools are closed in some areas for security reasons." In addition, to conclude: "All these facts constitute a brake on the socio-economic development of Haiti, which must necessarily go through education and training."

Magalie Georges, Secretary General of the *Konfederasyon Nasyonal Anseyan Dayiti*(CNEH), makes the same observation: "School principals are victims of blackmail. The economic situation deprives educational personnel of the necessary resources that can cover the costs of schooling and transport for their children. Teachers become poorer; those in the private education sector are deprived of their salary when schools are closed."

Trade unions are prevented from functioning

The current political and security situation strongly affects the free exercise of essential trade union rights. Roadblocks set up by armed gangs make travel around the country extremely dangerous and difficult. Union officials are no longer able to travel to the provinces to collect membership dues. In addition, union leaders continue to be the target of punitive measures, including arbitrary transfers, preventing them from carrying out their legitimate activities.

In August 2020, the Minister of National Education and Vocational Training Agénor Cadet arbitrarily transferred two union officials who are EI affiliates, Magalie Georges and Georges Wilbert Franck. Despite the massive mobilisation of Haitian teachers, on strike throughout the month of September 2020, and the actions taken by EI and its affiliates, the minister never reversed his decision. "Even today the Minister of National Education continues to violate the rights of trade unionists by transferring them to very remote areas. With these new waves of repression, the bridges are completely cut between the Ministry and all unions", comments Georges Wilbert Franck, Coordinator of the *Union Nationale des Normaliens/Normaliennes et Educateurs/Educatrices d'Haïti*(UNNOEH).

Trade unions mobilise for democracy

Without being able to dialogue with the Minister of Education, EI affiliates had to reconsider their strategy. Education unions have joined forces with civil society and human rights organisations to demand respect for democratic values and the rights and freedoms of the Haitian people.

"Faced with such barbarism which currently reigns in Haiti, the trade union sector had no other choice but to engage in resistance in an attempt to reconquer the democratic spaces essential to the exercise of fundamental freedoms", explains Georges Wilbert Franck.

Several large-scale strikes and demonstrations have been organised since the start of the year, but continued mobilisation is made difficult by the security situation. In addition, EI affiliates and civil society organisations believe that mobilisation and actions at the national level will not be enough to end the attacks on democracy. They are calling for a much stronger reaction from the international community, in particular from members of the Core Group, to condemn Jovenel Moïse's retention in power and dictatorial abuses.

Call for solidarity from EI

Education International is launching a campaign today to strengthen support for its Haitian affiliates in their struggle for democracy, the right to education and freedom of association in Haiti. EI will mobilise on several fronts with all of its affiliates around the world, in particular by strengthening its action with United Nations bodies, stepping up the pressure on the Haitian authorities and the countries of the Core Group, as well as development cooperation actions in support of its members.

** The Core Group is made up of representatives of the most influential diplomats in Haiti: the Ambassadors of Germany, Brazil, Canada, Spain, the United States of America, France, European Union, the Special Representative of the Organization of American States and the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations.*

3. EI and OECD launch Principles for Effective and Equitable Educational Recovery

How will we ensure effective and equitable educational recovery from COVID19? Education International and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed ten key principles which every country can use.

The paper, 'Principles for Effective and Equitable Educational Recovery' (PEEER) has been agreed jointly by EI and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They will facilitate the collaboration of education authorities, the teaching profession and their organisations to reshape education systems after the pandemic to reach greater levels of educational quality and

equity.

The 10 Principles are:

1. Keep schools open as much and as safely as possible.
2. Ensure equity and align resources with needs.
3. Provide a remote learning infrastructure which is designed to reach all students.
4. Support teachers in their professional lives.
5. Enable teachers and parents to support learners.
6. Provide targeted support to meet students' learning and social and emotional needs.
7. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders.
8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities.
9. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation.
10. Learn from national and international evidence.

"Today's launch of our joint road map for educational recovery is a special moment. My organisation, Education International, which represents teacher unions across the world and the OECD, one of the world's most powerful inter-governmental organisations, have come together to agree ten principles for reconstructing the world's education systems," stated Susan Hopgood, Education International President.

"This pandemic has shown the fundamental role of schools in our societies, and that teachers must be supported and empowered. From the development of new educational technologies to meeting the social and emotional needs of students, it has to be schools, and the educators at their core, who are trusted to lead," said David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

"Educational recovery can only come with teachers and school staff at the centre, with fully funded educational systems, equity as a core principle, and education unions as key partners," Edwards added.

The 'Principles for Effective and Equitable Educational Recovery' (PEEER) can be [accessed here](#).

Headlines

1. Education unions' success in improving working conditions and status for the profession despite COVID-19 crisis

Around 170 education unionists from 55 countries shared success stories in ensuring decent working conditions for education workers in an online meeting organised by Education International.

On 6 May, Education International invited member organisations to explore how unions have won additional rights for educators during the pandemic.

Moderating the virtual event, the executive director of the *National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa*(NAPTOSA), Basil Manuel, stressed that while extra activities are required from educators during COVID-19, it is also a good time for them to reclaim their autonomy and professional growth.

Four speakers from member organisations presented successful local campaigns. They detailed how they managed to negotiate progressive agreements resulting in improved working conditions and status for the profession.

Sweden: Social dialogue is crucial during the pandemic

"Talking about success is good for the spirits nowadays", said *Läraryrket*'s president and member of Education International's Executive Board, Johanna Jaara Åstrand.

Underlining the importance of maintaining social dialogue during the pandemic, she said that Swedish educators had demanded three things primarily:

1. Going to work without fear of being infected.
2. Safety measures to be carried out in all schools.
3. Reasonable expectations, aligned with existing resources.

Union representatives had called for protective closures of schools when needed, she added.

Among other successes, her union was able to secure compensation for education workers unable to work, to get training and counselling for members, more ICT support, and more cleaning personnel.

Läraryrket also demanded that COVID-19 be considered as a workplace injury.

"As we foresee this will continue until the second half of the year, we will make sure that social dialogue will continue to benefit educators, schools, and children and make the teaching profession an attractive one," Jaara Åstrand insisted.

Argentina: Agreement for educators to be extended to all workers nationally

"In Argentina, we made a huge leap forward," said Eduardo Pereyra, international relations secretary of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina*(CTERA).

“From March last year, teachers had to work online, we had to learn something we were not familiar with. So, teachers saw their workload increase tremendously and did not have enough time for everything,” he said.

CTERA decided to work on an agreement with the Government and the Education Minister. Among other issues, the agreement recognises the increased workload for teachers in the context of the pandemic. It guarantees that teachers will retain their jobs; guarantees that teachers can take leave if sick; recognises that teachers need time to disconnect; covers for any risk due to the profession, so that educators can take leave; guarantees that teachers can be members of trade unions and organise themselves; guarantees that teachers get enough resources and training; and guarantees that teachers have adequate ICT/Internet infrastructure.

Pereyra explained that this agreement contributed to a wider national agreement to be applied to workers in the entire country.

“We will go back to on-site education but, before that, we will get together with public authorities to guarantee the health and safety of educators – and students – in the workplace,” he added. In early 2021, his union agreed that a priority of the country should be the vaccination of teachers.

Bahrain: Use of social media beneficial for educators’ terms and conditions

The vice-president of the Bahrain Teachers' Association and member of Education International's Executive Board, Jalila al-Salman, underlined that the use of social media was the main instrument for campaigning and advertising BTA's policy on reopening schools. The union managed to make major breakthroughs although the EI affiliate has been illegal for the last ten years in Bahrain. Through networking with like minded allies, BTA managed to push policies within the Bahrain's Education Ministry, even on the distribution of students in classes.

She highlighted how Education International's COVID-19 Solidarity Fund has been used to buy laptops and Internet connections, supporting remote education in the country.

Mexico: educators’ proposals to reinforce the union and building a strong base for the future

Raymundo Valdivia of the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*(SNTE) described how his union joined forces with colleagues throughout Mexico to ensure educators' health and safety. SNTE tried to find ways for teachers and students to return to school safely, he said.

SNTE's goal “was to go back to the basics of trade unions movement in Mexico, promoting and defending basic rights of all teachers in Mexico”.

The union raised awareness about the challenges brought to education by the COVID-19 pandemic, and parents also got involved in its activities

“We decided to reinforce our union. We tried to concentrate on strengthening social dialogue in the whole country, and on building a key foundation for the future,” Valdivia acknowledged.

He said that SNTE members made one million proposals, which were then sent to the President and relevant ministries.

He was pleased that his union could contribute to increasing educators' salaries, achieving social security for teachers, ensuring that all teachers are vaccinated, and enhancing ICT structures for them.

Themes

Participants then engaged in thematic conversations through six group sessions:

1. Guaranteeing COVID-related healthy and safe workplaces
2. Training and supporting with digital teaching, guidelines around technology introduction, issues of workload
3. Improving employment conditions, wage protection, benefits
4. Defending professional autonomy and academic freedom
5. Negotiating with private employers
6. Teachers reaching out to each other

In his conclusion, the moderator highlighted that the pandemic increased teachers' workload and also increased the challenge of providing quality education for all, e.g., learning how to use new tools and technologies to teach, ensuring safe working environment.

Positive lessons are sometimes overshadowed by other issues, but teachers could look back and say that COVID-19 did some good for the profession, he said.

“Suddenly, we do not feel alone anymore, as more and more of us have been in touch with colleagues from the other side of the world. This webinar allowed us to shed a light on things colleagues are doing and did so well around the globe,” he concluded.

This was the third in a series of Education International webinars to take place in recent months on issues related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education.

The [previous webinar](#) in the series focused on ways COVID-19 continues to affect terms and conditions in education.

2. Palestine and Israel: Education International condemns all acts of violence against children and civilians

On behalf of teachers and education workers around the world, Education International condemns all acts of violence against children and civilians.

Education International, an organisation with Israeli and Palestinian members, calls on the international community and the United Nations to ask all the parties involved to respect a ceasefire and ensure the protection of all civilians.

EI will be supporting its member organisations in Israel and Palestine as they defend human and workers' rights and promote dialogue involving civil society as the path to ensure progress and alleviate the suffering of people.

According to reports from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, recent violence and air strikes have resulted in the death of at least 26 people, including nine children. According to the Palestinian Red

Crescent 520 people have been injured.

[BBC](#) reports that at least 212 people, including 61 children, have now died in Gaza, and 10, including two children, in Israel.

The UN Security Council is due to hold its fourth emergency meeting on the violence on 18 May.

Education International calls on the international community to respect the right of all children and adults to safe and secure learning and teaching environments where students can develop and learn and teachers work in freedom and security.

EI urgently calls for compliance of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 which calls for an immediate, lasting, and fully respected ceasefire.

Education International reiterates the statement of its 2019 World Congress which urges both Israelis and Palestinians to:

“Renounce violence and commit to engage in direct negotiations. EI recognizes that agreement on the status of Jerusalem is central to resolving the conflict, and underlines the urgent and imperative need for the international community to support, in every way possible, the realization of a peaceful and just solution”.

In a week of devastating attacks against school children, teachers, and civilians in Afghanistan and Russia and continued violence against schools communities in Nigeria, Education International demands that all actors respect the integrity of schools as safe and secure environments for learning and growth.

Resource:

[EI's Declaration on Schools as Safe Sanctuaries](#) contains seven articles, each articulating a call to action from the world community. They are:

1. Reaffirm the commitment to the principle of the right to education in safety
2. Take practical measures to ensure protection
3. End impunity for attacks on students, teachers, academics, all other education personnel and education facilities
4. Strengthen monitoring of attacks and efforts to end impunity
5. Prioritise action and share expertise on resilience and recovery
6. Make education an agent for peace
7. Support campaigns of solidarity.

3. World Education Support Personnel Day: Pandemic, Privatisation and Public Education

Education International fixed 16 May of every year as a day to recognise Education Support Personnel (ESP). The day focuses on rights and status of these education workers, has called attention internationally to the essential role of ESP.

COVID19 has brought recognition and respect for front-line workers who have taken risks and worked hard to protect health and to ensure vital services in the midst of a deadly pandemic. Among

the workers who have seen their role and contributions placed in the limelight and praised as never before, are Education Support Personnel (ESP). It is not clear, however, if this support for ESP will continue after the health crisis is over.

ESP and the Pandemic

ESP were not often visible to the general public prior to the pandemic. Teachers, students and their families however, have always relied on ESP.

All those who have contact with ESP in classrooms, administration, canteens, in school libraries, cleaning and security, maintenance, transport or other school services, know they are central to the functioning of schools and a quality education.

ESP have always been critical to positive and safe learning environments and to making sure that education institutions function effectively, however, even inside education systems their contributions have not always been fully appreciated. Too often they do not have access to quality training and career development and aren't consulted on issues that impact their profession.

During school closures around the world, ESP provided meals to students and families, kept school facilities clean and safe, and worked tirelessly to address the mental health of their students. They have delivered books, set up wi-fi stations, and provided support to students in need.

Unfortunately, the wave of public appreciation of front-line workers rarely took the form of better compensation or working conditions. In some countries, there were temporary bonuses.

Many ESP remained overworked and underpaid. Some had little or no job security and had precarious contracts. In some countries, they were laid off without compensation during school and university closures.

ESP and Recovery

In a post-pandemic period, recovery will depend on additional public spending to boost the economy and public services that have been strained by the health, economic and associated crises. When that is beyond national means, it will require solidarity to move the world forward together.

Just as universal availability of vaccines is essential for a global health recovery, international solidarity is the key to a sustainable social and economic recovery.

As schools return to in-person learning, the availability of ESP in sufficient numbers and with the required tools to maintain appropriate levels of sanitation is key to successful reopening.

Unfortunately, many governments are already planning stable or reduced budgets for public services. Some recognise the need to stimulate industries that have been affected by the pandemic, but fail to understand the crucial social, economic, and other contributions to recovery that education and other public services represent.

Privatisation and public-private partnerships (PPP) have often been embraced by governments in times of austerity, although they often neither reduce costs nor improve quality. In education, privatisation, commercialisation, and PPPs have taken many forms: private and for profit schools; increased dependence on private companies for policy or curriculum; or in the design and operation of standardised testing and evaluation systems. Private firms have assumed some education responsibilities, including through partnerships with EdTech companies to digitalise education. For education services performed by ESP, it has often taken the form of sub-contracting work.

ESP and Privatisation

In the austerity period that followed the 2008-2009 financial and economic crisis, some education systems contracted out services such as food, transport, cleaning, and security. This privatisation was often encouraged by international financial institutions, especially the World Bank.

Private companies that provide these services may be local or national or multinational. To give an example, the French-based company Sodexo operates canteens and other food services in both the private and public sectors. According to their 2020 annual report, 19 per cent of their revenue comes from schools and universities (reduced in that year due to school closures). There are also multinational companies delivering cleaning, security, and transportation services.

ESP, even if they are working for private contractors, are still part of the school community, but that relationship may become more tenuous with outsourcing.

Depending on national laws and practices, ESP may or may not be able to transfer their employment to private companies. ESP workers may or may not be covered by collective agreements. If they are covered by such agreements, they are often agreements in food services or transport, or cleaning or other sectors rather than education. In many cases, their links to schools can be severed if they are re-assigned to jobs in other workplaces.

EI General Secretary David Edwards, explains that, “for ESP, like for workers in other education sectors, recovery from the pandemic holds opportunities as well as dangers. Boosting investment in ESP can extend the reach and improve the quality of education.

Governments must understand that quality education requires funding. Contracting out their responsibilities for public education may seem like a cheap answer, but it is not a good investment.”

Fostering positive, safe learning environments to ensure that educational institutions function effectively for all students requires ESP that is supported, compensated and empowered to advocate for their profession and for their students.

4. Israel and Palestine: Education International calls for immediate action to ensure lasting peace

While a ceasefire is critical to end this month's violence between Israel and Hamas, it cannot lead to a lasting and permanent peace if the underlying causes of the violence remain unresolved. This is the moment for ending both the occupation and the blockade. It is critically important for rebuilding to

begin immediately, but that rebuilding must occur on a solid, democratic and rights-respecting ground.

EI deplores the fact that since the 10th of May, Israeli airstrikes have killed 248 civilians, among them 58 children. Conversely, Hamas rockets have killed 10 Israeli civilians and two children. EI mourns all these civilian losses. We deplore the destruction of schools on both sides, and the conversion of scores more from centers of learning into emergency shelters housing displaced people.

We also deplore the fact that Hamas' strategy is to directly send rockets into civilian centers, which goes against all ethical and moral norms and international laws. However, the high numbers of death and destruction to innocent bystanders from Israel's military strikes into civilian targets is also unacceptable and unethical, even if it is targeting Hamas within the civilian population.

These attacks came after days of violence, in Jerusalem, where hundreds of Palestinians were injured in demonstrations against forced evictions of Palestinian families by the Israeli authorities. The planned evictions, if implemented, would constitute a gross violation of Israel's obligations under international law.

For too many families, the trauma does not end with this ceasefire. Hundreds of families are left mourning the loss of loved ones, far too many of them children. Teachers are mourning their students and vice versa. Thousands of people are homeless and critical infrastructure has been destroyed. A massive humanitarian effort to rebuild after so much destruction must commence immediately and without delay.

Equally important is to recognize that the root causes that have led to the current situation and escalation must be addressed with the same urgency.

Focusing attention on symptoms and not causes resigns all involved to a permanent cycle of escalation and violence instead of coexistence and peace.

EI reiterates its 2019 World Congress statement urging both Israelis and Hamas to: "Renounce violence and commit to engage in direct negotiations. EI recognizes that agreement on the status of Jerusalem is central to resolving the conflict and underlines the urgent and imperative need for the international community to support, in every way possible, the realization of a peaceful and just solution".

Headlines

1. Trade union renewal in Asia-Pacific to advance educators' conditions and representation

Education International's Asia-Pacific office has launched new research "Union Renewal in the Education Sector: Prospects for the Asia-Pacific report". This has provided an opportunity to reflect on the need for education unions to overcome challenges, embrace renewal, and seize opportunities offered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revitalising, strengthening, and enriching the work of teacher unions

Introducing the "comprehensive and insightful" [report by Professor Michele Ford and Dr. Kristy Ward](#), Education International's President, Susan Hopgood, recalled that "we at Education International have learnt from long experience how vital teacher unions are to the welfare and advancement of not just the education system, but of the nation and the society as a whole".

She stressed that teachers also perform an important social and civic role, often undertaking tasks on behalf of the government, and disseminating knowledge and ideas that orient the larger society in a specific direction of progress.

By giving teachers "a voice and a responsible role in matters of social policy and governance, the roots of democracy are strengthened. The best way to utilise their wisdom and make them part of national projects is to let them organise and speak in a coherent, representative voice."

In the Asia-Pacific region, Hopgood noted, teacher unions face both opportunities and challenges. In some places, unions are struggling, in others they are innovating.

For Hopgood, the report suggests strategies and provide examples of how unions can renew or transform with the times to overcome the challenges and seize opportunities. "We hope that this report will stimulate new thinking and discussion on the larger project of union renewal, and lead to more effective interventions on the ground that revitalise, strengthen, and enrich the work of teacher unions worldwide," she said.

Education unions to reflect on their purpose as 21st century organisations

Presenting their research, authors Professor Michele Ford and Dr. Kristy Ward recommended that, for union renewal, it is vital to:

- Increase union membership and participation
- Develop members' skills as professionals and unionists
- Bring together teachers' professional and union identities

They outlined strategic orientations for union renewal, i.e., mutual aid, labour relations, and teachers as professionals and as social justice actors.

They also insisted that the strategic choice must be informed by the local context. Ultimately, a teacher union's role is a political one, given the nature and visibility of education as a public good and

the relationships with governments being a source of social policy – opening some doors, closing others.

Their recommendations for union renewal included:

- Unions to reflect on and clearly articulate their purpose as 21st Century organisations via a structured process of reflection at the school level and via social media.
- Unions to use the results of this reflective exercise to: formulate a clear narrative about their identity and purpose, rank specific policy issues identified by members in terms of their feasibility and potential impact on social policy and teachers' industrial and professional well-being, and identify what success would look like for highly ranked issues.
- Having consulted further with members, unions to select one policy issue that is both important and able to be addressed and develop a targeted and time-bound campaign with clearly identified outcomes to be prioritised at all levels of the union.
- Unions to use this campaign as a laboratory to identify aspects of union structure and processes that could be improved, new ways to engage with external interlocutors (including but not limited to government), apply these insights across the day-to-day work of the union and repeat the process.

Union renewal inspired by social movement unionism

Angelo Gavrielatos, President of the New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF) and former leader of Education International's Global Response to the privatisation and commercialisation of and in education campaign, also shared experiences drawn from that campaign and how it can be one of the effective tools for union renewal.

"Beyond description and analysis, we can define the broader union movement in two categories: economistic unionism, focusing on salary and conditions, and social justice or social movement unionism," he said.

It is important to consider union renewal in terms of social justice or social movement unionism, as it caters to the interests of members more broadly, as citizens, and looks at policy development in a broad societal sense, he said.

Speaking about Education International's Global Response campaign, Gavrielatos stressed that it "seeks to work with unions on the ground to fight the privatisation and commercialisation of education and build activism and solidarity in and across unions".

The campaign's narrative is an understanding that privatisation and commercialisation of education is not in anyone's interest: students, parents, and educators. It is therefore a broad campaign to strengthen quality public education for all and needs the involvement of everyone, Gavrielatos said.

Education unions "need to fulfil a leadership role in building social justice unionism, because we work with others in society to achieve sound social education policy. We all learn from each other as we challenge each other."

ACT: A Filipino union made of practicing teachers and organisers

Sharing experiences regarding engagement with the renewal process, Ruby Ana Bernardo, Regional Secretary of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) in the Philippines insisted that "a strength of

our union is that we are practicing teachers and organisers”.

The union head office is the centre of campaigns, and organisers also give guidance to educators in the 17 ACT regions.

The ACT values young educators, women leadership, sharing of experiences, the democratic process, and inclusive consultations, Bernardo explained.

She also underlined that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the lack of government support for teachers and students, long lockdowns and school closure, ACT found ways to train members or to provide them with personal protective equipment.

The meeting was then divided into sub-regional and DC partner breakout groups. The groups later reported to the plenary.

Unions ensuring that they are relevant to their members

In his concluding remarks, Education International’s General Secretary, David Edwards, highlighted that “the social justice angle is critical. That is what we see during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

He noted that the [Resolution “Education Union Renewal: The New Imperative”](#), adopted at Education International 8th World Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2019, did not plan the public health situation we know today. This resolution, however, mandates Education International’s Executive Board “to identify and facilitate opportunities to share the knowledge, expertise and reflections of EI affiliates in relation to union building and union renewal”.

“That is what we are built for as unions, how we are relevant to members, to help them flourish and not oppressed. Standing still is not an option,” Edwards insisted.

2. Education research in the spotlight: COVID-19 recovery and the status of teachers in 2021

On June 8 and 9, Education International is hosting the annual meeting of its Research Network which brings together education researchers from around the world. The first day of the meeting gave participants the opportunity to share updates on the latest research in the sector and featured a preview of two upcoming reports:

- Education International’s report on the status of teachers and
- a report on educational responses during the COVID-19 crisis and times of disruption in the Africa region.

Research critical to COVID-19 recovery in education

The 16th meeting of Education International’s Research Network comes at a critical time for the global education sector. With the COVID-19 pandemic still taking its toll on education systems worldwide, research into the impact of the crisis at all levels of education is critical to inform the recovery process.

The meeting introduced the latest research from Education International. At the global level, topics included [teaching with technology](#), [pandemic privatisation in higher education](#), [inclusive education](#), [auditing equity in light of the pandemic](#), and the [Education International – OECD principles for an](#)

effective and equitable educational recovery.

At the regional level, research has been conducted on a variety of topics ranging from the provision of education for refugees during the pandemic to tax and education financing, labour rights, and union renewal.

The status of teachers and the teaching profession in 2021

The initial findings of the 2021 edition of Education International's flagship report on the Status of Teachers were presented during the meeting. Authored by Professor Greg Thompson, the triennial report is based on a survey of Education International member organisations around the world.

According to the initial findings, the status of teachers remains a concern in many jurisdictions. Teachers are aware that holding the same qualifications or levels of training as other professions does not always mean the same status, despite the fact that teaching and facilitating learning is complex and requires expertise.

A significant number of unions report that the status of teachers is constantly undermined by the interaction of the following factors:

- Pay is too low, conditions are deteriorating, infrastructure to support teaching and learning is not a priority for government investment.
- There is a lack of respect evident in the ways teachers and teaching are represented by governments and elements of the mass media.
- Work has intensified, and many unions report concerns for their members' wellbeing due to the stress of a more complex job compounded by more and more being expected of teachers.
- Many teachers now face a future of precarious employment as permanent jobs are replaced with casual and short-term contracts.
- Meaningful continuous professional development that is easy to access and provided free of charge remains a priority for many unions.

The report warns that an increasing number of teachers are planning to leave the profession. At the same time, unions are concerned about attracting a new generation of teachers into a profession that is underpaid and undervalued.

The full report on the status of teachers will be published later this year.

[The Research Network took a moment to highlight the attrition crisis in education. Cameras were turned off to illustrate the empty space left behind when a teacher is forced out of the profession.](#)

Africa: Policies on the work of teachers without the input of teachers

Professor Yusuf Sayed presented his report on the response to the pandemic in education systems across eight African countries: Cape Verde, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique and South Africa. Key findings include:

- Governments largely did not consult educators and their unions on COVID-19 measures in schools, thus missing out on precious practitioner insights that would have helped mitigate some of the challenges.
- Unions reported that the continuous professional development provided to teachers during the pandemic was limited and often decontextualised.
- In all countries analysed, psychosocial support for educators was either not provided or limited and ineffective.

Prof Sayed noted that building system resilience for the pandemic and future crises requires consulting the teaching profession by engaging in meaningful social and policy dialogue, and paying particular attention to teachers' psychosocial and wellbeing needs.

The second day of the Research Network meeting will focus on education in times of climate and health emergencies, including the UNESCO-Education International global teacher survey on education for sustainable development.

3. Alarming new child labour numbers reiterate the need for quality public education

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the number of children pushed into child labour has reached 160 million, a 8,4 million increase**, with 9 million more at risk. This alarming trend can be effectively addressed by making quality public education accessible to all, a top priority worldwide.

The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic with its accompanying school closures and economic crisis, is being felt by millions of children who have been pushed into the labour force at a devastating rate.

The number of children forced into child labour has reached an alarming 160 million worldwide [according to the latest numbers from the International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) and UNICEF](#). This is an increase of 8,4 million since the last report 4 years ago.

The report stresses that **for the first time in two decades the progress towards the eradication of child labour has been halted**. There has also been a worrying increase in the number of children between the ages of 5 to 11 who are now working instead of attending school. This is more than half of all children worldwide.

The Covid-19 pandemic has pushed millions of children into child labour. Nine million more are at risk of joining the ranks of child labourers by the end of 2022, and if urgent measures aren't taken the number could reach 46 million more.

Education unions take the lead to eradicate child labour

EI affiliates in thirteen countries (1) are carrying out child labor eradication programs with the support of EI and its partners.

Most of these projects concern the development of "[Child Labor Free Zones](#)" (CFLZ) in a community or group of villages. In these types of projects, all sectors of a school community cooperate with local authorities, community leaders and employers for the systematic elimination of child labor and their (re)integration into formal schools attending full-time.

The involvement of education unions generally begins with the training of teachers in the area concerned. These training courses mainly focus on getting girls back to school, as they are more affected by child labor.

In countries like Mali and Togo, the teachers' unions involved in these projects are encouraging the creation or strengthening of students' mothers' associations, as they play a crucial role in girls' education.

From working to back to school

The unions involved in these projects report numerous cases of former child laborers brought back to school thanks to their projects, and of children who were at risk of dropping out but who were able to stay in school. In 2019-2020, in the CFLZs developed by EI affiliates in seven African countries (2), 686 children (374 boys, 312 girls) were brought back to school.

In Albania, where the SPASH and FSASH unions have extensive experience in working against child labor, monitoring groups are set up in schools, bringing together teachers, parents and students. They are responsible for closely monitoring the children most at risk of dropping out of school and contacting the families of children who have already dropped out.

This model has made it possible to limit child labor even in more vulnerable communities, such as the Roma. It has also helped teachers to increase the involvement of local authorities.

Enriketa Zeno, head of the FSASH section in Berati district, shared her experience in a teacher trainers' training course organized by SPASH and FSASH in May:

" We collaborated not only with the regional directorate of education, but also with the municipality, which allowed 15 families of students who had dropped out of school to receive a monthly allowance, making it easier for them to go get back into the classroom . This example may inspire my colleagues in other districts."

The devastating effects of the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in long periods of school closures, and an increase in child labor worldwide.

During this pandemic period, unions kept in touch with teachers, community leaders, local and school authorities involved in projects against child labor, enabling them to gather first-hand information.

Among the reported observations were:

- a loss of interest in education among students due to the inability to access educational materials online;
- the lack of funds available to schools to purchase protective equipment against COVID-19;
- the difficulty of enforcing and maintaining physical distance in schools and on the way to school,
- an increase in early pregnancies and marriages;
- the difficulty of finding students who were in the adult world or in the world of work during the closures, who had got used to earning a little money and lost the academic discipline they had before the pandemic.

When schools reopen, there are often fewer students compared to the period before the closure.

The strategies put in place in the contexts of the projects make it possible to achieve results in terms of getting children back to school soon after teaching has resumed. This is the case in Malawi.

“ Before the closure, in March 2020, out of the 10 schools included in our project in the Kabwinja area, the number of students enrolled in these schools was 7,809, but when these schools reopened in October, there were no more than 4,096 students,” says Pilirani Kamaliza, Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) project coordinator.

“We organized a 'back to school' campaign: messages in favor of education were broadcast on loudspeakers placed on vehicles that traveled around Kabwinja, three large panels raising awareness against child labor were displayed and placed in strategic places, the teachers and heads of villages went to parents' homes ”.

TUM and The Private School Education Union of Malawi (PSEUM) also held an assembly bringing together the highest district authorities, teachers, students and parents from the targeted schools. Messages were sent to bring every child back to school. In December 2020, three months after the reopening of 10 schools in the targeted area, the number of students enrolled was 8,058, more than before the pandemic closure.

"Thanks to our awareness-raising efforts, the rate of children returning to school is higher in Kabwinja than in other areas of the district, the schools in the project also have a better school retention rate. Teachers are now attentive and react as soon as they see the first sign of a child dropping out of school, "says Pilirani Kamaliza.

Among the relevant responses of union projects to fight child labor to the crisis posed by the pandemic, there are also [training workshops for manufacturing hand sanitizer using local equipment](#) in Nicaragua, training by SNE-FDT in Morocco for teachers who are lost in the face of new technologies linked to distance education, [the training of teachers from Togo on modes of transmission of COVID 19](#), the broadcasting of radio spots calling for a return to school, etc. The Ugandan union UNATU has started to organize psychological support sessions for teachers facing a large number of cases of early pregnancy and marriage among their students.

The lessons learned by unions involved in these projects show that it is possible to limit the devastating effects of school closures on the rise in school dropouts rates and child labor. They should open the eyes of governments to meet their obligations to ensure access to quality education for all financed by public funds.

To listen to the testimony of a former child labourer who is now a teacher [please click here](#)

To learn more about EI's work, see the study: [EI's Child Labor Projects and AOb: Transnational Best Practices](#)

(1) Projects to combat child labor are currently supported by EI and its partners (AOb, Mondiaal FNV, GEW Fair Childhood Foundation, Stop Child Labor coalition) in 13 countries: Albania, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nicaragua, Uganda, Senegal, Togo, and

Zimbabwe.

(2) Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Uganda, Togo, Zimbabwe.

4. Teacher unionists' continuous advocacy for inclusive education and LGBTI rights

Educators in Spain and the UK are backing up research by UNESCO and the International LGBTQI Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) – a member-based youth and student network –and reiterate their commitment in favour of the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) educators and students in education systems and societies.

Spain: Far from reaching the inclusion of LGTBI students

In their [recent blog](#) (in Spanish), Belén de la Rosa and Begoña Fuentes, of the Federación de Enseñanza de Comisiones Obreras (FE.CC.OO) explain that, in recent years, much progress has been made in Spain towards achieving equal rights for LGTBI people.

They note that laws have contributed to lesbian, gay, non-binary, trans and intersexual people increasingly feeling more accepted in society. At national level, there are two crucial laws, one guaranteeing equal marriage and one on the change of registered name, pointing out the need to expand civil rights for transgender people. Laws against LGTBIphobia and the right to gender self-determination have also been approved in 12 of the Spanish autonomous communities.

De la Rosa and Fuentes however deplore that, drawing from their experience as teaching professionals and with a history of bullying for being part of the LGBTI community, “there is not progress at the same pace in terms of social acceptance”.

They mention a recent survey carried out in Europe, including Spain, in which more than 17,000 boys, girls and young people between the ages of 13 and 24 were questioned and revealed that exclusion and discrimination continue to be present in the classroom.

To them, it appears that “the safety of the LGBTI student body seems to depend on whether you are lucky enough to live in a region that has developed inclusive educational policies or not, and the political context of the moment. This means that our rights are constantly threatened. The advance of the extreme right and the return to ultra-conservative positions is a stark reminder of how easy it is to abolish certain fundamental rights of LGTBI people.”

That is why FE.CC.OO provides schools with information and tools they need to support LGBTI students and teachers, as “schools need strong systems capable of controlling discrimination and violence against LGBTI students. Students must be at the center of these efforts. For example, through clubs and spaces that offer support systems to students who have been victims of harassment or violence.”

When all students, regardless of their differences, feel safe and welcomed, bullying and violent incidents decrease, and they can reach their full potential, de la Rosa and Fuentes stress.

They agree that for schools to embrace all students, it is essential that teaching staff are trained and trained with the knowledge necessary to deliver inclusive curricula: “If a teacher does not inspire confidence in their students - knowing that bullying and violence will be dealt with effectively - they

will not be willing to reveal their identity and sexual orientation. They will continue to hide.”

UK: LGBTI rights are human rights

“The NASUWT- The Teachers’ Union is fully committed to the belief that all students and teachers should be free to teach and learn in an inclusive environment that respects LGBTI rights. We strongly believe that an inclusive education environment for pupils and students must also be a safe and inclusive space for all school staff, particularly those that are LGBTI,” also [highlighted NASUWT National Official \(Equality and Training\) Jennifer Moses](#).

At our recent LGBTI Teachers’ Conference, she said, 36% said that these incidences had worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic with many seeing a rise in homophobic and hateful language being used online.

In terms of teaching, much recent attention in England has focused on the extent to which LGBTI related issues are reflected meaningfully and sufficiently in the curriculum offer schools make to their children and young people, Moses insisted.

She went on to remind that the history of LGBTI education in England’s schools is complex and difficult. In recent decades, the issue has been dominated by the impact of what became known as ‘Section 28’.

This was legislation passed in 1988 which established that schools ‘shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality’ or ‘promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”.

‘Section 28’ was eventually repealed in 2003, but it left a legacy in England’s education system in which the equal status of LGBT+ persons and communities was not reflected in schools’ educational offers in many cases, with clear negative implications for children and young people and for the cause of LGBTI equality more generally, Moses regretted.

She indicated that the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education (RSE) in England had not been updated since 2000 until a revised version was enacted last year. The previous guidance was silent on LGBT+-related issues. While entirely legitimate criticisms of the revised guidance for not doing enough to address discrimination against LGBTI persons and communities and to support the promotion of equality can, and do, continue to be made, it is difficult not to regard the revision of the framework for relationships and sex education in schools as a clear step in the right direction.

This reform to the framework for LGBTI education is at a relatively early stage of implementation and it will be important for all stakeholders, including Government, trade unions and advocacy and rights groups, to continue to monitor the extent to which it provides schools with the scope to address LGBTI-related content more effectively and comprehensively than has often been the case in the past, Moses said, adding that “specific attention will need to be given to the quality and quantity of training and support made available to staff in schools and to their ability to access sources of effective external expertise and advices”.

For her, more broadly, while changes to RSE are important, it also clear that more work needs to be done to ensure that LGBTI issues are reflected more consistently and prominently in the wider school curriculum.

“We must continue to fight for a safe and inclusive learning and teaching environment around the world for all LGBT pupils and school staff if we truly believe that LGBTI rights are human rights,” Moses concluded.

UNESCO and IGLYO: Over half of LGBTI students in Europe bullied in school

The education unionists were reacting to the new [study by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report and the LGBTI youth organisation \(IGLYO\)](#), finding that over half of LGBTI students in Europe have reported being bullied at school. This report, released on 17 May, International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia recommends increased investment in teacher capacity to deliver inclusive curricula and for tackling LGBTI bullying and harassment.

It also recognises the failure of some education establishments to address discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and intersex variations.

Interventions by teachers and other school staff upon hearing negative remarks and bullying are vital to an inclusive education system, the study shows. But many teachers lack the confidence and knowledge to support LGBTQI learners. The majority of students (58%) never reported bullying incidents to any school staff and fewer than 15% of respondents systematically reported their experiences of bullying to any school staff.

According to the report, providing a safe learning environment is a crucial step in achieving inclusion for LGBTQI learners, which was recognized in the commitment made by 56 countries in 2016 under the UNESCO-convened Call for Action by Ministers for inclusive and equitable education for all learners in an environment free from discrimination and violence.

UNESCO and IGLYO also called on governments and schools to roll out the teaching of human rights education and other subjects, including history and social studies, to introduce LGBTQI people, their history and experience in teaching programmes. These efforts must be complemented by training and empowering teachers to deliver inclusive curricula so they can impart knowledge and address incidents and threats effectively.

5. World Refugee Day: Education unions stand with refugee students and educators

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a damaging impact on refugee students, teachers and other education personnel. On World Refugee Day, education unions call on governments to guarantee inclusive education and decent living, learning, and working conditions for all migrants.

“Together we heal, learn and shine”

“The shared experience of COVID-19 has showed us that we only succeed if we stand together. We have all had to do our part to keep each other safe and despite the challenges, refugees and displaced people have stepped up. Given the chance, refugees will continue to contribute to a stronger, safer, and more vibrant world. This year, we call for greater inclusion of refugees in health systems, schools, and sport. Only by working together can we recover from the pandemic.”

- UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

The right to education at every stage

According to the UNHCR's Education Report 2020 published before the pandemic, [Coming Together for Refugee Education](#), more than 1.8 million refugee children were out of school. That is equivalent to 48 per cent of all refugee children of school age.

The report highlights that the educational options for refugee children dramatically fell away after primary school; less than half of refugee children who started primary school made it to secondary school. Only 31 per cent of refugee children were enrolled at secondary level in 2019 - that was an increase of two points on the previous year, representing tens of thousands more children in school.

At primary level, gross enrolment of refugee children in school stood at 77 per cent, a level that has remained constant since 2019.

Three per cent of refugee youth were enrolled in courses at the level of higher education – including technical and vocational education and training as well as university courses. This has been the same percentage year after year.

For girls, the picture was already particularly stark before COVID-19. Almost all the gains made at secondary level in 2019 were in favour of boys: 36 per cent of refugee boys were enrolled in secondary education, compared to only 27 per cent of girls.

According to the report, while children in every country have struggled with the impact of COVID-19, refugee children have been particularly impacted. UN figures show that 1.6 billion learners across the world, including millions of refugees, have had their education disrupted.

“COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of global solidarity. Refugee students, teachers and their families should be a priority as we rebuild. With our member organisations around the world, we urge governments to ensure quality and inclusive public education to refugees, to protect refugee educators and students, and to recognise the experience and qualifications of refugee teachers.”

- Education International's General Secretary David Edwards

Education International: Protect migrants and implement international standards

Education International calls on governments to:

- Protect and respect the human rights of all refugees, including children, young people, teachers, researchers and education support personnel.
- Ensure equitable access to public education for all children and youth, including refugees.
- Implement the [UN Global Compact on Refugees](#) and promptly address any delay caused by the pandemic.
- Carry out [equity audits within the education sector](#) to systematically assess the impact of the school and education institution closures on the most vulnerable students, teachers, researchers and education support personnel, including those with a refugee

background/status, and urgently address the key equity issues that have been aggravated by the pandemic.

- Safeguard the dignity and rights of all migrant workers by ratifying and applying the [International Labour Organization's Convention 143](#) and other relevant international labour standards, as well as including migrant workers and their families, regardless of their migration status, in COVID-19 economic recovery policies and plans.

Education International advocates for inclusive education

The importance of inclusive education was reaffirmed at the 8th Education International World Congress, held in 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. Delegates endorsed the [Resolution on Protecting the Rights of Immigrant and Refugee Children and Young People](#), which notes that “national governments must protect immigrant and refugee children and young people from detention, separation from their loved ones, child labour, forced recruitment into armed groups, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and violence”.

The resolution underlines that “education is the key to successful inclusion of immigrant and refugee children and young people in society. Educators should be given the means, the autonomy and support required to best respond to the needs of immigrant and refugee children and young people”.

The same congress, via the [Resolution on Education for Refugees](#), outlined how 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, of whom 25.4 million are refugees. In addition, 52 per cent of refugees are under the age of 18, with 7.4 million being of school age. It condemned the fact that four million refugee children do not attend school at all.

This resolution urges Education International and its member organisations to continue to work with campaigns and initiatives working to support refugee children and their families in accessing high quality education. And it calls on them to maintain pressure on national governments and on international institutions, with reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to:

- Prioritise financial assistance for the education of refugees, people displaced by force or natural disasters, and those in need of international protection;
- Enable refugee teachers and education support staff to continue exercising their occupation in their new country; and
- Facilitate support/learning for teacher trade unions on how to respond to the impact of the refugee crisis in their countries/education systems and improve their education systems to guarantee the universal right to education without exclusion.

Educations unions proactive around refugees' rights

Education International and its affiliates have been active on this issue around the world.

Most recently, [Education International's affiliates in the African region called on governments to take strong action for refugees migrants and internally displaced people](#), for example by putting in place contingency plans at all levels to manage large-scale population movements in times of crisis, ratifying and implementing UN and ILO Migrant Conventions, or ensuring free training and continuous professional development for migrant, refugee, and local teachers in order for them to meet the specific needs of migrating children and youth.

In Lebanon, unions warned the Ministry of Education on several occasions that refugee students and teachers are facing an [education crisis aggravated by COVID-19](#). They highlighted that the Syrian

refugee crisis has significantly impacted an already debilitated public education system, shaken in particular by [the worst economic crisis in 30 years](#).

6. Global trade union movement launches toolkit in campaign to eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work

As the International Labour Organization Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work comes into force on 25 June 2021, global unions launch [toolkit to support the Convention and its Recommendation 206](#). The manual provides thousands of unions around the world with critical tools in the fight to eradicate violence and harassment.

The first international instruments against violence and harassment in the world of work

Affecting millions of workers globally, physical assault, bullying, sexual harassment, online abuse, economic violence and abusive work practices are some of the most widespread forms of violence in the world of work.

Thanks to intensive lobbying by trade unions and women groups across the world, Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 provide a foundation for trade unions, employers and other stakeholders to address violence and harassment in the world of work. The Convention and the Recommendation extend to all sectors – public and private – as well as the informal economy, and are the first international instruments of this kind.

Making Convention 190 a reality for all workers

The new toolkit aims to support unions to develop training programmes and workplace solutions that tackle violence and harassment, with a special focus on gender-based violence and harassment and ensure that violence is no longer considered “part of the job”. It is also a useful tool for trade unions campaigning for the ratification of Convention 190 in their countries.

Welcoming the toolkit, Susan Hopgood, Education International President, stated:

“Many years ago, the trade union movement set out to end violence and harassment in the world of work. Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 are a great victory for us all and especially for the women who spearheaded this movement. It is a great step forward but it's just the first. We now need to ensure every country ratifies and implements the Convention. We also need to work in our unions so that every union member becomes an agent of change. We must press on until we make this convention a reality for workers everywhere.”

The launch of the toolkit comes at a critical moment. Evidence shows that all types of violence against women and girls have intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, making women workers especially vulnerable. A lack of policies and employer support to respond to and prevent this violence have led many women to develop anxiety, mental illness or resulted in decreased job performance and impacted women's revenue. Domestic violence, while taking place outside the workplace, can also have significant physiological and physical implications on abused workers. Moreover, intersecting discrimination creates another layer of inequalities that increases the risk of violence and harassment.

The toolkit features a facilitators' guide and an activities workbook aiming to:

- Encourage discussion about violence and harassment and gender-based violence in the world of work;
- Raise awareness about Convention 190, its accompanying Recommendation 206 and its significance for workers – particularly women workers;
- Encourage unions across the world to campaign for the ratification of Convention 190 and its effective implementation in line with Recommendation 206;
- Encourage unions to use these instruments to integrate Convention 190 into the union bargaining agenda;
- Build stronger unions to enable workers to assert their rights to a world of work free from violence and harassment.

The Toolkit was launched during a [webinar on 25 June, with unionists from across the world in attendance](#).

Download the toolkit below!

July

Headlines

1. Nigeria: Education unions call for the immediate release of students after new attack

Education International condemns the kidnapping of 140 students by gunmen in northwest Nigeria Kaduna state and urges public authorities to ensure their safe return to their families and communities. EI reiterates that schools must be safe havens, free from violence and intimidation.

At least 140 students are missing and presumed kidnapped after gunmen stormed the Bethel Baptist School in Nigeria's northwest Kaduna state, where an epidemic of kidnappings for ransom has increasingly ensnared students in Africa's most populous nation.

According to media reports, a local Christian leader said there were 180 students in the school, only 20 of whom had been accounted for. However, he said some of them may have escaped. On 4 July, armed assailants also abducted eight people, including two nurses and a 12-month-old child, at the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Training Center in Zaria, about 50 miles from Kaduna, according to the BBC.

The alleged kidnappings were the fourth armed attack on an educational institute in Kaduna state in the past five months and the third on the Zaria hospital. Since December, more than 1,000 students have been abducted, at least nine killed, and over 200 are still missing – some of them as young as three –from similar raids, also according to the BBC.

The latter went on to report on a statement by Kaduna police forces saying that the gunmen “overpowered the school's security guards and made their way into the students' hostel where they abducted an unspecified number of students into the forest.”

The statement adds that 26 people, including one female teacher, have since returned, while the status of the rest of those missing from the Bethel Baptist School remained unknown. Nigerian police said they had not yet received any ransom demands from the alleged kidnapping at the hospital.

African educators united to fight violence in schools

“Teachers, education support personnel and students are at risk simply by coming to school, because armed forces consider schools and tertiary education institutions as targets,” explained Education International's Director for Africa Dennis Sinyolo. “Frequent abductions in Nigerian schools threatens to undermine the education of millions of children,” he added.

Since the [Islamist group Boko Haram \(which means “Western education is forbidden” in the Hausa language\)](#) [abducted 276 schoolgirls from Chibok secondary school](#) in Nigeria's Borno state in 2014, in a widely reported incident, kidnappings for ransom by armed groups have been on the rise in parts of Nigeria where poverty, unemployment, and the proliferation of criminal and armed groups is rampant. The proliferation of kidnappings of schoolchildren has led many parents to see schools as unsafe, according to further reporting by [The Washington Post](#).

The Education International Africa Regional Committee (EIARC) has expressed deep concern over the fact that schools in many countries in Africa, especially Nigeria, are not the safe havens they should be.

In a [statement adopted by the EIARC](#) in May, education unions from the region have reaffirmed their solidarity with the Nigeria Union of Teachers and called on the Government of Nigeria to ensure that schools are safe and secure all over the country.

The statement emphasizes that “education is a fundamental human right no matter the circumstances, and that the utmost must be done to protect schools and children’s right to education.” It stresses that “the quality of teaching and learning is enhanced by a safe, peaceful, secure, supportive, and conducive, learning environment that ensures the safety and health of all teachers and students,” and that “education authorities across the continent should ensure environments that are supportive, comfortable, safe, and secure for all.”

Education International’s World Congress resolution

Education International and its member organisations have already been underlining for many years the need to consider schools and education settings as safe sanctuaries for educators and students, in Africa and the world over.

During Education International’s 8th World Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2019, delegates adopted a [Resolution on attacks on schools in Africa](#). The document asks Education International and its member organisations in Africa to pressure their governments to, in particular:

- ratify and domesticate all instruments for the prevention and combating of terrorism in Africa and put in place mechanisms for the implementation of these instruments;
- endorse, implement, and support the Safe Schools Declaration to ensure that all students and educators, male and female, can learn and teach in safety;
- systematically investigate attacks on education and prosecute perpetrators;
- ensure that education promotes peace instead of triggering conflict.

The 2009’s [Declaration on “Schools as Safe Sanctuaries”](#) also contains seven articles, each articulating a call to action from the world community. They are:

1. Reaffirm the commitment to the principle of the right to education in safety
2. Take practical measures to ensure protection
3. End impunity for attacks on students, teachers, academics, all other education personnel and education facilities
4. Strengthen monitoring of attacks and efforts to end impunity
5. Prioritise action and share expertise on resilience and recovery
6. Make education an agent for peace
7. Support campaigns of solidarity.

2. EI/AOb Child Labour Projects | Transnational Best Practices and Union Impacts

For the last two decades, EI and its affiliates, Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOb/the Netherlands) and Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW/Germany), through the Fair Childhood Foundation,

have supported projects to reduce school dropout rates and child labour and to contribute to the development of child labour-free zones in over 13 countries on three continents.

This research study of child labour projects aims to identify practical evidence of context-independent best practice and innovative approaches in the professional development of teachers and in the schools; and to document the impacts of these projects on union development.

The research took place over a 10-month period from August 2018 to April 2019 and used a mixed-methods participatory approach premised on systematic listening and feedback.

3. Arab educators and their unions ready to rebuild education and shape the future of their work

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector, the future of work, climate change action, the protection of human and trade union rights, and safeguarding democracy were at the heart of discussions during the 5th Conference of Education International's Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (ACCRS).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the education sector in the region, aggravated by the failure on the global level to roll out vaccines in an equitable manner.

In his opening remarks to the virtual conference on July 8, Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards, stated that child labour, where important progress had been made during the last generation, was increasing in many countries. In addition, progress on gender equity has slowed and violence against women skyrocketed during lockdowns.

“Setbacks need to be reversed and progress resumed before pandemic effects leave a permanent stain.”

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary

There have also been advances in the region as the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the [Violence and Harassment Convention Number 190](#) in 2019. This far-reaching Convention calls for the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, and covers employers, suppliers, other business partners as well as third parties. Despite the pandemic, trade unions are campaigning hard for its ratification, Edwards explained.

Human and trade union rights under threat

The General Secretary also outlined how emergency measures imposed during the public health crisis have at times been too excessive or abused. Health measures should not be used to restrict freedom of expression or impose censorship, nor should they be used as an excuse to limit freedom of association, or the right to strike, he argued.

In the ACCRS region, “we have witnessed the repression of the Jordanian Teachers' Association (JTA), and attacks on the union's existence continue despite the release of union leaders”, he said. Restrictions on trade union rights in many other countries are increasing. In Morocco, for example, the government has invoked the COVID-19 crisis to deny workers their right to strike, he noted.

Union renewal different in every country

Edwards highlighted the theme of union renewal which was central to the conference.

“Union renewal is grounded in the exercise of freedom of association and the right to education. Both are levers to change the world,” he added. “There is no blueprint for union renewal. It will be different in every country, but we can learn from each other and show solidarity.”

Privatisation pushed during the pandemic

As private companies increased their push into education and especially in distance learning models, Edwards emphasized that “education happens in social relationships. It is not an assembly of vendors for individuals, but rather a healthy school community.”

Global trade union solidarity

Edwards said that the trade union community is not severed by national boundaries or regional barriers. He added “our common values and solidarity are the glue that holds us together. That is what Education International, and our regional structures are about”.

“Like nobody else, we can mobilise nationally, regionally, and globally to organise and educate. We can take the lead to move away from darkness and towards the light of social justice and a healthy, sustainable world,” he concluded.

ILO: Education is key for the future

Delivering the keynote address on “Future of education from a global perspective”, Oliver Liang, ILO Head of the Private and Public Services Sector Unit, reflected on the role of trade unions in supporting education and knowledge in shaping a desirable society.

“Education is key to imparting skills and preparing for work, but it also centred around human liberation, preparing for a meaningful life,” he underlined. “Teachers have the crucial duty to ensure that education is not indoctrination, but a means of human liberation.”

According to Liang, education is at a crossroads, with teachers asked to teach new skills and tackle topics like climate change and global citizenship.

On the use of new technologies in education, he insisted that equality in access to technologies is key and educators must be trained to deal with ethical and social implications of these technologies.

Social dialogue and the future of work

Achieving quality education during the pandemic demands the participation of teachers and their unions through social dialogue, Liang stressed.

Referring to the [2019 ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#), he outlined the outcomes of the [technical meeting on the Future of work in the education sector in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda](#) held in May 2021.

“The future of work in education must prepare students for work, for citizenship, and support their moral, psychosocial, and intellectual development,” he explained.

Acknowledging that “education is not a commodity, it is a public good and a public responsibility”, Liang said that “teachers will determine which direction we take with technology. They will ensure technologies serve students, not big companies”.

Study on Economic and Social Impacts of COVID-19 in Education

Education International’s Coordinator for Arab countries, Dalila El Barhmi, presented the Education International/International Trade Union Confederation/Global Union Federations’ joint Research on the Economic and Social Impacts of COVID-19 in Education and other sectors - A Study of Union Perspectives in the Arab Countries.

“We wanted to have a clear analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on working conditions for educators and on violations of human and trade union rights,” she said.

El Barhmi mentioned three aspects to the study:

1. Learn more about union action during the pandemic.
2. Get the union perspective on what unions and their members would need post-COVID-19.
3. Document the level of social dialogue in Arab countries.

The study’s key findings highlighted:

- An increase in precarious working conditions for educators,
- A decrease in workers’ wellbeing, particularly impacting women,
- Governmental unpreparedness to provide online education. The digital divide prevented too many students from learning,
- The loss of teachers’ rights, like collective bargaining, as governments took advantage of the pandemic.

Among the diverse recommendations made by the global union federation’s study, El Barhmi highlighted:

- A clear need for union development and organising,
- Social dialogue required to achieve quality education in and beyond the pandemic,
- Support needed for women teachers,
- A need to put the wellbeing of teachers and students first,
- Governments must ensure decent working conditions, including decent salaries, paid on time
- Governments must respect education workers’ rights,

- Governments need to consult teachers before posting educational programmes online.

The Education International's ACCRS is composed of 28 education unions from 13 countries.

4. Belarus: Education International calls for an end to crackdown on democratic forces

Education International is calling for an end to the repression against students, workers, activists, and others who are fighting for democracy in Belarus and facing a nationwide crackdown. A series of repressive actions in recent weeks, from the arbitrary arrests of activists to the illegal raids on NGO's, have raised the alarm and generated international censure.

The crackdown is part of a continued effort by the Lukashenko regime to stay in power after losing the presidential election in August of 2020 and widespread demonstrations and nationwide protests that followed demanding the restoration of democracy. Alexander Lukashenko claimed without evidence that he was re-elected with 80.08 per cent of the vote over the opposition candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaïa, considered the actual winner.

“The massive peaceful demonstrations and strikes in Belarus after the stolen election gave us hope that democracy would be restored. Less than a year later, we are seeing what happens when a dictator puts personal power before all else,” stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International. “Lukashenko’s actions display the weakness of a desperate tyrant.”

Targeting students

Students who were a significant force in the protests which followed the election have also been the targets of the regime. Many students were detained. Some were tortured. Repression across sectors increased and the population was terrorised. Political leaders of the opposition were imprisoned or forced to go into exile.

Eleven student leaders and a university professor were arrested in November of 2020. In May of 2021, their trial began and they were accused of “the organisation and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order or active participation in these actions.” On 16 July, all but one were sentenced to 26 months in prison.

The Belarus Students Association [reports](#) that over the last nine months 492 students have been detained, 160 have been expelled.

In a [video](#) by the spokesperson of the opposition in exile, Pavel Latuschko, university administrators were exposed and denounced for having failed to support students during demonstrations and for actively collaborating with security forces. He charged that they summoned the riot squads, gave statements to the police, and fired teachers who objected to the violence. They also testified on behalf of the State during the trial against the students. Latuschko pointed out that universities have no autonomy as rectors are appointed personally by President Lukashenko. Four of these rectors were placed on a sanctions list by the European Union.

GEW, an EI member organisation in Germany, declared their support for the convicted students and for the Belarus Students' Association. They protested that in July, six lecturers and researchers from the Institute of Genetics and Cytology at the Minsk National Academy of Sciences (NASB) were

forced to resign or dismissed. This action was also related to their protests after the election in August of 2020. The European Region of EI, the ETUCE, also [supported](#) the academics and students.

Many lawyers defending students and other protesters had their licenses to practice law suspended or were [disbarred](#). The fundamental right to a legal defence is being suffocated and lawyers are being punished for exercising their profession. The government no longer goes through the motions of fair trials and the rule of law.

Attacks on journalists and their union

In addition to the crackdown on students and their supporters, on 16 July, the authorities raided the opposition media Belsat as part of a larger pattern of harassment and detention of journalists.

The European and International Federation of Journalists [reported](#) that “the Belarusian regime is intensifying its crackdown on journalists and their representative organisation, the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ). After searching and sealing BAJ’s offices on 14 July, the authorities blocked the organisation’s bank accounts on Tuesday 20 July.” They also indicated that 33 journalists are in captivity.

Actions against human rights organisations and doctors

Human rights and other organisations were also raided and many human rights activists have been detained. One human rights group, Viasna, lists 421 political prisoners and reports many new arrests and convictions.

Being in the midst of a global pandemic has not slowed the repressive actions of the regime.

Despite the rapid spread of COVID-19, a low rate of vaccinations, and shortage of medical personnel, over 70 medical professionals have lost their jobs in recent months, and eight medical students have been expelled from university. That is in addition to the [250 doctors](#) who have been fined or held in detention centres, with some being beaten by security services. Some were arrested for expressing concern about the COVID response according to the Belarusian Medical Solidarity Foundation.

International solidarity

President Lukashenko continues to rule by generating fear, panic, and terror, but will not have the final say, according to those committed to democracy.

“Repression, no matter how vicious and determined, does not mean that there is no hope. The people of Belarus know their power. They took to the streets. They struck. They joined independent unions. Women and young people, including many courageous students, took the lead,” reiterated David Edwards of Education International. “The situation will not change today. It may not change tomorrow, but it will change,” he added.

Edwards reiterated that the people of Belarus have the support of international allies who will stand with them in these difficult times.

“The struggle for democracy will continue. Liberation will come from within, but the people of Belarus must have the support and solidarity of the rest of the world, especially governments. They will continue to have our support until their journey to freedom is complete.”

August

Headlines

1. Teaching with Tech: The role of education unions in shaping the future

The Future of Work is not just making the headlines - it has become an issue of increasing importance for students, teachers and the whole of society. While there is always an element of anticipatory anxiety when facing the future there has also been real concern about the arrival of Artificial Intelligence, its potential to disrupt the labour market and changing skills requirements in the workplace more generally.

This report on EI's survey about the Future of Work in Education lays out a clear landscape of the problems and opportunities we will face. While educational technology clearly has the potential to save teachers time doing mundane tasks and it is important to recognise that education would have ground to a complete halt during the pandemic without digital technologies connecting teacher and students, EdTech clearly, like Janus, has two faces.

It is also an extremely profitable market growing at 16% and is estimated to reach over \$400 billion by 2025, according to HolonIQ1. Data and privacy are particular concerns for teachers as EdTech giants mine our clicks for profit. This is explored in some detail in this report with a particular emphasis on the need for unions to get involved in data governance.

2. Union Renewal in the Education Sector: Prospects for the Asia-Pacific

The primary objective of this report is to construct an initial model of 'union renewal' or 'union transformation' to be considered for further development by selected Education International affiliates in partnership with Education International's Asia-Pacific Office.

In reaching this objective, the report examines the current state of some selected teachers' unions in the Asia-Pacific, their operating environment and context, their understanding of the importance and process of 'transformation' and/or 'renewal', and the extent to which (a) there is appetite for it, and (b) if it is already taking place.

3. Education of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Context of COVID-19: The Education for Life Project in Uganda and South Sudan

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated education systems, communities, and economies across Africa and globally. The health crisis has seriously affected the education, health and well-being of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Uganda, South Sudan and across the continent.

Girls and women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and there is a real risk that many girls and young women will be unable to go back to school due to pregnancy, early marriages, child labour and other challenges.

As this policy brief reveals, considerable efforts have been made by the Governments of Uganda and South Sudan to ensure that children and youth, including refugees and those displaced by conflict,

continue to receive a quality education during and beyond the current crisis.

However, these efforts have been hindered by the unavailability of digital and related infrastructure for distance education. Teachers lack the necessary training, competences and support to deliver effective virtual teaching and learning. COVID-19, coupled with the digital divide and protracted crises, has widened inequalities.

This policy brief identifies the key challenges related to COVID-19 and the education of refugees and IDPs and goes on to proffer recommendations for tackling those challenges. We hope this policy brief will be a useful tool and resource to the Education for Life consortium members, education advocates and activists, policy makers and other stakeholders in our collective quest for inclusive equitable quality education for all.

4. Pandemic Privatisation in Higher Education: Edtech & University Reform

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a state of emergency engulfed higher education. The crisis of mass campus closures and a rapid 'pivot' to online learning became the context for attempts by private actors and commercial organisations to reconfigure the sector.

Besides the immediate and necessary short-term 'relief' provided by education and technology providers during campus closures, commercial organisations and private sector promoters sought to 'reconstruct' higher education for the long term.

Temporary emergency measures were treated as experimental opportunities to establish a new 'digital normalcy' in which private and commercial actors could play a substantially increased role in schools, colleges and universities worldwide, with wide-ranging implications for the experience of students and the working lives of staff.

The effects are likely to continue unfolding as institutions and national systems deal with the rolling disruptions of the pandemic, and the emergency 'pivot online' translates into long-lasting sectoral changes. Digital technologies and private sector participation can bring many benefits to higher education, but many of the transformational changes promoted during the pandemic also present serious challenges.

This report documents key ways commercialisation and privatisation of higher education have been - and continue to be - advanced through digital technologies in the context of COVID-19, identifying issues and implications for more detailed discussion and deliberation as higher education sets out on the long path to post-pandemic recovery.

5. The bedrock of inclusion: why investing in the education workforce is critical to the delivery of SDG4

This report summarises lessons and recommendations from a multi-country study undertaken on behalf of ActionAid, Education International and Light for the World. The study looked at the current state of play, and the realistic requirements for investing in an education workforce that can support disability-inclusive education systems in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania.

6. Education: A Powerful Tool For Combatting Climate Change. A Guide For Education Unions And Educators

This guide aims to provide EI member organisations with a tool for exploring the principal questions, issues and challenges arising from the climate crisis and how unions can respond.

The ability of education to inspire, engage and empower people as well as inform people of the climate emergency, including its causes and impacts, are clearly acknowledged in international climate agreements.

However, this recognition must be translated into action plans and policies: we must ensure that climate change education is incorporated into school curricula, teaching and learning materials, and teacher training.

Teachers are change agents and can be at the forefront of the fight against climate change but they have to have the means to do so.

7. Privatisation of education in Morocco. A multi-speed education system and a polarised society.

The study is a detailed examination of the trends and current manifestations of privatisation in education in Morocco. The report also sheds light on various public education reforms implemented in Morocco and how privatisation policies have affected these reforms.

In order to have a clear overview of how privatisation has expanded in the Moroccan education system, it is essential to understand how numerous education reforms have led to the privatisation of a sector that, traditionally, has been provided by the Moroccan state.

A few key policies are worth pointing out. As a result of government policies facilitating procedures for private entities to enter the education market, local and foreign actors have come to progressively invest in private education as an increasingly profitable market. Insufficient regulations for private schools have also led to an increase in providers of varying quality (some senior state and government officials are involved in the private education sector themselves, perhaps challenging their ability to make impartial decisions on regulating the sector). Last but not foremost, the loss of tenure through the growth of limited contract employment in the teaching profession has introduced a level of job insecurity never seen before.

8. On Education & Democracy: 25 Lessons from the Teaching Profession

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Education International, which currently brings together the national education unions of 170 countries representing 32.5 million educators and education support staff, we have selected 25 lessons which educators and their organisations have learnt throughout history on education and democracy.

Our lessons serve as a set of recommendations to every classroom teacher working at all levels in our education systems and in their education unions. These lessons are an invitation to take a stand in favour of democracy and its institutions and to consider contributions that teachers, schools, universities and representative organisations can make to solidify and progress democratic life.

9. In sheep's clothing: Philanthropy and the privatisation of the 'democratic' state

This report seeks to advance our existing knowledge on the shape and new roles of philanthropic actors at different levels of the policy-making cycle in the field of education.

First, it seeks to identify, map and examine a number of key philanthropic organisations that are now active in the field of education across the globe. Second, it aims to develop a typology of philanthropic involvement and participation, particularly focusing on the way in which they interact with and modify the roles of other traditional actors involved in education policy development (i.e. governments, unions, professional organisations, training institutions, etc.).

The first part of this report considers the more general implications of the involvement of ‘new’ philanthropists in global education policy communities in different countries across the world. Numerous adjectives have been used to describe this new approach to philanthropy, which highlight different facets of engagement (e.g. impact, strategic, engaged, venture) but all share a common denominator: they all apply the principles and methods of venture and investment capital to philanthropic decision-making and activities. More concretely, it focuses on the rationale and portfolio structure of four venture philanthropy organisations: Omidyar Network, NewSchools Venture Fund, Reach Capital, and LGT Venture Philanthropy.

The second part of this report, focuses on the UK registered education charity Absolute Return for Kids (Ark). It is best known for its role as a provider of academy schools in partnership with the government in England. It is rapidly growing in geographical and budgetary terms, and in the number and nature of the programmes in which it is involved. The aim of this part of the research is to identify, through the analysis of Ark’s international work, some of the multi-faceted channels for philanthropic action into the field of education policy, including but also exceeding philanthropic funding—in the form of investment and grant making, that are turning philanthropy into a significant force in the re-working of education as a non-state activity in different spaces and locations.

10. Public education in Greece: Aspects and trends of emerging privatisation

Commissioned and led by the Greek Primary Teachers’ Federation (DOE) and the Greek Federation of Secondary Education State School Teachers (OLME), the study is part of EI’s Global Response to the Privatisation and Commercialisation in and of Education.

It seeks to analyse the multi-faceted phenomenon of emerging privatisation of primary and secondary education in Greece. In particular, it investigates issues such as:

- Theoretical approaches to the privatisation of education
- The economic aspects of private and shadow education
- The laws and institutional frameworks that allow for ‘irregular’ privatisation
- The resolutions and policies of the Greek Primary Teachers’ Federation (DOE) and the Greek Federation of Secondary Education State School Teachers (OLME) concerning the privatisation of Greek public education
- Teachers’ attitudes towards the privatisation process in Greek primary and secondary education.

The study shows the major impact of austerity on public education in the country: the worrying growth of privatisation and shadow education, education staff shortages, the lack of infrastructure and, as a result, increasing public distrust of public education.

The study also highlights the need for immediate measures to address the issues identified and puts forward a set of recommendations, calling on the government to urgently boost funding for public education, increase teachers' salaries, ensure professional development and support for education workers, and strengthen all public education structures and programmes that have been neglected for years.

11. Privatisation and commodification of university in Latin America: The cases of Argentina, Peru, Chile and the Dominican Republic

Since the late 20th century, Latin American higher education has witnessed two major processes: firstly, considerable expansion – a sustained increase in enrolment, a growing number of institutions, and growth and diversification of study programmes, levels and qualifications; secondly, a decline in public funding.

As a result, the aforementioned expansion has taken place in circumstances that have left institutions in a situation of instability. Likewise, with a backdrop of neoliberal hegemony, education in general and universities in particular were viewed as business opportunities and were defined in free trade agreements as marketable services.

12. Commercial Activity in Pacific Education

This study collected scoping data to document and understand the extent of privatisation and commercialisation of education in eight Council of Pacific Education (COPE) nations - the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

This scoping research identifies that, like many jurisdictions around the world, COPE nations are embarking on significant reforms to their education sector. Also, like many nations that embark on education reform agendas, the impact and consequences of these reforms often remain hidden. What this report demonstrates is that the reformist zeal that Sahlberg (2011) identified as the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) is impacting schooling in the Pacific Islands, albeit within the unique context of each nation. Sahlberg (2011) identifies six features of education reform principles that have been employed to try and improve the quality of education. Each of these are discussed in relation to the Pacific Islands:

- Standardisation of and in education
- An increased focus on literacy and numeracy where skills in reading and mathematics, at the expense of a broad curriculum.
- Teaching to predetermined results
- The transfer of innovation from corporate to the educational world where education policy and ideas are borrowed from the private sector
- The adoption of test-based accountability policies in which school performance and raising student outcomes is linked to accrediting, inspecting and ultimately, rewarding or punishing schools
- The increased control of schools in which there is a drive to collect data to identify and target low-performing schools.

The report also identifies a number of areas for further research to better understand the elements (and related components) of school provision in the Pacific.

13. Cameroon: Education organisations' joint project for democracy and union renewal

Education International and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES, German acronym) are working together in Cameroon on a capacity building project, "Union renewal: building strong, inclusive, democratic and effective unions in the education sector in Cameroon". The project involving all of Education International's national member organisations will run from 2021 until 2023 and will help the education unions strengthen their organisational structures and build political dialogue.

Trade unions face multiple challenges globally. These challenges include "repressive regimes and closing spaces for trade union work, digitalisation, climate change, privatisation, integrating young workers", according to Mirko Herberg, Head of the FES Project Team International Trade Union Policy. These challenges demand "a high level of organisational flexibility and a constant need to develop political and organisational responses that should come about in democratic and transparent ways." That is why FES, whose aim is to support trade unions all over the world, believes it is important to support capacity building projects led by Education International and affiliates.

Unions need to keep up, spend time and invest resources in building their capacity to respond to those challenges, he said. "With limited budgets available to unions, solidarity partners such as FES can and must play a role to support initiatives by trade unions to stay on top of the game."

The Foundation does this via financial support, and by engaging in the development of content and methodology, he said.

FES is present in 108 countries around the globe. In these countries, its experts on local policies, politics, traditions, economy, etc., work with education and other trade unions and civil society organisations.

In Cameroon, Education International's member organisations, the *Fédération Camerounaise des Syndicats de l'Education* (FECASE), the *Fédération des Syndicats de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche* (FESER) and the *Syndicat des Travailleurs des Etablissements Scolaires Privés du Cameroun* (SYNTESPRIC) pointed out that they "operate in a repressive political context that undermines union activity. Our challenge is to reset the balance of power in our favour through massive unionisation so we are able to set union activity free."

The *Syndicat National Autonome de l'Enseignement Secondaire* (SNAES) has been working with FES for five years, said Roger Kaffo, SNAES General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary of FESER. The latter is one of Education International's member organisations that is part of SNAES. The FES "has been a strategic partner for years. The foundation is engaged with my union in several types of cooperation. For four years, they have been training members of the union leadership (four or five per year) through the foundation's young leaders' programme."

He added: "I know that the foundation is involved in the movement of social democracy and that in the history of the foundation there is also a good part of trade unionism. It is a foundation that historically has deep connections with trade unionism. They try to promote the values of social justice, social engagement, and politically, democracy with a social focus. We connect there."

Generating a genuine political debate

Kaffo noted that FES' analysis of the Cameroonian democratic forum, revealed gaps to be addressed. It realised that political parties have the monopoly of expression on television. This made it necessary to open the debate on the future of society, of institutions, to a larger panel, for example with unions and researchers.

"They called it the 'political debate'. A team selects themes and partners and supervises the debates. It works very well and touches on sensitive topics, for which it would be difficult to get permission to organise a public debate. We can do it within this frame," Kaffo said.

FES also funds particular union projects, including for example, a campaign on education support personnel or work on the textbook crisis in Cameroon. According to Kaffo, this support allows unions to do things they would not otherwise be able to do, especially due to lack of resources.

"We are in a restricted political space. We have a certain margin of freedom but are sometimes monitored and thwarted. What the foundation helps to do is set up an accessible infrastructure that is not under external control."

Describing FES as "a reliable strategic partner with a lot of ambition, not only for the union, but also for democracy more broadly", Kaffo highlighted that this goal "brings together organisations around the ideas of debate, openness, commitment and fight".

Going towards development unionism

Kaffo added that the SNAES has changed since 2004, broadening its focus out from union interests to the entire education system. "That is why we called it development unionism. Step by step, it was explained that, in underdeveloped countries, education is at the heart of development. Teachers must be involved in this goal of making children open to the perspective of development," he concluded.

Facilitating union renewal

In addition to democracy, union renewal is also a key aim in projects piloted by the foundation, according to FES' Herberg. "Understanding that this is highly sensitive work that requires a lot of trust, internal deliberation and time, we encourage our trade union partners to be brave, ask hard questions and take strategic decisions as to where to take the union. The proper role of an organisation like FES is to support such union transformation processes, by facilitating or reflecting on the process dimension. We encourage Education International and its affiliates to continue this work."

In Cameroon, with the project supported by FES, FECASE, FESER and SYNTESPRIC are resolute to act jointly towards trade union revitalisation, taking into account the new political and social realities, and questioning their role and their internal organisation.

To carry out this difficult task, the Cameroonian teachers' unions intend to rely on the recommendations resulting from "[Organising teaching: Developing the power of the profession](#)", the research carried out in 2018 by Professors Bascia and Stevenson, on behalf of Education International, and aiming to improve the image and efficiency of unions.

Cameroonian education unions are also determined to provide adequate space for:

- Young members and women.

- All categories of staff, including teachers, education support personnel, contract workers and private school staff.
- All components of the union, including regional and local sections.

Among union activities planned are:

- A national workshop to establish a diagnosis and related alternative responses concerning trade union practices in the education sector.
- A national workshop to identify the real needs of teachers to enhance the planning of union action.
- Regional capacity building workshops for union leaders and new members within five regional coordination bodies on the following themes: social dialogue, transparency and internal democracy, leadership in trade union regional coordination bodies.

September

Headlines

1. Haiti: Call for international solidarity with education colleagues after earthquake

Education International has launched an urgent action appeal for Haiti to assist trade unionists and teachers in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake.

On 14 August, the Nippes region, 150km east of the capital, Port-au-Prince, was hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. This natural disaster has led to deaths, injuries, infrastructural damage, and the disruption of the education system.

Ten days later, on 24 August, the official death toll stood at over 2,200, and more than 12,000 people had been injured. Thousands of houses and several dozen schools collapsed as a result of the earthquake. The start of the school year, scheduled for early September, has been postponed. Roads have been destroyed, making it difficult to access victims and to assess damage and needs. The authorities are still conducting that assessment.

“We will do our utmost to respond to requests to assist trade unionists and teachers affected by the earthquake. To this end, I appeal to the generosity of all member organisations to contribute to the Solidarity Fund.”

David Edwards, Education International’s General Secretary

Education unions in close contact with public authorities

Since the earthquake, despite the difficulties of transportation and communication, Education International's four member organisations in Haiti have been in close contact with teachers in the areas affected by the earthquake.

One affiliate collected the following information remotely about its members: one teacher dead, 143 injured, 204 houses destroyed, and 1,461 houses damaged. Officials from another affiliate managed to travel to the affected region and met victims, assessed needs, and developed an action plan to help the education sector there. This work is still ongoing.

Education International’s Haiti Solidarity Fund

Education International assures member organisations in Haiti of its full support in these painful circumstances.

“We will do our utmost to respond to requests to assist trade unionists and teachers affected by the earthquake. To this end, I appeal to the generosity of all member organisations to contribute to the Solidarity Fund,” said Education International’s General Secretary, David Edwards.

Contributions to the Haiti Solidarity Fund can be made via the following account:

Education International

ING Bank

24, Avenue Marnix

1000 Brussels

IBAN: BE05 3101 0061 7075

Swift: BBRUBEBB

With the following label: Haiti

Ongoing challenges

Besides natural catastrophes, Haitian educators continue to struggle with serious challenges, including [governmental harassment](#), [the fallout from the killing of the country's president](#), and ensuring [health and safety](#) during the pandemic for the education community.

Education International will monitor the situation of educators and education in Haiti closely.

2. Palestine: Development cooperation programme builds capacity among female teachers and union members

Capacity building for young female teachers and increased female representation in union leadership are at the heart of training organised by the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT).

The training programme, set up by a consortium comprising Education International, the National Education Union (NEU) of the United Kingdom, and the Union of Education Norway (UEN), came in response to the unique challenges experienced by women during the pandemic.

GUPT reported that female educators found themselves having to balance educating and providing feedback to students remotely, filling in reports, and taking care of their families. This led to burnout and hindered progress towards achieving gender equality.

This creative project on e-learning and gender equality will “contribute to enhance the skills of young female teachers to become active members” and “support women to overcome obstacles preventing them from accessing leadership positions”.

Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney, leaders of the NEU/UK

In response, the GUPT resumed its capacity-building programmes, funded by the consortium partners. The aim is to build the capacities of young female teachers around e-learning and increase the number of women in key union leadership and decision-making positions at local and national level.

Female teachers from all of Education International affiliates in Palestine – GUPT, the General Union of Workers in Kindergarten and Private Schools, and the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees - are enjoying the benefits of the training.

Improving access to leadership roles

At the launch of the programme on 25 September, GUPT General Secretary Saed Erziqat thanked Education International, NEU, and UEN for supporting the development programme.

In his message, Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards, congratulated GUPT for taking the lead in supporting young female teachers and enhancing gender equality during and beyond the pandemic. This creative project on e-learning and gender equality will “contribute to enhance the skills of young female teachers to become active members” and “support women to overcome obstacles preventing them from accessing leadership positions”, he said.

The Chairperson of the GUPT Women's Committee, Iman Al-Shayeb, highlighted the importance of enhancing the role of this Committee to ensure increased numbers of women in union leadership and decision-making roles and positions at local and national levels.

Indeed, in April 2021, GUPT amended its by-laws and introduced a gender quota to increase women's leadership at all levels of GUPT's structures.

Strategic plan promoting gender equality

This move is part of the GUPT's strategic plan and in the framework of the consortium's capacity building programme. Among the plan's objectives are the following:

- Develop female teachers' skills around e-learning. The training content will be taught electronically through platforms used by the Education Ministry.
- Develop learning online materials during the programme. Peer learning and mentoring is encouraged amongst participants.
- Take action to increase gender equality within GUPT and develop a gender-responsive education system.
- Improve understanding of and take action to address barriers to women's participation in union leadership and decision-making at local and national levels.
- Lobby the government to include gender equality in educators' initial and continuous training with special focus on recognising and addressing gender stereotypes in textbooks.

“Despite all the challenges related to the lack of infrastructure, access to digitalised curricula, the lack of teachers' involvement by public authorities in developing online content, and the lack of professional development, the union has taken the lead.”

David Edwards, Education International's General Secretary

Pioneering role in the Arab region

Congratulating GUPT for taking the lead in supporting young female teachers and enhancing gender equality during and beyond the pandemic, Education International's General Secretary David Edwards also commended GUPT for facilitating quality distance teaching and learning.

At the occasion of the launch of the consortium's capacity building programme, he also stressed in his message the pioneering role the union is playing in the Arab region.

"Despite all the challenges related to the lack of infrastructure, access to digitalised curricula, the lack of teachers' involvement by public authorities in developing online content, and the lack of professional development, the union has taken the lead," Edwards said. "Quality learning depends on well-supported qualified teachers. The union's work in those areas has again showed the relevance of our work as unions and teaching profession."

In their joint message, NEU Joint General Secretaries Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney acknowledged that this creative project on e-learning and gender equality will "contribute to enhance the skills of young female teachers to become active members" and "support women to overcome obstacles preventing them from accessing leadership positions", they said.

GUPT a strategic social partner during pandemic

In addition to responding to the needs of female teachers, GUPT also reacted swiftly to the COVID-19 crisis through an effective national response.

Thanks to the Education International's COVID-19 Response Fund, the union established its own training department and also [trained union members on an online educational programme](#). This helped the union to position itself as a strategic social partner, as the Education Ministry officially adopted the GUPT e-learning model.

Headlines

1. New global report points to overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession

On World Teachers' Day, education unions are raising the alarm as [new research](#) shows that teachers around the world are overworked, underpaid, and undervalued.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on the education sector. With school closures around the world, there has been an increased public appreciation of teachers and the work they do. However, this awareness has not led to structural improvements such as investment, support, and better working conditions for professional educators. In fact, education budgets have fallen in 65 per cent of low- and middle-income countries, and in 33 per cent of upper-middle- and high-income countries.

The [2021 Education International report on the Global Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession](#), which surveyed 128 education union leaders and officials in 94 countries and across all levels of education, points to system wide conditions which are failing to attract a new generation of educators to the profession. The continued teacher shortage undermines the right of every learner to be taught by a qualified teacher.

“What are we learning in this pandemic? First, teachers and Education Support Personnel have gone above and beyond for their students. This report is a clear indication that governments need to make an urgent investment in teachers and the students they educate. Increasing teacher salaries and reducing workload is essential to recruit the best people into the profession and ensure quality education for all,” stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International.

“Recent policy moves tend to shift responsibility, and blame, onto teachers for issues that systems should be providing support for. An intelligent professional agenda requires a collective, joint negotiated plan with the profession. This should be seen as a foundational move towards intelligent professionalism. The joint development of the [Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards](#) by Education International and UNESCO is exemplary in this regard.”

The report, authored by Professor Greg Thompson, Queensland University of Technology in Australia, outlines the factors affecting the status of education workers worldwide, such as pay and working conditions, as well as professional autonomy and the portrayal of teachers in the media. Some of the main findings include:

- **Teacher pay** is too low, conditions are deteriorating, and infrastructure to support teaching and learning is not a priority for government investment. Over 42 per cent of respondents stated that there had been a deterioration in teachers' working conditions over the last three years. 84 per cent indicated that salaries had decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Workload** has intensified. Over 55 per cent of respondents stated that workloads were unmanageable. Over 66 per cent of respondents felt that “administrivia” requirements were contributing to the excessive workload pressures for education professionals.

- **Teacher attrition** was reported as an issue at all academic levels, with primary education (33.1 per cent) the highest and higher education (17.3 per cent) the lowest. 48 per cent of respondents think the teaching profession is not an attractive profession for young people.
- **Precarious employment** is growing. Almost 60 per cent of respondents pointed to the use of casual and short-term contracts to employ teachers and academics. In some settings, including sub-Saharan Africa and South-West Asia, many contract teachers described receiving less pay than permanent teachers, inadequate professional support, and poor working conditions.
- **Continuous Professional Development** remains insufficient for teachers. Many perceived it to be of poor quality, not directly relevant to the issues that teachers were facing, and came at personal financial cost without clear career benefits (see tables 106-112).

The respondents were also asked their recommendations to improve the status of the profession and stated that a focus on pay, conditions, and particularly workload would be valuable elements. Positive policies and practices include hiring adequate numbers of teachers, trainers, and education support personnel and ensuring that education systems be well-resourced to ensure high-quality education.

To access the full report on the Global Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession, by Thompson, G. (2021) and its executive summary, [please click here](#).

2. New research: IMF imposed austerity slashes three million frontline workers from world's most fragile education and health systems

New research by ActionAid, Public Services International, and Education International warns that the International Monetary Fund's demands to cut public sector employee costs undermine progress on health and education.

The International Monetary Fund's advice to cut government spending in the global south has wiped nearly \$10 billion from public sector wage budgets in 15 countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This is the equivalent of cutting more than three million essential jobs, such as teachers, nurses, and doctors, despite the growing need for such professionals during the pandemic.

David Edwards, General Secretary at Education International stated: "Public sector wage bill constraints have a devastating effect in the education sector. When the teacher wage bill is cut, students' right to quality education is threatened by a lack of qualified teachers and unacceptably large class sizes. Given the global teacher shortage and rising attrition levels due to the pandemic, the IMF should be supporting low and lower-middle income countries to recruit and retain more well trained and highly qualified teachers rather than pushing for countries to reduce their spending on these workers that are so crucial for countries' post-pandemic recovery. Teachers are key for quality education and are crucial for achieving the global goal to ensure inclusive education for all."

The public versus austerity

As G20 finance ministers meet for the IMF annual meetings today (12 October), the research reveals that despite IMF claims that wage bill containment is a temporary measure, all the 15 countries studied have been advised to cut or freeze public sector wage bills for three or more years and most for at least five years.

The report, [The Public Versus Austerity](#), shows how cutting budgets used to pay public sector workers is undermining progress on health, education and gender equality while blocking Covid-19 responses and the transformations needed to address the climate crisis.

"Public sector wage bill constraints have a devastating effect in the education sector. When the teacher wage bill is cut, students' right to quality education is threatened by a lack of qualified teachers and unacceptably large class sizes."

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary

Analysis of IMF documents, including Article IV reports that provide policy advice which shape countries' economies for years, also reveals how data is being misused at country level to drive down public employment funding. It finds that countries with wildly different spending on public sector wages as a percentage of GDP were all advised to make cuts, from Zimbabwe with 17% of GDP to Nigeria with just 1.8% of GDP. Despite these huge variations, the IMF's advice is consistently to cut spending.

Out of 69 IMF documents examined, only Liberia's included calculations on existing staffing shortfalls in the education and health sectors – despite such information being of vital importance in determining public employment funding levels.

Liberia's Article IV report showed the country's ratio of health professionals per 10,000 people is only five, compared to the World Health Organisation target of 41. Yet despite the clear need for more public service workers across a range of sectors, Liberia was still advised to make a 1.1 percentage point cut to the public sector wage bill.

The report comes just weeks after the World Bank ditched its annual Doing Business report following calls from civil society for change and a damning investigation, which revealed significant internal bias and data manipulation.

The new research further highlights the need for reform at both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, towards a new policy direction which revalues the role of public employment and services in fostering development and growth.

Accounts from the frontline

Teachers, doctors, and nurses from the countries involved in the study, shared shocking accounts of fragile health and education systems brought to their knees during the height of Covid-19 due to shortages of key workers.

In Zimbabwe, teachers' salaries (around ZWL\$28,666, or US\$335 per month) are less than the total consumption poverty line, the amount needed to buy enough food and non-food items to support a family of five each month.

Farai*, a teacher from Zimbabwe says: "Our wages feel like slave wages, teachers are facing so many challenges. We are suffering from stress and surviving teachers feel as if they have become beggars. Morale is at its lowest."

“We have become a laughingstock in society, living from hand to mouth. We go to work in tattered clothes, and we are living in squalid conditions. I have heard of marriages breaking down. But through this all we are still reporting for duty.”

Broken austerity policies such as wage bill containment, highlight how the IMF has undermined public services and prevented countries responding to multiple crises, such as the climate crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Across the 15 countries studied, if governments were to raise the amount of GDP spent on public sector wage bills by just one percentage point this would allow for the recruitment of eight million extra teachers, doctors, nurses, and other key workers.

*The names of doctors, nurses, teachers, and other public sector workers quoted in the research have been changed to protect their identities.

Watch the launch event

International segment

West Africa segment

East and Southern Africa segment

3. The attack on the CGIL in Italy is an assault on democracy

David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, the global federation of teachers and education workers, expressed his outrage after the headquarters of the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL), the largest union confederation in Italy, was ransacked by neo-fascists.

The violence broke out on Saturday, October 9, during demonstrations opposing a “green pass” which requires employees to show proof of COVID vaccination, negative test, or recent recovery from the virus.

“As educators and unionists, we condemn the assault on the CGIL, and express our continued solidarity with our union sisters and brothers in Italy. This act of violence by avowed neo-fascists is a clear attack on democratic institutions, and an effort to intimidate those who stand in the way of extremism and authoritarianism,” stated David Edwards, Secretary General of Education International.

“We stand with our affiliate FLC-CGIL, and with all our member organisations in Italy and trade unions in the country as they continue to represent the voice of workers and work for an inclusive democracy,” Edwards added.

Following the incident, twelve individuals, including top leaders of Forza Nuova, a small political party that describes itself as neo-fascist, were arrested in connection to the violence.

"The assault on CGIL's national headquarters is an act of fascist thuggery, an attack on democracy and on the world of work. No-one should think that they can return our country to its fascist past," stated [Maurizio Landini, General Secretary of the CGIL](#).

Press reports based on information from official sources indicate that those who perpetrated the violence in Rome are part of an extreme right group whose strategy and actions were inspired by the January 6 assault on the US Capitol in Washington DC. In both cases, there is evidence that social media driven by extremist groups was used to manipulate anger and dissatisfaction based on lies and distortions.

"When facts are debatable, then you don't have facts, you don't have truth and you can't have trust. Without all of these things then you don't have a shared reality, you can't have democracy." This quote by Maria Ressa, a friend of Education International and recipient of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize, illustrates the key role established, representative organizations such as unions have in safeguarding healthy democracies.

Just as journalists and a free press have a vital role in supporting democracy when it is fragile and under attack, so do teachers. The role of teachers is fundamental in cementing the values of democracy, developing competences such as listening, observation, critical thinking, free discussion, and active citizenship. These skills help young people separate facts from propaganda and serve as guiding principles for their actions as adults.

"The value of trade unions in building and maintaining democracy, as well as the irreplaceable role of journalists and educators must be understood and supported in order to prevent the type of violence and extremism which led to the attack on the union hall in Rome." Edwards concluded.

Education International will join the [national antifascist demonstration organised on Saturday 16 October](#) in Rome by all three major trade union confederations, the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL), the *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori* (CISL), and the *Unione Italiana del Lavoro* (UIL).

Abbasso il fascismo. Viva la democrazia.

4. Seven things to know about COP 26: A quick guide for education unionists

After a one-year delay due to the coronavirus pandemic, world leaders, negotiators, civil society representatives and key stakeholders will be convening for the UN climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland from October 31 to November 12. The two-week conference aims to mobilise urgently needed climate action in order to meet the Paris Agreement's targets.

This means raising emissions reductions pledges, organising more efficient adaptation mechanisms to the impacts of climate change, and mobilising financial support for developing nations to facilitate their transition to low-carbon economies. This year's COP is shaping up to be the most crucial since the passage of the Paris Agreement in 2015.

Here are a few things you need to know about the summit:

1. The Conference of Parties is the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),

The original environmental treaty forged in 1992 was primarily tasked to tackle ‘dangerous human interference with the climate system.’ The COP is the venue where Parties review and negotiate the implementation of the Convention. COP 25, for instance, left many important issues undecided, such as the highly contentious debates on [carbon markets](#). Many are anticipating the verdict on these issues as the [dismal outcomes](#) of the previous COP cast doubt on the seriousness of world leaders to act on climate.

2. Many are hoping that COP 26 will spark greater ambition that would keep the higher goal of the Paris Agreement alive: limiting global temperature rise to 1.5° C.

Widely regarded as the most important multilateral treaty addressing climate change today, the Paris Agreement aims to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees C compared to pre-industrial levels by 2100. However, due to the magnified impacts of climate change, the aim for 1.5°C was set as the more ambitious goal of the agreement. A recent report by UN’s climate scientists has warned that the rise in global temperature will likely breach the 1.5°C by 2030 if massive emissions cuts are not made soon. It remains to be seen if COP 26 will deliver on its promise of catalysing bolder climate action, particularly on the temperature target of 1.5° C.

3. The world will be keeping an eye on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The NDCs—an outline of a country’s voluntary climate action plans—have been hailed as one of the most prominent achievements of the Paris Agreement. It eschewed the ‘top-down’ approaches of past policy regimes and allowed countries the autonomy to decide the pace of their decarbonisation processes. Theoretically, the voluntary nature of the NDCs was supposed to inspire confidence in nations to raise ambition through mutual cooperation and diplomacy. However, [current climate pledges have failed to deliver on the goals](#) of the Paris Agreement. In fact, if the world continues with current climate commitments, the world will be [2.4°C warmer by the end of the century](#). Raising ambition within the NDCs, particularly of high emitting countries, will be key in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.

4. Civil society organisations, negotiators from small island states and least developed countries, as well as unions, will be pushing for climate justice in the talks.

The UK presidency, through Boris Johnson, has outlined four key priority areas: [coal, cash, cars, and trees](#). Johnson’s pronouncement summarised his presidency’s climate commitments, which mainly targets the end of coal, mobilise \$100 billion a year for the developing world, hasten the transition to electric cars, and [end deforestation](#). However, countries who are already experiencing the destructive consequences of runaway climate change are calling for a [Solidarity Package](#) that would address a variety of issues not captured in the UK government’s approach. Hence, we can expect that civil society representatives, unions, and a few negotiators from climate vulnerable countries will be pushing to [reference climate justice in the negotiations](#).

5. Climate Education needs to be amplified at COP 26.

While the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) has been actively conducting dialogues with Parties and key stakeholders on how to operationalise and strengthen its program, there is still so much that needs to be done. Primarily, raising awareness on the need for quality climate education as a veritable climate action strategy is imperative. Given that [most nations are failing in their climate education pledges](#), it is high time that governments stepped up their ambition as the Paris Agreement recognises the [importance of education](#) in confronting the climate crisis.

6. Unions will demand for a ‘New Social Contract’ at COP.

With a history of active engagement at the COPs, trade unions via the International Trade Union Confederation, will demand to centre social justice in the transition to low-carbon economies. In particular, the ITUC has outlined its five demands for a New Social Contract. These are: 1) The creation of climate-friendly jobs 2) Rights for all workers 3) Universal Social Protection 4) Equality 5) Inclusion and democratic participation.

Thus, climate education will be a vital component in this transition. As the world begins to decarbonise, the role of education in preparing the workforce for the green economy as well as shifting mindsets to more sustainable ways of living has never been more imperative.

7. We need the voices of educators at COP!

As such, we are calling on every educator to join EI at COP by participating online and, if possible, in person, by attending the [Global Day of Action](#) on November 6. Share and sign the [Manifesto on Quality Climate Education for All](#). Write letters to your education and environment ministers, urging them to recognise the need for quality climate education for all.

We also encourage you and your union to engage in international and domestic climate policymaking and demand that climate education be part of your country's NDCs.

We have created a [toolkit on climate education advocacy](#) as an introduction into this endeavour.

5. Solidarity in times of crisis: the EI COVID Response Fund

As the COVID-19 pandemic became global, education unions showed solidarity with a dedicated *COVID Response Fund* to support member organisations during school closures and where teachers were hit by the health crisis.

As the pandemic brought education systems to a halt, Education International (EI) and its members set themselves a goal: to help their colleagues in every country remain operational during the crisis, so that they could play their role in the development of effective national responses to the crisis.

To that end, EI established the EI COVID Response Fund (CRF) in April 2020 and issued an urgent action appeal for solidarity to its affiliates to gather funds. In May 2020, member organisations in need of support could submit their requests for help. Thanks to the contributions of member organisations and with a contribution of the EI Solidarity Fund, more than a quarter million euros were disbursed to member organisations in 26 countries, helping them limit the impact of the pandemic on their operational capacity.

Providing tangible support for member organisations

The support provided via the EI CRF has helped member organisations respond to pressing needs that emerged with the pandemic. They included the impact of lockdown measures on the union's capacity to reach out to members, the collection of memberships fees, dealing with increased numbers of dismissed or unpaid teachers, especially in the private sector, and poor digital readiness to establish distance education. Long-term needs were also addressed as the crisis deepened. They covered some pre-existing problems like the digital divide; precarious, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions; the privatisation of education; gender-based violence; child labour; poor social and policy dialogue in the education sector, and other ongoing needs.

Making unions stronger despite the health crisis

The EI CRF supported member organisations' efforts from Angola to Zimbabwe to collect evidence on the impact of the COVID outbreak on education systems and communities and to use it for advocacy purposes. Unions carried out surveys and consultations that allowed them to take stock of their affiliates' needs. For instance, they could better understand the importance and impact of online education on their students.

Member organisations were also successful in grassroots mobilisation of teachers and school communities. Whether through awareness-raising meetings focusing on required sanitary measures in schools, acting against child labour and gender-based violence; through capacity-building workshops about on-line teaching or the provision of legal assistance - education unionists remained active and present on the ground. In some cases, initiatives led by the unions were joined by education and health authorities, increasing the impact of education unions in their communities, and helping them build efficient, constructive working relationships with their government counterparts.

Examples of union-led actions undertaken with the help of EI CRF can be found [here](#)

Headlines

1. The world is failing millions of refugees. We must act now.

The recently published [Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2021](#) is a stark reminder of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable groups. Education International calls on the international community to ensure the fundamental right to education and the right to decent work for all refugees without delay.

Almost half of refugee children out of school, girls particularly excluded

While Education International welcomes progress in access to education in some countries since the adoption of the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#) in 2016 that paved the way for the adoption of the Global Compact, the fact that 1.8 million refugee children, almost half of school-age refugee children in reporting countries, remain out of school, is unacceptable.

The data covering more than 40 countries hosting refugees shows that the average gross enrolment rates for refugee children in 2019/2020 were 34% in pre-primary education, 68% in primary education, and 34% in secondary education. At the tertiary level, enrolment rates stand at an abysmal 5%. This is far below our collective commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030.

We must step up our engagement with the most vulnerable that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Refugee girls are still less likely to have access to education than refugee boys and alarmingly, a recent analysis in 10 countries found that half of all refugee girls will not return to school when classrooms reopen. Worse still, in some countries, all girls are at risk of dropping out for good. As one in two refugees is a woman or a girl, gender-responsive policies and responses are indispensable: the report justly points out that mitigating the long-term socio-economic impacts of displacement on women and girls requires, inter alia, targeted educational services.

Urgent action is needed to address intersecting forms of discrimination in education that have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis: Education International and affiliates around the world have been calling on governments to conduct [equity audits](#) whose results must inform recovery plans in education. Educational equity audits can also help address the lack of disaggregated data by age, gender, protection status and diversity desperately needed to further the inclusion of refugees in host communities.

Education must be at the heart of recovery

Education is the single most powerful tool to empower refugee children and youth to thrive and reach their full potential, yet the data shows that it is constantly marginalised and chronically underfunded.

Before the pandemic, in 2019, only 2.6% of humanitarian aid was spent on education - well below the global target of 4%.

The pandemic has also driven education budgets further down in many countries. An estimated 65% of governments in low- and lower-middle-income countries, and 35% of governments in upper-middle- and high-income countries have reduced funding for education since the beginning of the

pandemic.

Education International cautions against an approach that focuses on the development of digital educational solutions for refugees in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis. [Research](#) commissioned by Education International on the education of Syrian refugee children indicates that a disproportionate emphasis on technology may be pedagogically problematic and divert funding from more urgent needs, for the benefit of private actors.

If we are to build a more equitable and sustainable future for generations to come, investments to foster inclusive public education systems must be at the heart of humanitarian and development aid programmes, as well as national recovery efforts, so that all students, especially those most in need, have access to free quality education.

The report rightly stresses that filling the financing gap for inclusive refugee education, through both international and domestic funding, is urgently needed and feasible.

Decent work is a universal right

The report also highlights the fact that the pandemic is expected to increase global poverty for the first time in 20 years. Around 100 million people, including many refugees, will be pushed into extreme poverty as a consequence of the economic downturn.

Even before the health crisis, two thirds of refugees lived in poverty. Many face unsurmountable obstacles in accessing decent work. It is critical that countries include refugees in their plans for economic recovery in order to enable them to be self-reliant and contribute to their communities.

Quality education and decent work are not luxuries or privileges. They are universal human rights that must be respected. **In the lead up to the High-level Official Meeting taking place in December to assess progress on the implementation of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), Education International calls for a strong reaction from governments, international organisations, and all stakeholders to address the deterioration of refugees and host communities' self-reliance and resilience in the context of the pandemic, a core objective of the GCR.**

A lack of immediate action on refugee access to quality education and decent work condemns millions to a lifetime of hardship. National governments and the international community have a legal and moral obligation to all refugees and displaced people. Immediate action is imperative.

December

Headlines

1. Iran: Global education union community rallies around arrested trade unionists and demand their release

As an organisation committed to trade union and human rights, Education International is demanding the release of Esmail Abdi and other arrested trade union leaders in Iran. There is a particular and urgent concern for Abdi's health, severely affected after long imprisonment in dire conditions.

During a meeting of Education International's Executive Board on December 2nd, the international body adopted a resolution demanding respect for the "rights of teachers and education workers to organise and to freedom of association and freedom of speech including the right to peaceful assembly, without fear of intervention by the authorities."

The Executive Board also called goes on member organisations to join Education International's call for an immediate release of Esmail Abdi and other imprisoned leaders and join Education International's efforts to ensure safety and wellbeing for their family members.

For several years now, Education International has been following the difficult situation of trade unionists and educators in Iran and leading campaigns for the release of teachers and others who have peacefully asserted their rights.

Read the full resolution here:

[Executive Board resolution demanding release of Esmail Abdi and other arrested leaders in Iran](#)

The Executive Board of Education International, meeting on 1st December 2021

1. Notes with serious concerns that:

- a. Esmail Abdi, former Secretary General of Iranian Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA), has been imprisoned on numerous occasions since 2006 on trumped up charges of "propaganda against the State" and "espionage".
- b. He was sentenced to five years in 2016 on fictitious charges of "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security".
- c. To prevent his release, the Iranian authorities, executed a suspended 10-year sentence related to a 2011 case, at the end of his previous sentence on 11 January 2021 thereby imprisoning him until 2031.
- d. Long imprisonment and ill treatment in the prison has severely affected his health.
- e. Esmail's family (wife, two daughters and a son) are harassed and victimised by the security forces and at a serious risk.

2. Recognises that:

a. Esmail Abdi is imprisoned solely for his peaceful trade union activities, including associating with Education International, organising peaceful demonstrations by teachers outside parliament in April 2015 to protest against poor wages, the inadequate education budget and imprisonment of teacher trade unionists.

b. His arrest and the arrest of other trade unionists and human rights defenders are violations of freedom of association, the right to organise and freedom of speech.

3. Calls on the Iranian Government to:

a. Unconditionally drop all charges and release Esmail Abdi and other imprisoned trade unionists and human rights defenders in Iran.

b. Respect and uphold the rights of teachers and education workers to organise and to freedom of association and freedom of speech including the right to peaceful assembly, without fear of intervention by the authorities.

c. Institutionalise dialogue with representative organisations of teachers and education personnel on issues related to the education policy and teachers.

d. Respect the rights and privacy of the family members of Esmail Abdi and the imprisoned leaders and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

4. Calls on member organisations to:

a. Join EI's call for an immediate release of Esmail Abdi and other imprisoned leaders.

b. Join EI's efforts to ensure safety and wellbeing of Esmail Abdi's family members.

2. Development Cooperation Handbook: A guide to successful partnerships

This development cooperation handbook is intended for the use of all Education International affiliates. Those that are already involved in development cooperation will find food for thought and tools for use in their work. Affiliates that are not yet involved in development cooperation will find useful information to help them to get started in this area.

The guide was developed by the Education International (EI) Secretariat and the EI regional offices. It has been informed by input from participants at the annual development cooperation meetings in Brussels, Belgium, in 2019 and 2020.

What will you find in this handbook?

This handbook contains suggestions for successful engagement with development cooperation. These suggestions have been gleaned from and build on the experiences gained by EI and its affiliates in the field of international development cooperation. No one model of development cooperation is infallible. Nevertheless, this tool will contribute to reflection, help to avoid certain pitfalls, and ensure Education International affiliates utilise human and financial resources as efficiently as possible.

3. Francophonie: education and the trade union movement show their resilience in face of the health crisis

The theme of the XVIIth meeting of the *Comité syndical francophone de l'éducation et de la formation* (CSFEF), which brings together the education unions of French-speaking countries, was “Schools as a vehicle for solidarity and development - if countries give themselves the means”. Participants noted that unions have been very active during the COVID-19 pandemic and have continued to look for ways to grow stronger to better support educators and ensure quality education for all.

“The CSFEF has tried to maintain its links with French-speaking brothers and sisters, which has not always been easy. However, fortunately, the trade union movement has remained active despite successive lockdowns,” stressed CSFEF President Jean-Hervé Cohen at the event, held by videoconference from 25 to 26 November.

He also welcomed the fact that the majority of French-speaking unions continued to carry out campaigns to recruit activists.

Adding that “trade unionism is first and foremost being in the field, ensuring the proximity that allows our demands to be in step with the profession”, he recognised the need “be present in the places of information, the written and audio-visual press, but also social networks”.

CSFEF ready to support trade union struggles in the Francophone community

Regretfully, the difficulties repeatedly mentioned by trade unions at previous meetings persist, said Cohen. These difficulties in many Francophone countries include:

- Lack of funding for education;
- Contested political regimes;
- Trade union rights being trampled on (agreements being signed but not respected);
- Worsening working conditions and pay. This leads to protests and strikes (as is the case in [Gabon](#) at the moment) and puts the education of young people at risk.

“We see that the unions are not giving up and continue to fight: the CSFEF will always be at their side to support their struggles,” Cohen insisted.

Digital technology, a tool to be mastered

The participants also tried to draw up an initial assessment of education in a time of pandemic, by looking at the closure of schools and establishments, the health protection of teachers and pupils and the new, “[but not always well thought-out or effective, role of digital technology](#)”.

PASEC and the debate on teaching in French from the first year of school

The CSFEF meeting also discussed the report of the analysis of education systems by the conference of francophone education ministers, [Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie](#) (PASEC), published in December 2020.

Participants emphasised that this survey of student performance and teachers' skills in sub-Saharan Francophone Africa has important implications for teachers.

For the participants, the early learning of French is a matter of debate and cannot be approached in the same way everywhere, as it depends on the country and its linguistic make-up.

In debating the results of the PASEC survey, the CSFEF member unions, many of which are based in sub-Saharan Africa, showed that they could use the results of government surveys to put forward their demands, which are often common to all countries.

Finally, Cohen recalled that this CSFEF meeting was being held within the framework of the summit of heads of state and government, whose theme is “Connectivity in diversity: digital technology, a vehicle for development and solidarity in the French-speaking world”. This Summit has been postponed to November 2022 in Tunisia, where the CSFEF hopes to hold its next face-to-face meeting.

4. Development cooperation partners take stock of projects in Africa

To better understand the needs of member organisations in the region and to explore opportunities, partner organisations gathered on 15 November to discuss development cooperation projects in Africa and work on a common strategy.

Virtual discussions among the 27 participants from 13 countries led the way to the continuation of development cooperation projects across Africa and opened the door to new ones. Partner organisations identified ways to improve support to member organisations collectively. And the meeting also highlighted Education International’s crucial role in centralising information and guidance on development cooperation projects. This meeting paves the way for continued exchange of information and ideas among cooperation partners who work in the region.

African education unions face numerous challenges

Development cooperation is “a very noble and important cause”, stressed Dennis Sinyolo, Director of the Education International Africa region (EIRAF).

The EIRAF region faces multiple challenges and crises, including the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and other long-standing problems devastating the continent, such as conflicts, poverty, and climate change.

“Many African governments continue to infringe on human and trade union rights, such as social dialogue or professional autonomy,” he added. Sinyolo highlighted the [attacks on teachers in Eswatini](#), a situation which remains extremely difficult for education unionists. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Togo, governments have responded harshly to strike actions, firing teachers, he condemned. In these different instances, he highlighted that Education International had responded swiftly to support its affiliates.

Development cooperation is of great importance in Africa, because many unions are small and have poor resources, he insisted.

Sinyolo said the meeting’s aim was “to help us better understand the needs of trade unions, projects led in Africa, and build greater synergy for greater impact”.

Needs for support in several areas

EIRAF also presented the outcomes of a needs survey carried out in October. Fifty unions, from thirty-one countries, have responded to an online questionnaire on threats, challenges and needs.

The first three threats mentioned by member organisations are COVID-19, violations of human and trade union rights and government meddling in union affairs.

As for the challenges, the highest one is by far the loss of membership.

The member organisations have ranked their needs as follows: leadership skills; social and policy dialogue; lobbying, advocacy and campaigning for the respect of international labour standards; use of digital technologies.

The regional office will take these expressed needs into account to guide the resources available in these directions.

Sharing information on all ongoing projects

Sinyolo then presented the EIRAF Action Plan, and colleagues from the EIRAF office highlighted eight different capacity-building projects targeting African trade unions:

1. Africa Women in Education Network (AWEN)
2. School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV)
3. Education Workforce Initiative (EWI)
4. Education Out Loud (EOL)
5. Pan African Teachers' Center Projects (PATC)
6. Research Activities
7. [Global Response campaign on the commercialisation and the privatisation in and of education](#)
8. Union Renewal

Development cooperation partners also showcased their cooperation projects in Africa.

Thanks to joined efforts of EI and the DC partners, four African member organisations out of five benefit from at least one cooperation project. There is great diversity in the policies of cooperation partners. Some focus on a specific part of the education system (ECE), others on a particular problem related to the education system (child labour), others on union capacity building (organising, communication, social dialogue), others on a particular language (francophone countries), others still on a sub-region (East Africa).

Conclusions and way forward

In his concluding remarks, Sinyolo advised that cooperation partners and member organisations that are beneficiaries of development cooperation projects gather during the next development cooperation meeting.

Addressing concrete, specific work areas, he suggested that the Global Response campaign be expanded to include more countries, the relaunch of the John Thompson Fellowship Programme, and extending full support to the Young African Educators Network.

"I believe you have found this meeting fruitful, I certainly did," the EIRAF Director also stated. "We at Education International are fully briefed about what you do, filled information gaps, and will take on board your recommendations to improve development cooperation.

"The ultimate goal all of us share is to support member organisations in Africa and build more democratic, independent, and stronger trade unions in Africa. Through our efforts, we will achieve that goal. It is solidarity at work. We are stronger together."

5. Education International calls for equity audits to address exacerbated inequities facing refugee students and teachers

Education International took the floor at the first High Level Officials Meeting hosted by the UN Refugee Agency to highlight the crippling impact of the pandemic on refugee access to quality education and to call for increased support for refugee teachers, as well as teachers in crisis and refugee-hosting contexts.

Taking place virtually on December 14 and 15, the High-Level Officials Meeting is part of the process of building a long-term framework for engagement of states and other actors in refugee situations, as set out in the [Global Compact on Refugees](#). The Meeting provides an opportunity to take stock of the progress made so far and maintain momentum towards achieving of objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

Equity audits are imperative to educational recovery for the most vulnerable

Education International welcomed the progress documented in the first [GCR Indicator Report](#) but expressed concern about the 1.8 million refugee children that remain out of school, stressing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable in education, including refugees, and in particular, girls.

EI called on governments to conduct educational equity audits without delay in order to inform recovery plans and help address the exacerbated inequities facing refugee students and educators, as a result of the pandemic. EI representative, Sonia Grigt, also reminded officials that teachers, education personnel and their unions are best placed to assess the impact of this unprecedented crisis on students and help design solutions for a swift and inclusive recovery in education.

Few of the pledges made by governments in relation to education specifically focus on teachers, despite their critical role in ensuring inclusive quality education. Moving forward, this gap must be addressed, and governments must step up efforts to support teachers and invest in the recruitment, retention, training, deployment, terms of employment and working conditions of teachers in crisis and refugee-hosting contexts. Governments must also recognise the qualifications of refugee teachers and ensure that they have an opportunity to pursue their teaching career under the same terms and conditions as their local peers.

Reacting to EI's intervention, High-Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi recognised the importance of teachers and agreed that it is an often-overlooked aspect that deserves more attention and follow-up.

Watch the full intervention below ([the full statement can be downloaded](#) on the HLOM's website)

Education – a critical tool for inclusion

Several of the interventions made during the High-Level Officials Meeting highlighted the essential role of education in the inclusion and integration of refugees.

In his opening statement, the High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi welcomed the progress made on education, with increased enrollment in secondary and tertiary levels reported. However, he also stressed that gains made in education are fragile, especially for girls, and much remains to be done in order to achieve the 263 pledges made in this sector and ensure access to

quality inclusive education for all.

UNESCO representative Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa, Director of the Division for Education 2030, drew attention to the fact that the needs and lived realities of refugee students and teachers were not adequately considered in the design of national Covid-19 response plans. Many refugees lack access to the devices needed to engage in remote emergency education during lockdowns. In addition to the learning losses, the pandemic has also undermined the protective function that schools often serve, exposing the most vulnerable to increased vulnerabilities such as forced marriage and unwanted pregnancy, which are likely to prevent many young refugee girls from returning to school. Ms Katsuno-Hayashikawa concluded that it is important for donors to consider the full spectrum of vulnerable learners' needs.

In her intervention, the representative of the Global Partnership for Education, Margarita Focas-Licht, listed the three main challenges to refugee education: inadequate education funding, a lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient learning spaces. All these barriers must be addressed without delay in order to ensure the universal right to education for all refugee children and youth.

[Click here](#) to find out more about our work to promote the rights of migrants and refugees.