



Annual Report 2022

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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 2022.

January

Highlights

1. International Day of Education

As the Covid-19 pandemic, the biggest education crisis in history, entered its third year, teachers called on governments to truly prioritise education, invest in the sector, and support the profession.

Related Items

International Day of Education reality check: Governments are failing students and teachers

As the biggest education crisis in history enters its third year, teachers call on governments to truly prioritise education, invest in the sector, and support the profession.

Today, the International Day of Education, teachers from across the world are sounding the alarm to draw attention to the deepening crisis in the sector and the long-term consequences for students everywhere.

“Right now, keeping schools open and safe during relentless waves of the pandemic is a priority for governments, parents, and teachers everywhere. However, this priority is not reflected in education budgets. Since the start of the pandemic, education budgets have fallen in two-thirds of low- and middle-income countries, and in one third of upper-middle- and high-income countries. This is devastating, and every day teachers are asked to do much more, with much less”, stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, the global voice of teachers and education workers.

Even before the pandemic, the United Nations estimated that 69 million more teachers were needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The heavy workload, lack of resources to keep schools safe, and chronic understaffing in education means more and more teachers are leaving the profession. Unless governments act now, the global teacher shortage will become the next big crisis in education, depriving millions of students from access to a trained and qualified teacher.

Yet another alarming update comes from UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring Report. [A new report](#) released today shows that countries will not achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030. Worse still, the bleak findings do not take into account the devastating impact of the pandemic on education.

If we are to reverse the damage caused by the pandemic and accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4, urgent action is essential.

In a [video statement](#), David Edwards called on governments everywhere to truly prioritise education by:

- Allocating at least 6% of GDP or 20% of government expenditure to education.

- Focussing on teacher training, recruitment, and retention. Critically, governments must set and achieve ambitious national benchmarks on the percentage of teachers trained according to national standards.
- Supporting the teaching profession and working with teachers and their unions to overcome this crisis.

Headlines

1. An education union guide to copyrights and copywrongs in education and research

Copyright laws around the world are being changed to accommodate the digital environment. It is essential that education unions take an active role in copyright reforms to ensure that teachers and researchers are not deprived of their rights to use and build upon creative works for teaching, learning and research.

Teachers and researchers – as both users and creators of copyrighted educational materials - have an important voice that needs to be part of the process. This module is part one of a two-part toolkit to help teachers, researchers and education unions to understand their interests and rights in copyright reform as users and owners of creative works and take action to defend these interests.

This Module 1 focuses on the first set of issues – the user rights. It aims to:

- provide a brief introduction to copyright legislation and policies;
- illustrate examples of how copyright policy impacts teaching, researching and learning for educators and researchers as users and creators of works;
- provide policy recommendations that education unions can use to defend a balanced approach to copyright legislation.

2. Technical and vocational education and training as a framework for social justice: Analysis and evidence from world case studies

This report observes several limitations of human capital theory, both as a description of the way qualifications are used in the labour market, and in severely limiting the potential roles of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). It proposes as an alternative the human capabilities approach which posits that the goal should be for everyone to have the capability to be and do what they have reason to value.

The paper reports the application of human capabilities to TVET as productive capabilities which are located in and concentrate on an intermediate specialised level, the vocational stream which links occupations that share common practices, knowledge, skills and personal attributes. The paper reports an application of the concept of productive capabilities to seven countries: Argentina, Australia, Côte d'Ivoire, England, Ethiopia, Germany, South Africa and Taiwan.

From this the report finds that productive capabilities rest upon broader social, economic, cultural, and physical resources. These include the capacity for collective action, and the maintenance of physical integrity, physical and soft infrastructure such as legal and social institutions. The cases also illustrate the substantial role of TVET in supporting workers in the informal economy to transition to formal employment, including in developed economies where informal employment is from 10% to 15% of non-agricultural employment. Another case illustrates how marketisation and privatisation separately and together are undermining tvet provision, institutions, systems, and teachers. The report's final case illustrates the importance of TVET in educating the whole person.

The report concludes by considering implications for TVET's development of its students, communities, and of occupations and industries. The report argues that all qualifications have three roles: in education, in the labour market, and in society. It argues that to develop productive

capabilities TVET should develop individuals in three domains: the knowledge base of practice, the technical base of practice, and the attributes the person needs for their occupation. TVET has important roles anchoring its communities and in developing occupations and industries. To fulfill these roles TVET needs to have strong institutions with expert and well supported staff.

3. Pearson 2025 - Transforming teaching and privatising education data

Where does Pearson want to be in 2025? And what are the potential implications of this vision for public education?

Pearson currently has a presence in nearly 60 countries and characterises itself as the ‘world’s learning company’. Pearson is a new type of edu-business that operates across multiple education sectors and industries with a more ambitious global corporate vision than many of its competitors. The company has undergone significant restructuring over recent years, moving from an Anglo-American media holding company to a globally integrated education services company.

Pearson aims to lead the ‘next generation’ of teaching and learning by developing digital learning platforms, including Artificial Intelligence in education (AIEd). It is piloting new AI technologies that it hopes will enable virtual tutors to provide personalised learning to students, much like Siri or Alexa. This technology will be integrated into a single platform— Pearson Realize™—that has now been integrated with Google Classroom. It seeks to develop direct and lifelong relationships with customers to whom it will provide virtual schooling, professional certifications, assessments, and other services.

Pearson’s vision for education in 2025 laudably promotes the benefits of technological developments and their combination with new kinds of teacher professionalism. However, its corporate strategy is premised upon creating disruptive changes to (a) the teaching profession, (b) the delivery of curriculum and assessment and (c) the function of schools, particularly public schooling. These disruptions do not follow a coherent set of educational principles, but capriciously serve the interests of the company’s shareholders.

According to the findings of this research, Pearson’s vision raises two main causes for concern in relation to the integrity and sustainability of public schooling globally:

1. the privatisation of data infrastructure and data, which encloses innovation and new knowledge about how we learn, turning public goods into private assets; and
2. the transformation and potential reduction of the teaching profession, diminishing the broader purposes and outcomes of public schooling in favour of personalised learning that focuses on individual knowledge and skills.

4. Constructing teachers’ professional identities

This study aims at examining how teachers’ professional identities are constructed in seven contrasting education systems. The jurisdictions - Berlin, Chile, Kenya, Ontario, Scotland, Singapore and Sweden - were selected to achieve an economic and geographical balance and a range of contexts in relation to educational performance and teacher supply and working conditions.

Key findings from this review highlighted a number of complex and overlapping factors, which coalesce into four broad issues and processes that are key to the construction of teachers’ professional identities:

- Individual and contextual factors, within which teachers adopt, adapt and integrate professional characteristics to their working contexts in unique ways. The professional behaviours underpinning such adaptation and integration are embodied in expectations that teachers will think and behave professionally, by adopting professional characteristics, knowledge and attitudes, that are prescribed nationally, regionally and at school level and integrating these into their practice; and developing a personal professional pathway through these expectations and the demands of their roles.
- Involvement in a constantly evolving, ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences.
- The integration of a number of sub-identities flowing from different working contexts and professional relationships (and their implications for collective efficacy). These important professional contexts often include networks, partnerships and collaborative activities within and across schools, communities and across the system.
- Agency, which requires teachers to be active in the process of developing professional knowledge and skills so that individual and collaborative learning is realised through the activity of the learner and, in turn, to individual and collective efficacy.

5. What do we really know about Bridge International Academies?

Bridge International Academies (BIA) is the fastest-growing chain of 'low-fee' schools in the world, having 'reached 500,000 children through hundreds of schools across Africa and India' (BIA, 2018) and planning 'to be the global leader in providing education to families who live on US\$2 a day per person or less' (BIA, 2016a).

The aim of this essay is to summarise what is known about this company based on research studies conducted in local communities where it operates; informed by BIA staff, customers, and ministry officials acquainted with the business and its activities. It reviews seven research studies on BIA, as well as supplementary and relevant literature such as company webpages and materials, which includes three studies on the operations of BIA in Liberia (Hook, 2017; Klees, 2017; Romero, Sandefur & Sandholtz, 2017), two studies in Nigeria (Härmä, 2017; Unterhalter, Robinson & Ibrahim, 2018) as well as research studies in Kenya (EI/KNUT, 2016) and Uganda (Riep & Machachek, 2016). The research findings from this body of work reveal much about the nature, quality, and impact of BIA.

For this essay, the research findings are organised and discussed in relation to (1) market opportunities and state-level strategies, (2) the academy-in-a-box model, (3) affordability and accessibility concerns, (4) teacher qualifications (or lack thereof) and teaching methods, (5) misleading claims of 'world-class education', (6) legal contraventions, and (7) issues of sustainability, accountability, and transparency.

6. The future of the teaching profession (Second edition)

This study contains profound insights into the nature of teacher professionalism. Debates on the policy directions in education in the past decade have been increasingly focusing on learning outcomes and effectiveness indicators in search of the "hidden truth" or the "holy grail" of what makes an effective school. While effectiveness and efficiency have become the "call-of-the-day" not only in

education, but in other public sectors, too often attempts to capture what defines student achievement and teachers' contributions to it, have often been narrow, one-sided and limited, leading to distorted policies affecting the efficacy and morale of teachers.

Drawing on the evidence on what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century, this study begins with an analysis of the current situation in differing countries of the world. It examines the policies which frame teachers' work and the underpinning assumptions on which those policies rest. It illustrates how policy has been shaping the nature of practice, often with effects that limit teachers' professional judgment and which may, in the process, constrain student achievement.

Most importantly, drawing on the evidence from international research and fact-finding, this study offers alternative propositions for system redesign, illustrating these with vignettes of breakthrough practice from around the world, drawing out the key principles that characterize such practice.

The world, despite globalization, is still very diverse also in terms of education and teachers, their issues and priorities. Given the enormous body of practice and knowledge available, a body which is constantly changing and evolving, this study can only be a work in progress; a work which reflects the impact on school communities of education policies and systems.

7. Global framework of professional teaching standards

The joint Education International/ UNESCO framework on the development of professional teaching standards aims to improve teacher quality, teaching and learning, as well as support the implementation and monitoring of the teacher target in the Education 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).

The 8th World Congress of Education International (EI) held in Bangkok in July 2019 passed a resolution supporting the implementation of this joint EI/UNESCO framework on the development of professional teaching standards where it was made crystal clear that teachers and their unions must be at the centre of the process, working with governments and other education stakeholders. This is in line with the spirit of the Education 2030 Framework for Action which calls for the full participation of teachers and their representative organisations in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education policy. This is not just important for educators, it is essential for students and their learning.

8. Teacher professional development and curriculum Enhancing teacher professionalism in Africa

This report is a comparative study on teacher professional development in relation to curriculum. The review seeks to understand the relationship between teacher professionalism and curriculum in Africa by investigating 10 selected countries covering primary and lower secondary schooling.

The analysis of the profile countries, based on questionnaires, provides an overview about policy processes, the curricula framework, pre-service and in-service teacher education, and the policy gaps in 10 different countries, namely Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

9. Eswatini: International trade union cooperation and solidarity to support educators

International trade union cooperation was at the heart of recent activities by the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT). It has successfully engaged with the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and the Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ). This cooperation will allow the Swaziland/Eswatini education union to strengthen its structure and demonstrate the full support of educators at global level. It comes at a time when the union is being confronted with threats to human and trade union rights.

Engagement with South African colleagues

In 2021, 9 December marked a new era for SNAT and SADTU. "This historic day saw the adoption of a development cooperation programme between the two unions," said SNAT General Secretary Sikilela Dlamini.

This cooperation arose from a commitment by SADTU to strengthen its international work, particularly in terms of socio-political issues in neighbouring countries, including Eswatini. This commitment was copper-fastened in a national resolution passed by the SADTU Congress.

The SADTU branch in the neighbouring province of KwaZul-Natal (KZN) was tasked with strengthening unions in Eswatini. It entered into bilateral cooperation with SNAT, through a programme set in motion in August 2021, after a brainstorming session between the SNAT National Executive Committee and SADTU.

Objectives of partnership

The main objectives of the partnership are to:

- Build the capacity of members of both organisations, so that they can be better protected against all forms of injustices in the workplace.
- Strengthen the organisations' operational and leadership systems, so that they become 'organisations of choice' for all educators in their respective countries.
- Bring about and/or improve the international focus of both organisations.
- Raise awareness among their members on working class philosophy.
- Deepen their members' understanding of political issues in their immediate environment, help them to reclaim their role addressing political questions, and enable them to make concrete contributions regarding such issues.

Guidelines for cooperation

The 9 December SADTU-SNAT bilateral engagement also outlined resolutions which will serve as guidelines for the cooperation:

- Structuring and implementing a clear leadership and membership development programme, with deliberate provision for capacity building.
- Showing the unions' commitment to significant international partnerships.
- Protecting the dignity of the two organisations through various mediums and presenting a proper image on various public platforms, whilst advancing professionalism that is borne out of class consciousness.
- Mobilising resources to ensure broad understanding of the political, economic, and organisational context, sustaining the pursuits of the unions and reaching out to all members.

- Adopting a political programme that deepens the ideology of the SNAT as a teachers' organisation, even as it is confronted by political challenges.
- Conducting a deliberate situational analysis to inform worker demands at collective bargaining tables, ensuring free and fair processes through active participation that has also defined modalities for redress.

Time to counter union bashing

SNAT General Secretary Dlamini commented that “such a partnership could not have come at a better time than this, since there is a dire need for SNAT to establish and strengthen international solidarity. The behaviour of the Eswatini Government is clearly anti-union, and it is such initiatives that make it possible for unions such as ours to counter trade union bashing by the employer”.

He added that “this partnership will enable the SNAT leadership to adequately guide the membership into a political education programme that will support educators in better understanding the current political climate in the country, so that they can better participate in national political debates and processes as they join in the national call for the attainment of a multiparty constitutional democracy in this country”.

SADTU: Struggle against oppressive and abusive employers

SADTU KZN Secretary Nomarashiya Caluza said: “This partnership, based on solid foundations of international solidarity, provides SNAT and SADTU with a platform to share their experiences and good practices on how to best and successfully lead the struggle against oppressive and abusive employers. The struggles of workers and the mandate of trade unions is the same, and the current complicated political situation in Eswatini resembles the situation SADTU was in pre-1994 [and Nelson Mandela’s presidential inauguration]. The democratic breakthrough and the support the SADTU received from international bodies strengthened us.”

The two unions have agreed that “recognising the significance of international solidarity will help us define the nature of the class revolution that we have to pursue through popular collaboration as workers”, Caluza concluded.

Solidarity from Finnish educators

SNAT is also strongly supported by the Finnish education union, OAJ, that has condemned the violation of fundamental workers’ rights in Eswatini.

In 2020, OAJ and the Finnish trade union solidarity centre, SASK, began their cooperation project with SNAT. “We launched the project with a strong belief that the partnership will contribute to building a better future for teachers in Swaziland,” noted OAJ’s Organisation Manager, Jenni Arnkil.

SNAT members “have faced a very difficult situation” in the union and in Eswatini in general, given the way the COVID-19 “pandemic has changed our everyday life, teaching, and the status of the teachers in many ways around the globe”, she added. “We have had to face the restrictions at many levels and areas of life in the name of the pandemic – and, in some cases, the restrictions seem to have come to stay.”

Addressing SNAT members, Arnkil insisted that “the crisis you have faced concerning the struggle for democracy, trade union and human rights is something that we have been following with growing concern and we wish to express our solidarity to you, teachers of Swaziland”.

ILO and UN principles of democracy and human rights

She highlighted that [Education International and its Executive Board were shocked](#) to learn that force had been used against peaceful protesters, who had been seeking better - or at least decent - working conditions for teachers and other public sector workers. OAJ has also strongly condemned this violence.

As Eswatini is a member of International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN), it has committed itself to the ILO's and UN's principles of democracy and human rights, she emphasised. She acknowledges four categories of rights, i.e., freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, Arnkil explained.

She also mentioned the [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), “something that the UN member states should be true to every day”. Article 23 of this Declaration includes significant principles concerning work:

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring, for himself and his family, an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

OAJ: You are not alone

“In this regard, we are concerned about the situation in Eswatini, and we hope that you have the strength and courage to continue peaceful protests and demands for these principles to come true,” she added. “We condemn all the use of force against peaceful protests and teachers, and we hope that a brighter future is just around the corner for Eswatini’s teachers and children. We encourage you, the teachers of Eswatini, to continue to stand strong and peacefully protest to enhance democracy and human rights and for a better future for the children and workers of Eswatini. Thank you for that. You are not alone,” she concluded.

You can read the SNAT magazine, The Eagle, reporting on these global development cooperation programmes [here](#)

10. Africa: International solidarity allows for educators to teach using storybooks with local flavour

Local stories are at the heart of new schoolbooks being published, thanks to funding provided by the Australian Education Union (AEU) to the Pan African Teachers' Centre (PATC). African education unions will print these storybooks to help students to develop a taste for reading using local stories and contexts. In most cases, teachers wrote or selected stories from local cultures, ensuring greater relevancy at grassroots level.

In 2021, the AEU decided to continue support for a development cooperation programme in Africa, including the development/production of storybooks. This is done in conjunction with PATC, a department of Education International Africa (EI Africa). The PATC is in charge of the professional development of teachers and educational workers, as well as promoting equity and quality public education for all, in Africa. It ensures that EI affiliate members receive training in a variety of fields, including research methodology. This is aimed at building union capacity to garner the evidence needed to build their narratives in social dialogue.

AEU: Learning materials must be culturally relevant and context-related

The AEU perspective has always seen development cooperation programmes as a way of building organisations, supporting the development and strengthening of education unions, stressed AEU Federal Secretary and Education International President, Susan Hopgood. “And we always look for ways in which we can achieve quality public education for all around the world.”

The Australian union focuses on the industrial and professional part of educators’ work, she added.

This is done via the provision of professional development and learning opportunities for its members.

“We see it as important for education unions to assist other organisations,” Hopgood asserted. So, when Education International approached AEU to work with PATC, her union was “pleased” to avail of this offer, its first opportunity to work with the Pan African Teachers Centre.

“The programme is not only an opportunity to provide professional development for teacher unions in Africa, it also offers opportunities for teacher activists to gather and learn from each other, providing learning material, developing materials to be used in the classroom.”

Hopgood was also adamant that, “from experience, we know that learning materials must be linked to the context. Learning materials must be culturally relevant and appropriate given the context. We know that from our own country, working with First Nations and migrants.”

Contributing to education for all

For EIRAF Director Dennis Sinyolo, “this is a great opportunity for member organisations benefiting from the project to contribute to education for all, particularly in disadvantaged areas. In some schools, the storybook is the only textbook available to teachers. In addition, the programme includes a professional training component, enabling teachers to be trained in writing and using the book.”

Burkina Faso: Training beneficial for teachers from diverse cultural realities

In Burkina Faso, Souleymane Badiel, General Secretary of the *Fédération des syndicats nationaux des travailleurs de l'éducation et de la recherche* (F-SYNTER), said that stories were written, proofread, and selected in 2015, their content adapted to the level of targeted children.

One issue highlighted during this professional development programme was the loss of local values. “It is a problem our society is facing,” said Badiel. “This explains a certain number of shortcomings observed at the youth level, for example poor discipline, juvenile delinquency and its relationship with narcotic substances, or the issue of youth/elderly relationships.”

Role of storytelling in passing on values

In the cities, new technologies have replaced the telling of stories by grandmothers to children – an activity which could anchor these values, Badiel regretted.

“We must be able to put this in writing, audio, or visual media to allow children to learn about it,” the F-SYNTER leader also advised.

He also noted that the students no longer read, they no longer have a taste for reading. He queried how children can be enticed to read today, particularly younger children. “It can be through stories like the ones developed thanks to this programme, rather than the classic textbook which is seen as imposed on the school.”

Carrying out activities such as printing the storybooks - which are not the primary activities of trade unions - is a way of showing people another aspect of trade unionism, he remarked. It was regrettable that some people think that unions are just about strikes, Badiel added, insisting that the union can carry out activities that contribute to the development of the education system.

It was also disappointing that public authorities have not exercised enough responsibility around this issue of textbooks. “There is a clear lack of financial resources. The question of schoolbooks is acutely highlighted during this type of exercise consisting of creating textbooks adapted to learners’ needs. We end up with a school manual for 10 students. Even for simple reading sessions, there are no resources to buy textbooks.”

Burkina Faso: History schoolbooks still focus on France or Europe

The General Secretary of the National Union of Secondary and Superior Teachers (SNESS), Anatole Zongo, also explained that, in Burkina Faso, some history textbooks still focus on France or Europe.

“In the last ten years or so, some of these books have been replaced, but not all of them,” he said.

“Teachers therefore use books from Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, or France, and most of the works in schools highlight foreign, imported situations and cultures.

“But these are not our realities. Doudou and Fatou are not first names from Burkina Faso!”

Zongo added that learning is more fluid when the cultural context is familiar. This made the professional development training organised, thanks to AEU and PATC, very relevant, with stories presenting “accounts of known situations, specific to students’ realities and community customs”.

He also recalled that all four Education International member organisations were represented during the two-day training workshop. SNESS sent three members to the workshop, where teachers were trained to write a booklet on specific realities, i.e. local customs, tales, and legends. The aim was always to choose the best stories and publish them, he underlined. Written and printed schoolbooks must serve as educational documents for primary and secondary school teachers, as a support for teachers and students alike, he said. Now, these works must be promoted, he concluded.

Ghana: Use of new skills to write stories in local dialects

Ghana National Association of Teachers’ (GNAT) General Secretary Thomas Mussa also highlighted the quality of “the PATC programme regarding the book development project with GNAT”. The programme’s theme is ‘Let’s work together’.

For two-to-three weeks during the school break, GNAT chose teachers to be trained on several professional aspects in a specific region.

Mussa outlined how some selected participants have been trained on literacy, storytelling, and story writing. The trained unionists then used the acquired literacy skills to write simple stories in their local dialects and used it at basic school level.

February

Highlights

1. Stand with Ukraine

On 24 February 2022 Russia launched an unjustifiable full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Education International and its member organisations around the world stand in solidarity with the teachers, students, and people of Ukraine. The outpouring of support and solidarity have been unprecedented.

Related Items

Educators around the world stand with Ukraine and call for peace

As the already fragile situation at the border between Ukraine and Russia further deteriorates, Education International calls for immediate de-escalation and a diplomatic solution to secure a lasting peace.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: “Educators around the world stand with our colleagues, students, and all the people of Ukraine and call for a peaceful resolution to current tensions. We denounce any military intervention in Ukraine and call on the international community to use all diplomatic means to de-escalate the conflict. The lives and futures of millions of innocent people are at stake.”

In a [statement issued today](#), ETUCE, Education International’s European regional structure expressed its solidarity with member organisations in Ukraine - the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU) and the Free Trade Union of Education and Science of Ukraine (VPONU).

We amplify that solidarity and pronounce our unwavering commitment to our members who now stand in harm’s way. Not only would any Russian military intervention within Ukrainian borders be a clear violation of international law, it would be absolutely catastrophic in terms of the loss of human life. The students, teachers and citizens of Ukraine have the right to a future free of violence and war. The world must stand with them and redouble its efforts to ensure peace in the country and on the continent.

Educators around the world stand with the people of Ukraine and condemn Russia’s act of war

Ignoring global pleas for peace and diplomacy, Russia has launched an unjustifiable full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Education International stands in solidarity with the teachers, students, and people of Ukraine and calls on the international community to stop the bloodshed and do their utmost to avoid a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Europe.

“Russia’s attack on Ukraine is unacceptable. Educators across the world stand with our colleagues, students, and communities in Ukraine and denounce the invasion. The conflict has already cost 14,000 lives since 2014, wounding thousands and displacing 1.5 million people. The

violence must stop. The international community must stand united in the face of this aggression and support Ukraine's right to choose its future," stated David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

Susan Flocken, Director of ETUCE, the European Region of Education International said: "Teachers, academics and their unions in Europe are shocked by the military intervention of the Russian Federation in the sovereign state of the Ukraine. ETUCE condemns the attack of Russia on the Ukraine and expresses its strong support and profound solidarity with colleagues, teachers, academics and students and all people of Ukraine. The lives of millions of people are at stake. War and invasion should never happen in contemporary societies where people employ words and not arms to reach a settlement. The invasion must cease."

We have engaged with member organisations in Russia and Ukraine to stress the importance of dialogue and of preserving the values of education and peace.

We affirm our unwavering commitment to our member organisations in Ukraine - the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU) and the Free Trade Union of Education and Science of Ukraine (VPONU).

"Russia's attack on Ukraine is unacceptable. Educators across the world stand with our colleagues, students, and communities in Ukraine and denounce the invasion."

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary

In their statement, TUESWU which represents 1.4 million education workers in Ukraine, emphasised "that this aggressive scenario will have catastrophic humanitarian consequences, but would also significantly undermine the country's economy. Millions of jobs could be destroyed, and the destruction of educational institutions, social services, and the economy would lead to poverty and destitution. Social welfare and respect for workers' rights would no longer be on the agenda."

Russia's invasion of Ukrainian sovereign territory is a flagrant violation of international law that will result in the tragic loss of human life and threatens not only the security of Ukraine, but of the entire region. The far-reaching consequences of this act of war cannot be understated.

The people of Ukraine have a right to a future free of violence and war. They have the sovereign right to democratically decide their future as a nation. The world must stand with them and redouble efforts to ensure peace in the country and on the continent.

It is a time to address the serious problems of the region based on building peace rather than waging war and destruction.

Ukraine: Education unions from around the world stand in solidarity

Education unions from around the world have expressed their solidarity with the people of Ukraine and have condemned the Russian invasion of the country.

Education International and its European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) have issued [a strong joint statement demanding an end to the military aggression and sovereign peace for Ukraine](#).

Education International stands in solidarity with its member unions in Ukraine who represent teachers and education workers who are in fear for their lives and their country: The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU) and the Free Trade Union of Education and Science of Ukraine (VPONU).

Education Unions around the world have also demanded an end to the invasion and called for peace.

Lithuania

The Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union has mobilised its members to use their first lesson on Monday, February 28, to speak to students about the history of Ukraine and about the importance of solidarity at this critical time.

Audrius Jurgelevičius, a history teacher and the union's Deputy Chairperson, gave an online history lesson on Ukraine on Monday, 28 February. The lesson was [streamed live on YouTube](#).

The Lithuanian Education Employees Trade Union has launched an initiative to help Ukrainian refugee children and ensure their education.

Poland

ZNP, Education International member organisation in Poland, expressed solidarity with Ukraine and published a guide for teachers on how to speak to students about the war on their borders.

Germany

GEW, Education International member in Germany, has condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and encouraged members to participate in an anti-war protest on Sunday, February 27, in Berlin.

The VBE education federation [expressed its solidarity](#) with the teachers, students and people of Ukraine and reaffirmed its unwavering support to the Ukrainian education unions.

Austria

The GÖD Board has issued a resolution condemning Russia's military attack on Ukraine and expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Belgium

FGTB has issued a statement of solidarity with the people of Ukraine and a call for peace.

The ACV has condemned the invasion and called on all concerned parties to work towards a peaceful resolution.

Czechia

Education International member ?MOS-PS has [condemned Russia's aggression and expressed solidarity](#) with education unions, teachers, students and all people of Ukraine.

Denmark

The Dansk Magisterforening and the Danish Union of Teachers have [condemned the Russian invasion](#) and expressed their solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Estonia

The Estonian Educational Personnel Union has expressed its support.

Finland

Education union OAJ stands with Ukraine.

France

Education unions UNSA, SNES-FSU, SNUIPP-FSU, SNESUP-FSU, and SNCS-FSU have expressed their solidarity.

Georgia

The Educators and Scientists Free Trade Union of Georgia have expressed their solidarity and support.

Ireland

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Irish Federation of University Teachers stand with Ukraine.

Italy

All Education International member organisations in Italy have expressed their solidarity with Ukraine and have supported the [anti-war protests in the country](#).

Latvia

The Latvian Educational and Scientific Workers' Trade Union has expressed its deepest solidarity with its colleagues and the entire people of Ukraine.

Moldova

The Education and Science Trade Union Federation from Moldova has expressed support and solidarity with the education unions of Ukraine and has initiated a solidarity campaign to assist war refugees.

Norway

The Union of Education Norway has issued a statement condemning the Russian attack on Ukraine and called on the Norwegian government to provide humanitarian aid.

Portugal

The National Federation of Education (FNE) has issued a [statement](#) condemning Russian's aggression and standing in solidarity with Ukraine.

Slovakia

The Trade Union of Workers in Education and Science in Slovakia stands with Ukraine.

Spain

The education union FECCOO stands in solidarity with Ukraine and expressed its hope that a peaceful resolution to the conflict will soon be reached.

More recently, [a joint declaration](#) from Spain's CCOO and UGT has been issued condemning Russian's invasion and calling for peace.

Sweden

The education unions Lärarförbundet, LR and SULF have expressed their solidarity with colleagues, children, students and the whole people of Ukraine. They have called on the international community to use all diplomatic means to stop the conflict.

United Kingdom

The NASUWT stands in unity with the people of Ukraine and the international community in condemning the illegal invasion and military action by Russia in Ukraine. [Read the statement.](#)

The UCU have expressed solidarity with all those affected by the devastating events in Ukraine and asked governments to ensure all people are able to reach a place of safety.

United States

The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) stand with Ukraine.

The AFT Executive Council also adopted a [Statement on Ukraine](#).

Read the piece written by AFT President Randi Weingarten on the tragedy in Ukraine, published in the New York Times ([English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#), [German](#)).

Japan

Japan Teachers' Union has issued a [statement protesting Russia's invasion of Ukraine and calling for peace](#).

Canada

The Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Quebec National Federation of Teachers (FNÉE-CCSN) and the Canadian Labour Congress stand with Ukraine.

Brazil

The National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE) and unions in Brazil stands with Ukraine. CNTE have issued [a statement](#) calling for the end of the war and the respect of Human Rights in war-affected populations.

Australia

The Australian Education Union denounced the act of war by Russia and urged the world's governments to strive for peace and an end to this humanitarian crisis.

The New South Wales Teachers Federation joined the global union movement in condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Protecting the rights and dignity of all refugees

The global turmoil of recent decades causing crises, conflicts, and wars and the consequences of climate change worldwide have led to millions of individuals fleeing their countries in search of safety and shelter.

Education International (EI) and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) advocate for the rights of refugees and migrants in every continent and works with member

organisations to ensure that every child, every student, every teacher who flees their home has a welcoming education community to learn and thrive.

Today, as war broke out following Russia's attack on Ukraine, Europe now faces a new wave of refugees. UN High-Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi reported that, as of 8 March, 2 million people have fled Ukraine. As conflict escalates, it is likely that millions more will be forced to flee Ukraine and seek refuge across borders, joining what is already a record 31 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide.

The immediate response by surrounding countries and local communities has been heartfelt and impressive. Neighbouring countries such as Poland, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia have kept their borders open, and civilian volunteers, NGOs, religious organizations, trade unions, and governments have come together to offer shelter and support to displaced populations.

However, there are also disturbing cases where not all seeking refuge were welcomed. Reports indicate that individuals of African, Asian, and Middle Eastern background, including international students, have faced discrimination and racism while crossing to safety. Education International and ETUCE denounce any type of discrimination. All people fleeing Ukraine must be treated with dignity and allowed to cross the border, regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, religion or any other background.

“As educators and unionists, we stand for the rights and dignity of all migrants and refugees. Any act of discrimination towards those seeking safety is unacceptable. We applaud the overwhelming mobilisation in neighbouring countries and across the world to help those fleeing the war in Ukraine. We call on governments to wholeheartedly support school communities who are welcoming students and families traumatised by war.”

David Edwards, EI General Secretary.

“In ETUCE, we promote universal values and the principles of democracy, tolerance, human dignity, the rule of law, and solidarity. Education trade unions across Europe – teachers, academics and other education personnel - are engaging in manifold initiatives and actions to defend the rights and freedoms of migrants, refugees, and displaced children with a view to support those in need. Ensuring that all students have access to inclusive and quality education is key to recognizing the value and potential of the young generation in shaping our common and prosperous future in peace.”

Susan Flocken, ETUCE European Director

Education provides a critical sense of normalcy for children and youth exposed to conflict-related trauma and is the cornerstone of inclusion. Inclusive education systems and education communities where migrants and refugees feel safe and welcome, and all students can learn together, are fundamental for all students to reach their full potential. For this to happen, significant investments in education will have to be made to support teachers and education

personnel as they work to address the learning needs of children affected by the pandemic and their new students impacted by war. Education International and ETUCE also call for host nations to welcome and give accreditation and recognition of the qualifications of refugee teachers.

The arrival of millions of refugees, mostly women and children, many unaccompanied, represents a great challenge for education systems and societies across Europe. Education systems, communities and personnel, already struggling with the impact of the pandemic must be supported to take on this unprecedented challenge.

Many education unions in countries bordering Ukraine have already expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people and stepped in to support refugees, especially children and youth.

Seeking asylum is a fundamental human right that must be recognised by all states. The global education union movement stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and those forced to flee their country. Education International and ETUCE have also condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and called for an end to the war in the region.

To download the joint EI-ETUCE statement on Ukraine's refugee crisis [please click here](#)

War in Europe: Unions must stand together to defend democracy

" We know that they lie;

They know that they lie;

They know that we know that they lie;

We know that they know that we know that they lie;

And yet they persist lying."

Aleksandr Isajevitsj Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

A crime of aggression

Vladimir Putin could not have done more justice to Solzhenitsyn's cynical observation. On 24 February he justified his "military operation" by falsely claiming that in the past eight years the regime in Kyiv had committed genocide against the ethnic Russians in the Donbas, and that the Ukraine was to be demilitarized and de-nazified.

Two days earlier, on 22 February, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) had posted on their websites a statement about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. They called "for an immediate end to hostilities and conflict in eastern Ukraine, and (for) good-faith negotiations to resolve the crisis in the interests of the people". Calling upon the two countries to immediately end hostilities was as misplaced as such a call would have been to Germany and Poland on 31 August 1939 one day prior to Hitler's invasion of Poland. On 22 February, our friends from the ITUC and ETUC could have already ascertained that Mr. Putin would, once again, invade Ukraine. The only question was whether he would go for the occupation of the two Ukraine rebel regions Donetsk and Luhansk or head

directly to Kyiv to subdue the entire country. As we now know, he chose the latter.

One explanation for their inappropriate statement could be that ITUC and ETUC leaders did not want to offend the largest ITUC Russian member organization, the FNPR, but it is more likely that they shared the *naïveté*, real or feigned, of some Western politicians concerning Mr. Putin's intentions - despite his invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of the Crimea in 2014, and the serious deterioration of civic rights in Russia during his tenure.

Fortunately, on 25 February, ITUC and ETUC posted a second statement clearly condemning Mr. Putin's crime of aggression.

That is exactly what millions of people around the world have been witnessing in the past two weeks. Not a war between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, but a crime of aggression committed by Mr. Putin, the autocrat who appears to be living in a reality that exists only in his mind, and who seems to believe that he can, with impunity, redraw the map of Europe and shake up the world order.

War is cruel and ugly by itself. But when civilians and civilian infrastructure are targeted and when cluster munitions and other banned means of destruction are deployed to create havoc and terror, war becomes a crime against humanity. The hundreds and thousands of people, mainly women and children, trying to escape their homes, bear witness of the ruthlessness of Mr. Putin's war machine. Education International has expressed its solidarity with the Ukrainian education unions and is providing support to these organizations. The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU) have asked their global union to persuade NATO to close the skies over their country. They have reported that in the first ten days of the war more than three thousand civilians, including children, have lost their lives, while residential areas, hospitals, and schools in many parts of the country have been bombed. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) over 210 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed, since the invasion of the Ukraine began on February 24. The nationwide closure of schools and education institutions has affected the entire school-aged population – 5.7 million students between 3 and 17 years old, and more than 1.5 million enrolled in higher education institutions.

The no-fly zone dilemma

The response of the international community has been loud and clear. On 2 March, a special session of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution - with 141 countries in favor, 5 countries against and 35 abstentions - demanding that the Russian Federation immediately end its illegal use of force in Ukraine and withdraw all troops. An astounding unity shown by NATO and EU member states resulted in stiff sanctions imposed on Mr. Putin and his entourage with the purpose of hurting the Russian war chest. Never has a UN member state been hit with such severe sanctions. However, pleas made by the Ukrainian government to NATO to impose a no-fly zone over their territory, were rejected. This rejection raises the question of what line must be crossed by Mr. Putin before Western democracies intervene directly and with force? The explanation given is that Ukraine lies beyond NATO borders and that a war with Mr. Putin is to be avoided at all costs. This weak and unsatisfactory response may strengthen Mr. Putin in his view that he can defy international law and walk right over Ukraine causing death and destruction without the risk of a military response beyond the valiant, if lonely, struggle of brave Ukrainian

soldiers and civilian volunteers.

It should be recalled that in 1999, when Serbian and Yugoslav armed forces terrorized the Albanian speaking population of Kosovo forcing them to flee their country to neighboring Macedonia and Albania, NATO did take action outside its borders. It carried out an aerial bombing campaign over Belgrade forcing the Serbian President Milošević to withdraw his troops from the autonomous Serbian province. While there are some remarkable similarities between the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Kosovo conflict (Milosevic's pretext for taking military action was to protect the Serbian speaking minority living in Kosovo against the Albanian--speaking Kosovars), there is, of course, an important difference. Mr. Milošević had no nuclear arms to bully the world.

Eruption of solidarity

Public opinion in western countries, fed by images of war, of brave Ukrainians resisting Mr. Putin's war machine, of indiscriminate shelling of civilians, and of an estimated two million refugees, almost instantly turned against Russia. Large demonstrations all over Europe and North America showed an eruption of solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Europe opened its borders to take in large numbers of refugees. Countries such as Poland and Hungary which were always reluctant or even refused EU calls to open their borders for refugees from Syria and other places of war, are now hosting the bulk of Ukrainian refugees.

Global union federations and national trade unions in Europe launched solidarity campaigns in support of their colleagues in Ukraine. Many other initiatives were taken. For example, on 28 February, the Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union organized a national lesson for all schools in their country on the history of Ukraine to counter the historical falsehoods used by Mr. Putin to justify his invasion.

Little solidarity has been shown with the Russians who are or will also be victims of this conflict. Most Russians are against war but are afraid to dissent and are constantly misinformed by the state media. The few independent media in Russia which have published and broadcast more balanced and accurate information about the war have been shut down, leaving the Russian people at the mercy of Mr. Putin's propaganda machine. Not only do the Russian people suffer from the financial sanctions, but they are also hit by private boycott initiatives, some of which are unwarranted. Individual athletes being banned from the Paralympics, football clubs being thrown out of UEFA, cancelation of Russian theatre groups, and interruption of student exchange programs. What good does that do? Russophobia is not the answer. This is an attack by Mr. Putin on the liberal democracy of the Ukraine and to some extent it is also an attack on what remains of Russian democracy.

There were demonstrations against the war in many Russian cities, which prompted thousands of arrests and a new law imposing 15-year sentences for spreading information that goes against the Russian government's position on the "special military operation" in Ukraine. Among the Russians who came together to protest the war were five thousand teachers who signed an open letter addressed to Mr. Putin. They stressed that

" The war with Ukraine is not our war. The invasion of Ukraine began on behalf of Russian citizens, but against our will. We are teachers, and violence is at odds with the very essence of

our profession. In the heat of war, our students will perish. The war will inevitably lead to an aggravation of the social problems of our country. We support the anti-war protests and demand an immediate ceasefire.”

The initiators were to remove the open letter from their “Teachers Against War website” after Mr. Putin further curtailed freedom of speech on 4 March. These restrictions as well as the arrest of Russian protesters, not to mention the scanning by policemen of text messages on people’s smart phones in the streets of Moscow are the Orwellian signs of a police state.

A democratic future for Russia

Ordinary Russians need to be encouraged and assisted to protect their own democratic rights rather than to be pushed away, alienating them from the rest of Europe. This is also to be kept in mind by the trade union movement. Russian labor unions, like other trade unions in the former Soviet Union, joined the international free trade union movement in the early nineties of the last century. Although recognized as independent organizations, most were never entirely free from government interference. Their independence, to the extent that it existed, was often restricted to the industrial sector they represented. The Russian education union, for example, has been able to function independently as a professional union. With Putin’s autocratic traits gradually taking hold of Russia’s “guided democracy”, trade unions are walking on eggs. Worse, some feel pressured to support their President’s plans. On 24 February, the Russian trade union confederation FNPR, to the consternation of their European sister organizations, even published a statement endorsing Mr. Putin’s “military operation”. Ukrainian and other European members of ITUC/ETUC immediately demanded that the Russian organization be expelled from the global and European trade union movement. Although their anger and indignation are widely shared, these feelings should not lead to hasty expulsions. On the contrary, they should intensify dialogue with the Russian labor movement which represents a tremendous potential for democratic change. Asking them today to publicly speak out against their President’s war crimes is feeding them to the wolves. Turning our backs to them would be like giving up hope on a democratic future for Russia in Europe.

Democracy vs autocracy

Future generations of schoolchildren will be called on to memorize the date of 24 February 2022 as the day that a young and fragile democracy was raided by an authoritarian regime known for its contempt of western democracies, which, the regime believes, are “weak, chaotic and depraved”. In the past decade, Mr. Putin has tried to create division and undermine democracy in Europe and the Americas by supporting extreme right-wing parties, launching cyber-attacks, spreading fake news and manipulating elections. In an astonishingly chilling sermon given on 6 March the head of the Russian-Orthodox church, a Putin ally, supported the Russian invasion. Patriarch Kirill told his Moscow audience that the military operation was about no less than “the salvation of mankind”. He said that Ukraine wanted to belong to a club of countries that support gay rights, thus being forced to “sin” and deny “God and his Truth”.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is of course not a religious conflict, but a clash between two political systems - democracy and autocracy - with the Ukrainian people in the forefront. Irrespective of its outcome – there will be serious geopolitical consequences.

Perhaps, the tragedy befalling the Ukrainian people today will create more awareness among people living in democracies around the world of the vulnerability of their political systems and of the imperative to uphold and protect the democratic values that they share. This awakening, however, should not only be expressed by boosting defense budgets but also by making life better and fairer for everyone. The danger of disinformation campaigns supported by Russian, Chinese and other autocratic rulers is that they may convince people that democracy does not and cannot work. Healthy skepticism is good. Destructive cynicism is dangerous. It leads to polarization, fuels hatred, and incites people to drop out of democracy. Perhaps the courage of Ukrainians risking their lives to save their democracy will inspire those living in free countries to take the trouble to go vote and to become active citizens so that authoritarian forces will not steal their democracies without firing a shot.

Education and democracy

Teachers have a vital role to build understanding of democratic values, encourage critical thinking, and develop active citizens. The 8th World Congress of EI in Bangkok rang alarm bells about the erosion of democracy. For that occasion, we produced a book, based on experience of member organizations, “ [Education & Democracy, 25 Lessons from the Teaching Profession](#).” In the preface to the book, the historian Timothy Snyder, succinctly describes education’s democracy mission:

“ Democracy depends upon a common world that we can all try to understand together. If the people are to rule, which is what democracy means, the people must see and grasp and share and improve the world around them.

All of this is possible, but none of it is automatic. Such a world can only be made by teachers and the schools and unions that support them.

If we want democracy, we have to demand it, and we have to be able to educate children who will make and remake it.”

Ukraine: Education unions, national and local authorities, and international organisations mobilise to ensure access to education for all refugee students

Education unions from Ukraine and other European countries, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, local authorities in neighbouring countries, and international organisations came together in Warsaw on May 3 and 4, to step up collaboration to ensure that education continues for all Ukrainian refugee students.

Since the beginning of the war on February 24th, nearly 6 million people have fled the country, with UNICEF estimating that half of the refugees are children.

“The solidarity shown to those fleeing the war in Ukraine has been absolutely outstanding. We must do everything in our power to sustain it for as long as it takes. Education unions are working tirelessly with all stakeholders to ensure that every student displaced by the war in Ukraine has access to quality education while abroad, that every refugee teacher receives the support they need to navigate this crisis,” explained David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

Organised by Education International in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and hosted by Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP), EI member organisation in Poland, the event brought together a wide range of stakeholders in Ukraine and countries receiving Ukrainian refugees for an initial policy dialogue on the best ways to meet the educational needs of Ukrainian students.

The meeting was opened by David Edwards (Education International General Secretary), Andreas Schleicher (Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the OECD), and Larry Flanagan (President of EI's European Region – the European Trade Union Committee for Education).

From hosting refugees in union buildings, to organising donations and volunteering at border crossings and reception centres, education unions and their members have shown great solidarity with those fleeing the war.

Mapping challenges and needs

The first part of the event featured speakers from Ukraine and neighbouring countries now hosting large numbers of Ukrainian refugees.

In an online intervention, Andriy Vitrenko, First Deputy Minister for Education and Science of Ukraine, provided participants with an update on the situation of education in Ukraine, stressing that over 100 educational institutions, 10 to 15% of all education institutions in the country, had been destroyed, with many others severely damaged.

The First Deputy Minister also spoke of the online resources the Ukrainian government is making available in order to support the education of refugee students, including online classes and school books in Ukrainian. Olha Chabaniuk, Vice President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, EI member organisation in the country, spoke of the impact of the war on education and the teaching profession. The union leader stressed that because many Ukrainian teachers are women, a significant part of the profession has now fled the war to neighbouring countries.

Information on the needs of Ukrainian refugee students and the challenges facing host communities was also provided by education unions in countries bordering Ukraine which have received millions of refugees since February 24th. Participants heard from representatives of EI member organisations ZNP and KSN NSZZ "Solidarnosc" (Poland), OZPSAV (Slovakia), PSZ-SEH and PDSZ (Hungary), and "Alma Mater" NTUF (Romania).

From hosting refugees in union buildings, to organising donations and volunteering at border crossings and reception centres, education unions and their members have shown great solidarity with those fleeing the war.

Local authorities also took the floor to present the situation in their jurisdictions and the measures put in place to support refugee access to education. Joining from Poland, Wojciech Bakun, Mayor of Przemyśl, and Andrzej Suchenek from the Department of Education of the City of Warsaw, spoke about support offered to Ukrainian refugees in their cities and the needs that must be met as a matter of urgency. Katarína Kremser, from ZMOS, an Association of

municipalities in Slovakia, provided insights on the situation of refugees in Slovakia, highlighting areas that need immediate attention. All speakers stressed the need to increase financing for the schools now welcoming thousands of new students who require dedicated support.

Learning from previous refugee crises

Participants also heard from education unions, local authorities, and international organisations sharing best practices from previous refugee crises in Europe and beyond.

GEW, EI member organisation in Germany, and Silvana Safouane from the Ministry of General and Vocational Education in Hamburg shared the lessons of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, noting that the measures put in place since 2015 in order to include refugee students have helped accelerate the response to the current crisis.

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), EI's European region, presented the outcomes of their project "European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education" which looked at educational responses to the 2015 refugee crisis in Spain, Serbia, and Belgium.

Further information and learnings on supporting refugee students and teachers were shared by international organisations present in the event: the OECD, UNHCR, UNESCO-IIEP, and SIRIUS – Policy Network on Migrant Education.

"Education unions are working tirelessly with all stakeholders to ensure that every student displaced by the war in Ukraine has access to quality education while abroad, that every refugee teacher receives the support they need to navigate this crisis."

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary

Moving forward to ensure access to quality education for all refugee students

Participants discussed possible solutions to the current challenges and reaffirmed their commitment to all refugee students and teachers. Education International member organisations will continue to coordinate and work across borders to ensure all refugee students have access to quality education and all refugee teachers are supported throughout this crisis.

Romanian unionists unite and take action to support Ukrainian educators and students

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the *Fédération des Syndicats Libres de l'Enseignement* (FSLE) of Romania has been undertaking many activities in solidarity with Ukrainian colleagues and children. Romanian educators are working as volunteers making sure schools are ready to receive Ukrainian students and organising rapid training for teachers to learn how to work with students suffering from war trauma.

The union has also facilitated access to EU teaching resources via the ERASMUS+ Programme.

For FSLE, "the Romanian education system must face the challenge to integrate many children and students. It is time to be united and act in support of our colleagues and Ukrainian children."

The union reminded that, since the beginning of this crisis, almost 1 million Ukrainian citizens who have entered Romania. The flow of refugees from Romania and Moldova is moving fast to Western Europe, and the majority (over 61%) have already left Romania for other destinations in Western Europe (Austria, Germany, France, Spain), indicating that they have relatives and friends in those countries.

According to information provided by Romanian police forces, out of the total number of refugees remaining in Romania, 31.385 are children. However, the data is changing every day.

Registering unaccompanied minors

Through the National Authority for Child Protection, the Romanian Government is preparing a procedure for registering Ukrainian children who enter Romania without a parent or a legal guardian. They will be taken care of by child protection services in the border counties. Children from Ukraine who arrive in Romania unaccompanied will benefit from this protection. The government considers as 'unaccompanied minors' foreign citizens or stateless persons under the age of 18 arriving in Romania unaccompanied. A Task Force for Unaccompanied Children has been set up to quickly identify the most appropriate measures for the protection of unaccompanied minors. Measures have also been taken to ensure the necessary administrative infrastructure and human resources to provide refugee children from Ukraine with appropriate protection in such critical situations.

FSLE – through affiliated organisations in the cities of Maramures, Suceava, Botosani, Cluj and Bucharest – helped the border authorities via donations of clothes, beds, food and medicine, as well as toys and supplies for children.

Educators volunteer at the Romanian-Ukraine border

Thousands of teachers and education staff volunteers are at border crossings every day, helping to guide the refugees' flow and providing official and accurate information on transit through Romania and the refugees' rights in the country.

Also, cash donations of FSLE's affiliates were redirected to the Romanian Red Cross and UNICEF Romania, because those organisations have procedures and support channels for people in war zones, which the union does not have.

Hotels and other accommodations of the union in the border areas were also made available to the authorities to receive refugees, while Romanian teachers and education workers accommodated refugee families in their homes.

FSLE stressed that the main problem in Bucharest and other big cities is that schools are already overcrowded with Romanian students. It met with State Secretary Szekely who agreed to start identifying spaces in Bucharest' schools because if the conflict continues, the number of children will rise further. While some schools can enroll 2-3 students, this issue will become more acute in autumn when the new school year will start, as Romania is not prepared to receive such a big flow of refugees in an education system that must already deal with many challenges.

Other key issues underlined by the Romanian education union include:

- The lack of teachers who can speak Ukrainian.
- The assessment of the refugee children's education level

- The lack of textbooks in Ukrainian.

Local authorities in Romania are looking for Ukrainian refugee teachers and the Ministry of Education is planning on employing them. However, FSLE insisted, no rules or regulations for such employment currently exist.

Another issue is to identify all refugee children, as most of them are not in refugee centres: some have families or friends in Romania or agreed to stay in the homes of Romanian volunteers.

ETUCE's mission

FSLE was involved in organising the solidarity mission in Romania of Education International's European regional office, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and offered technical support for the ETUCE mission in Republic of Moldova.

Meeting at the FSLE office with State Secretary in charge of refugees, Ionel Lixandru.

The outcomes of these visits were particularly important in defining the contents of the [Resolution for Peace in Ukraine](#), adopted at the [ETUCE Special Conference](#) held in Liege, Belgium, and in deciding on future courses of action.

The ETUCE delegation met with policymakers, education trade unions and trade union confederations, and European Commission Representations. It also visited several refugee centres, schools and universities that are integrating Ukrainian students.

Visit of a primary school in Bucharest welcoming Ukrainian children.

Visit at the Politehnica University of Bucharest, where a refugee center was opened on the campus.

The delegation called for greater social dialogue between the government and education trade unions in [Poland](#), Romania and Moldova, and for better targeted support, including financial sustainability, for education systems and education personnel who are doing everything possible to ensure that all Ukrainian children can feel safe and continue their education.

During these missions, the insufficient funding for education was apparent, as was the lack of ICT tools and education equipment available while the majority of the Ukrainian children coming to Poland, Romania and Moldova, continue following Ukrainian online classes, which requires adequate ICT equipment and good internet connectivity.

FSLE's Alexandra Cornea moderating the meeting between the ETUCE Solidarity Mission with the Romanian authorities.

Another persistent challenge in all three countries is the registration and tracking systems of refugees: numerous Ukrainian families consider these countries as transit countries or plan to return to Ukraine as soon as it is possible and therefore do not enroll their children in the local education system. In fact, FSLE pointed out that a growing number of Ukrainian refugees are

already returning to their country.

Ukraine: Education International condemns Russian attacks against teachers and education in occupied territories

In a horrific effort to rewrite history and indoctrinate, Russian forces are cracking down on teachers and education in occupied territories in Ukraine. According to Serhiy Shkarlet, Ukraine's Minister of Education and Science, the Russian army is burning Ukrainian books and threatening, arresting, and torturing teachers in the Kherson region for teaching the Ukrainian curriculum.

Educators around the world condemn these attacks against our colleagues and education and call for Russia to immediately stop this war of aggression on a sovereign nation, so that peace can return to Ukraine.

"Like other autocrats before him, President Putin is attacking teachers for the key role they play in preserving and passing on a nation's memory, history, and identity. But teachers are not easily deterred. Our colleagues have put up a remarkable and admirable resistance in defense of their students and country. We are in awe of their bravery and stand with them every step of the way to freedom," stated David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

Efforts to erase Ukrainian history and identity

In preparation for the staged referendum on annexation to the Russian Federation which is due to take place on September 11 in the occupied areas of the southern Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions, Russian forces are working to undermine Ukrainian identity and history by attacking teachers and education.

Plans to introduce a new curriculum and new books for the school year starting in September have been met with resistance from Ukrainian teachers. The new materials rewrite history and closely follow the Kremlin's political agenda.

Teachers have been threatened with being sent to Crimea for "retraining". According to The Times of London, Russian media have called for teachers who oppose the new curriculum to be shot or "sent to the gulag". Kherson residents report teachers having been arrested, threatened, and tortured. The Russian military has also taken over schools in Kherson to use as barracks, setting tripwires and explosives around them.

Resistance from Ukrainian teachers

According to Ukraine's Minister of Education and Science, the great majority of teachers in occupied territories have refused to collaborate with the occupiers. Instead, they are working to continue teaching the Ukrainian curriculum using YouTube or national television channels to broadcast lessons. Many teachers stay in touch with parents to pass on teaching materials and support home-schooling in secret.

Some teachers in Russian-controlled territories have exposed themselves to incredible risks, with some crossing the front line to bring back information and salaries for colleagues.

"We are in awe of their bravery and stand with them every step of the way to freedom."

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary

Praising Ukrainian teachers, the Minister of Education and Science stated: "I am proud of my educators, they are definitely war heroes in our country. They did not just teach, but saved, protected, sheltered children. Teachers were often the first to provide psychological support."

Ukraine: Trade unions strongly oppose new law that undermines labour rights, collective bargaining, and democracy

A new law deprives as many as 70% of Ukrainian workers of labour protections, including their collective bargaining rights. Trade unions in Ukraine, including Education International member organisation, the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, are dismayed at this push to undermine the rights of workers in Ukraine and are mobilising to fight the new law in court and at the international level.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: "We fully support Ukraine's fight for freedom and democracy. Respecting workers' rights and engaging in meaningful social dialogue are absolutely vital to a healthy and thriving democracy. Working alongside and not against unions is essential to Ukraine's path to democracy, to the European Union, and to the bright future all Ukrainians deserve."

Ruling party moves to restrict workers' rights

Adopted on July 17 and entering into force on August 19, Law 2434-IX (former Bill 5371) affects workers in companies and organisations with fewer than 250 employees. According to expert estimates, the new law impacts around 70% of workers in the country.

Under the new law, the main instrument regulating labour relations between employer and employees in small and medium-size companies will be individual contracts. In fact, collective agreements negotiated by unions will no longer apply and unions have also lost the legal authority to veto workplace dismissals. This change opens the door to arbitrary dismissals and will create fear to engage in trade union or other independent activities.

The first attempt to introduce the law dates back to 2021. It received negative expert opinions, including from the International Labour Organization, and was heavily criticized by trade unions confederations and all major stakeholders.

For the moment, the law only applies as long as martial law is in place. This stipulation was only added at the last minute, in response to pressure from unions in the country.

The law is part of a broader agenda of deregulation and stripping back of workers' rights. In July, Parliament passed a law that allows employers to stop paying those who have been called to fight and another piece of legislation that legalises zero-hour contracts. Trade unions warn that many other pieces of legislation curtailing workers' rights are being pushed through Parliament. All are vigorously opposed by the trade union movement in Ukraine.

Trade unions mobilise

While martial law prevented unions from calling strikes and protests, the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine is launching a campaign to challenge Law no. 2434-IX in the Constitutional Court of Ukraine and will appeal to the International Labour Organization and other European and international bodies.

“The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine supports the position of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine on the anti-labour Law no. 2434-IX. The trade union is categorically against this law as it introduces extreme forms of liberalisation of labour relations and discrimination by significantly restricting labour rights and guarantees for workers. Law no. 2434-IX discriminates against employees of small and medium enterprises and deprives them of one of their fundamental rights - the right to labour protection and collective bargaining. The trade union draws attention to the fact that this document grossly violates the Constitution of Ukraine, international acts ratified by Ukraine, including the EU Agreements and ILO Conventions”, stated Georgiy Trukhanov, President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, Education International member organisation in the country.

"Working alongside and not against unions is essential to Ukraine's path to democracy, to the European Union, and to the bright future all Ukrainians deserve."

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

Education International and its European structure - the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) - [stand with](#) the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine and all trade unions in the country fighting to protect and promote workers' rights.

Polish educators in full solidarity with Ukrainian colleagues and children

From hosting refugees in union buildings, to organising donations, volunteering at border crossings and reception centres and organising classes for children, education unions and their members in Poland have shown great solidarity with those fleeing the war raging in the neighbouring country of Ukraine.

ZNP: Providing Ukrainian refugees with quality education and decent living conditions

“We knew that some activities were needed even before the Russian aggression. We had to prepare a strategy quickly. We sent protest letters to Russian authorities. After, we mobilised teachers,” explained Dorota Obidniak of the *Zwi?zek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego* (ZNP).

Dorota Obidniak, ZNP/Poland

Her union organised many activities. With other unions and many Polish organisations, ZNP helped by lending properties to be used by refugees- 250 refugees are hosted in ZNP holiday and training centres. It also provided refugees with phones and SIM cards, washing machines, etc. “Now we organise holiday camps for students from Ukraine, as we got funds from the American Federation of Teachers,” Obidniak observed.

The first three weeks were dramatic as 2,800,000 refugees in total were in Poland. Some of them stay, some are in transit, she reported, saying that refugees stay in big cities, where the

Ukrainian diaspora is bigger. At least 80% of refugees are women of all ages, with children, sometimes very small children. There are 300,000 Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw, where the population increased by 20% in three weeks.

“The situation is dynamic and changes every day. More than 1,000,000 refugees returned to Ukraine,” Obidniak indicated.

At the beginning, only 20,000 Ukrainian children wanted to go to Polish schools, so there were no real issues, she said. As the Ukrainian Education minister chose to support remote classes, teachers in Ukraine taught remotely to students living abroad, “who got the feeling their lives were going on with a sense of normalcy,” including in Poland.

Preparing guidelines on how to work with refugees, the Polish education unionists looked for advice and were part of an Education International project. They organised an online meeting with Marlis Tepe of the German education union, Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, and former member of the Education International Executive Board.

Obidniak recalled that while Poland got 2 million Ukrainian refugees in a few weeks, Germany welcomed one million in two years. She said that Tepe could estimate the costs of welcoming refugees, how much money is needed, how many schools are needed, the number of teachers they need.

She went on to say that ZNP sent a letter to the Minister of Education proposing to collaborate with the ministry. “We got 60,000 Ukrainian students in Polish schools before the war. So, some colleagues knew what to do,” she said. The education union, however, has not received any ministerial answer to the letter.

Besides a creating a 200 member-strong Facebook group, ZNP hired someone from Ukraine in its main office to answer refugees’ requests. “Valentina provides information for Ukrainians in Ukrainian. For example, she gets information from teachers’ unions from abroad and can help with visas.”

The confederation employs a psychologist from Ukraine, Obidniak added.

ZNP is also working to prepare Polish teachers to teach Ukrainian students, explaining that Polish schools apply for money to prepare their institutions for Ukrainian students.

She reported that her union trains Polish teachers to teach Polish as a foreign language. “These classes were quickly overcrowded, as 1,200 teachers registered,” she stressed. ZNP concluded an agreement with the University of Warsaw to organise these classes – 70 hours per group, 20-25 teachers per class –, she said. There is also a course for teachers’ trainers, to teach colleagues what they learnt. These teacher’s trainers get an extra 30 hours of classes.

Obidniak also pointed out that some children with trauma cannot go to schools; the mother/someone therefore needs to take care of them. “These adults do not work and have little, if any, time to try to find a job. You need social support for everything. More than 200 refugees are employed in Warsaw by NGOs.”

She highlighted another issue: the recognition of qualifications of Ukrainian teachers, for which “you need a long time, and it has cost implications”. ZNP therefore asks for quick and free recognition of qualifications.

KSOiW NSZZ “Solidarno??”: Contributing to a brighter future for Ukraine

Tomasz Gryczan, international policy coordinator of KSOiW NSZZ “Solidarno??” and a member of the European Trade Union Confederation’s Education and Training Committee, emphasised three main activities undertaken by members of his union to help refugees from Ukraine.

Tomasz Gryczan, KSOiW NSZZ “Solidarno??”/Poland

“Firstly, my union decided to organise our 32 regions, our hotels and training centers for refugees from Ukraine. We organised accommodation for them – mostly women and children, places they could live in,” he said.

Also, each regional union branch has an office with specialists for the labour market who know what is required to get a job. NSZZ “Solidarno??” also has a database with vacancies refugees can apply for.

Refugees can ask for legal advice, Gryczan added, stressing that “our lawyers in every region support refugees and explain to them what kind of conditions they need to comply with. Sometimes refugees have registration problems with local authorities.”

NSZZ “Solidarno??” also organised a special fund for refugees, and collected first need items, supportive citizens giving clothes for example.

Gryczan underlined that, secondly, the union engaged in social dialogue with authorities, “crucial in such a dramatic situation”, advocating for inclusion and psychological support of refugees. “We started negotiating with the Ministry of Education in Poland to find the best legal framework for pupils from Ukraine. We proposed a flexible system which should include all children and suggested a psychological support for refugees, especially children. We also said it is crucial to change the curriculum and set up special training for teachers.”

“On international cooperation, the education section of NSZZ “Solidarno??”, with ZNP, welcomed on May 4th the delegation of Education International and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) – Education International’s European regional organisation. The delegation with ETUCE President Larry Flanagan, ETUCE Director Susan Flocken, and Education International General Secretary David Edwards visited our office and we exchanged good practices,” adding that his union met with European Commission’s representatives in Poland, where it advocated increased funds from the European Union.

The education union also recorded a solidarity speech with a TV video recording company.

“Of course, the war has not ended, we are still monitoring refugees’ needs, especially preparing for the new school year. Students and pupils should have the chance to go back to Ukraine. It is much better to rebuild the country when they have quality education, and we strongly believe that our education will also be one of the things that support Ukraine’s future,” Gryczan concluded.

Solidarity with Ukraine: Education unionists from the United States and Poland meet with colleagues in Ukraine

On October 11-12, 2022, a delegation of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and of the Polish education trade union ZNP visited Ukraine at the invitation of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine (TUESWU). AFT President and Education International Executive Board Member Randi Weingarten headed the delegation. The event was hosted by the TUESWU Lviv Regional Organization.

The purpose of the visit was to collect in-depth information and insights into what the war has meant for education in Ukraine, to understand the impact of military aggression on the lives of teachers, children and the educational process in general. These insights will inform union work in solidarity with Ukraine, so that the support provided meets the needs of Ukrainian colleagues, students, and nation as a whole.

Ukrainian teachers: United and determined to continue education

A round table was held with the heads of TUESWU regional organisations at the Ivan Franko Lviv National University. Trade union colleagues discussed education during martial law, the work of teachers, and the challenges they currently face.

"Colleagues, we are here to witness the terrible consequences of the Russian war and the incredible resilience of the Ukrainian people."

Randi Weingarten | AFT President | Education International Executive Board Member

The heads of TUESWU regional organisations spoke about the state of education in their regions. The voices coming from the regions most affected by the invasion provided powerful accounts of the war and its toll on Ukraine, its students and educators. Tetyana Matveeva - Head of the TUESWU Chernihiv regional organisation, Nadiya Hryn - Head of the Zaporizhia regional organisation, Serhiy Borysenko - Deputy Head of the Kharkiv regional organization, and Valentina Borovik - Head of the Trade Union Committee of Sumy shared the experience on educators on the frontlines.

Educators' solidarity and determination to continue their mission was abundantly clear. Maria Yatseyko - the Head of the Lviv regional organisation, Tetyana Povkhanych - the Head of the Zakarpattia regional organisation, and Anatoly Stetsenko - the Head of the Cherkasy regional organisation spoke about the incredible unity of educators across the country and their work in difficult conditions.

"It is important for us to show and tell you the truth about the life that Ukrainian educators live today. Despite everything, they keep the educational front. The armed forces of Ukraine liberate our lands from the occupiers, and the teachers continue to educate our children and take care of the future of the country," stressed the Head of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, Heorhii Trukhanov.

Internally displaced teachers: Unwavering hope to return to their classrooms

The delegation had a number of meetings during their stay in Ukraine. The most poignant were the conversations with internally displaced educators from Mariupol, Bakhmut, Kharkiv, Kherson, who now live in the trade union boarding house "Prolisok" and a dormitory of Drohobyt'sk State Pedagogical University. Educators shared their life stories with American and Polish colleagues. They told how they experienced those terrible times at the beginning of the war, how they ran from bullets, how they lost their homes, and about the care and support they receive from their union and colleagues.

"I am touched and inspired by Ukrainian teachers. I heard about their experiences, about their hope and most of all about their struggle. One teacher, when we were waiting in the shelter during the air raid, said that he wished that the sky above schools would be clear, and that school bells would ring again and call children to their classrooms... You are at the forefront of democracy and freedom. You work every day so that education continues and children learn. We will deliver your truth. We will not leave you and we will support you," AFT President Randi Weingarten stressed.

International trade union delegation in dialogue with local authorities

As part of the visit, the American-Polish-Ukrainian trade union delegation met Lviv Mayor Andrii Sadov. The mayor of the city spoke about the work to provide education in the city during the war and its importance.

Full-fledged cooperation between trade unions and social partners was discussed at the next meeting of the international delegation with the Director of the Department of Education and Science of the Lviv State Administration, Oleg Paska and the Head of the Commission for Education, Science and Innovation of the Lviv State Administration, Ivanna Gerus.

Leaders of the education sector told foreign guests about education in the region during the war and about the daily work to ensure education continues. "We have common goals with our department and deputies - our educators must be protected and receive everything provided for by law, even in the extremely difficult time of war," said the Head of the Lviv Regional Committee of the Trade Union, Maria Yatseyko.

The delegation also discussed plans to further develop links between Ukrainian, American, and Polish schools and establish full-fledged cooperation between educational institutions.

In addition, AFT President Randi Weingarten and Hryhoriy Osovoy, Head of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, spoke about the legal framework regulating the activities of trade unions in Ukraine, and the role of unions today.

Education International and its member organisations [continue to stand with Ukraine](#) and support colleagues and students affected by the Russian invasion.

#16Days | I was less afraid of a russian missile than of a russian soldier: Sexual violence as a weapon of war in Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked the beginning of a collective nightmare. Attacks against civilians, including sexual violence against women and girls have

been used as part of the campaign of terror to intimidate the population. This first-hand account from Ukraine details the horrors war unleashed but also the unbreakable spirit of Ukrainians fighting for freedom.

The full-scale war in Ukraine has been going on for nine months. The russians [1] were allegedly going to capture most of our country in five days. They did not expect that Ukrainians loved their country and freedom and would not meet them with flowers and warm embraces.

The first days after the 24th of February were like another reality, a nightmare for all Ukrainians. People couldn't accept the fact that their lives changed in one moment, at 5 am when we heard the first sounds of missile strikes and explosions. We couldn't understand why it was happening to us, a peaceful nation, who just wanted to be free and independent.

I have two sons, four years old and 12 months old. My family and both my children spent several weeks after the start of the russian invasion in the basement of our house, together with our neighbours because of the constant shelling. My husband joined the local defence forces. The basement was absolutely unadapted for a long stay: it was February, cold, no beds, no kitchen to prepare food. The explosions outside did not allow us to sleep, the children were scared and cried constantly. It was the worst time, when you didn't know what to do, didn't know what the future may hold, your plans gone up in smoke. These were the feelings of every Ukrainian family, of every Ukrainian woman.

But what scared me the most was when the russian army was 3 kilometres away from our house. We had already heard about their cruelty. The fear for my children was probably the most terrifying and uncontrollable feeling. After the liberation of every new corner of Ukrainian land, every Ukrainian village or town, we see the overwhelming joy of freed people, but we also see the same horrible picture of occupation. Its signs are destruction, murder, and violence. It is painfully clear: the aggressor country widely uses violence against civilians, in particular sexual violence, as a weapon of war. Rape has become a too common practice of the russian occupiers.

In July, after four months of war, the UN reported it had received more than 150 complaints of sexual violence committed by russian troops in Ukraine and this is only the tip of the iceberg. The overwhelming majority of cases remain unreported as victims of sexual violence often refuse to speak to law enforcement agencies. They have experienced severe psychological trauma, so most do not want to recall those terrible events, some are afraid of a possible revenge by occupiers and fear for their relatives who are still under occupation.

Anyone can become a victim of rape in the occupied territories: men, women, even children. There are reported cases of rape at gunpoint in the presence of family members. According to one victim, a russian soldier explained the purpose of sexual violence: "so that Ukrainian women would not want to have sexual contact with any man, to prevent them from giving birth to Ukrainian children".

For us this is not just a war, this is genocide. Frankly speaking, after the photos and evidence of what the russians did in the first month of the war in the Kyiv region, I was less afraid of a russian missile than of a russian soldier.

After this nightmare I can't really imagine what psychological wounds caused by russian barbarities our children, our people will carry.

My colleagues from the eastern regions told me about the forced deportations of people, including teachers, and there is official evidence of this. Thousands of people and children have already been taken out of temporarily occupied territories to russian territory illegally, against their will. It's an act of kidnapping by the state. All these are crimes against humanity.

Teachers under occupation are in an extremely difficult situation. The Ukrainian education system is being destroyed in these territories. The "occupation authorities" force teachers to work according to the russian curricula. Teachers are threatened with torture and arrest, for refusing to cooperate with the occupiers. Parents who do not allow their children to go to school are threatened with having their children taken away to boarding institutions. It's hard to believe that this is happening in the centre of Europe in the 21st century.

The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, as many other trade unions in Ukraine, is actively supporting internally displaced people, contributing to humanitarian aid provision and providing assistance to its members in need.

We have no doubt that Ukraine will win and will be peaceful and free again. But the wounds run deep, and the physical and psychological trauma will not disappear overnight. It will take years if not entire lifetimes to come to terms with what we suffered and lost so unfairly. The sexual violence against women and girls, the attacks on civilians, the torture, all the innocent lives lost or changed forever cannot be forgotten. Ukrainian authorities are gathering evidence of war crimes in every newly liberated territory. We call on the international community to recognise russia as terrorist state, to ensure that these crimes do not go unpunished by mounting a determined effort to prosecute the perpetrators and those who unleashed this bloody war to the full extent of international law. Seeing justice done will be the first step towards healing and rebuilding our lives and our country.

This is the author's preferred spelling in sign of protest against the war of aggression on Ukraine.

Headlines

1. Albania: Education unions' success in combating child labour

The Albanian trade unions FSASH and SPASH (1) have been involved in projects to combat child labour since 2002, with the support of international partners (2). More than 500 trade union leaders and 6,000 teachers have been trained in preventing dropping-out and in reintegrating former child labourers into school. The unions estimate that these efforts have resulted in more than 2,800 children returning to school and another 6,600 not dropping out.

The trade union training covers the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and national legislation on child labour. It is also very practical: it strengthens teachers' skills to identify and support vulnerable children, those most at risk of dropping out of school. It also covers inclusive education techniques, including through art, culture and sport.

When a school is newly involved in an FSASH and SPASH project, a child monitoring group is set up within the school. It consists of the head teacher, a union representative, teachers, student representatives and parents. They identify children who are dropping out of school in the school's catchment area and students who are at risk of dropping out.

"We then visit the families of these children to identify with them the difficulties that are getting in the way of their children's schooling and convince them of the benefits of school for them. We try to help them, for example by providing basic school materials," explains Ermelinda Hoxhalli, coordinator of the union project in Korça at the Sotir Gurra school from 2019 to 2021. "We try to identify each student's favourite subjects and interests. If a student is passionate about music or sports, we will try to promote this in the school's activities. We also group children together to facilitate peer learning. In some schools, students mobilise to organise collections of clothes and food to give to children from poorer families."

Ermelinda Hoxhalli, coordinator of the union project at the Sotir Gurra school in Korça: "We visit the families of the children who dropped out to understand their difficulties and to convince them of the benefits of school."

Return of Roma children to school

Special attention is given to children from Roma families, who often fear that their children will be discriminated against or humiliated if they attend school. Early marriage is also more common among this minority, with a negative impact on girls' schooling. In Levan (Fier prefecture), one third of children at the "Dino Ismaili" school are from the Roma community. The FSASH and SPASH trade unions carried out a project there in 2010 with the support of Mondiaal FNV.

Irena Jano, a teacher at the school, explains that the project is still having a positive impact today: "Since 2010, the teaching staff have done everything possible to ensure that Roma children come to school without suffering prejudice because of their clothes or lack of materials. We have visited the parents or grandparents of these children several times, we show our interest in bringing the children to school. We have shown them that when their child comes to school, they will have their own desk, their own school equipment, friends who will play with them, teachers who will support them. These frank conversations have given their families confidence, the parents have understood that school can benefit their children. Some of the Roma pupils we brought back to school in 2010 have gone on

to higher education, have become civil servants and have returned to thank us for our support. We are now continuing to implement the methods of combating child labour that we learned at the trade union seminars in 2010.”

Irena Jano, teacher in Levan: “Some of the Roma pupils we brought back to school in 2010 have gone on to higher education and have become civil servants. They have returned to thank us for our support.”

“One student's drop-out becomes everyone's problem”

The teachers involved in the FSASH and SPASH projects explain that before the trade union training they were already applying some of these measures, but that involvement in a project has helped them to organise this in a systematic way, with the aim of fighting child labour. Romeo Prado, headmaster of the “Pandeli Cale” school in Korça : “Before this project, when children dropped out of school, we were already visiting the parents as teachers, but without a coordinated strategy. Now, when a student drops out, it is the problem of the whole school community: the whole teaching staff is mobilised. We also look for external support, such as from Roma community organisations.”

A municipal tax for the schooling of the poorest

FSASH and SPASH are sharing within their networks the good practices developed in schools. In May 2021, at a trade union training course, Enriketa Zeqo, chair of the FSASH branch in the city of Berati, explained that she had obtained a small municipal tax to support 150 children at risk of dropping out of school. Their families receive 60 euros per month on condition that they send the child to school. “At the beginning of the school year, the teachers and headteachers select the children who receive this support, as they are familiar with the families’ socio-economic situation. The municipality has also helped the children’s relatives to get a job, so that they in turn can support the school fees,” explains the trade unionist, who is also a member of the city council.

Important gains for trade unions

Beyond the fight against child labour, the trade unions involved in these projects are seeing many benefits, such as the improvement of their image in society, greater activity among activists and an increase in their membership. Between 2015 and 2018, in the schools that participated in the SPASH and FSASH projects, the two education unions recorded an average increase in membership of 41.5%, while membership was declining nationally (3). The Albanian unions also point out that keeping children in school and bringing back former child workers to school is a way of safeguarding teachers’ jobs, a major issue in a country hard hit by emigration.

The 2019-2021 FSASH and SPASH project was supported financially by AOb/Netherlands and the Fair Childhood Foundation of GEW/Germany, while Education International was responsible for international coordination (monitoring the financial and narrative reporting). Despite school closures due to the pandemic, 32 of the 61 children identified as child labourers were able to return to school in the two project schools in 2019-2021, and 84 of the 104 students identified as being at risk of dropping out are now attending classes regularly. Twenty-five new trade union trainers on child labour have also been trained across the country, and child labour awareness materials have been printed widely by FSASH and SPASH. The two Education International affiliates will expand their projects to twelve more schools during 2022.

(1) Trade Union Federation of Education and Science of Albania, FSASH; Independent Education Trade Union of Albania, SPASH.

(2) Education International, AOb/Netherlands, Mondiaal FNV/Netherlands, International Trade Union Confederation, GEW/Germany's Fair Childhood Foundation, International Labour Office.

(3) For further reading see: ["EI/AOb Child Labour Projects. Transnational Best Practices and Union Impacts"](#).

2. Time to turn the tide: Privatisation trends in education in the Caribbean

This report is an initial mapping of education privatisation trends in the Caribbean region and will form the basis for further analysis and union action. It draws attention to favourable conditions for privatisation across the region, including a chronic underfunding of public education systems.

3. Madagascar: International solidarity to ensure education continues in the wake of a natural disaster

Following the passage of the category 3 tropical cyclone Batsirai which hit Madagascar on 5 February, Education International has decided to provide financial support to its affiliate, the *Fédération chrétienne des enseignants et employés de l'éducation de Madagascar* (FEKRIMPAMA). This support will enable the Federation to provide relief and meet the most urgent needs of its members and students in the affected areas of the south of the island.

"The passage of cyclone Batsirai in Madagascar caused terrible damage in the five regions most affected, namely Atsimo Antsinana, Amoron'i Mania, Haute Matsiatra, Fitovinany and Vatovavy, including the loss of human life and the destruction of infrastructure (houses, schools, hospitals, administrative buildings, churches, temples, national roads, etc.)," said Constant Andrianatrehy Marolaza, General Secretary of FEKRIMPAMA.

He also reported 94 deaths, 115,090 people affected (representing 24,125 households), 57,445 people displaced in 93 sites. In addition, he reported that 7,488 huts were destroyed, 2,714 damaged and 6,978 flooded.

One hundred and six FEKRIMPAMA members had their homes destroyed, he added.

The two main objectives of Education International's assistance are

1. To distribute financial aid to the affected FEKRIMPAMA members and
2. To prevent students from dropping out of school, especially those in classes preparing for exams.

Marolaza concluded his communication to Education International by stressing that "we have a heavy task ahead of us to repair the damage to the affected areas".

4. Promoting the rights, dignity, and agency of migrants for an inclusive recovery

In the lead-up to the first-ever [International Migration Review Forum](#) taking place later in the spring, to assess progress on the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the [second report of the Secretary-General](#) is a reminder of the impact the pandemic and natural disasters caused by climate change has had on migrants and their host

communities.

Education International fully supports the report's call for states to "take concerted action to advance a world that truly fosters the rights, dignity and well-being of migrants and that is grounded in cooperation and international law".

The GCM was adopted in December 2018 by a majority of UN Member States and is the first inter-governmentally negotiated non-binding agreement, covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The GCM set forth 23 objectives covering inter alia, fair and ethical recruitment as well as conditions to ensure decent work for migrants, access to basic services including education, empowering migrants and societies to realise full inclusion and social cohesion and mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.

Rethinking the global governance of migration in the post-pandemic era

The report rightly points out that "the Covid-19 pandemic has, in many ways, reshaped international migration". It has highlighted both the crucial contribution of migrants in society, while lifting the veil on the deeply entrenched discrimination and human rights violations that migrant workers and communities face, as a result of the current global migration governance.

As we review progress and identify ways to address systemic challenges, Education International supports the call contained in the report for "a truly global and equitable recovery that guarantees fair and ethical recruitment and decent work and invests in solutions that facilitate the mutual recognition and development of skills, qualifications and competencies".

While the report underlines that since the adoption of the GCM in 2018, "states continued to ratify fundamental labour instruments", the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (Convention 143) remains one of the least ratified human rights treaties, thirty years after its adoption. Governments must safeguard the dignity and rights of migrant workers by ratifying and applying ILO Convention 143 and other relevant international labour standards.

States must put education at the forefront of migrant inclusion and recovery policy.

An education-driven and inclusive recovery

While Education International acknowledges some progress mentioned in the Report, more can be done to promote the full inclusion of migrants. In this regard, and while acknowledging that migrants still struggle to gain access to basic services, the Report underplays the significant role of education and fails to identify meaningful progress in this area. States must put education at the forefront of migrant inclusion and recovery policy in order to meet the objectives of the GCM.

As States and stakeholders are encouraged to pledge concrete actions for the implementation of the Compact, ahead of the International Migration Review Forum, systematic and participatory review mechanisms should be in place to ensure that these promote the human rights of migrants, and in particular the right to quality inclusive education.

In the context of their pledges and efforts to implement the GCM, Education International urges governments to systematically assess the impact of the full/partial closures of schools on the most

vulnerable students, teachers, and education support personnel, including those with a migrant background/status, and urgently address the key equity issues that have been aggravated by the pandemic.

Meaningful engagement with trade unions

Education International also supports the Report's call for diverse actors to "engage together in dialogue and analysis and inculcate cooperation and partnerships to act in solidarity with and for all people, as part of the collective work to realize the benefits of migration for all." Trade unions are critical actors in understanding the needs of all workers, and must not be left out of policy decisions, particularly around fulfilling the labour rights of migrants.

A lack of immediate action on migrant inclusion in quality education systems and decent work condemns millions to a lifetime of hardship. National governments and the international community have a legal and moral obligation to all migrants. Immediate action is imperative.

March

Highlights

1. 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) opened on March 14 at UN headquarters in New York, as well as online across the world, with a focus on “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”.

Delegates from Education International and other Global Unions took part in the Session and called for a gender-transformative and inclusive just transition for a green and caring world.

Related Items

Gender equality and climate justice in the spotlight at the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

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The gendered impact of the climate crisis

While the climate crisis affects everyone, its impacts are not felt equally. The countries that contributed least to the problem are now facing its gravest consequences. Women and girls from marginalised backgrounds and from the poorest communities are most vulnerable and feel the impact most acutely, not least because of the traditional gender roles that have been assigned since birth.

The gendered impact of the climate emergency is well documented. For example, 80% of those displaced by the effects of climate change are women. Systemic gender inequality means that women and girls have limited access to resources and decision-making power, which makes them less able to withstand and recover from climate-related disasters, and prevents them from accessing basic services, including healthcare, education, housing, and other recovery services.

Climate-induced disasters and climate-related conflict also exacerbate gender-based violence against women and girls, which maintains and reinforces gendered power imbalances and is a major obstacle to achieving gender equality.

In this complex landscape of intersecting vulnerabilities, the fight for gender equality and the fight for climate justice cannot be waged separately. Education unions at the CSW are working to highlight the critical role of education in achieving both gender equality and climate justice.

“It is not enough for education to be high-quality and accessible. It must be publicly funded and free. This must become a focal point in accelerating progress towards gender equality.”

Haldis Holst, Education International Deputy General Secretary

Advancing gender equality and climate justice through education

The Education International delegation at the CSW66 brings together 84 education union representatives from 32 countries. Educators are advocating for quality climate change education to be integrated “into curricula as a compulsory subject at all levels of education, including early childhood education, technical and vocational education, further and higher education, and adult education”.

Education and its critical role in a just transition to a green economy is highlighted in the [Global Unions’ statement to the CSW66](#): “Education must be transformed to support the fight against climate change and to support a Just Transition. Students have a right to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to sustain our world for present and future generations, and to receive an education that prepares them for the world of work in a green economy.”

Speaking at a parallel event organised by the Global Unions, Dianne Woloschuk, Chair of the EI Status of Women Committee, presented EI’s [Teach for the Planet campaign](#) and its [Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All](#), which outlines the profession’s vision on how we can truly harness the power of education to strengthen a progressive and justice-based response to climate change. She stated:

“Our belief is that quality climate education, which is based on science and addresses the ethical, cultural, political, social, and economic dimensions of climate change, will equip students with the knowledge and tools they need to respond. They will gain critical thinking and team-building skills that they will need – now and in the future - to address the challenges brought about by the climate crisis.”

However, in order to fully realise the transformative potential of education, all barriers in terms of access to education must be removed. EI’s Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst highlighted this point in her opening remarks to a CSW66 side event on securing quality education, 21st century skills and the successful transition from school to work in a digital world for women and girls:

“It is not enough for education to be high-quality and accessible. It must be publicly funded and free. This must become a focal point in accelerating progress towards gender equality.”

EI’s Deputy General Secretary also stressed the imperative need to build resilient public education systems that can truly guarantee and deliver on the commitment of the universal right to education:

“The Covid-19 pandemic and the onslaught of climate disasters are showing us just what is at stake when education systems are not financed in ways that make them robust enough to withstand shocks and crises: the right to quality education that is publicly funded and free becomes an empty pipe dream for millions, particularly the most marginalised learners, such as

girls.”

Global Unions at the CSW66

Delegations from Global Unions are representing over 80 million women workers from across the world at the CSW66. The [Global Unions’ statement to the Commission on the Status of Women is available here](#).

The Global Unions are also hosting and participating in a number of parallel events. [Click here to see the full programme of Global Union events at the CSW66](#) and join the online discussions.

[Sign and share the EI Manifesto on Quality Climate Education for All](#) and join us in advocating for a gender-transformative and inclusive just transition for a green and caring world.

EI President takes floor at the United Nations: Social dialogue and climate education for a just transition

On March 22nd, Education International President Susan Hopgood addressed the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Speaking on behalf of Education International and the global trade union delegation to the CSW, EI’s President highlighted the critical role of social dialogue and climate education for a women and worker led just transition to a green economy.

The video and transcript of Ms Hopgood’s intervention are available below. The full CSW session is [available here](#), with interpretation into French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish.

Statement by Education International President Susan Hopgood to the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Distinguished delegates,

As President of Education International, I am honoured to represent the global trade union delegation, representing 80 million women workers. The CSW is particularly important to Education International, the global union federation of over 32 million teachers and education support personnel, a profession largely held by women.

No matter where you are joining from, the climate emergency is on your doorstep. However, the people most affected are women, living in poverty, many from marginalized groups and working in the informal economy or precarious jobs.

Today, we call on Member States to engage in social dialogue with workers and their trade unions to adopt gender-responsive Just Transition plans to preserve our planet and adequately address inequities in the world of work.

The plans must prioritize and integrate quality climate change education into curricula as a compulsory subject at all levels of education. Students - especially girls in all their diversity - have a right to an education that will equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to live and work in a green economy.

For this green economy to function, Just Transition plans must create rights-based, climate friendly jobs, especially for young women in STEM sectors. Sustainable industrial policies to create decent work with minimum living wages, underpinned by international labour rights, must be implemented. These include the right to association and the right to collective bargaining enshrined in ILO Conventions 87 and 98, the right to work free from violence and harassment in Convention C190 and Recommendation 206, and the right to equal pay for work of equal value in Convention 100. We call for the adoption, ratification and implementation of all gender-specific ILO Conventions.

Placing women at the centre of a just transition means an investment in low-carbon transport, an end to occupational segregation, job formalisation, developing a rights-based sustainable food system and redistributing unpaid care responsibilities.

Women and worker led Just Transition plans are fundamental for building societies equipped to respond to the climate emergency, and to meet the targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thank you.

Headlines

1. Tonga: Global education union movement in solidarity after devastating volcanic eruption

Education International has launched an Urgent Action Appeal after being contacted by its member organisation in Tonga, the Friendly Islands Teachers' Association (FITA/Tonga), regarding the plight of its members in the areas affected by the volcanic eruption on 15 January 2022.

The Hunga Tonga submarine volcano erupted violently at 5pm local time, some 60 kilometers north of Tongatapu, Tonga's main island. The eruption, which registered as hundreds of times more powerful than the first atomic bomb, triggered a tsunami that swept over Tonga's low-lying islands and reached Fiji, Vanuatu and many other areas along the Pacific rim.

The atmospheric plume from the volcanic eruption in the Pacific nation of Tonga is pictured from the International Space Station as it orbited above the Pacific Ocean northwest of Auckland, New Zealand. By NASA / Kayla Barron - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nasa2explore>

Four deaths have been reported in Tonga, but all FITA colleagues are safe. Still, the situation in the country remains extremely difficult. Most of the land area was covered by ash and debris, and power outages remain frequent. Communications and access to internet have been interrupted due to extensive damage to undersea cables. Most drinking water remains polluted, with Tongans having relied on expensive bottled water for the last seven weeks. The country has also had to deal with its first-ever COVID-19 outbreak after getting its first cases from aid workers delivering humanitarian supplies.

Education International has already made an initial financial contribution to help FITA purchase supplies after its office was damaged in the disaster. However, much more is needed for FITA to be able to resume activities and help its members. We therefore invite member organisations to support their sister organisation in Tonga by contributing to the EI Solidarity Fund at:

Education International?

ING Bank?

24, Avenue Marnix?

1000 Brussels?

IBAN: BE05 3101 0061 7075?

Swift: BBRUBEBB?

With the indication UAA (Urgent Action Appeal) Tonga Solidarity fund.?

2. World Bank to exit investment in for-profit school chain Bridge International Academies

Education International (EI) welcomes the decision from the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), to stop investing in the for-profit chain of schools, Bridge

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

The [IFC Project Information & Data Portal](#) recently disclosed that the IFC “has exited its investment in NewGlobe Schools, Inc. (the parent company of Bridge International Academies), effective on March 3, 2022.”

This announcement comes after years of advocacy from Education International and member organisations, who have [campaigned to block profit focused institutions](#) which exploit low-income communities around the world. EI campaigns in favor of quality public education as a basic right and a public good, which is not for sale to corporate interests.

“The [World Bank](#) is the largest funder of education in the developing world. Investing in private for-profit operators, such as Bridge International Academies, clearly contravenes the global commitment to inclusive and equitable quality free education for all consistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. In a world where so many children are denied access to education, allocating scarce funding to anything but public education is totally unacceptable,” stated EI’s General Secretary, David Edwards.

“We welcome this decision, which has been a core demand from teachers in Africa, and call on other Bridge International Academies investors to follow the IFC’s lead. This is a major victory for Education International and its member organisations. It is a result of [years of union and civil society campaigning](#) against the World Bank’s sponsorship of Bridge International Academies and its illegal operations in Africa and Asia.”

The President of EI’s African Regional Committee, Christian Addai-Poku, stated: “Across our continent, we have witnessed the rapid growth of so called ‘low-cost’ private schools. These schools are notorious for employing unqualified teachers with low salaries and few labour rights. They operate with inadequate, if any, monitoring or accountability. Bridge International Academies (BIA) stands out as an example – it is the largest ‘low-cost’, for-profit school chain in the world. In Africa, it exhibits both disregard for national sovereignty and the rule of law.”

“The expansion of BIA, and other such operators, is undermining efforts to address de-professionalisation and improve teacher qualifications and standards in Africa, as well as trying to legitimise profit making in the provision of education. Evidence shows that privatisation, in all its various manifestations, undermines the right of all students to free, quality education and entrenches inequalities, particularly for girls and the socially disadvantaged. Research and experience are unequivocal in showing that it is only through a strong, inclusive, quality public education system that societies can be cohesive, just and prosperous.”

Education International calls on governments and intergovernmental agencies to prioritise the realisation of the right to education through the allocation of adequate funding to public education. This can be achieved by the mobilisation of sustainable domestic resources, particularly, through strengthened and progressive tax regimes and closing loopholes that facilitate illicit financial outflows.

To find out more about Bridge International Academies operations in Uganda, Kenya, Liberia, and Nigeria please see: [What do we really know about Bridge International Academies? a summary of research findings](#) (Riep, C., 2019)

Education International's letters to the World Bank, urging the organisation to stop their sponsorship of Bridge International Academies, [can be found here](#)

April

Headlines

1. Jordan: The harassment against union leaders and members must stop immediately

Education International has strongly reiterated its condemnation of the acts of harassment against the Jordanian Teachers' Association (JTA), its leaders and members. It deplores the criminalisation of legitimate trade union activities including marches and demonstrations.

Ruthless and ongoing arrests and detentions of education unionists

Reacting to the most recent violation of the trade union rights of educators, i.e., the arrest and detention of 163 JTA unionised teachers and board members – whose identities he also got – on 29 March, Education International's General Secretary David Edwards highlighted that these unionists were arrested while protesting in front of the Education Ministry. The syndicate had planned a sit-in to protest the restrictions placed by the government on JTA and its members since 2020.

In his letter to the Jordanian Prime Minister dated 31 March, he also reminded that the 150,000-strong teacher labour organisation JTA was illegally shut down in July 2020 and dissolved on 31 December 2020 by the Amman magistrate court. On 29 September 2021, the Jordanian Attorney General rejected the appeal filed by the JTA against the union dissolution and one-year imprisonment of all 14 JTA board members.

Quality education correlated to respect for teachers' human and trade union rights

He went on to deeply regret that leading members of the JTA continue to be regularly arrested and detained, as was the case in connection with World Teachers Day celebrations, when they objected to the unilateral change of the employment regulations for civil servants to ease the termination of teachers' employment without compensation and force teachers to retire early.

"I call once more on the Jordanian authorities to stop the harassment of the JTA and to confirm the right of all teachers in Jordan to join the union of their choice and to express opinions on education policy," Edwards wrote, highlighting that "a teaching force that is supported with fair working conditions and the right to organise and manage its affairs is one that can provide quality education for all children".

Report to the International Labour Organization

Education International has reported to the International Labour Organization on this serious issue, stressing that "despite the constitution of Jordan guaranteeing the right to assembly, free speech and protest, heavy-handed approaches to protests and dissent are common, particularly through crackdowns on the teachers' syndicate".

It will continue to stand in solidarity with its sister organisations in Jordan and closely monitor the human and trade union rights situation in the country, Edwards ensured.?

2. Amplifying young voices within trade unions in the COVID-19 new normal

Education International has joined other global union federations (GUFs) in a project aiming to promote union renewal and train young unionists.

This three-year project, “Amplifying young voices within trade unions in the COVID-19 new normal”, is underpinned by Education International and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Public Services International (PSI), International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), IndustriALL, and the Building and Wood Workers’ International (BWI). The project received financial assistance from a German foundation, the [Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung](#) (FES).

Clear impact of COVID-19 on young workers

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, young workers were disproportionately represented in precarious/non-permanent forms of work - including agency, temporary and informal work, the GUFs deplore. These types of work are characterised by a lack of labour rights and protections, low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of/or inadequate access to social protection.

The social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have simply exacerbated the situation of young workers. Young women have been particularly negatively affected. Recent research by UN Women shows that the health crisis has a clear gendered impact. Globally, women have lost (and continue to lose) income because of the lockdowns. In addition, the significant amount of unpaid domestic and care work women already did prior to the pandemic increased exponentially.

GUFs’ actions for young workers

GUFs are already working to bring young workers together from different sectors, unions, and regions. The aim is to discuss and share concerns and ideas in terms of new challenges young workers are facing amidst the pandemic. The GUFs have taken a clear stand to promote decent wages and working conditions for young workers and to enhance their representation and active participation within the trade union movement.

Two webinar sessions on “Amplifying Young Voices” were organised by the GUFs in July 2020 and two online (pilot) training sessions were held in November 2020. Participants actively engaged in the discussions during the two webinar sessions and called for more extended discussions to be organised on relevant topics.

Young workers have faced specific challenges for years, and these were exacerbated by the pandemic. The challenges include a high rate of youth unemployment, precarious and insecure work, new forms of work, deteriorating working conditions, and discrimination and inequalities at work.

Arising from these challenges, the GUFs’ project, has the following objectives:

- Develop leadership among young union activists
- Enhance young workers’ understanding of, and capacity to, analyse complex global issues affecting (young) workers in the world of work and their ability to include such issues into their trade union work
- Increase young workers’ active participation and representation in unions
- Strengthen international solidarity amongst young workers within and across sectors

Indeed, Education International’s strategic plan for this Congress period (2019-2023) includes a strategic priority on ensuring young activists are actively engaged at all levels within its member

organisations and within its own structures.

Diverse activities under the FES/GUFs programme

By the end of 2023, a working group of young union leaders will meet, discuss, and agree on the key issues affecting young workers across sectors and in all of their intersecting diversity, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for new and existing forms of work.

The working group will also make recommendation identifying key opportunities for action by the GUFs.

It is also expected that:

- The issues and concerns of young workers are included in trade union agendas at all levels and within campaigns and decision-making structures during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- Young union activists' concerns and ideas are taken into consideration in Governments' short-term, mid-term, and long-term responses to address the current public health, social, and economic crises at local, national, regional, and global levels.

To attain the project objectives, several activities are planned:

- **A global working group on young workers and new forms of work. It consists of 18 young trade unionists from the participating GUFs' affiliated member organisations from around the world.** After regular workshops, it will, among other actions, report on the key priorities for young workers across sectors. It will also develop recommendations on the modalities, mechanisms, format, and/or approaches to inter-generational, cross-sectoral dialogue within and between trade unions at national, regional, and international level, as a critical dimension of (re)building union renewal in a world of work impacted by COVID-19.
- **A young workers' global academy in the form of virtual and physical education modules.** Its function is to empower 20 young trade union leaders and activists to shape a "new normal" that is grounded on economic, social, climate, gender, and racial justice.

The GUFs will cooperate with the Global Labour University to develop the academy's curriculum and programme. The conclusions and recommendations of the working group on "young workers and new forms of work" will also feed into the curriculum and programme of the global academy.

Young leadership is "vital" in a union

Ruby Ana Bernado, a member of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers in the Philippines, was chosen to be part of the working group. This was based on her experience in organising, advocacy, and campaigning on young workers in new forms of work.

"Generally, the struggle of all Filipino teachers is also experienced by all young teachers, from being overworked, underpaid, and under attack up to the problems related to distance learning," she explained. "To have young teachers among the leadership in the union is also important," including having their voices and opinions heard.

Bernado acknowledged the value in meeting different union leaders across sectors and countries, which increased her understanding that young leadership is "vital" in a union.

As a member of a committee focusing on social media, Bernado finds it “a big help to spread the word about what the unions among the countries are doing and for my fellow young unionists to see that we are not alone and there is the spirit of solidarity. I can share how we disseminate information on social media platforms. I can organise a membership campaign among our youths and re-echo what I’ve learned in this programme.”

She admitted that her greatest expectations lie in social solidarity, that union campaigns on human rights, labour rights, and education for all be heard in the international arena.

“Young people are essential in the union because of our innate character to be strong, idealistic, vibrant, and we have a lot of time and commitment,” added Bernado. “We are also creative in thinking of strategies in campaigns. From the global perspective, we can also see how young people take action in climate justice, the fight for democracy and, even in the Philippines, sovereignty and human rights issues have been improved in many countries.”

Equip young teacher unionists with knowledge

For Geneviève Ngo Djon, head of the Youth Cell department at the Fédération camerounaise des syndicats de l’Éducation (FECASE) in Cameroon, “there is a growing, fundamental gap in working conditions between rural and urban teachers, especially among young ones”.

The latter suffer from a non-existent educational infrastructure in remote areas, she said. “For the most part, they are not directly cared for, but supported by their families. They also have to engage in another job to make ends meet.”

She also regretted that, often, “when we leave the teacher training school, we are abandoned to ourselves. It is important to have more experienced peers to guide you.”

She highlighted that unionisation is not automatic and is poorly perceived by the general public. “It is a real problem when unionisation is no longer automatic. People talk about corrupt people in unions; unionism is directly associated with opposition to the government, the public authorities. The perception of others matters and weighs heavily in the refusal of workers to unionise. So there is pressure from society, from the government. We should therefore return to systematic unionisation, and let the unions find ways to mobilise at the grassroots level.”

Another issue for teachers, and above all young ones, is the lack of ongoing education, she noted. “That is why the FES/GUFs’ project is so important to remedy that. And I didn’t expect the quality of the training we get through it!”

Giving the example of a training session on union communication, she underlined that teachers in Cameroon lack knowledge, and being equipped with adequate knowledge is the first step.

“At my school, people look at me with fear, due to my union involvement and my training, but they come to see me for a job well done. At the professional level, one gains knowledge, for example in conflict management. At the union level, when I came back from the training session in the FES/GUFs’ programme, we managed to talk about the union, we discussed it with people who joined our cause, by using the tool of persuasive power I’d learned.”

Since the training, Ngo Djon has also been tasked by the union’s Executive Board to manage the contents of the union’s website and Facebook page. She now wants to create Instagram and TikTok

profiles for the union, investing in social media to mobilise young people in rural areas. She will also organise and moderate training workshops, explaining what she has learned during the FES/GUFs training.

Join a union, have a friend before you need that friend

Like Bernado and Ngo Djon, Anthony Kennedy of the Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA) benefitted from the training offered by the FES/GUFs project.

"A lot of young teachers fail to rise to leadership position and lack opportunities to grow," he insisted. "We need a change of mindset, and it is already changing slowly. Young teachers' abilities are not used as they should be."

On the campaign trail for the JTA presidency, he observed "the mindset that I was too young and had to wait for my turn like other young people. Also, people do not see the teachers' work and contribution to society."

His message during his campaign was: "I want to bring about union revitalisation, rebrand the association, change what it means to be a trade union."

For Kennedy, a campaign about what a trade union is is much needed, as young teachers are not interested in unions, and information does not reach teachers at the union's grassroots level.

However, there are opportunities, he said. "The future does look good for us. A key element is to work on organisational strategies. Young teachers must have a voice for themselves."

A way of speaking to young teachers, Kennedy said, is to highlight that, "the way the government is going forward, you are going to need a friend. Have a friend before you need that friend. Join the union, so when it comes to that point when you need someone to be there with you against what is there, what is coming, you have that friend."

3. Africa: Educators united to resist privatisation and defend quality public education

Privatisation, the importance of State funding in public education, and campaigns to combat the privatisation and commercialisation in and of education all came under the spotlight at a recent online forum. Organised by Education International's Africa Region (EIRAF) office, the webinar focused on the need to resist privatisation and defend quality public education on the continent.

Privatisation is one of the greatest threats to the achievement of the [UN's Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4](#) on quality education and the objectives of the [African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa](#). That is according to EIRAF President, Christian Adai Poku, who opened the EIRAF webinar on 6 April. "Unless this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency, our vision of the 'Africa We Want' will remain nothing but a pipe dream for millions of children and youth in the region."

EIRAF has been mandated by various Congress Resolutions to campaign against privatisation and commercialisation in and of education, he said. In addition, the Global Response to the privatisation and commercialisation in and of education campaign meant that African unionists were able to compel the Government of Liberia to invest in public education.

Despite this and other efforts, privatisation remains one of the biggest challenges in Liberia and elsewhere in Africa, Adai Poku pointed out.

Government failure to invest in public education

He also condemned the fact that many African governments have failed to keep their promise to invest in quality education for all. According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report, African governments allocate 4.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or 16.8 per cent of their national budgets to education. This falls far short of the minimum education financing benchmarks of six per cent of GDP and 20 per cent of the national budget, respectively. This has created space for profit-driven corporates and their partner foundations, supported by international organisations, to privatise and commercialise education, he added.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has created space for education technology (edtech) businesses to position themselves as providers of digital education solutions. This, coupled with other forms of privatisation and commercialisation of education in Africa, is likely to further threaten the provision of quality public education, leaving rural children, those with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and girls furthest behind.

In her intervention, Education International's Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst made it clear that "governments are responsible for fair, progressive taxation systems to finance public education. They must provide inclusive, relevant content in education and answer the needs of teachers."

Four key paths to educational privatisation

Researcher, Curtis Riep, presented his preliminary findings of a continental survey on privatisation and commercialisation in and of education in Africa. He noted four key privatisation paths:

1. Privatisation as a structural reform and market response to State incapacity
2. Privatisation through public-private partnerships
3. Privatisation through the expansion of low-fee private schools
4. Privatisation by way of crisis or emergency

He also explained that EIRAF member organisations had identified key drivers contributing to the growth of private school opportunities across the African region. These drivers are:

- Perceived low quality of public schools (i.e., poor teaching, learning resources, or learning outcomes discouraging demand for public basic education)
- The deregulation of licensing requirements for private, independent, or alternative schools
- Inadequate government expenditure on public basic education
- Public-private partnerships in the provision of basic education
- Lack of public-school options after graduating from primary school
- High demand for low-cost private schools
- External assistance supporting private provisions of basic education

Riep acknowledged further areas to be investigated for this research study, including the ongoing impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways in which it is creating new pathways to privatisation and for-profit activities in education. In addition, case studies could be undertaken of African countries that require urgent targeted action to respond against privatisation

and defend quality public education.

Global Response campaign in Africa: positive impact, but more to do

Dr. Limbani Nsapato introduced the preliminary results of the process evaluation of the [Global Response campaign to the privatisation and commercialisation in and of education](#). He observed that privatisation/commercialisation of education has slowed in some African countries. However, responding unions suggested that, over the past five years, privatisation/commercialisation activities had increased while public financing of education had declined.

The unions also urged Education International and its affiliates to increase their engagement around reversing and halting the privatisation/commercialisation trajectory. There is much work required to achieve the overall project impact in the targeted countries, i.e., Kenya, Uganda, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Nsapato recommended:

- Governmental funding of education and ensuring that these funds are judiciously used in public schools
- International financing institutions and development partners reviewing their education financing policies towards guaranteeing publicly funded inclusive and equitable quality education
- An ongoing campaign against privatisation, ensuring the enforcement of strict rules and sanctions on promoters of private education
- Building the capacity of stakeholders in education to understand and support the campaign aimed at halting education privatisation
- Education International and affiliates investing in research
- Education International and affiliates mobilising resources to make Global Response a sustainable campaign

Statement on Resisting Privatisation and Defending Quality Public Education for All

Webinar participants also adopted [Education International's Africa Statement on Resisting Privatisation and Defending Quality Public Education for All](#).

The statement calls on African governments “to take immediate policy, legislative, and budgetary measures to ensure universal access to free quality public early childhood, primary and secondary education, as well as make tertiary education progressively free, in line with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education commitments”.

Governments throughout the continent should also “regulate the activities of private education providers, ensuring that they guarantee educators’ rights, including freedom of association, the right to organise and collectively bargain”.

Education International and member organisations will also put pressure on governments to allocate at least six per cent of GDP or at least 20 per cent of their national budgets to education. Developed country partners should meet their commitment to allocate at least 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income to development aid and ensure that at least 10 per cent of all Official Development Assistance is allocated to education.

The challenge presented by digital technologies

In his closing remarks, EIRAF Regional Director, Dennis Sinyolo noted: “Research evidence is crystal clear: privatisation and commercialisation of education is on the rise. Privatisers have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to expand their business opportunities under the guise of providing technology solutions to our governments.”

He acknowledged that “the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that digital technologies are important but cannot replace teachers or in-person, in-school teaching and learning”. However, “the privatisers’ claim that technology will solve all educational problems in Africa negates the fact that schools and other education institutions provide the safest and most equitable environment for quality learning”.

He emphasised that “we need to close the digital divide by putting pressure on governments to equip all our education institutions with appropriate digital infrastructure, to regulate data costs and to build the capacity of educators to use technology as a tool for teaching and learning”.

A wake-up call to do more to challenge privatisation

Sinyolo stressed that the online forum was “a wake-up call for us to do more to challenge privatisation in all its forms”. He called on governments to regulate the activities of private education providers, to guarantee teachers and education support personnel’s right to form and join a trade union of their choice, and to engage in policy and social dialogue, including collective bargaining.

We will “remind African and all governments that money put into education is not an expense, but an investment; an investment in our children and their future; an investment in the Africa we want”, he concluded.

Agreeing that the battle against privatisation and commercialisation of education will not be easy, as the privatisers will try to fight back through the media and other fronts, Sinyolo also explained that “they have the money, but we have the power of our members; the will and commitment to defend and promote quality public education for all.”

“To counter the privatisers’ strategies, we need to build a strong evidence base, organise and mobilise, both within and outside our movement, and communicate effectively. If we stand together in solidarity we shall overcome and succeed in our quest for quality public education and decent working conditions for all. For we are stronger together!” he concluded.

4. Teacher Wage Bill Constraints: Perspectives from the Classroom

Constraints to the teacher wage bill blocks teacher recruitment and limits teacher salaries. This exacerbates teacher shortages and decreases the attractiveness of the profession, impeding the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all.

This document summarises evidence from Malawi, Nepal and Zambia on International Monetary Fund (IMF) advice regarding the teacher wage bill, and teachers’ perspectives on their employment and working conditions in public schools. Insights from teachers on “the frontlines” of education delivery were gathered through surveys, interviews and focus groups in each country

5. Haiti: Seeds of international solidarity bear fruit

Education International is pleased to report that it has received letters from member organisations in Haiti informing it that the repression against union leaders has been lifted, following a strong show of solidarity from education unions around the world.

Lifting of punitive government measures against education trade unionists

In a letter to the General Secretary of Education International, David Edwards, the coordinator of the *Union nationale des normaliens/normaliennes et éducateurs/éducatrices d'Haïti* (UNNOEH), Kensone Delice, informed him that the leader of his union, Georges Wilbert Franck, who was the victim of union repression at the beginning of September 2019, has been reassigned to his post.

On behalf of the UNNOEH Executive Board, Delice expressed the gratitude of the Haitian trade union organisation “to the Executive Board of Education International for its support and accompanying measures of various kinds, as well as its various appeals for international solidarity inviting affiliates from all over the world to support the struggle of teachers in Haiti”.

He went on to say that “through this unwavering solidarity, Education International has set a fine example that reaffirms the idea that the struggle for public education knows no borders and must be a universal and global struggle for a more socially just humanity.”

The General Secretary of the *Confédération nationale des éducatrices et éducateurs d'Haïti* (CNEH), Rose Thérèse Magalie Georges, also sent a message on behalf of her organisation to the General Secretary of Education International, announcing that she had been “reinstated in her post as school principal”.

Another victim of union repression, she explained that she had been transferred to the “Croix des Bouquets”, a district controlled by armed gangs since 12 November 2019.

She notes that “the fight we waged together forced the Ministry of Education to reverse the decision taken by Minister Pierre Josué Agénor Cadet, whose aim was the disappearance of trade union organisations. The support of Education International's affiliates proved to Haiti's political leaders that the global trade union movement is standing up to dictatorship. Please pass on our thanks to each of the affiliates. Thank you for persisting with this continual demonstration of solidarity for the welfare of humanity.”

Call for urgent action for teacher trade unionists

Informed in August 2020 of the harassment of Haitian trade union leaders, Education International responded with an [Urgent Action Appeal](#), asking members, among other things, to send letters of protest to the Haitian authorities.

The appeal denounced the fact that “these punitive measures have been taken while education unions are mobilising in favour of a resumption of school activities that guarantees that the rights of teachers, students and parents are protected. Such transfers and salary suspensions will prevent unionists from carrying out their legitimate activities, which are particularly necessary to protect workers in the context of the global health crisis that is severely impacting the living conditions of Haiti's citizens, as is the case elsewhere in the world.”

Education International also expressed its [deep concern at the sudden decision of the Haitian authorities to arbitrarily transfer a number of union leaders and activists](#), including several from the

education sector.

In October 2020, Education International and its member organisations around the world had reiterated their support and indicated that they were [monitoring “developments in the situation of the teacher trade unionists who are fighting for free, quality public education for all in Haiti](#). In particular, they are putting pressure on the government to respect the human and trade union rights of educators.”

Education International thanks the more than 50 member organisations in over 30 countries who have sent protest letters to the Haitian authorities in support of their colleagues.

6. Lebanon: Education International mission in solidarity with teachers, students, and schools

During a mission to Lebanon, Education International expressed solidarity with educators and students who face extreme conditions which deny children their right to education and impact teachers and their unions.

Despite not being in the headlines the situation in Lebanon is dire and has affected every layer of society with a particularly heavy impact on schools, students and teachers. The aftermath of the massive explosion in Beirut’s port in August 2020, (which destroyed 163 schools) the collapse of the financial system, political deadlock and rising instability, and the COVID-19 pandemic, have had a devastating effect on the country.

“Just one of these crises would be enough to put strain on an already struggling education system, yet teachers are always trying their best to maintain safe and quality learning environment for 1.3 million children and adolescents in the country,” stated EI General Secretary, David Edwards who led the mission to Lebanon from 29 March until 1st April.

Edwards further emphasised the importance of solidarity for the teachers and unionists in Lebanon and conveyed the support of global education community to EI member organizations: the League of Public Technical and Vocational Teachers (CETO), the *Ligue des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Secondaire Public du Liban* (LPESPL), the Public Primary Schools Teachers League in Lebanon (PPSTLL) and the Teachers Syndicate of Lebanon (TSL).

During the mission Education International also cooperated with UN agencies working in Lebanon, government officials, and education trade unions to:

- Prioritise the provision of education without discrimination; and
- Improve the working conditions of education personnel in Lebanon.

EI member organisations reported that teachers are suffering from the sharp depreciation of the local currency, with their salaries losing over 90 per cent of their value in two years, while inflation has soared. For example, the price of fuel nearly doubled within three weeks.

“Just one of these crises would be enough to put strain on an already struggling education system, yet teachers are always trying their best to maintain safe and quality learning environment for 1.3

million children and adolescents in the country.”

EI General Secretary, David Edwards

They also shared that schools lack the funds needed to operate and are struggling to afford basic items such as stationary, computer equipment, and hygiene materials to implement COVID-19 safety protocols, and have only a few hours of electricity a day, if any at all.

They also explained that though in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, UN agencies are providing financial support to public schools, institutions delivering technical and vocational education and training are not receiving this financial support, making a difficult situation worse.

In addition, banks have imposed strict capital controls as they lack hard currency to repay depositors and require cash disbursement in instalments. This is making it extremely difficult for teachers and schools to withdraw money they desperately need, local unions said.

These factors have led to a prolonged teacher’s strike in which educators are denouncing extremely difficult working conditions, inadequate healthcare coverage, lack of pay and a lack of support to adapt to the changing needs of their students. They have now agreed to put their strike on hold and resume teaching after Education Minister Abbas Halabi suggested a series of incentives, including a small salary increase and a transport allowance.

“The teachers’ situation is horrendous”

“The teachers’ situation at this stage is horrendous,” expressed Mirvat Chmaitelly, PPSTLL board member and ECE teacher in a public school with refugee children.

“To date, teachers are yet to receive last year’s salaries and transportation allowances, which has led some to quit while others are forced to seek supplementary sources of income. We are demanding better salaries and working conditions due to the current high cost of living in Lebanon. We are also asking for our monthly payments and for the development of a plan to increase the transportation allowance, as we need to work under better conditions,” she added.

For the education unions, the dire circumstances teachers are confronted with are emblematic of a wider global challenge: an utter disregard for the unique, invaluable, and demanding role that teachers play in ensuring children and adolescents learn and develop in crisis contexts.

“To date, teachers are yet to receive last year’s salaries and transportation allowances, which has led some to quit while others are forced to seek supplementary sources of income. We are demanding better salaries and working conditions due to the current high cost of living in Lebanon. We are also asking for our monthly payments and for the development of a plan to increase the transportation allowance, as we need to work under better conditions.”

PPSTLL board member and ECE teacher, Mirvat Chmaitelly

They deplored that, too often, teachers are taken for granted, promoted as innovative and resilient, and it is assumed that they will be able to adapt to whatever challenges come their way. However, the pandemic highlighted that in many instances teacher training very rarely includes skills on how to pivot learning during a crisis – even in countries which are at increased risk of crisis and conflict.

“When teachers are not properly supported, there are huge impacts that extend beyond the classroom”

“When teachers are not properly supported, as in the case of Lebanon, there are huge impacts that extend beyond the classroom,” Edwards explained. “Children are incredibly perceptive to the well-being of their teachers, and as research shows, a teacher’s working conditions will always be linked to learning conditions for students.”

In Lebanon, teachers have been standing up for their students. “They have watched children and families suffer over the last two years while education has been an afterthought for policymakers. They have been lobbying for better conditions both for themselves and their students, and they have gone above and beyond by subsidising the cost of fuel for schools, securing medical supplies, and providing stationery and books – all with one sole clear purpose: protecting the right of every child to education,” he added.

Edwards called on the Lebanese government and the international donor community to do all they can to ensure schools stay open in Lebanon. “In doing this, we must reduce the burden on teachers by fully supporting them so they can deliver the education all children deserve.”

“Even in times of crisis, governments should prioritise access to education for all children, including refugee children. Lebanon’s plans for next year’s school year are limited and practically nonexistent. The crisis is a call to action for Lebanon’s new government and its international partners to support the education system if Lebanese and refugee children are to have hope for the future,” Edwards concluded.

To read the blog by Education International’s General Secretary David Edwards, Teachers and students in Lebanon need global solidarity to save their education system and their hope for the future. The world must answer, please [click here](#).

May

Highlights

1. World Education Support Personnel Day

On the occasion of World Education Support Personnel (ESP) Day, Education International organised a virtual event where member organisations representing ESP at all education levels and in every corner of the globe highlighted the crucial yet underrecognised role played by ESP in quality education systems, as well as the need to provide them with decent working conditions.

Related Items

Celebrate education support personnel with us!

On May 16th, Education International and its member organisations will mark the fifth edition of [World Education Support Personnel \(ESP\) Day](#) by holding an online meeting around this year's theme, Decent Work for ESP Now!

Decent Work for ESP Now! webinar

Taking place at 14.00–15.30 CEST, it will enable member organisations to exchange strategies to secure decent working and employment conditions for all ESP. [Register here and join us!](#)

ESP's deteriorating working and employment conditions

Education International's General Secretary David Edwards reminded that, "on World Education Support Personnel Day, we celebrate all the professionals around the world who work to ensure quality education for all students. They deserve recognition. They deserve secure jobs. They deserve decent work."

However, during the past years, many ESP around the world have been hit by deteriorating working and employment conditions. In many contexts, insufficient education budgets – often stretched further during the pandemic – and the undervaluing of ESP's crucial work for quality education have led to pay cuts and lay-offs.

ESP are crucial for quality education systems

"Today, and throughout the pandemic, education support personnel have done whatever it takes to support quality education for all students. Their work is crucial to maintain happy, safe, healthy, and vibrant education communities. Education International calls on all governments to uphold the labour rights of education support personnel and ensure their status as valued education professionals," stressed Education International's President Susan Hopgood.

Education International's Declaration on the Rights and Status of ESP

Education International believes that defending the rights and status of ESP is a priority. We are calling on governments to enact our [Declaration on the Rights and Status of ESP](#).

Use our [communications kit](#) and help us spread the word that all ESP deserve respect and decent working conditions.

The declaration is also available in [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Arabic](#).

You can also read the blog piece by NZEI/New Zealand General Secretary Matthew Mc Gowan, “Education Support Personnel build and protect universities”, [here](#).

Decent work for education support personnel now!

On the occasion of [World Education Support Personnel \(ESP\) Day](#), Education International organised a virtual event where member organisations representing ESP at all education levels and in every corner of the globe highlighted the crucial yet underrecognised role played by ESP in quality education systems, as well as the need to provide them with decent working conditions.

ESP are the glue that holds together quality education institutions

Opening the webinar, Education International’s President Susan Hopgood highlighted that, “for more than two years we have seen education communities step up and come together to do whatever it takes to keep education going, support the bereaved, and help students struggling to catch up after long education institution closures. Education support personnel, in all their roles, have been key to making this happen.”

She went on to stress: “In crisis, and in all times, education support personnel are doing crucial work to maintain happy, safe, healthy and vibrant education communities. Working inter-dependently and collaboratively with teachers, researchers and other education workers, they are the glue that holds together quality education institutions, at all levels, from early childhood to higher education.”

Regretting that these professionals’ contribution to quality education is systematically underrecognized and undervalued internationally, she condemned the fact that, in many contexts we are now seeing trends towards increased privatisation and outsourcing of vital ESP roles, or deprofessionalisation of ESP through poor working conditions, a lack of professional development opportunities and the hiring of under-qualified staff.

This is not acceptable, she said. “To achieve quality education for all students, in every school or university and in every country, we need decent work for education support personnel now!”

Hopgood called on all governments to enact the [Education International’s Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel](#) and urged Education International’s member organisations across the world to use the Declaration as a tool to fight for their members’ right to decent work.

ILO supports educators

Oliver Liang, Head of the Public and Private Services Unit at International Labour Organization (ILO), explained that, “while the ILO used to focus on teachers, now it recognizes the importance of focusing on other groups like school leaders and ESP too. It really is a whole team of people supporting a student in his or her learning journey. That is why the ILO now uses the inclusive term ‘educators’ to describe teachers, school leaders, ESP and all workers in the education

system.”

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized this message further, heremarked, as these “heroes” contributed to the continuity of education during the pandemic.

The ILO recognises the important role of ESP, who are frontline workers deserving protection against violence and diseases, he noted. The organisation is concerned with the wellbeing of educators and respect for their role in social dialogue.

Countering the constant restructuring of ESP work in higher education

The webinar welcomed participants of the [3rd UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education](#) taking place in Barcelona, Spain, from May 18-20 and included a focus on the fundamental contribution support staff make to quality higher education for all.

Alison Barnes, president of the [National Tertiary Education Union \(NTEU\), Australia](#), underlined that ESP in the higher education sector, mainly women, have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. They suffered from job losses and a constant restructuring of their work, leading to “devastating consequences for those who do the job, with a massive increase of their workload, but also a decline in students’ learning conditions.”

ESP continue to live in fear of job loss, restructuring and a sense that their job is not valued by university directors and governments, she observed.

NTEU therefore:

- Draws attention to issues these workers face.
- Advocates for a cap on the number of restructurings per individual per year.
- Demands remuneration for work done over normal working hours.
- Seeks to protect ESP from workload intensification.

Despite their pride in doing their job, ESP are out of breath

Valérie Fontaine, president of the Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur-Centrale des syndicats du Québec (FPSES-CSQ), Canada, said that her union deplores a shortage of ESP, rampant privatisation linked to that shortage, and a lack of recognition. “When ESP leave their jobs, they do not get replaced, due to financing and worker shortage, which leads to workload increase for those who stay. Despite their pride in doing their job, ESP are out of breath.”

FPSES-CSQ demands:

- Better recognition of ESP by university management.
- The creation of a culture of collaboration.
- Wage increases and wage catch-up to restore purchasing power.

- A public service that is once again an employer of choice.
- Investment in ESP in the workforce.

Fontaine underlined that “without us, education institutions cannot work. We must create a better sense of union membership, to develop a pride in representing ESP.”

Union challenges and successes in supporting ESP

Guelda Andrade of the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação Educadores* (CNTE)/Brazil, Jose Luis Garcia Mancera of the *Federacion De Enseñanza De Comisiones Obreras* (FE.CC.OO.)/Spain, Pablo De León of the *Asociación de Trabajadores de Educación Secundaria* (ATES)/Uruguay, Debra Ward Mitchell of the National Education Association (NEA)/USA, Julie-Anne Roberts and Ally Kemplen of the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), and Sylvester Mutindindi of the Zimbabwe Educational Scientific, Social & Cultural Workers’ Union (ZESSCWU) then took the floor to talk about the experiences of Education International’s members representing ESP across sectors and regions.

Among other issues, they stressed that:

- Schools are spaces where children are developing as human beings, therefore they need professionals, like ESP, working there, and a network to defend them.
- ESP are leaving their jobs at an alarming rate, due to lack of professional respect.
- We can find hope in the power of unions and collective bargaining.
- ESP often suffer from precarious working conditions and have little professional recognition.

Notably, colleagues from NZEI reported on the success achieved by their union in raising their status and working conditions.

“In 2017, we made a pay equity claim for support staff. The government agreed to take this on, and we were able to raise awareness around ESP status and working conditions through local and national media. We were brave enough to tell our own stories.” NZEI now has an agreement with the government to end fixed-term contracts for members.

In her concluding remarks, the moderator, Marjolaine Perreault, General Director of the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ)/Canada and member of the Education International’s Executive Board, said: “We must highlight the harsh working conditions of ESP, their work overload, and continue Education International’s actions to promote their unionisation. In Quebec, we will soon be leading negotiations for the renewal of ESP working conditions. We will certainly be inspired by our New Zealand colleagues,” she noted.

Perreault ended the meeting by urging participants to use the [Education International’s Declaration on the Rights and Status of Education Support Personnel](#) to call their governments to ensure decent work for ESP.

Education Support Personnel build and protect universities

The idea of a university is a noble and important one. A place where knowledge can be shared, tested, developed and expanded. Where people can interrogate everything important about who we are, how the world works and how we fit within it. This happens in an environment built on freedom of thought, expression and inquiry.

A modern university is a community with libraries, food outlets, cleaners, security staff, administrators, carers, plumbers, electricians, specialist technical staff and many more. The bills have to be paid, computer systems maintained and supported, buildings built, gardens watered, the learning environment kept safe. Such spaces don't happen by accident. They need to be constructed and maintained.

This is the work of highly qualified professional staff who keep the institution functioning in every way. The internationally understood term is Education Support Personnel (ESP).

And yet, the work of most ESP is often unrecognised or undervalued. They make up around 57% of Australian universities' workforce. Their pay is frequently less than their academic colleagues, and when budget cuts are being considered, they are often the first to go.

Pre-COVID, about 30% of university income in Australia came from international students who had become a critical funding source. When COVID hit Australia, our universities were hit badly. When Australia's borders were closed and students stopped travelling, there was a significant funding shortfall.

The Federal Government introduced a scheme providing funding to businesses and organisations to help protect jobs across the economy, but actively and purposefully kept that funding from universities. This led to thousands of job losses.

Estimates vary, but the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) believes as many as 30-40,000 people lost their jobs including casual, fixed term, and permanent staff. Of the fixed term and permanent staff, it is reported that around 70% of them were ESP.

When job losses took place, they happened with haste and often without proper planning. Critical people have been lost in many workplaces. It is a frequent refrain from professional and academic staff that the result is not just a problem of overwork, but that the work simply cannot all get done.

Recent analysis has shown that most university finances have survived the crisis, and that many have healthier balance sheets than before the pandemic because of the cuts they have imposed. In short, management decisions have cut deeper than they should have if their purpose was to respond to the pandemic crisis.

The NTEU has started to focus heavily on health and safety in the workplace. And not just on whether our university workplaces are COVID safe. But also on whether excessive workloads are creating a risk to peoples' health.

Bargaining processes are currently underway at most universities and staff will be seeking recognition of the pain they have been through with key improvements on job security (particularly for our casual and fixed term members), academic freedom protections, and pay.

The support mechanisms that have maintained our universities as vibrant communities are starting to fray. Many of the people who have kept our sector functioning without drawing much attention to themselves are under real pressure and the impact may not be fully revealed for some time.

The Australian Government, who refused to support universities in a crisis, is facing a difficult election as a result of incompetence on a range of issues. But the full political impact may not be known for some time.

The professionals who make up the Education Support Personnel are devoted to their work, but also to the purpose of their work. They take pride in their role in supporting and maintaining the community of scholars.

But everyone has their limits. There is a significant element of good will amongst staff who give more than they should for the workplace they love. But the current pressures put that at risk. The long-term consequences for the sector are yet to be seen. Government and managements have created a climate where people may lose their passion for their job and consequently refuse to take on more and more work without recognition for their efforts.

Universities depend on ESP. For the sake of the academy, university managements and government better start paying serious attention to the damage that has been done and do something about it.

2. International Summit on the Teaching Profession

Convened by Education International and the OECD, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession brings together governments and education unions in OECD countries in order to strengthen and support an informed and honest policy dialogue between and among elected representatives of the teaching profession and national government authorities.

Hosted by Spain, the 2022 edition took place on 11-13 May and focused on an inclusive and equitable educational recovery in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. The themes included the role of digital technologies in supporting educational excellence for all, as well as the role of teachers in securing a sustainable future.

International Summit on the Teaching Profession 2022: Governments and teachers' unions working together for an equity driven public education

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Watch the Summit closing session below.

Watch the Summit press conference below.

Watch the Summit opening remarks below.

Read the opinion piece about the ISTP by Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards, [here](#).

Headlines

1. Education and Copyright: obstacles to teaching in the digital age

Access to knowledge is an important aspect of the right to education. In order to respond to the needs in the classroom, teachers often complement traditional teaching resources (e.g., textbooks and other curated materials) with a wide spectrum of materials from a variety of sources (e.g., short videos, images, articles). These are often protected by copyright and related rights [1].

Recognising the essential public mission of education as well as [the right of teachers to choose and adapt teaching materials](#) without having to ask permission from the copyright owner, governments are putting in place so-called copyright exceptions and limitations for education. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the massive shift to remote education during school closures has highlighted, more than ever before, that those exceptions and limitations are not always fit for teaching in the digital age.

Is it Legal? Education and Copyright in the Digital Age analyses 10 digital and remote teaching and learning scenarios that involve the use of copyrighted materials and other protected materials under the laws of 40 countries in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

This study's findings indicate that, in many countries, current copyright laws prevent the use of copyrighted materials in remote educational activities (e.g. live-streamed online or radio-broadcasted classes) and in on-demand digitally-supported education (e.g., emailing or storing reading materials on a school's platform). This forces teachers to either refrain from using such materials or to work in legal grey zones.

Where are we now?

Here are some of the patterns and trends identified in the study, which illustrate the inequalities between the regions and can provide guidance for copyright reform efforts:

- **Countries with general and flexible “fair use” provisions and countries with broad and technologically neutral exceptions are better equipped to facilitate remote and digitally-supported education.** The majority of these countries are located in Europe and North America. **Educators and students from Africa and from Latin America and the Caribbean and, to a lesser extent, Asia-Pacific, are particularly disadvantaged,** as their copyright laws are not as fit for the digital age.

This scenario illustrates the digital copyright divide well. **In contrast to countries in the Global North, countries in Latin America and Africa in particular do not perform well in this scenario.** They do not permit distance communication/sharing of protected materials.

- **International instruments for mandatory exceptions** (e.g. the mandatory quotation exception in the Berne Convention), **internationally agreed model laws for exceptions** (e.g. the model education exception in the Tunis Model Law on Copyright for Developing Countries), **as well as regional instruments for mandatory exceptions** (e.g. the mandatory digital and cross-border education exception in the new EU Copyright Directive) **play an important role** in reforming national copyright laws.

This scenario illustrates the role played by international model laws. In **Africa**, in contrast to other regions, most legal frameworks are supportive of uses of protected materials made during radio-broadcasted classes. This is because most have been influenced by the educational exception model contained in the 1976 Tunis Model Law, which specifically exempts “the utilization of a work by way of illustration in ... broadcasts”.

- **Teaching collaborations, online courses and other activities that involve the use of protected materials between students and teachers located in different countries remain a challenge.** Educational cross-border activities are only regulated within the EU and exchanges of protected materials beyond EU borders is not possible.

Recommendations to overcome the digital copyright divide

As the world is dramatically “off track” in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Agenda for Education, it will be essential for governments to take action now:

- **Governments should substantially reform their national copyright laws**, to ensure that they have flexible and broad educational exceptions in place that stay relevant as innovation advances and regardless of the means of teaching and learning. Otherwise, education communities across the world will be burdened with narrow educational exceptions that will ultimately undermine quality teaching and learning in a digital and online environment.
- **Copyright reform should be undertaken in consultation with teachers and their representatives** to ensure that it supports teaching and learning.
- **Research on digital and remote educational practices** that investigates how teachers are working with materials and what challenges they are facing can provide important insights for copyright policy makers.
- **International soft laws and models are an important vehicle in the process of reaching an international consensus** on binding instruments and in assisting countries in reforming their copyright laws to adapt their educational exceptions to digital and remote settings.
- **Policy makers should make an effort to agree on an international binding instrument** to ensure that the education community can enjoy a minimum set of rights to use copyrighted and other protected materials for educational purposes everywhere. This will substantially reduce the legal uncertainty and risks posed to educators, learners, and other participants of educational activities, including in a cross-border environment.
- **Legal solutions for cross-border educational uses should be explored**, at bilateral and multilateral levels, to deal specifically with certain cross-border uses of protected materials for educational purposes that are essential for education communities.

The full research paper by Nobre, T. (2022) can be found here : <https://eiie.io/3PdfYEW>

The summary of the research can be downloaded here: <https://eiie.io/3LX8FyU>

Note:

[1] “Copyright” refers to exclusive rights granted to the author of a work; “Related rights” refer to exclusive rights granted to certain categories of people (e.g., performers such as actors and singers, producers of sound recordings and films, broadcast organisations) in respect of the materials they produce.

2. The voice of educators at the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference

The 3rd World Higher Education Conference brought together the global higher education community to reflect on how to address the impact of the pandemic and design the future of higher education to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Organised by UNESCO, the Conference took place from 18 -20 May 2022 in Barcelona, Spain.

Education International attended the event, representing higher education workers around the world.

The Education International delegation highlighted key issues including academic freedom, the status of higher education teaching and research personnel, and the need to address the increasing trends towards privatisation and commercialisation of the higher education sector.

Prior to the conference, Education International organised a consultation with its member organisations, the results of which were shared with the Conference secretariat, together with several relevant studies. Education International is also organising and participating in a number of events throughout the Conference.

Online side events

On the occasion of World Education Support Personnel (ESP) Day, on May 16, Education International's webinar "**Decent Work for ESP Now!**", had a dedicated session to showcase the experience of education support personnel in higher education.

In collaboration with Scholars At Risk, Education International hosted the online event: "**Beyond words: A call for global guidance on implementing academic freedom, autonomy and related values**". The event took place on May 17. The session aimed to inform the debates at the Conference and raise awareness of the importance of academic freedom for the future of higher education. It also aimed to contribute to the debate on developing global authoritative guidance on implementing academic freedom at the global, regional, and national levels.

On-site sessions

Education International hosted two on-site roundtables at the World Higher Education Conference in order to create a union-led global conversation on the future of the workforce in higher education. These were held in collaboration with the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC).

The first roundtable, entitled "**In the frontlines: The impact of Covid-19 on higher education workers**", discussed the short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of the pandemic on teachers, researchers, and other higher education personnel and possible implications for the future of the profession. It took place on 18th May 2022.

The second roundtable, "**Setting the terms: the future of work in higher education**", took place on 19th May 2022. This session explored ongoing and future trends affecting higher education workers that must be considered as we define a new vision for the sector globally.

In parallel, Education International's President, Susan Hopgood, addressed a panel organised by the UNESCO Teacher Task Force and the International Labour Organisation on "**Higher education teachers: reinventing the future of the profession**". This panel took place on 19th May 2022. The event discussed the impact the pandemic has had on higher education institutions and on the work of

teachers, and the transformations needed concerning their status and professional development, in line with [UNESCO's 1997 Recommendation on Higher Education Teaching Personnel](#).

3. International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia: Safe and inclusive schools for students and teachers in all their diversity

On 17 May, the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Education International (EI), reaffirms our support and efforts to create safe and inclusive schools, universities, and other educational settings for learners and teachers in all their diversity. Safe schools are those where all teachers and students can feel and be free from discrimination, threats, and violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

As educators, trade unions, and members of the global community, we play a critical role in promoting inclusion and diversity in our schools, and protecting the fundamental rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) members and students. [1]

However, despite many achievements and progress made to advance universal human rights, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia still exist. Globally, progress on LGBTI rights is threatened by the rise of political leaders who fuel anti-LGBTI rhetoric and violence, enact anti-LGBTI legislation, and ban gender-affirming and inclusive curriculum, all of which have profound impacts on LGBTI students and teachers.

Victor Madrigal-Borloz, the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, has found that in schools where LGBTI students face “abuse, including physical violence, social isolation, humiliation, and death threats...[this results] in feelings of unsafety, missed school days, and reduced chances of academic success. Due to such abuse in educational settings, LGBT youth are more likely to commit suicide than others”. [2]

Let's stand up to intolerance and discrimination whenever and wherever we see it. Let's keep working to ensure our unions and schools are more LGBTI inclusive. Societies and their schools are only as strong as their most vulnerable.

To support this effort, EI has started a blog series that brings together the voices of education experts and activists – researchers, teachers, unionists, and civil society actors. In [the first blog entry, IGLYO](#), The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation, offers practical guidance to pave the way towards Inclusive Education based on their research. Next week, IEAL, the Latin American Regional Office of EI, provides an overview of a tool developed for education union organisations to promote respect for the gender identity and sexual orientation of the people who make up the educational communities of the region, with more blog entries to follow in the upcoming weeks.

Education unions can, and must, play a key role in the struggle for equal rights and quality education for all. Education International calls on governments, educators, and unions around the world on IDAHOBIT to commit to creating safe, inclusive spaces for all learners.

If you would like to contribute a blog to this series, please contact Lainie at equality@ei-ie.org.

Resolution on: Securing LGBTI Rights.

OHCHR | Effective inclusion of LGBT persons

The Trevor Project: 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health

LGBTYS LiS e-use (lgbtyouth.org.uk)

4. Is it legal? Education and Copyright in the Digital Age

This study intends to demonstrate whether copyright exceptions and limitations for educational purposes are fit for remote educational practices. Several studies commissioned by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) have analysed the copyright frameworks for education across the world⁸. The author has also previously analysed the fragmented landscape of provisions allowing for educational uses of copyrighted works and other protected materials in Europe, as well as in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

This study draws on and goes beyond these earlier findings to better understand whether existing national education exceptions across the world have the necessary flexibility to cover activities that take place remotely. It does this by analysing 10 digital and remote teaching and learning activities that involve the use of copyrighted materials and other protected materials under the copyright laws of 10 African countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe), 10 countries from the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam), 10 countries in Europe and North America (Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States), and 10 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico).

Highlights

1. Solidarity with students and teachers in Afghanistan

In 2022, Education International worked to support its member organisations in Afghanistan and to advocate for the rights of students and teachers living under the Taliban regime.

Related Items

Afghanistan: The Taliban regime denies girls' right to education

March 23rd was supposed to be a day of hope and a bright new beginning for girls across Afghanistan. The Taliban regime had promised to reopen secondary schools to girls eager to restart their education after months of disruption. These hopes were dashed by a last-minute change in policy that pushed girls out of school and casts serious doubt over the Taliban's commitment to girls' education.

"The policy reversal is deeply disturbing and is a direct violation of girls' right to education. It impacts the lives of millions of girls and deprives an entire country of the immense contribution these students can make towards a better future. Educators in Afghanistan and around the world will not stand for it. The international community will not stand for it," stated David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

Education International has been working shoulder to shoulder with our member organisation, the National Teacher Elected Council of Afghanistan, to advocate for girls' right to education. Education unions around the world have [mobilised in solidarity](#) with teachers and students in Afghanistan, providing support and working to protect Afghan colleagues, especially women teachers whose lives have been threatened.

Since the Taliban took over in August of 2021, the ban on girls' education has resulted in 200 million lost learning days, with no end in sight. Lack of access to education severely hampers girls' and women's chances to live a decent and fulfilling life.

While disappointing, this decision is not surprising. Under the Taliban rule in the 1990s, girls were banned from getting an education and saw their rights severely restricted throughout Afghan society. Since the Taliban took power, most boys' schools have remained open but only girls' primary schools have been allowed to operate in most of the country. Girls over the age of 11 were promised they would be able to return to their classrooms this week.

Education International reaffirms the right of every single girl to go to school and fulfil her potential. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts and demand girls' and women's right to education as a fundamental human right.

Afghanistan: reaffirming strong support for exiled trade unionists and for the return of democracy, freedom and equality

Together with French affiliates and leaders of French national and international trade union confederations, Education International took stock of the catastrophic situation of democracy and education in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. It also reiterated its commitment to and solidarity with Afghan trade unionists who, despite being exiled in France, are still fighting for a better future in their country.

Education International and two of its French affiliates, the *Syndicat général de l'Éducation nationale-CFDT Travail* (SGEN-CFDT) and the *Fédération de la Formation et de l'Enseignement privés-CFDT* (FEP-CFDT), attended the international trade union conference on human rights in Afghanistan organised by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and three French trade union confederations, the *Confédération française et démocratique du Travail* (CFDT), the *Confédération générale du Travail* (CGT) and *Force Ouvrière* (FO).

Solidarity, a fundamental trade union value

Speaking on behalf of the General Secretary of Education International, Florian Lascroux stressed that Education International welcomes the intense work that has already been done in conjunction with the ITUC on the Afghanistan situation and saluted the tremendous work that has been carried out for months now by the French confederations, with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, to evacuate trade union activists and their relatives from the country.

He went on to note that “in an international context where there is a perception that crises are multiplying, it is essential that trade unions show in a very concrete way that solidarity is at the heart of their values”.

Education International's action in support of trade unionists in Afghanistan

He also recalled the actions taken with its affiliates since the Taliban took back control in Afghanistan:

- Support for its member organisation in the country, the National Teachers' Education Council (NTEC), so that it can continue to operate on the ground in the regions;
- Adoption by the Executive Board of Education International in December 2021 of a [resolution](#) in support of education, peace and human rights in Afghanistan; and
- The launch of an urgent action appeal to all 400 member organisations to raise funds to support its affiliate in that country and to assist in the evacuation of activists.

The Observatory for the Rights of Afghan Teachers

Lascroux went on to explain that Education International will create an Observatory for the Rights of Afghan Teachers. This will be in the hands of the NTEC, which will collect data on four main points:

1. Teachers' salaries;
2. Human or trade union rights violations, with a particular focus on gender equity;
3. Working and living conditions of women teachers; and
4. School attendance, especially for girls, in relation to [UN Sustainable Development Goal 4](#).

This Observatory will make it possible to:

- Make the voice of Afghan teachers heard by sharing testimonies; and

- Build advocacy based on factual elements.

Lascroux also relayed the EI General Secretary's proposal to continue in the coming months the joint work begun with the ITUC on the Afghan situation.

Ensuring a decent reception for Afghan trade unionists who arrive in France

In his speech, Laurent Berger, General Secretary of the CFDT, said that the aim of this conference was to recognise the value of the solidarity actions carried out and to foresee others in the long term. "We will support steps taken to ensure that Afghans who arrive in France can be welcomed and housed properly," he said.

For Philippe Martinez, General Secretary of the CGT, "we must collectively ensure that we regularly express our views and take action to denounce the violations of fundamental rights in Afghanistan. We must be vigilant about the reception of Afghan refugees in France."

The three French trade union confederations have long been involved together in international solidarity and must continue to act to secure the restoration of fundamental rights in Afghanistan, while also taking steps so that Afghan refugees can live in a dignified manner in France, said Yves Veyrier, General Secretary of FO.

The voice of Afghan trade unionists

The conference participants were also able to listen to the interventions of Afghan trade unionists who spoke about the situation of workers' rights and that of women's rights in Afghanistan.

Maroof Qaderi, president in exile of the National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE), described the human rights abuses in Afghanistan. He noted that unemployment is very high, with 800,000 people losing their jobs, especially women, under the Taliban. There is no freedom of expression and journalists are threatened, he said. He similarly criticised the fact that the Taliban have suspended or amended labour and human rights laws, causing many to flee the country.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, there are 2.6 million Afghan refugees registered worldwide, of which 2.2 million are registered in Iran and Pakistan alone. A further 3.5 million people are internally displaced, having fled their homes in search of refuge in the country.

Habiba Fakhri, Vice President of NUAWE, explained that "Afghanistan is a rich country with poor people". She condemned the fact that, since the change of regime, the economy has collapsed, there is a lot of corruption, and international aid has stopped coming in. Violent groups are fighting for power in the regions, she noted. She also deplored the increase in famine throughout the country.

International trade union solidarity

"There is still a lot to be done in Afghanistan. However, the first steps have been taken and we can be proud of the trade union movement," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

She also congratulated the French trade unions who have done an extraordinary job in enabling trade unionists and their families to come to France and assured that "we will make sure that

these comrades can have a decent life in France”.

The ITUC, she added, will continue its advocacy work on Afghanistan and will talk about it beyond the trade union circle. The rights to democracy and freedom are at the heart of our trade union values, she said.

Anthony Bellanger, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), said his organisation is also present on the ground and “it is a real nightmare. More than 300 media outlets have been banned. In 2021, 12 journalists were killed. Our action on the ground is becoming humanitarian, so dramatic is the situation. We hope that the light of information in Afghanistan will not be extinguished.”

Many people have lost their jobs in Afghanistan, deplored Ariel Castro, Senior Workers Activities Specialist and Head of the Asia-Pacific Region at the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV). He highlighted the fact that “we have a responsibility to defend workers and their rights. We are continuing our efforts, with our office in Kabul, to assist Afghan trade unions and develop activities in Afghanistan.”

In her concluding remarks, Burrow stressed that “we leave this conference with hope based on solidarity. You see here what the trade union movement is capable of when we want to uphold justice.”

Finally, addressing the Afghan trade unionists, Burrow guaranteed that “we will work on the basis of the right to democracy. We will fight alongside you. Your courage and determination are an inspiration to us all.”

Afghanistan: As the Taliban regime undermines education, peace and human rights, Education International and its member organisations step up their actions

[Education International's Afghanistan Teachers' Rights Observatory \(ATRO\)](#), to be launched in September 2022, is the latest in a series of strong actions undertaken demonstrating the global education community's solidarity with Afghan educators and populations, who are undergoing great hardship under the rule of the Taliban.

ATRO, a monitoring and advocacy tool

In April 2022, Education International and the National Teacher Elected Council (NTEC) agreed on the creation of ATRO, whose aims and objectives are to:

- Monitor, document, assess and report on the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, including: Payment or non-payment of teachers' salaries and working conditions ; Human, labour and trade union rights' violations, with particular focus on gender equity ; Girls access to education ; Restrictions on women teachers – including on dress code and where they can or cannot teach ; The safety and psycho-social well-being of women teachers ; Curriculum adherence to meeting SDG standards (inclusive, evidence based)
- Empower, support and build capacity of NTEC
- Elevate the voice of Afghan teachers by collecting and sharing stories and testimonies of teachers in partnership with NTEC
- Use evidence gathered for advocacy at national and global level

ATRO expected outcomes are as follows:

- Increased advocacy for teachers' rights, students' rights (particularly girls) labour and human rights, both domestically and internationally
- Increased influence, visibility and status for NTEC domestically with increase in membership coverage across the education workforce
- Publication of a bi-annual monitoring report
- Production and dissemination of bi-monthly bulletins
- Compilation of a disaggregated database of rights' violations, including on: Educational rights– access, gender equity, pedagogy and the curriculum ; Human rights, with specific focus on gender equity ; Labour rights

The operationalising and implementation at national level will be carried out by NTEC.

International solidarity movement for Afghan educators and unionists

ATRO comes after a number of other initiatives undertaken by Education International and member organisations who stepped up their assistance to Afghan educators and unionists after the Taliban's return to power.

On 2 May, Education International and two of its French affiliates, the *Syndicat général de l'Éducation nationale-CFDT Travail* (SGEN-CFDT) and the *Fédération de la Formation et de l'Enseignement privés-CFDT* (FEP-CFDT), attended the international trade union conference on human rights in Afghanistan organised by the *International Trade Union Confederation* (ITUC) and three French trade union confederations, the *Confédération française et démocratique du Travail* (CFDT), the *Confédération générale du Travail* (CGT) and *Force Ouvrière* (FO).

Education International took stock of the catastrophic situation regarding democracy and education in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. It also reiterated its commitment to, and solidarity with, Afghan trade unionists who, despite being exiled in France, are still fighting for a better future for their country.

Education International welcomed the intense work that has already been done in conjunction with the ITUC on Afghanistan and saluted the valuable work carried out for months by the French confederations, with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, to evacuate trade union activists and their relatives from the country.

Education International's urgent action appeal

On 14 December 2021, Education International had already sent out an urgent action appeal regarding "the critical situation that has been unfolding in Afghanistan" and asking for affiliates' solidarity to:

- 1) Support Education International's Afghan members who are undergoing great hardship;
- 2) Support the rescue and resettlement efforts of teacher trade union activists from Afghan member organisations who are under threat; and
- 3) Pressure their governments to both support relocation efforts and to ensure that humanitarian aid includes education and the rights of women and girls.

Education International further noted that “the Taliban, which seized power earlier this year, is reversing decades of educational and human rights’ progress and targeting schools and educational institutions to hinder girls’ education and erase women’s participation. From 1996 to 2001 it barred girls and women from almost all work, the right to vote and to access education. [...] Despite recent assurances from the Taliban, EI member organisations in Afghanistan are reporting that the situation is getting worse for women teachers and students, especially girls.”

“Schools should never be targets of terrorism or violence”

The Education International’s Executive Board, meeting on 2nd December 2021, also adopted a [resolution reiterating in particular that “schools should never be targets of terrorism or violence”](#) and “education is a fundamental human right and adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is fundamental to promoting inclusive, non-discriminatory, and peaceful societies”.

Afghanistan: The Taliban regime must stop its attacks on the teaching profession

Education International condemns the abusive measures imposed by the Taliban government on universities and higher education institutions in Afghanistan. These measures are in clear violation of the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as enshrined in the [1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the status of higher education teaching personnel](#).

In what appears to be an attempt to purge the country’s education system from any independent voice, Afghan universities were recently asked to denounce the “corrupt, incompetent and destructive” teachers within their ranks. The letter from the authorities also commands higher education institutions to report any teacher or professor who had connection with previous governments.

Education International reaffirms the critical importance of academic freedom for fostering independent thinking and expression, strengthening democracy, and contributing to the common good of societies. The 2019 Education International [Resolution on Academic Freedom in Higher Education](#) states that “higher education teaching personnel and researchers should [...] enjoy, without interference, internationally recognised civil, political, social and cultural rights applicable to all citizens”.

Education International calls on the Afghan authorities to respect the rights and freedoms of education professionals, including academic freedom.

In a [resolution adopted last December](#), the Executive Board of Education International expressed grave concerns about the catastrophic situation of democracy and education in Afghanistan since the Taliban took over in August of 2021, and particularly regarding the safety of educators and equal access to education for girls. This new attack on education and academic freedom is a further confirmation that despite their initial promises, the current regime is no different from the Taliban rule in the 1990s.

Education International stands in full solidarity with its member organisations and the teaching community in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: Union ensures the distribution of allowances to unpaid teachers

The National Teachers Elected Council (NTEC) has played a key role in ensuring that UNICEF's badly needed emergency funds reach teachers across Afghanistan and advocating for secondary girls access to education be reinstated.

“During a meeting held at the UNICEF offices before the distribution of allowances with each teacher receiving 100US\$, I was able to share my views and see them adopted on the most transparent way to distribute money to teachers,” NTEC President Fazel Ahmad Fazel stressed.

Transparency in the distribution of money

While an issue related to the number of teachers appeared – as some teachers, especially women teachers, were absent from the classroom –, the distribution was done through the teachers' bank accounts, and this largely ensured transparency, he went on to note.

Although it is very difficult to give an exact number, according to information received from the provinces, about 80% of the teachers have now received the money, he added.

He also explained that beneficiaries have been selected by UNICEF and the central and local offices of the Ministry of Education, the union playing a “supervisory role in this case, so that no teacher is forgotten or disadvantaged”.

Consequences of the distribution

This distribution of allowance has its positive and negative consequences, Fazel insisted.

On the positive side, he acknowledged, it was “a kind help” for those teachers who have a salary of less than 100US\$.

He however mentioned two negative points:

1. A slow distribution process: some teachers haven't received it yet.
2. Teachers usually earning salaries higher than 100US\$ only received the 100US\$ allowance. The remaining amount hasn't been paid by authorities yet and teachers have been affected by this.

Education International believes, that whilst this initiative is welcome, it is a temporary and unsustainable solution. A permanent and more sustainable mechanism is needed for the payment of salaries to teachers in crises situations, as in Afghanistan.

NTEC taking the lead on quality inclusive education

NTEC is also continuing to mobilize and pressure the ministry to allow secondary girls to go to school by running a campaign across all provinces and will be holding a national conference at the end of July on what Afghan teachers need to ensure a quality education for all.

Education International General Secretary David Edwards commends NTEC for its leadership at this critical time. “While donors debate political viability of engagement strategies and the current Taliban rulers restrict rights on women and girls, NTEC is bravely taking the lead for its members and the students of Afghanistan under incredible pressure. They need and will continue to get EI's solidarity, support and admiration.”

Afghanistan: International solidarity to face human and education rights violations

International solidarity was reaffirmed at a webinar on Protecting the Right to Education of Girls in Afghanistan organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Unite the Union. Participants took stock of the educational and trade union situation in the country.

Putting pressure on the ruling Taliban

The Associate Director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, Heather Barr stated that beyond education and attacks on girls' education, a "much broader context of human rights violations", such as extra-judicial killings.

She deplored "magical thinking" as far as the Taliban's promises are concerned, especially when they stated that men and women are equal, but take action to the contrary. She reminded participants that women journalists were fired early on and women were dismissed from most jobs, in education and in other sectors.

While the Taliban had promised that schools would reopen on March 23, girls are banned from secondary education and secondary schools remain closed.

She highlighted that despite the challenges there is pressure in many Afghan provinces to demand Taliban governors reopen schools for girls.

"The Taliban wants recognition in the international fora, the lifting of economic sanctions and travel bans. They also want humanitarian assistance, which should not be conditional. We must put pressure in these areas," she stressed.

Her presentation was shared during a webinar moderated by Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary for Education and Research of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) – an Education International member organisation.

Engaging with teacher unions to ensure quality education

Education International has been very active since the Taliban's return to power helping the evacuation of union leaders at risk, [assisting its affiliates on the ground](#), supporting the implementation of girls, women and labour rights in the country, explained Education International's Consultant Samidha Garg. It is also setting up an [Afghanistan Teachers' Rights Observatory](#) (ATRO).

"The consultation with teacher unions is sporadic, but they are part of the solution," Garg underlined, relaying Education International's clear message: "We need a meaningful engagement with teacher unions to ensure quality education in Afghanistan, especially for girls. We also need a sustainable international mechanism for the payment of teachers' salaries in crisis situations."

Building an international consensus to solve education and teacher union issues

Fahima Salehi, former provincial leader of the National Teachers' Elected Council – Education International's national affiliate –, now exiled in Pakistan, also took the floor. This education and human right activist and advocate for women's educational rights, was an English teacher in a girls' secondary school.

Since the Taliban are not committed to any of the human rights principles, especially in the field of women's rights, nor to the restoration of human and educational rights, especially girls' education, Salehi called for an international union consensus on:

- Coordination between civil institutions defending human rights;
- Holding international conferences to carry resolutions to the United Nations;
- Putting pressure on governments to work with the United Nations to implement resolutions; and
- Shifting the international community's focus on educational projects for girls.

She was also adamant that, "if the Taliban are dissatisfied and do not change, economic sanctions against them should be increased, and the Taliban government should not be recognised. They are an extremist group that has always been against human rights and girls' education. If they are not put under pressure by international institutions, the situation will be worse and more catastrophic than it is today."

EI's 4th World Women's Conference rallies the power of women for change

A record number of women education unionists came together online for the 4th Education International World Women's Conference held from the 13 to 16th of June. Bringing together a profession largely dominated by women in many parts of the world, the Conference focused on mobilising and using women's power for change.

Education union power is women's power

In her opening speech, Susan Hopgood, Education International President, called on women education unionists everywhere to take action in order to counter the alarming developments of the last few years. From worsening gender inequalities caused by the pandemic, to sexual violence used as a weapon of war against women in Ukraine or the Democratic Republic of Congo, or the alarming rates of femicide in parts of Central and Latin America, the world is backsliding when it comes to women's rights and gender equality.

"As trade unionists, we recognise the importance of collective power: we build solidarity between workers so we can mobilise, organise and harness our collective power to defend and promote our rights. As education unions, we also defend and promote the rights of our students. In this Conference, as we think about and discuss what it means to refer to 'women's power', let us not forget that we are a profession that is largely dominated by women in most regions. So, in fact, in many of the places where we are joining the Conference from, education union power is women's power," Hopgood highlighted.

Using women's power for change

During the four Conference days, participants explored a wide range of topics and had the opportunity to hear from a variety of women leaders, from those occupying formal positions of power in governments and unions, to the young women who are leading the global movement for climate justice.

The first day of the Conference focused on women in leadership in government and education unions. High-level political leaders from Uganda, Jamaica, Morocco and New Zealand and the women who lead Education International as members of its Executive Board, shared their personal and professional journeys into leadership, the kinds of opportunities and barriers they encountered along the way, and personal stories that prepared them for a journey into leadership. Speakers also shared their views on the nature of power: how it's used, how it should be used and its gendered dimensions.

The second day of the Conference explored insights from recent research into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women in unions and in education. The day also featured a storytelling session about the ways in which power operates in relation to gender, race, caste, socio-economic status, etc.

On the third day of the Conference, participants turned their attention to education union efforts to address and eradicate gender-based violence. Speakers from EI member organisations across regions discussed why eradicating gender-based violence in and around educational settings, in unions, and in society is a top union priority. Speakers also shared examples of how their unions are working to effect change on this critical issue. Education unions in Ukraine and Afghanistan whose members are currently experiencing the horrors of war or are trying to pick up the pieces in post conflict settings shared powerful experiences. The day closed with a panel featuring experts from different regions, who are bravely facing anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-critical race theory backlash in education.

The final day of the Conference was dedicated the future. The day featured an inspiring panel of young women leading the struggle for climate justice and for transformative climate action. In a discussion moderated by NASUWT's Michelle Codrington-Rogers, Mitzi Jonelle Tan from the Philippines, Vanessa Nakate from Uganda, Phoebe Hanson from the UK, and Laura Verónica Muñoz from Colombia, talked about what it takes to challenge traditional/structural power as a young woman in the context of a planetary emergency. Watch their conversation below.

Unions are our homes

In her closing remarks, Susan Hopgood encouraged women unionists to treat their unions as their homes. "Our unions must be models for what inclusive, sustainable, and values-led movements ought to look like, behave like, and feel like. Every time we approach the bargaining table, the media, the podium, or the streets, we dig deep into the foundation of our homes - our values," she stated. "We must ensure that the structures of our homes, whether it is informal networks, committees, professional development programmes, or our leadership boards, do not limit women to one floor, but enable them to reach every floor in the house."

2. 4th Education International World Women's Conference

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Using women's power for change: Education unionists come together for the 4th Education International World Women's Conference

From 13 to 16 June, record numbers of women education unionists from around the world are coming together online for the 4th Education International World Women's Conference. Under the theme, "Using Women's Power for Change", the Conference is a festival of ideas, experiences, and strategies to advance gender equality in and through education unions.

"Education union power is women's power."

Susan Hopgood, Education International President

"As trade unionists, we recognise the importance of collective power: we build solidarity between workers so we can mobilise, organise and harness our collective power to defend and promote our rights. As education unions, we also defend and promote the rights of our students. In this Conference, as we think about and discuss what it means to refer to 'women's power', let us not forget that we are a profession that is largely dominated by women in most regions. So, in fact, in many of the places where we are joining the Conference from, education union power is women's power," stated EI President Susan Hopgood, in her opening remarks. Watch her speech below.

During the Conference, participants will hear from a fantastic line up of women - leaders, educators, unionists, activists, researchers – effecting change around the world. Speakers include:

- Jan Tinetti | Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister for Women, and Associate Minister of Education | New Zealand
- Nouzha Skalli | Former Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family, and Social Development | Morocco
- Margaret Rwabushaija | Member of Parliament | Uganda
- Fayval Williams | Minister of Education and Youth | Jamaica
- Vanessa Nakate | Climate justice activist and founder of the Rise Up Movement | Uganda

Over the four Conference days, women education unionists will discuss a wide range of topics, including:

- Women leading in politics and in education unions;
- The gendered impacts of the pandemic in unions and in education;
- The role of education unions in eradicating gender-based violence;
- The challenges faced by women teachers and female students in conflict and post-conflict settings;
- Anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-critical race theory backlash in education;
- Young women driving the fight for climate justice;

and much more.

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On the third day of the Conference, participants turned their attention to education union efforts to address and eradicate gender-based violence. Speakers from EI member organisations across regions discussed why eradicating gender-based violence in and around educational settings, in unions, and in society is a top union priority. Speakers also shared examples of how their unions are working to effect change on this critical issue. Education unions in Ukraine and Afghanistan whose members are currently experiencing the horrors of war or are trying to pick up

the pieces in post conflict settings shared powerful experiences. The day closed with a panel featuring experts from different regions, who are bravely facing anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-critical race theory backlash in education.

The final day of the Conference was dedicated the future. The day featured an inspiring panel of young women leading the struggle for climate justice and for transformative climate action. In a discussion moderated by NASUWT's Michelle Codrington-Rogers, Mitzi Jonelle Tan from the Philippines, Vanessa Nakate from Uganda, Phoebe Hanson from the UK, and Laura Verónica Muñoz from Colombia, talked about what it takes to challenge traditional/structural power as a young woman in the context of a planetary emergency. Watch their conversation below.

Unions are our homes

In her closing remarks, Susan Hopgood encouraged women unionists to treat their unions as their homes. "Our unions must be models for what inclusive, sustainable, and values-led movements ought to look like, behave like, and feel like. Every time we approach the bargaining table, the media, the podium, or the streets, we dig deep into the foundation of our homes - our values," she stated. "We must ensure that the structures of our homes, whether it is informal networks, committees, professional development programmes, or our leadership boards, do not limit women to one floor, but enable them to reach every floor in the house."

Headlines

1. Statement | World Day Against Child Labour

On June 12th, World Day Against Child Labour, Education International calls on unions to urge governments to implement the [Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour](#) adopted at the [5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour](#), held from 15-20 May 2022.

The Durban Call to Action represents an important international commitment to ending child labour which can be used by Education International and its member organisations to:

- Support advocacy to strengthen quality public education as a tool for the elimination of child labour.
- Reaffirm the human right to education and free, compulsory, quality, basic education.
- Reaffirm the central role of social dialogue, the importance of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work, including freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Ending child labour is increasingly urgent

This call to action addressed to the governments of all United Nations (UN) Member States acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, and food, humanitarian, and environmental crises threaten to reverse years of progress against child labour.

It builds on the body of international conventions, UN and multilateral conferences and commitments, in particular the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development target 8.7 to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. It recalls the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and other ILO Conventions, including the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also builds on the commitments made in the context of the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, and the outcomes of the previous Global Child Labour Conferences.

The Durban Call to Action includes commitments in six different areas:

1. Making decent work a reality for adults and youth above the minimum age for work by accelerating multi-stakeholder efforts to eliminate child labour, with priority given to the worst forms of child labour.
2. Ending child labour in agriculture.
3. Strengthening the prevention and elimination of child labour, including its worst forms, forced labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons, and the protection of survivors through data-driven and survivor-informed policy and programmatic responses.
4. Realising children's right to education and ensuring universal access to free, compulsory, quality, equitable, and inclusive education and training.
5. Achieving universal access to social protection.
6. Increasing financing and international cooperation for the elimination of child labour and forced labour.

Teacher unions are key to ending child labour and making the right to education a reality

“Schools provide the best environment for all children. Children have the right to a quality education. They belong in school with their teachers and caring educators, not in the world of exploitation of child labour,” stated Education International General Secretary, David Edwards.

Underlining the importance of educators and their unions to eradicate child labour, he was adamant that governments must support teachers through training, continuous professional development, decent salaries and working conditions, and ensure education is made “genuinely free, available, and accessible to all”.

Edwards went on to mention five key teacher and union strategies to make sure children are in school:

1. Research and evidence.
2. Advocacy and social dialogue.
3. Raising awareness.
4. Community mobilisation.
5. Creating safe and inclusive school environments.

He further explained that, for Education International and its affiliates around the globe, “education must be made genuinely free, available and accessible to all”. This, he said, calls for adequate investment in education by allocating at least 6% of GDP or/and at least 20% of the national budget to education.

Education unions, in cooperation with other trade unions, such as rural workers or plantation workers’ unions, and trade union centres have a vital role to play in ensuring that governments are held accountable for the implementation of the measures to which they committed in the Durban Call to Action, Edwards added.

Education unions can use the Durban Call to Action in advocacy with the National Assembly/Parliament, the education community, parents and activists, and to raise awareness with union members.

The summary of the main points of relevance to Education International and its member organisations of the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour is available [here](#).

2. E-commerce, Education and Copyright: A Policy Brief

In the context of the World Trade Organisation’s 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) in Geneva on 12-15 June 2022, Education International calls on governments to deliver a comprehensive intellectual property waiver on Covid-19 vaccines, treatments and tests and warns of the risk of increasing commercialisation of education and research due to concerning e-commerce rules in trade agreements.

In light of the ongoing discussions on e-commerce at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Education International is launching a policy brief on Ecommerce, Education and Copyright, written by Michael Geist.

The brief shows that e-commerce (i.e. online buying and selling of goods and services) opens doors to new, for-profit online educational services that contribute to commercialisation of education and research, undermining fundamental rights to education, privacy and quality terms of employment. This is a wake-up call for education unions to closely monitor and engage in rapidly advancing e-

commerce negotiations at the international and national level

3. Education International reaffirms the crucial role of social dialogue for quality education systems

In her address to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Education International Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst stressed the need for social dialogue to establish education policies and ensure decent working conditions of all education personnel.

CEART recommendations

During her address, Holst stressed that “more structured and democratic mechanisms are needed to hear the voice of teachers and their representative organisations in relation to their evolving, and increasingly precarious, employment and working conditions, as well as emerging challenges affecting professionalisation that have resulted from the COVID pandemic”.

Commenting on the Report of the ILO Director General on June 9, Holst highlighted this recommendation from the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART).

CEART oversees, on behalf of ILO and UNESCO, the two recommendations on teaching staff, i.e the [1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#) and the [1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#).

Holst reiterated that, “in the education sector, COVID led to school closures, dramatic changes in how and where teachers were expected to work and to dismissals, often without social dialogue or respect for labour rights.”

ILO Sectoral meeting on the future of work in education

She went on to highlight some of the outcomes of the [ILO Sectoral meeting on the future of work in education](#), focusing on:

- The need for **professional autonomy and training and lifelong learning opportunities** for educators.
- **Technology-mediated education** that responds to access and to challenges in the digital transformation of work, including developing appropriate privacy and personal data protection measures.
- **Privatisation**, governments being invited to strengthen governance and regulation of private education providers.

Working with educators and their unions to eliminate child labour

Holst also commended on behalf of Education International and member organisations on work done by the ILO to end child labour, taking action to achieve the universal right to education. The [Durban Call of action](#), which came out of the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, underlines the importance of educators and their unions to eradicate child labour, she insisted.

4. Solidarity sparks union renewal programme in Asia-Pacific

Thanks to the support of the Australian Education Union (AEU), the Education International's Asia-Pacific (EIAP) regional office/Council of Pacific Education (COPE) was able to organise a strategic planning meeting on trade union renewal for members of the Fiji Teachers' Union and the Fijian Teachers' Association.

The meeting aimed at developing new strategies to organise and mobilise the membership, prepare grassroots/workplace representatives for leadership, build a narrative around common issues, communicate that narrative for broader advocacy and outreach and foster partnerships through effective communication.

The EI affiliates in Fiji, Fijian Teachers Association and Fiji Teachers Union, with the support of AEU and EIAP/COPE were engaged in a two-day intensive strategic planning meeting on trade union renewal.

Fourteen participants from both Fiji's unions attended this meeting held from 28-29 May in Nadi, Fiji. The meeting was facilitated by AEU Deputy Federal Secretary Nicole Calnan, Deputy President of the New South Wales Teachers Federation (affiliated to AEU) Henry Rajendra, and EIAP Chief Regional Coordinator Anand Singh.

The EIAP's regional research on trade union renewal, a basis

The EIAP's regional research – [Union Renewal in the Education Sector: Prospects for Asia Pacific](#) – was used as a basis for developing a programme for renewal for each union.

Informed by the research, participants highlighted the importance of working towards achieving a government-funded quality public education system for all, their union's strengths and weaknesses, union structures, priorities and where they can further develop.

“Both unions identified their provision of services to members as a strength and increasing member engagement and participation as something they needed to build,” acknowledged Singh.

He added his satisfaction that participants understood the “potential to make history” of such a renewal programme, discussions being centred around “change”, “hope” and a “joint commitment” to build union and political power, to achieve the public education their country deserves.

“Through this project, we are trying to build union power by empowering union members, union leadership at school level and improving the way education unions engage with other stakeholders such as parents, community and ministries,” Singh further underlined.

FTA General Secretary Fijian Teachers Association, Puala Manumanunitoga, also stressed: “Thanks to EIAP and AEU, we are presented with this important opportunity to engage in constructive reflexion on our union and our work. We are eager to take this project forward to strengthen our union and build a more engaged and empowered membership.”

Upcoming two-day renewal programme

Taking note of the priorities identified and the clear commitment from both unions, AEU proposed a two-day renewal programme revolving around training workplace union representatives and supporting the professional needs of the Fijian unions' members through a teacher development programme. The Fijian unions and EIAP regional office agreed on this renewal programme, to be led by the latter.

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

As millions of refugees around the world face another year far from their homes, Education International continues to advocate for their rights and to ensure they are welcomed and treated with dignity and respect.

This year, on World Refugee Day, Education International is especially concerned with the plight of millions of refugees from Ukraine displaced by the Russian invasion. This war has had a devastating and brutal effect on children and their families and has violently disrupted the education system at all levels.

Education International is working closely with its affiliates in Ukraine to provide assistance to teachers and their communities impacted by the war. EI members from around the world are standing in solidarity with Ukraine and calling for peace and an end to the war.

At the beginning of May, Education International brought together education unions from Ukraine and neighboring countries, policymakers, and international organisations in order to step up collaboration and ensure that education continues for all students displaced by the war. [Click here to download the report of the seminar.](#)

[Education International has also denounced the acts of racism and discrimination](#) faced by African, middle eastern, and Asian students seeking to flee Ukraine as the war started. All displaced people must be treated with dignity regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, religion or any other background.

“As educators and unionists, we stand for the rights and dignity of all migrants and refugees. Any act of discrimination towards those seeking safety is unacceptable. We call on governments to wholeheartedly support school communities who are welcoming students and families traumatised by war, persecution, scarcity, and climate change.”

David Edwards, EI General Secretary

“On World Refugee Day, education unions around the world unite with a renewed commitment to the rights of all displaced populations, and particularly children and students, teachers, education support personnel, researchers and education unionists,” he added.

Global turmoil of recent decades causing crises, conflicts, and wars, and the consequences of climate change worldwide, have led to millions of individuals fleeing their countries in search of safety and shelter.

Education International advocates for the rights of refugees and migrants on every continent and works with member organisations to ensure that every child, every student, every teacher who flees their home has a welcoming education community.

In Lebanon, a country facing multiple crises and hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, Education International is working alongside its member organisations to ensure that

education continues for all students. Following a recent [mission on-site](#), EI has called for international solidarity to avoid the collapse of the country's education system.

In Africa, through the [BRICE/Education for Life project](#), Education International is working with its affiliate, the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), and international partners to improve the resilience of learners and teachers in South Sudan and Uganda. In Uganda, which hosts nearly 1.5 million refugees, [efforts are underway to address issues affecting education and teachers in refugee settlement areas](#).

On June 21st, David Edwards will share insights from EI's work on refugee education at a Brookings-Yidan Prize online event entitled "Ukraine and beyond: Lessons in refugee education". [Click here to register](#).

Teacher organisations will continue to lead the way in their countries and local communities to ensure that the right to education is delivered to newcomers, that this education is inclusive, and that the roles of all education personnel, also those amongst displaced persons, are recognised, valued and rewarded.

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

6. Demanding progress for education and research at the World Intellectual Property Organization

Stop putting teachers at risk and advance balanced international reforms that empower educators and researchers worldwide to adapt and choose materials for quality education and research.

This was Education International's call to action at the 42nd meeting of the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) that took place from 9-13 May in Geneva, Switzerland.

WIPO's SCCR was set up in the 1998-1999 biennium to examine matters of substantive law or harmonisation in the field of copyright and related rights. As such, it is the dedicated international committee that could - through legally binding instruments - address the challenges of copyright restrictions for education most effectively.

Education International study: Copyright laws inadequate for teaching in digital era

On the occasion of the SCCR, Education International launched the study, [Is it legal? Education and Copyright in the Digital Age](#), by Teresa Nobre. The report paints a stark picture of the status of copyright laws around the world. Basic teaching activities, such as showing a video in an online class or storing a news item on a school platform, are currently illegal in many countries. Educators in Latin America, Africa, and some parts of Asia-Pacific are particularly disadvantaged.

However, globally, cross-border collaboration that involves the use of copyright-protected works is a legal challenge for educators.

Education and copyright during pandemic

The 42nd SCCR meeting kicked off with a [COVID-19 information session](#). This provided a platform for representatives from the education, research, and cultural heritage sector as well as the creative industries to share their experiences during the pandemic.

Education International welcomed that the panel on education and [the SCCR's Expert Report](#) recognised the legal risks and consequences that teachers are exposed to in situations where their countries' copyright laws are not fit for education. This has been a major concern, particularly for remote and digitally supported education during the pandemic.

The report also referred to the importance of Open Science as one way of increasing access to research, but it remained silent on [access to Open Educational Resources](#). Surprisingly, the session's panel did not include any copyright experts. Therefore, no recommendations on how to support education and research in this regard were made.

A representative from the national Department of Basic Education in South Africa, Nonpumelelo Mohohlwane, stressed that a guarantee for limitations and exceptions for education could be a good way "to allow teachers and schools to plan ahead and be prepared for future pandemics".

Draft broadcast treaty on hold

On Tuesday and Wednesday, 10-11 May, the SCCR discussed the draft WIPO [Broadcasting Organizations Treaty](#). In its [statement](#), Education International expressed concern that "while new exclusive rights for broadcasters are being created, exceptions and limitations remain inadequately addressed. This is particularly alarming in the context of this pandemic where educational broadcasts have helped millions of children worldwide to practice reading and literacy skills. But it is also relevant beyond the pandemic, audio-visual works such as films, documentaries and other broadcasts are commonly used in teaching, learning and research."

The Committee could not agree on concrete next steps for this treaty but committed to continue discussions at the 43rd SCCR meeting in 2023.

Action for education and research at WIPO

As the agenda moved on to discuss the next steps on copyright exceptions and limitations for libraries, archives, educational institutions, research institutions, and persons with disabilities, [the proposal of WIPO's African regional group](#) was at the centre of the debate.

In its [statement](#), Education International highlighted the massive discrepancies between what is required from teachers and what copyright laws allow and welcomed the African proposal as a step in the right direction.

"We appreciate the leadership of so many countries in this room who recognise the important role of teachers for quality education, who do not close their eyes to the fact that current copyright laws put teachers in vulnerable positions, and who are ready to move beyond vague statements about potential legal impossibilities," the statement read.

The African Group's proposal was strongly supported by the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC). Particularly developed countries who continue being adamant against any work towards a globally binding instrument to support education, research, and cultural heritage organisations worldwide opposed the proposal. Once it was established that the next steps should be

focused on toolkits and guidance, there was agreement that the Secretariat can start working on the following items:

- Invite research presentations on copyright challenges for teachers and researchers working in cross-border educational or research projects (e.g., online classes with students in multiple countries, research collaborations)
- Develop toolkits to “help Members craft laws and policies that support education, research and preservation of cultural heritage”
- “Present (1) a scoping study on limitations and exceptions on research and (2) a toolkit on preservation”

There was no agreement on the next steps in relation to text and data mining research, the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, as well as contract override and safe harbour protections.

Education International will remain engaged in relation to the agreed action items as well as those that are still outstanding to ensure that the perspectives of teachers and researchers as creators and users are taken into consideration.

The Committee Chair’s summary of SCCR/42 is [available here](#).

7. Education versus austerity

At least 69 million more teachers are needed by 2030 to achieve the sustainable development goal on education, yet around the world existing teachers face low pay and deteriorating conditions, affecting the status of the profession. There is a clear common cause uniting low pay and teacher shortages – both arise from decades of squeezed public funding, triggered most directly by the imposition of public sector wage bill constraints.

Whether imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or by Ministries of Finance who adhere to the same neoliberal ideology and economic policy, public sector wage bill cuts and freezes have become a central flagship of wider austerity policies. Teachers are the largest single group on most public sector payrolls, so constraints on the overall wage bill disproportionately impact teachers, pushing down their pay and blocking new recruitments.

Download this policy brief to find out more about how IMF policies can be felt in the classroom.

July

Headlines

1. European educators reaffirm their commitment to enhance the status of the teaching profession for inclusive, peaceful, democratic and sustainable societies

Confronted with turbulent times for teachers, educational staff and their trade unions, delegates at the Special Conference of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), the European region of Education International (EI), took a pro-active stand and reasserted their will to mobilise and organise for quality public education, for the benefit of students, and improved status for the education professionals, key elements to inclusive, peaceful, democratic and sustainable societies.

The event took place from 5-6 July 2022, in Liège, Belgium. Participants were welcomed by the Minister of education of the German-speaking region of Belgium and by the leaders of the Belgian ETUCE member organisations.

Stefaan Hermans, Director of Policy Strategy and Evaluation in the DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission, emphasised the importance of social dialogue, enshrined in the European Treaty, and representing “a fundamental element of the democratic societies we live in”.

In his keynote address, Education International’s General Secretary David Edwards informed that [at the invitation of the UN Secretary General, EI is joining with civil society, students, the UN and other international organisations](#) to put the fight for a sustainable future back on track, beginning with a new deal for teachers and all educators that ensures the requisite conditions for transformation.

The adopted [resolution on the Conference theme](#) reflects that education trade unions must mobilise along the demands for quality and inclusive education. ETUCE President Larry Flanagan explained: “There must be pressure on politicians, and they must be made aware. As teachers, we must make our demands heard and safeguard the values of democracy. Our expertise must be imprinted in education policy, as teachers know best what teachers need.”

Hermans was then joined by Evelyne Léonard, Professor at the Louvain School of Management in Belgium, for a panel discussion on boosting social dialogue for quality education. For Léonard, “social dialogue can be a game changer” and “provides an opportunity for institutional innovation for an inclusive and sustainable society.”

Day one of the Special Conference ended with the official launch of an exhibition of education union posters, and with the [Kounka Damianova Award](#) ceremony. For 2022, recipients are Borka Visnic of the Teachers Union of Serbia (TUS) and Dorota Obidniak of the Polish Zwi?zek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP).

The adopted [Policy Paper on Raising the Status and Improving the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession](#) contains ten key messages to improve the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession in all education sectors.

In her keynote speech, Kristin Vanlommel, Professor and member of the Research Group Learning and Innovation at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht, The Netherlands, explained that “digitalisation is complex and brings educational change. It involves different actors, with diverse ideas concerning the direction of the change. You need to be agile and responsive.”

Connecting to the conference online, Georgiy Trukhanov, Chairman of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine explained the recent developments regarding the devastating situation of teachers and students in his country, and informed that his union had found an agreement with the national education ministry, including the prohibition of dismissal, maintaining the average salary and the right to work remotely from other regions or from abroad.

Delegates showed solidarity with Ukrainian educators, saying: “Solidarity makes us strong. We want a peaceful and just world. War on war!”; or “As educators, we are committed to teach peace. We oppose violation of human rights on any possible ground”. They unanimously approved the [Resolution for Peace in Ukraine](#).

Speaking on citizenship and inclusion, Catherine Lowry-O'Neill, lecturer at the Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland, inspired participants: “Hold on to your dream of democracy, peace and inclusion. Keep the flame of passion, hope and courage burning for the children in your classrooms.”

ETUCE Committee member Rob Copeland, welcomed guest speakers Matteo Vespa, President of the European Students' Union, and Ulrike Pisiotis, Policy Officer in the schools unit of the European Commission's DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. They stressed that “upskilling and reskilling is important when we speak about environmental sustainability through education” and that “there has definitively been progress made in the last years on bringing environmental sustainability in training and education systems”.

2. Madagascar: education trade unionists relay international solidarity aid to colleagues affected by natural disaster

In the wake of tropical cyclone Batsirai which hit Madagascar on 5 February, the *Fédération chrétienne des enseignants et employés de l'éducation de Madagascar* (FEKRIMPAMA) has spared no effort to pass on the [financial solidarity aid](#) provided by Education International and its member organisations, responding to the most urgent needs of its members and students in the affected regions of the South of the island.

Reaching out to affected educational communities

"We managed to get in touch with them. We have maintained contact with current members and with some school administrators, such as school headmasters," explained FEKRIMPAMA's Secretary General, Constant Andrianatrehy Marolaza.

While his union has no contact with other organisations, mayors in some rural municipalities, as well as the head of the district and the head of the school district in the affected regions, are communicating with FEKRIMPAMA and providing information. The priority needs of teachers were identified based on information from local authorities.

"I have visited some regions and from what I have seen, the damage is heavy and almost the same everywhere," said Mr. Andrianatrehy Marolaza. "We have made a call for partnership and collaboration in places where events, such as the Batsirai and Emnati cyclones, have affected our members. Organisations such as Education International have responded directly to the appeal we have made. International organisations, such as the UN World Food Programme, UNICEF and the NGO Tanintsika, are also bringing direct aid to the affected areas."

The FEKRIMPAMA General Secretary also acknowledged that "our action plan has been able to specifically help people with their food and equipment needs and also with the updating of their administrative records."

Support for teacher trade unionists

When asked about the support given to the affected teachers, Mr. Andrianatrehy Marolaza mentioned the moral and psychological support given to the educators "to help them get back on their feet and continue exercising their profession, in addition to the financial aid" granted thanks to the solidarity of the global education trade union community.

He emphasised that "this gave them a lot of courage to carry on with their profession and their respective tasks, because the true friend is the one who provides support in a difficult moment like the one that they experienced".

Assessment of the support operation for Malagasy educators

As for the lessons learned about the union's management of such an emergency situation, he highlighted the fact that, "sometimes in a similar situation, the state response to emergencies comes late. To date, many schools have not yet been rehabilitated. This action to help the affected teachers has given us the opportunity and the courage to support our comrades."

He also welcomed the fact that this activity represented a great opportunity for FEKRIMPAMA to strengthen their foundations and to carry out a massive recruitment effort in the regions visited or assisted.

For FEKRIMPAMA, training on trade union organisation, the use of new technologies to facilitate rapid communication, and trade union and professional rights is needed. "We are counting on collaboration with colleagues around the world to carry out those priorities," concluded Mr. Andrianatrehy Marolaza.

3. Belarus: Education International denounces liquidation of independent trade unions and imprisonment of trade unionists

Education International firmly condemns attacks on free trade unions by the authorities of Belarus as part of the long campaign to destroy democratic forces. On 18 July, the Supreme Court liquidated and dissolved the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP) along with its four member organisations, three of which are members of IndustriALL Global Union. In addition, fifteen leaders and union activists are in prison.

Ten of them, including the historic leader of independent unions in the country, Aliaksandr Yarashuk, were arrested on 19 April 2022. Two have been detained since 17 August 2020. The list of prisoners with their union membership follows:

1. Aliaksandr Yarashuk – Chairperson of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic trade unions, BKDP.
2. Siarhei Antusevich – Vice-Chairperson of BKDP.
3. Hennadz Fiadynich – Vice-chairperson of the Radio and Electronic workers' union, REP.
4. Vatslau Areshka – activist of REP.
5. Mikhail Hromau - Member and Secretary of SPM Council.
6. Iryna But-Husaim - BKDP media team officer, book-keeper of BKDP.
7. Miraslau Sabchuk – Activist of SPM.
8. Yanina Malash - Deputy Chairperson of SPM, officer for organizing.
9. Vitali Chychmarou - Member of SPM Council, labour inspector.
10. Vasil Berasneu - Acting Chairperson of REP.
11. Zinaida Mikhniuk - Deputy chairperson of REP.
12. Aliaksandr Mishuk – Vice-Chairperson of BITU, Chairperson of BITU at JSC Belaruskali.
13. Ihar Povarau – activist of BITU at Belarusian Metallurgical Plant, BMZ.
14. Yauhen Hovar – activist of BITU at Belarusian Metallurgical Plant, BMZ.
15. Artsiom Zhernak – Chairperson of SPM at Minsk Automobile plant.

"The fact that the Russian government has started a war against Ukraine today cannot be understood, justified or forgiven. The fact that the aggressor invaded Ukraine from the territory of Belarus with the consent of the Belarusian authorities cannot be justified or forgiven."

The independent union confederation of Belarus, the BKDP.

Global Unions' call for the release of arrested trade unionists

In May of 2022, Education International joined other Global Unions in a [call for the release of the 20 independent trade unionists](#) arrested on 19 April (a few were freed shortly after the arrests). Global unions are also supporting an ongoing [LabourStart campaign](#) for their release.

Although Belarus President Lukashenko has steadily eroded democratic freedoms since his first election to that office in 1994, repression escalated after the most recent election on 9 August 2020. The results were widely considered to be fraudulent and were not transparent. The announcement of the official figures brought hundreds of thousands of people into the streets and generated strikes in large, state-run enterprises. The response of the authorities was brutal and violent repression against all dissent, the independent press, the media, and trade unions that were not under government control. There were mass arrests, widespread torture and even a state-sponsored hijacking to capture an independent journalist.

Among the measures taken against journalists was the dissolution of their 1300 member trade union, the [Belarus Association of Journalists \(BAJ\)](#), an affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). It was disbanded by the Supreme Court on the initiative of the Ministry of Justice in August of 2021, one year after the election.

Belarus, a staging area for the deployment of Russian troops

In order to cling to power despite over-whelming public opposition, President Lukashenko obtained the strong support of Russian President Putin and paid the price in the sovereignty of the country. Russian influence further increased with the invasion of Ukraine, with Belarus becoming a staging

area for the deployment of Russian troops. In addition to troops, Russia has indicated that it intends to transfer Iskander-M missiles to Belarus. They can carry both conventional and nuclear weapons.

Shortly after the Russian invasion, the independent union confederation of Belarus, the BKDP, issued a [statement](#) saying:

"No nation in the world wants war. The Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples are no exception. Few peoples in the world have suffered such terrible losses and sacrificed the lives of tens of millions of their citizens in their history as our three peoples did, peoples who are so close to each other. And the fact that the Russian government has started a war against Ukraine today cannot be understood, justified or forgiven. The fact that the aggressor invaded Ukraine from the territory of Belarus with the consent of the Belarusian authorities cannot be justified or forgiven."

Educators plant the seeds of democracy in young people

Education International's General Secretary David Edwards, in reaffirming the support of Education International for the independent trade unions of Belarus and their allies in the fight for democracy, said:

"The struggle of free trade unionists in Belarus for democracy despite the dissolution of their unions and the imprisonment of their leaders deserves the respect and support not only of the global trade union movement, but from all who cherish democratic values and institutions. Their courage is an inspiration, but it also shows how difficult it is to extinguish the aspiration for liberty and solidarity.

Trade unions can only fully and freely function in democracies. Democracies cannot be complete without trade unions. Education International joins with independent trade unions in all sectors in that common fight for trade unionism and democracy.

"The struggle of free trade unionists in Belarus for democracy despite the dissolution of their unions and the imprisonment of their leaders deserves the respect and support not only of the global trade union movement, but from all who cherish democratic values and institutions."

Education International's General Secretary David Edwards.

As educators, we will continue to contribute to that struggle by planting the seeds of democracy in young people so that they can and will resist authoritarians wherever they are found. As American educator and philosopher said, 'Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.'

August

Highlights

1. Advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Throughout the year, Education International worked to advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples in education and beyond. Some of the highlights of our work in 2022 are featured below.

Related Items

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

On the 9th of August, Education International (EI) joins the celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and reaffirms the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. This year's [theme](#) is The Role of Indigenous Women in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Knowledge.

Education unions are working to ensure that Indigenous Peoples have access to equitable, relevant, quality Indigenous education; to decent work opportunities, and social protection. As educators we also know that education systems have been – and in some contexts continue to be – developed in ways that stigmatise, exclude, and erase Indigenous knowledge systems. Far too often, education systems have maligned Indigenous cultures, languages, and beliefs on one hand, and imposed Western knowledge and science as normative and universal on the other.

Indigenous women play key roles as leaders and holders of knowledge critical to preserving Indigenous identity, language, culture, and generational histories; to creating solutions to conflict; to addressing climate change and the protection of biodiversity; to improving health and education outcomes; to defending land and human rights and to building resilience in the face of pandemics and other crises.

Despite the crucial roles Indigenous women play, they are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, extractive industries and projects, land occupation, are [under-represented](#) in leadership roles, and too often experience intersecting levels of discrimination based on gender, class, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

In June 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, released a special report on Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls to the Human Rights Council, outlining key causes, manifestations, and consequences of gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls, as well as good practices regarding truth and reconciliation, access to justice, support services, prevention, and protection.

In this impactful [report](#), the Special Rapporteur emphasises the scale and seriousness of continuous, systemic acts of violence that Indigenous women and girls face, rooted in colonisation, patriarchal power structures, racism, exclusion and marginalisation. However, these violations, perpetrated by State and non-State actors, occur with relative impunity and are inadequately reflected in data collection, legislation, or public policies. Although the right of Indigenous women and girls to be free from violence is enshrined in international law, this has

not materialised into sufficient prevention and protection measures by States.

EI joins the Special Rapporteur's calls for States:

- to fulfil their obligation to ensure Indigenous women and children are protected from all forms of violence and discrimination;
- to engage with Indigenous communities to implement public policies which improve access to and retention in culturally relevant and high-quality education which centres Indigenous knowledge systems;
- to develop curricula which eradicates discriminatory gender stereotypes and social attitudes, which are often root causes of gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls

This day provides EI an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on the different ways education systems impact the rights of Indigenous Peoples. To explore the ways Indigenous education experts, activists, researchers, and teachers, are working to ensure quality education that centres Indigenous knowledge systems, EI will start a weekly [blog series](#) that brings together the voices of Indigenous Peoples and their allies from across the world this month.

It will take visionary political will and concrete action by leaders –including those in educational settings and within our unions -backed by properly targeted resources, and in consultation with Indigenous Peoples and their representatives, for the full realization of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, particular for women and girls. We are up to the task.

If you would like to contribute a blog to this series, please contact Lainie.Keper@ei-ie.org.

Including Indigenous identities and ways of knowing in education and science

Engineers and scientists are vital to meeting Sustainable Development Goals but the ecological knowledge that Indigenous people hold when we care for the land are things that are central to the existence of life.

Some of the most intelligent people I know in my community are those that don't hold degrees from institutions that were built to function as settler colonial entities; the extraction of bodies, the extraction of knowledge, the nonconsensual taking of land are rooted in these entities. People, like my grandmother and uncles hold thousands of years of traditional knowledge, but don't hold degrees from these institutions. They know when the salmon will come in the Yukon-Kuskokwim River, they know that heavier snowfall in the winter will bring more berries in the spring. These are our ways of knowing and I'm thankful for their stories because they brought me here.

Your lived experiences, the way you subsist from the land and care for your community is science.

In my experience in higher education, I found that a lot of what is taught to me in my engineering courses often use language that is inaccessible to those in my community yet those same principles and theories are things we follow when we care for the land and our loved ones. The knowledge I learn from my uncles, aunts and elders are not underrepresented in this field but are systemically excluded and invalidated because of the origins of western science and the expectation that nonnative people hold for myself and those in my community.

Globally we're seeing intense wildfires, rising sea level, coastal erosion, dying vegetation and rising temperatures. These are drastic environmental changes.

Indigenous peoples have been living in these dystopic futures and conditions since the beginning of colonialism. (Whyte, Anthropocene) Yet people continue to frame Indigenous communities as people who have just been hit by the effects of climate change. We have always known about the rotting of our lands, of our waters, of our air. But we are not listened to, not regarded. I often think about what our world would look like if our stories and our ways of knowing were regarded as serious and thought-provoking frameworks in the field of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)? Would our reality be different? Our lived experiences as Indigenous peoples can shape a better future for the earth but also for the entire field of STEM.

The Extractive Nature of Research and its roots in Settler-Colonialism

I am an undergraduate student studying Civil Engineering and Anthropology at Columbia University and do research on the intersections of plant ecology, civil infrastructure, plant ecology, and cultural resilience. My existence in the field I study in is a disruption of western academia because I was never intended to be here, yet here I am. I love the work I do and am grateful for where I'm at.

However, people also need to understand the extractive nature of research that most scientists follow, unintentional or not. Entering a community, they hold no ties to, extracting knowledge non consensually and then presenting it in highly specialized spaces that are inaccessible to attain degrees, compensation, title, and prestige. This shouldn't be the standard.

Ecological scientists do work with the intention to create a better future for people but as an Indigenous woman who does ecological work, I do this work for the survival of my people because we have been living in these "dystopic" conditions due to settler colonialism.

On Navigating Higher Academia as a Native woman in STEM

I often describe my experience in STEM as a violent endeavor, being underestimated, having my place and competence questioned in spaces I thought I would be regarded with respect. But then I meet professors and mentors and students that remind me that I am capable and I want to remind Native woman who do work in STEM that I see you and am proud of you. Your words and your work are necessary.

Thank you especially to Dr. Kevin Griffin and Dr. Paige West at Columbia University. I would not be doing the work I do today without your guidance and brilliance.

And thank you to Mr. Abel who was one of the first educators who believed in me.

I found that despite these barriers, there were always people who believed in me, saw me and validated my experiences and scholarship and I am thankful for these people because I would not be where I am without them.

My story in Education

When I was 16, I conducted research. I found that American Indian and Alaska Native students have the [lowest graduation rates and highest dropout percentages in the US](#). The graduation rates of Indigenous students are [among the lowest in Alaska](#), despite the state having the

highest percentage of Indigenous K-12 students. In my district, Alaska Native and American Indian students have a [graduation rate of 62.88 per cent](#) and the highest rate of dropping out compared to any other demographic.

When Native students don't see themselves in the curriculum that they learn, on land that was once theirs, they're not going to be as motivated to graduate high school. Why would you want to graduate from an institution that continues to contribute to the erasure of your people? If Alaska Native and American Indian students felt their required classes were culturally relevant and inclusive of the Indigenous perspective, we would be more engaged with our education. This is what I found in my research. We shouldn't have to study in an environment that fails to acknowledge the atrocities Indigenous people have faced. Western education dehumanizes the narrative of Indigenous people and doesn't acknowledge the resilience and diversity of Native culture. We need to understand the history of those that came before to reconcile what happened in the past and what continues to happen to Indigenous peoples.

With the help of Dr Maria Shaa Williams, Director of the Alaska Studies Department at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and Dr Richard Manning, professor at the University of Canterbury, I developed an accurate and inclusive history sub-curriculum of Indigenous peoples that highlights the atrocities faced by my ancestors and focuses on an Indigenous perspective through readings, videos and movies. I incorporated Alaska Native guest speakers to talk about specific events, including the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the Boarding School Era.

My work in education and science are the same. I often think about what sovereignty would look like in both fields. The use of STEM as a mechanism to validate the existing ecological knowledge of Indigenous communities is sovereignty. To give back the words to youth, the words that we already know and validate their ways of knowing are sovereignty.

I often think about what our world would be like if our ways of knowing weren't systemically invalidated and excluded in STEM and education. I am proud of who I am and where I come from. I know now what sovereignty could look like in these fields.

I thank my mother, Elizabeth Lozano, and her family. They are the ones who gave me the words and courage to speak of our story of survival and brilliance.

QuyaMMna Cakneq,

Thank you so much for reading my words.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is commemorated annually on 9 August to raise awareness about the rights of Indigenous Peoples globally. This year's theme, The Role of Indigenous Women in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Knowledge, is an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on the different ways education systems impact the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly women and girls. On this occasion, Education International is launching a blog series featuring the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and their allies from across the world. The series explores the ways Indigenous education experts, activists, researchers, and teachers, are working to ensure quality education that centres Indigenous knowledge systems.

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Indigenous educators from across Latin America come together to strengthen public education

Convened by Education International Latin America (EILA) on August 9-11, the IX Regional Meeting on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples brought together more than 150 educators from all over the region, representing indigenous peoples from Peru, Panama, Argentina, Costa Rica, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay who travelled many miles by air and land to reach the city of Asunción, Paraguay.

Challenges facing indigenous education in Latin America

The hall was filled to capacity as Education International for Latin America (EILA) and its affiliates kicked off the IX Meeting on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples, held in the framework of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Also present at the event were Fátima Silva, Vice-President of the EIAL Regional Committee; Combertty Rodríguez, EIAL Senior Coordinator; Roberto Leão, EIAL Global Vice-President; Eladio Benitez, General Secretary of the Unión Nacional de Educadores-Sindicato Nacional (UNE-SN) and Juan Gabriel Espínola, representative of the Organización de Trabajadores de la Educación del Paraguay-Auténtica (OTEP-A).

Combertty Rodriguez opened the event by pointing out that it is the responsibility of unions to ensure that indigenous populations can find a home in the trade union movement.

“The IEAL felt it had a duty to hold this event to address a central issue: the education problem facing indigenous populations, from a public policy perspective,” he added.

Roberto Leão addressed those present saying “I hope that you leave here strengthened, with proposals that each of you can take back home, and continue this struggle for the existence of humanity. Because it is you, through your relationship with nature, who are the future of humanity.”

Eladio Benitez highlighted the similarities that exist between the countries of the region, pointing out that “there is much that is lacking, such as difficulties in the use of and access to new technologies, lack of connectivity, but above all there is the historical neglect by the governments in each of our countries”. Hence the importance of this meeting, the leader explained, which will be an opportunity for proposals on these issues to be put forward.

“It is a great commitment for our trade union, because what is a union if not a tool for liberation? And that is what we want, to walk together as a union, with you. We can no longer allow this to happen in our societies, this marginalisation of the real owners of the land. And we from the union, with our motto of commitment and coherence, are here to walk by your side”, added Juan Gabriel Espínola.

Finally, Fatima Silva recalled that “commemorations such as today's are precisely the dates when we should tell heads of state to implement the policies that are so necessary for the indigenous populations who have been marginalised throughout the world”.

Proposals to strengthen public education for indigenous peoples

During the morning of this first day, the participants introduced themselves, so that everyone got to know each of the different ethnic groups and peoples represented in the activity. One by one they put their names on the wall of the venue where everyone's origins could be clearly read.

The communities shared traditional dances and songs, as well as explanations about their traditional dress, the foods most commonly eaten in their communities, and the history of their villages.

Participants formed working groups to discuss the challenges facing public education systems in indigenous communities.

The educators concluded their discussion by agreeing on the need to guarantee compliance with existing legislation in the countries of the region related to the rights of indigenous people, as well as with laws and treaties that guarantee the right to a living wage.

They also pointed out clear needs such as the improvement of educational infrastructure, internet access, teaching materials, school meals and libraries, conditions that must go hand in hand with public policies that guarantee the connectivity of these communities.

The educators recalled that meeting these challenges depends on guaranteeing other rights such as access to clean water, health services, and the right to their ancestral lands.

Finally, participants put forward important proposals such as organising competitions that allow indigenous educators to work in their communities, favouring training courses that respect the culture and worldview of each indigenous group, and guaranteeing a differentiated curriculum.

At the end of the event, the non-indigenous union leaders in the room reflected on the need to support their indigenous colleagues in their organisations and, above all, to listen to them. They stressed the importance of ensuring equity for indigenous educators when it comes to trade union victories, as well as the importance of having representation at all levels of their organisations.

In addition to the Paraguayan unions, the EIAL member organisations who attended the event through their leaders and affiliates were the Confederación de Educadores Argentinos (CEA), Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (CTERA), Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación de Brasil (CNTE), Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación (SUTEP), Colegio de Profesores de Chile (CPC), Asociación Nacional de Educadores y Educadoras (ANDE), Sindicato de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores de la Educación Costarricenses (SEC) and the Magisterio Panameño Unido (MPU).

Indigenous education workers call for a commitment from the region's governments to education for their peoples

The call was made in the framework of the IX Regional Conference on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples convened by Education International Latin America.

The event was attended by over 150 education workers who travelled to Asuncion, Paraguay from Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, and Paraguay .

The IX Regional Conference on Public Education and Indigenous Peoples, convened by Education International Latin America (EILA) and its affiliates, ended on Wednesday the 10th of August, with the reading of the manifesto jointly prepared by its participants, in which they make an emphatic call to the governments of the region to put an end to the policies of “invisibilisation and neglect affecting Indigenous peoples in education.

The document demands and reflections that synthesise the dialogue of over two days, in which education workers from Indigenous peoples in Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina and Paraguay compared their experiences and found many similarities.

The chief demands included public policies that guarantee access to equitable, free and quality education for all Indigenous peoples in the region; the ratification and implementation, in all countries, of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples; and mechanisms for the participation of Indigenous communities as a prerequisite for decision-making related to Indigenous education policy.

They also called for the historic demands of their peoples to be met, such as access to essential resources like drinking water, health services and the right to their ancestral lands, as well as the protection of their territories from land devastation, deforestation, and the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources.

As for the demands directly regarding education, they called for public policies ensuring connectivity that covers rural and urban areas of Latin American countries without distinction and the incorporation of technological tools for learning and community development; better educational infrastructure, appropriate teaching materials, school meals and quality libraries for educational centres in Indigenous communities, along with other demands included in the full document.

In addition to the Indigenous education workers, the event was attended by Fátima Silva, vice president of the EILA Regional Committee; Combertty Rodríguez, EILA senior coordinator; Roberto Leão, EILA vice president; Eladio Benitez, general secretary of UNE-SN (National Union of Education Workers - National Union, Paraguay) and Juan Gabriel Espínola, representing OTEP-A (Organisation of Education Workers of Paraguay - Authentic).

Trade unions defending Indigenous struggles

The group work on the second day focused on considering the demands that Indigenous peoples can make of their trade union organisations, and the areas in which they believe their structures could improve their work.

Among the main points put forward, on which almost everyone agreed, was the need for the recognition of plurilingualism within trade unions, and for trade union organisations to support and stand alongside Indigenous peoples in their struggles and their negotiations with governments.

The need was stressed to incorporate Indigenous peoples’ representatives within trade union structures at every level and to ensure that their viewpoints are always taken on board. The importance was underlined of demanding that governments fulfil the rights of Indigenous

education workers.

Finally, the participants asked their organisations to provide political and trade union training for education workers from their communities. They stressed the value of having meetings convened by trade unions with Indigenous teachers in each country.

“These decisions depend on the political will of each affiliate to implement the proposals put forward as a conclusion of this event. EILA alone cannot implement these recommendations; it must go through the national organisations. Trade unions must be an organising vehicle for Indigenous peoples,” concluded Combertty Rodriguez, EILA regional coordinator, at the end of the activity.

Ending Ability Grouping to empower Māori learners in Aotearoa New Zealand

Variably practiced as ‘ability grouping’, ‘streaming’, ‘attainment grouping’, ‘setting’, ‘banding’ or ‘tracking’, pedagogical practices that group students based on perceived ability or prior achievement are longstanding and widespread world over. Research, however, has long shown that this has negative impacts for students, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous populations.

Today, despite an overwhelming amount of evidence demonstrating that ability grouping does more harm than good – some of it dating back [nearly a century](#) – these practices persist with remarkable stubbornness. What is it about ability grouping that makes it such a resilient part of pedagogical practice? More importantly, how can we organise to end a practice that is ultimately inequitable and damaging for students?

According to PISA 2018, on average across OECD countries 54% of students are in schools that ability group for at least some subjects. In my country, Aotearoa New Zealand, we are well above that, with [83.5% of students](#) in schools that ability group for at least some subjects – making us third highest in the OECD. In this post I discuss some efforts we are making to end this practice. But before I get into that, let me quickly review the evidence for anyone reading who may still have doubts. Below I refer to several studies that support my argument. I encourage you to follow the links. It makes for some sobering reading.

The evidence against ability grouping

Focusing on measurable academic achievement alone, numerous studies have established that overall, [no statistically significant beneficial effect](#) can be identified from ability grouping students at all levels. While a marginal benefit to high achieving students can be found in some – but not all – studies, the detrimental impact of ability grouping on lower achieving students is significant and far outweighs marginal benefits at the top. Conversely, [improvements in academic performance](#) have been found to result from the introduction of mixed ability grouping.

Arguably more important than any academic measure, however, is the [social and psychological impact](#) ability grouping has on students. Students placed in lower groups, even at very early ages, quickly become aware of what it means for them. In Aotearoa New Zealand, among students such groupings are commonly referred to as the ‘cabbage class’, a reference to the unthinking mode these groups are imagined to operate on.

In a 2017 paper, Becky Francis and colleagues argue that ability grouping creates a ‘[self-fulfilling prophecy](#)’ where students in low ability classes identify with and internalise low expectations for themselves and their learning. Unsurprisingly, this has disastrous effects on student self-concept, confidence, and ultimately academic performance. Many students simply give up and disengage, believing that school is not the place for them.

The segregation of students into ability groups is often subjective or based on questionable evidence, leading many to conclude that grouping decisions reflect biases about particular social groups. For example, researchers from the University of Auckland found a correlation between [teacher’s expectations of student ability and their ethnicity](#). They identified higher expectations for Asian and Pākeha (white New Zealander) students, and lower expectations for indigenous Māori and Pasifika students.

As I show in the next section, this has deep roots in colonisation and serves to guarantee negative outcomes for already marginalised groups. In short, ability grouping reinforces social and economic inequalities – it is a pedagogical tool that functions to keep marginalised populations marginalised, and to ensure that the privileged remain privileged. That is why some of us in the education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand have come together to organise to put an end to it.

The colonial legacy of ability grouping in Aotearoa New Zealand

Streaming and ability grouping has been a persistent feature of the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand since the country’s colonisation in the nineteenth century. Assumptions about ‘innate abilities’ were used here, as elsewhere, to segregate students along ethnic and class lines. This might seem archaic to the modern audience however it is important to realise that grouping practices in today’s classrooms have an intimate connection (what we in Aotearoa New Zealand call a ‘whakapapa’) to these earlier ideas.

Aotearoa was colonised in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. As with all colonial projects, this was accompanied by, and justified through, racist assumptions and beliefs about the inferiority of non-white peoples. These white supremacist ideas then fed into the design and establishment of the education system, the legacy of which we still work within.

Māori culture has a deep regard for knowledge. In the early nineteenth century Māori rapidly adopted literacy as well as European printing techniques. By the mid nineteenth century, literacy was significantly higher among the Māori population than among the European settlers. By the middle of the 1930s, over forty Māori newspapers had been published.

Despite this clear passion for higher learning, early on the colonial government sought to [suppress the Māori language](#) and control Māori access to education. Streaming and ability grouping are connected to this history. A brief survey of some official comments, which I borrow here from [Dr. Hana O’Regan’s](#) powerful research on the whakapapa of streaming, serve to demonstrate this:

1862. “a refined education or high mental culture” would be inappropriate for Māori because “they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual than by mental labour” (*School Inspector reporting to the House of Representatives*).

1880s. [Te Aute College](#) produces first Māori graduates in the 1880s, but the College comes under pressure to abandon the academic curriculum and teach agriculture instead.

1915. “So far as the Department is concerned, there is no encouragement given to [Māori] boys who wish to enter the learned professions. The aim is to turn, if possible, their attention to the branches of industry for which the Māori seems best suited.” (*Inspector of Native Schools in the Annual Report*)

1931. “education should lead the Māori lad to be a good farmer and the Māori girl to be a good farmer's wife.” (*Director of Education*)

Given this history, it perhaps comes of little surprise that ability grouping continues to be taken for granted at the same time as the evidence of its disadvantage to Māori learners continues to mount. Debates over these practices have been circulating in education circles in Aotearoa New Zealand for some time. It might seem discouraging that any change away from streaming and ability grouping is possible. However, NZEI Te Riu Roa are taking part in a project that we believe offers perhaps the best chance yet at putting an end to it for good.

Ending ability grouping in Aotearoa New Zealand

Tokona te Raki, the [Māori futures collective](#), are described by project lead Piripi Prendergast as ‘part think tank, part do tank’. They were jointly approached in early 2020 by the Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group, a group of education leaders representing Māori tribes from around the country, and by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, and asked to bring together a team to develop a plan to end streaming and ability grouping in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Tokona te Raki were already aware of the damaging impacts of these practices on young Māori learners. Their remarkable 2019 report, [He Awa Ara Rau](#), drew on a massive data set to track the educational and vocational pathways of over 80,000 young Māori. The findings of that report were sobering. They found that the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand ‘still carries a racist legacy where Māori culture is seen as a barrier to success and Māori are channelled into unskilled labour.’ ‘These outcomes don’t happen by chance’, they argued, rather they ‘have been influenced by historical racism in education.’

In 2021 Tokona te Raki formed a ‘design team’ of experts from across the education sector who began meeting regularly from late that year. They have been busy working to release a ‘blueprint’ to end streaming and ability grouping in Aotearoa New Zealand in late 2022. Given the noted resilience of these practices, the design team are under no illusion about the challenge they face. A key insight of their work is that change must come from moving every part of the education sector in an intentional and coordinated way. This means working with students, parents, and communities to understand why making the change is important; working with educators to develop and disseminate alternative practices; resourcing schools with release time and professional development to support the change; having school leaders onboard to lead, as well as the active involvement and support of educational agencies across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Importantly, the design team includes representatives from the country’s two major education unions: the New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI Te Riu Roa) and the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA). Union involvement in the work is vital to its success. Streaming and ability grouping are still strongly supported by some of the country’s most

powerful political ideologues, and so the move away from these practices needs to be embedded through the power of union membership, and not as a top-down policy that could be easily overturned. For a practice that so stubbornly persists, it is the power of collective action that will make the difference in the campaign to end ability grouping in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is commemorated annually on 9 August to raise awareness about the rights of Indigenous Peoples globally. This year's theme, The Role of Indigenous Women in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Knowledge, is an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on the different ways education systems impact the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly women and girls. On this occasion, Education International is launching a blog series featuring the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and their allies from across the world. The series explores the ways Indigenous education experts, activists, researchers, and teachers, are working to ensure quality education that centres Indigenous knowledge systems.

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Adapting to Covid-19: Removing the land from indigenous land-based education

"That's what the elders are telling us. Go out on the land. This is a perfect time for people to show youngsters how to build a fire in the morning, how to put up a tent. It's almost spring. If people can get their families out on the land, that's a perfect way to self-isolate."

[The National Chief of the Dene Nation, Norman Yakeleya](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a specific set of challenges for Northern Indigenous communities in Canada. For Indigenous land-based education programs in particular, which require students and teachers to be out on the land together, the shift towards online learning required unique and creative responses from Indigenous communities and land-based educators.

At the [Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning](#) [1], an Indigenous land-based education centre located in the Northwest Territories of Canada, the pandemic posed an initial threat to carrying out our programs, which serve a number of Dene communities in the North. As the pandemic unfolded, Dene Elders and knowledge holders emphasized that returning to the land was a safe way to self-isolate from COVID-19 that would also encourage families to engage in cultural practices and to connect with the land and who they are as Indigenous people. Rooted in our commitment to Dene self-determination, Dechinta refused to shift all of our programming online, and found hybrid solutions that encouraged Dene families and youth to access the land safely.

We also hosted an online [webinar series](#) in 2020, and created a [subsequent report](#) in 2021 [2], to examine the risks of moving Indigenous land-based education online and to offer possible solutions, mitigations or alternatives to carrying out immersive group learning during the pandemic.

We have learned through this process that Dene land-based education is possible during a pandemic, but it cannot be done online or adapted to fit ‘Western’ institutional frameworks. It is not possible to remove the land from Dene land-based education because the land itself is the teacher. The land is, and will continue to be, the foundation of Dene land-based education and self-determination.

Indigenous Land-Based Education in Canada: Colonial Resistance and Cultural Reclamation

Indigenous land-based education programs are critical to building a future of Indigenous self-determination and cultural revitalization in Canada. For these programs to succeed, land is not an option—it is a requirement. The land has always been a primary source of knowledge and learning for Indigenous nations, informing ethical practices, political systems, language, and worldviews. Through the violence of colonization and European settlement, these knowledge systems were significantly disrupted as Indigenous communities and children were removed from their lands and community relationships. Indigenous land-based education works to counter this oppressive colonial legacy to restore Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing that are intimately connected to land.

A summary of our research (in partnership with Alex Wilson) on the importance of land-based and Indigenous-led programs in Canada has found that these programs are often developed with the following objectives in mind:

- to improve the academic and career outcomes of Indigenous students and to address the disproportionately low high school and post-secondary attendance rates among Indigenous youth
- to improve land-based skills and land literacy among students through Indigenous ways of knowing/being/doing
- to create culturally relevant curriculum for Indigenous students and provide them with safe spaces to learn and practice their cultures
- to create alternative educational options for Indigenous students that are not rooted in systems of colonialism
- to provide a model of education that promotes the self-determination of Indigenous nations by giving them control over their own education systems, and to empower students to become informed and active members of their communities.

Indigenous land-based education is not just another form of ‘outdoor education’—it is a critical component to nation-building, political and cultural resurgence, decolonization, and addressing gender-based violence. It also plays an important role in both physical and mental health—empowering students, educators, and community members to (re)connect with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, centering them within their own educational programs and giving them the tools to care for themselves, their communities, and their land using Indigenous theory and practices.

Returning to the land: COVID-19 and the Risks of Moving Dene Education Online

Even though land-based practices promote health, resiliency and self-determination for Dene communities, the pandemic made it difficult for Indigenous land-based education programs in the North to operate. Unlike other forms of education, [our research found that Indigenous land-based educators in the North faced a specific set of challenges amidst the pandemic](#), particularly with

the move towards online learning. This included concerns around access to internet and technology in remote communities and the possibility of knowledge exploitation when conducting Dene education over the internet.

In particular, we found that teaching Dene (and Indigenous) laws, ethics, and ways of knowing/being must be an embodied experience for students —it requires participants to be in a direct relationship to the land, with each other, and with their instructors and Elders. For example, the ethical practices associated with offering tobacco and praying, harvesting moose or caribou, setting up camp, or harvesting fish, can only be learned on the land. As well, one of the most important parts of immersive land-based education is having students participate in communal life. The lessons of consent, reciprocity, care, and connection that come from this experience cannot be replicated in isolation or online.

In response to these concerns, Dene leaders, elders, communities, and land-based programs found other ways to carry out land-based practices and Dene education in the North. Part of our research involved [an interview with Curve Lake First Nations Elder Doug Williams](#), who reminded us of the importance of centering land and tradition in our responses to COVID-19 as Indigenous people. Doug echoes what many of the other webinar participants emphasized: Indigenous people must find alternative ways to get outside and to practice traditions, while still prioritizing their safety and health. Returning to the land will look different during this time, but when done in a safe and isolated way, can be a source of healing and well-being for communities.

Prioritizing Dene Education During a Pandemic: Supporting Community Well-Being and Self-Determination on the Land

Dechinta responded to the urgent needs of Dene communities during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking new approaches to get families and youth out on the land safely. Starting in the summer of 2020, we pivoted our programming with the Tu Lidlini Dena, Yellowknives Dene, and Dehcho First Nations to support Dene land-based education in the following ways:

- Distributing necessary land-based education resources materials to encourage safe access to the land, and providing funding and bush gear to families and youth
- Developing the educational capacity and skills of youth to articulate Dena/Dene laws in relation to harvesting practices and relationship to the land, including a series of Dehcho videos
- Increasing the amount and diversity of country foods available to the community during a time of economic and food scarcity by paying harvesters to distribute fish, meats and medicines
- Producing resources for multi-generational language use and sharing
- Producing instructional videos incorporating key elements of Indigenous philosophy, ethics, and language

We also hoped to provide both theoretical and practical tools online to educators, students, and community members to support them in navigating their own relationship to Indigenous land-based education and practice in the era of COVID-19. In partnership with Alex Wilson, we worked on a project to [compile a document of resources and land-engaged teaching tools](#) compatible with remote delivery. Our webinar research also noted several alternative and safe approaches to Indigenous education when access to land and each other is limited. A full report of these findings is available on our [website](#).

It is clear to us that the wisdom of the land, and its centrality to Dene life and politics, provides the foundation for land-based education, and that online learning formats are not capable of replacing this mode of pedagogy. As we continue to face the challenges of a global pandemic, we will move forward by finding creative and alternative ways to carry out our land-based practices, be in community with each other and participate in ceremony, engage in learning that is beneficial to our mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, and find ways to assert and practice Dene self-determination.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is commemorated annually on 9 August to raise awareness about the rights of Indigenous Peoples globally. This year's theme, The Role of Indigenous Women in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Knowledge, is an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on the different ways education systems impact the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly women and girls. On this occasion, Education International is launching a blog series featuring the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and their allies from across the world. The series explores the ways Indigenous education experts, activists, researchers, and teachers, are working to ensure quality education that centres Indigenous knowledge systems.

If you would like to contribute a blog to this series, please contact [Lainie.Keper\[at\]ei-ie.org](mailto:Lainie.Keper[at]ei-ie.org).

At the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning we are brought together by our care for the land, each other, and our desire to revitalize and practice Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the Canadian North and beyond. We provide culturally-informed land-based education and community programs in partnership with local community members and elders. We are the only post-secondary accredited land-based program in the world, allowing our students to gain university credits while simultaneously learning cultural knowledge and practices, land-based skills, and Indigenous academic theory on the land.

The report is intended to be a supplement for the *COVID-19 Webinar Series* that Dechinta hosted in 2020. All videos are accessible on the website www.dechinta.ca/COVID19 and on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/c/DechintaCentre>. Written transcriptions of the webinars are also available on the website.

Recovering indigenous names

My name is Kantuta, and **I am proud to have an Aymara name that identifies me and represents my community.** When it rained, my grandmother told me that children who die without a name go to Tata Granizo. Next to him, children make round ice that falls from the sky like hail. "Nameless children must make hail until their hands bleed. That is why parents need to name their children," my grandmother used to say.

For Aymara people, the **rutucha** consolidates the names of the girls and boys. The rutucha is the first haircut done in the first year. In this ritual, family members cut a lock of hair while giving a gift to the girl or boy. In the end, the godfather and godmother of rutucha save the gifts for the children's future.

Although Bolivia is a country with a [predominantly indigenous population](#) and 36 indigenous languages, many people with Aymara names suffer racism daily. Discrimination and assimilation influence the loss of indigenous names. Therefore, **promoting indigenous names is central to recovering and strengthening our history, language and identity.**

Cultural ethnocide: why are indigenous names not used?

Indigenous names were denied to eliminate individual identity and collective identity as peoples. Colonial and post-colonial states prohibited indigenous names as part of the cultural ethnocide of the Aymara people. However, during the 1781 rebellion, Julián Apasa, the Aymara leader of the uprising, named himself Túpac Katari in honour of two previous leaders: Tomás Katari and Túpac Amaru. Túpac (Quechua) means bright; Katari (Aymara) means serpent or mighty river that carries gold. For the Aymara and Quechua peoples, by taking this name, Túpac Katari made an act of reaffirmation of indigenous history and identity. But, the settlers characterized Túpac Katari as violent and without compassion.

Current society views indigenous peoples through the same lenses: the noble savage and the brute savage. Both visions impose racist characteristics on indigenous peoples; they see us with one of these lenses when we have indigenous names. The brute savage view sees indigenous peoples as poor, drunk, lazy, and dangerous. Historically, indigenous peoples had to abandon their names to be considered people and citizens. The requirements for citizenship according to the [Bolivian Constitution \(1843\)](#) are to be registered in the civil registry, have a paid job (except domestic servant) and know how to read and write. Indigenous youth were prohibited from learning and working for pay.

Forced evangelization caused parents to baptize their children with non-indigenous names. Previously, the church asked for offerings and forced labour. After eliminating the *encomienda*, the church became the only civil registration entity, replacing the *encomienda* with high prices for births, baptisms or marriages. Currently, forced evangelization is evident in Aymara's sayings that characterize unbaptized children as weak. During storms, my grandmother hid me and took care that I did not leave the room because lightning *Illapa* or *Tata Santiago* takes unbaptized children.

At the same time, the vision of the noble savage reduces indigenous cultures to cultural spectacles. In the case of indigenous names, these are recovered – generally by third parties other than indigenous peoples – to promote products or services without respecting the sacred meaning of the name.

These actions of discrimination and assimilation are the leading causes of the denial of indigenous names. Several parents avoid using indigenous names for their daughters and sons and thus prevent them from suffering discrimination. However, **many young indigenous people seek to recover their names and thus recover their identity.**

Why are indigenous names important for identity?

Recovering indigenous names is part of the reconstruction of identity and the claim of linguistic and territorial rights. Indigenous names convey the person's personality and future. The newborn's name marks her future personality because it relates to the environment's characteristics, cosmology, solar movement and ancestral deities.

Names are also part of language recovery. Since the 1970s, as a product of indigenous movements, particularly in Bolivia, the *indianistas*, a movement of struggle based on the recovery of identity, have been recovering indigenous names by naming their sons and daughters, marking with this their indigenous identity.

The name is the firmness of the collective identity as peoples and nations. The names invite us to reconnect with our territories. Indigenous territories are living spaces where each community subject is a thread, so language is the art of weaving those threads. For example, surnames originate from the deities of water, hills, pampas, and animals, which are indigenous peoples' sacred protectors. Thus, the names reflect a town's identity and relationship with the territory. For this reason, young indigenous people must exercise their right to have their name.

What rights protect indigenous names?

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (2007) offers protection for indigenous names based on the right to non-discrimination (Article 2) and non-assimilation (Article 8). It also mentions that “*indigenous peoples have the right to attribute names to their communities, places and people and maintain them*” (Article 13). In other words, having an indigenous name is a collective and individual right.

How can we support indigenous names?

Sustainable Development Goal 4 guarantees equitable and inclusive education for all. Teachers, assistant educators, guidance counsellors and education staff should be respectful of indigenous names and their significance. Teachers are the most influential role models for developing students. In this regard, **teachers' support and embrace of indigenous names builds a stronger, more inclusive education**. Finally, joining forces to engage indigenous educators in education policies will create a future [towards the teaching of indigenous languages in schools](#).

For my part, I am dedicated to learning more about my culture and identity. The first step I took to love my indigenous heritage was through my name. Today, I am proud that my name represents a part of the Aymara people. My name, and other indigenous names, strengthen our identity and history. Having an indigenous name also enriches the diversity of cultures and encourages respect among them. Let's walk to a world without discrimination where the meaning of our names is respected.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is commemorated annually on 9 August to raise awareness about the rights of Indigenous Peoples globally. This year's theme, The Role of Indigenous Women in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Knowledge, is an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on the different ways education systems impact the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly women and girls. On this occasion, Education International is launching a blog series featuring the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and their allies from across the world. The series explores the ways Indigenous education experts, activists, researchers, and teachers, are working to ensure quality education that centres Indigenous knowledge systems.

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World Indigenous Peoples' Conference in Education: Unions come together to advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples

The World Indigenous Peoples' Conference in Education (WIPCE) was held this year on the traditional lands of the Kaurna Nation, the original people of the Adelaide plains, at Tarndanya, Adelaide, Australia. WIPCE is the largest and most diverse Indigenous education forum in the world. The EI delegation to the Conference consisted of over 70 education unionists, attending both in-person and online.

The WIPCE is a triennial event held in different places around the world. Since its establishment in 1987, participants are Indigenous leaders, teachers and academics who celebrate and share diverse cultures, traditions, knowledge, and strategies for Indigenous Peoples' education. Education International and its member organisations have attended the conference since its first edition.

Strong Education International presence

Over 70 EI delegates attended WIPCE 2022. Education unions are working to ensure that Indigenous Peoples have access to equitable, quality education, to decent work opportunities, and social protection. As education is the right that supports the full enjoyment of other human rights for Indigenous People, knowledge shared at this conference is critical.

“WIPCE provides a space for teachers, union leaders, and activists, to strengthen our collective network and knowledge at the global level. With this network and knowledge, we bring back innovation to our unions, communities, and classrooms.”

Raymond Basilio | EI Executive Board Member; Secretary-General ACT-Philippines

The EI delegation was welcomed to Adelaide with a reception co-hosted by Education International, the Australian Education Union, the Independent Education Union, and the National Tertiary Education Union, which created a space to build solidarity and community in preparation for the Conference.

The Conference was attended by members and union leaders from AEU (Australia), IEU (Australia), NTEU (Australia), Fiji Teachers' Association, Alliance of Concerned Teachers (the Philippines), PPTA Te Wehengarua (New Zealand), NZEI Te Rio Roa (New Zealand), Solomon Islands National Teachers Association, Vanuatu Teachers' Union, Cook Islands Teachers Union, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of British Columbia (Canada), and Alberta Teachers' Association (Canada).

“While we were small in number among the 2,300 delegates (including 900 international delegates) we made our presence known! Union proud and union strong.”

Kevin Bates | AEU Federal Secretary

Unions for Indigenous education sovereignty

Under the theme “Indigenous Education Sovereignty: Our Voices, Our Futures”, WIPCE offered over 400 workshops, seminars, cultural experiences, knowledge circles, and keynote presentations across one week. Five seminars were led and organised by EI affiliates.

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) hosted a session entitled “Staff Collective Agreements vs. Policy: Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment across the Australian Higher Education Sector”. NTEU leadership and colleagues presented the work of the NTEU in negotiating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment claims and other entitlements, such as cultural/ceremonial leave and language allowance, into Staff University Collective Agreements. These claims incorporate binding targets that can be enforced if required, providing a greater level of responsibility for universities compared to policy alone.

The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of British Columbia hosted a session on union-based approaches to operationalising the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, sharing good practices and current struggles in putting the Declaration into practice. This included addressing challenges to Indigenous academics acquiring tenure and affirmative action and more equitable hiring practices to improve the number of Indigenous professors and staff, amongst others.

The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA) Te Wehengarua hosted a session on “Progressing Our Tiriti (Treaty) Relationship”. PPTA Te Wehengarua has a proud history of bicultural partnership with tanga te whenua Māori (first nations people in Aotearoa New Zealand), evidenced by the fact that the union has included “to uphold and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi)” as one of its three constitutional objectives. Moreover, the organisation has a Māori Executive (Te Huarahi) and hosts an annual Māori Teachers’ Conference. Despite the union providing a great example of Māori involvement in the organisation, a feeling emerged in recent years, from members, both Māori and non-Māori, that further progress needed to be made, so they could not only survive but thrive as a bicultural organisation. The seminar explored their journey, including the policy changes made over the last 5 years to embed the new position of Māori Vice-president in union leadership and Te Kaihautū (Māori staff in the policy team) to elevate PPTA Te Wehengarua to the next level in its Tiriti partnership journey.

The New South Wales Teachers’ Federation hosted a session on the documentary film “naa muru gurung - To see a path for children”. The documentary presents the inspiring story of the many warriors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Federation members past and present, who campaigned, supported and advocated for Aboriginal education, the rights of children, and inclusion of the First Peoples in the early years of the Australian public education system.

The New South Wales Teachers’ Federation also hosted a session where participants and presenters shared their insights on implementing the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Policy. The seminar focused on strategies for building understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Islander students, histories and communities. It explored personal and professional reflections, links to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, policies and declarations, the use of student data, making connections and building relationships in school to improve educational outcomes of students.

The next WIPCE will be held in 2025 in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Education International and our affiliates thank the Kurna people for welcoming us onto their traditional lands and pay respects to Elders past and present.

A more detailed report of the event is forthcoming.

#16Days | Ending the violence against Indigenous women and girls

The tragedy of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls must not continue to be part of the narrative of Canada. Indigenous women and girls have experienced colonial violence and genocide for hundreds of years and it must end.

[Tina Fontaine](#) was just 14 years old when she went missing in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Three days after she was last seen alive, her young body was pulled from the Red River. [Maisy Odjick](#) was 16 years old and her best friend [Shannon Alexander](#) was 17 years old when they disappeared from their home community of Kitigan Zibi, a couple hours north of Ottawa, Ontario. They have never been found. [Tammy Nattaway](#), 16 years old, went missing in 2020 from Garden Hill First Nation in northern Manitoba. She also has not been found.

I mention these young women's names because they are the age of students in our classrooms. When I look at my students, I think of all the amazing possibilities for their future. My own daughter was the same age as Tina Fontaine when she died in 2014. I remember [Barbara Kentner](#) who, in 2017, was just 34 years old when she died in Thunder Bay, Ontario, due to complications from injuries she sustained after being hit by a trailer hitch that was thrown from a moving vehicle. I taught Barbara when she was in grade 10. In 1992, [Sandra Johnson](#) was 18 years old when her frozen body was found on a floodway in Thunder Bay. I went to high school with Sandra. These are just a few of the hundreds of names of missing and murdered women and girls. The story continues, and it needs to stop.

The 2004 data from Statistics Canada found that Indigenous women experienced much higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women 15 years and older were 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women. More recent data shows that between 2015 and 2020, Indigenous women accounted for 24 per cent of all female homicide victims in Canada, even though they make up just 5% of the country's female population. The statistics are not improving.

After Tina Fontaine was pulled from Winnipeg's Red River in 2014, Indigenous leaders from across this land, a place that we now know as Canada, rallied to renew calls for an inquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

In September 2016, the Government of Canada launched an entirely independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Over three years, the inquiry travelled across Canada and gathered stories from survivors and family members. In June 2019, the MMIWG National Inquiry released their [final report](#). The report shared findings that many Indigenous people had been stating for decades. We experience persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses, and these are the root cause behind Canada's horrific rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people. The Inquiry found that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada — [and 16](#)

times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women.”

In 2021, two years after the MMIWG Inquiry Final Report was released, the Government of Canada developed a [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan](#). Progress in addressing the issues has been minimal and painfully slow.

It is important to remember that this was not always part of our story. The tragedy of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2-spirit people is rooted in colonialism and colonial violence. Traditional Indigenous practices were often matriarchal. Women were water carriers and life givers. The sacred understandings of these roles were violated through the experience of colonial genocide on this land. There is much healing that is needed in our communities. I encourage all educators, administrators, superintendents, janitors, education assistants, and anyone else involved in education and schools to be open to understanding what Indigenous people face across Canada and help to educate the youth in our schools. As educators, you can start by learning about the [National Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action](#). Read the [National Inquiry in Murdered and Missing Women and Girls Final Report and the 231 Calls to Justice](#). Canadians must learn how violence against Indigenous women and girls is part of longstanding colonial policies. It is our responsibility as educators to address the issues and shift the discourse so that all our students have an opportunity to live in communities where they are safe and valued.

#16Days | Brazilian women fighting to protect the Amazon

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international UN Women campaign that has been running since 1991 and which provides an opportunity to reflect on the issue of abuse suffered by women around the world. The campaign runs from 25 November to 10 December and this year it takes on special significance in Brazil. As the four long years of the Jair Bolsonaro administration come to an end, a period in which the environment came under systematic attack and environmental activists were persecuted, it is vital that we remember – and never forget – the struggle of the many women in Brazil who stand tall in defence of Mother Earth.

Nowhere have women played a more prominent role in Brazilian environmental activism than in the protection of the Amazon, the world’s largest tropical rainforest. Regarded by many as the lungs of the Earth, it is the stage of a critical fight waged by many female activists in defence of both the rainforest and the Indigenous people that inhabit it. The continuous advance of agriculture, cattle ranching and illegal logging across huge swathes of the rainforest is the result of a deliberate policy implemented by the still-incumbent Brazilian president, a policy that involves the loosening of state control measures and regulatory and legal changes that have enabled the destruction of our greatest environmental asset over these last four years.

Many of the country’s female environmental activists have paid the ultimate price for their resistance and many more have been persecuted. Women have always played a significant part in protecting the environment, long before the current president came to power. The death of American nun Dorothy Stang in 2005 at the hands of farmers in the region she chose to live in and defend left an indelible mark on Brazil’s environmental struggle, which had now been shaped by her strength. During Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s first term in office, the police and criminal

investigators successfully brought her killers to justice. With Lula da Silva returning to power after the 2022 Brazilian elections, the expectation is for the full force of the law to fall once more on those who insist on taking our lives for defending the world around us.

Aside from safeguarding that world, the main concern of Brazil's environmental defenders and activists is to protect their own lives. Many of the country's women and environmental activists experience this fear and anxiety every single day of their lives. It is a constant for anyone fighting to defend the Amazon. While this fear is felt by everybody, it is women who account for most of the victims in a country that has long been afflicted by structural sexism, leading to one of the highest rates of femicide in the world.

The army of female activists combatting the destruction of our planet is large and diverse. It is led by young women, Indigenous women and quilombola (Afro-Brazilian) women, who are the target of choice of people who put personal profit above all else, even if it costs thousands of lives and the very air we all breathe. That is why we must pay lasting tribute to these great women, who deserve to live in safety. Among them is **Amanda da Cruz Costa**, a Brazilian environmental activist who is making history. A founder of the climate action group Perifa Sustentável Institute, she is a UN Global Compact Youth Adviser, UN Youth Ambassador, TedX Speaker and LinkedIn Top Voice and Creator, and also features on the #ForbesUnder30 list. Her fight is devoted entirely to the climate crisis and environmental racism, advocating for climate justice and sustainability and promoting youth engagement.

Another young female activist is the 21-year-old **Artemisa Xakriabá**, who represents two of the groups most threatened by environmental destruction: young and Indigenous people. Artemisa rose to prominence with a speech at the 2019 Youth Climate Summit. Speaking on behalf of more than 25 million people from the Indigenous communities of the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, she outlined the consequences of climate collapse for Indigenous peoples and the country as a whole. Then there is **Maria do Socorro Silva**, a quilombola (as the members of the communities formed by fugitive slaves in the days of slavery in Brazil are known) fighting against the environmental degradation caused by the largest aluminium refinery in the Amazon, in the Brazilian state of Para.

Also worthy of praise is **Sonia Guajajara**, one of the country's most prominent female Indigenous and environmental leaders. In 2018, she ran for the vice-presidency of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), the first time that an Indigenous person stood for the post. In 2022, she was elected federal Congresswoman for the state of Sao Paulo.

These are just some of the brave women who have taken on the fight to protect the environment. Now that the eyes of the world are on Brazil again following the election of Lula da Silva and considering the vital need to protect the environment in Brazil, particularly the Amazon, it is essential that we also focus our attention on the guarantees that the state must offer its environmental activists. They are driven by an unshakeable belief in justice and have been so cruelly persecuted for years.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign gains strength from women coming forward to the police and from the focus on justice and human rights. A country that damages the environment is also, almost as a matter of course, home to slave labour, child exploitation, abuse, land theft, and many other scourges.

May we protect women from all kinds of violence and safeguard their right to live in a society free of sexism and femicide. And may the fight to end gender-based violence also be embraced by everyone, including men.

Headlines

1. Education International Latin America to visit Chile to express support for the new constitution and its defence of the right to education

Representatives of the Education International Latin America Regional Committee will take part in an event, alongside national affiliates, in support of Chile's proposed new constitution

The right to education is enshrined in article 35 of the new draft constitution, which will be put to a referendum on 4 September.

A delegation of the Education International Latin America (EILA) Regional Committee will visit Santiago, Chile on 4 and 5 August to express Education International's (EI) support for the new constitution of the Republic of Chile, which incorporates the right to state-funded public education in the South American country.

Hugo Yasky, president of the EILA Regional Committee and general secretary of the CTA trade union centre of Argentina, will lead the union delegation, accompanied by Fátima Silva, EILA vice president and general secretary of CNTE (National Confederation of Education Workers of Brazil) and Roberto Leão, vice president of Education International Latin America. The delegation will be joined by Combertty Rodríguez, senior coordinator of the EILA regional office; Carlos de Feo, EILA higher education coordinator and general secretary of CONADU (National Federation of University Teaching Staff of Argentina); Eduardo Pereyra, international relations secretary of CTERA (Education Workers' Confederation of Argentina); and José Olivera, president of FeNaPES (National Federation of Secondary School Teachers of Uruguay).

The international delegation will be welcomed and accompanied by the EILA's affiliated organisations in Chile – the CPC, FAUECH and SINDIDOS.

The visit of the EILA Regional Committee is within the framework of [Education International's global campaign against the privatisation and commercialisation of education #StudentsBeforeProfit](#), and aims to express regional and global support for the recognition of the right to public education in the new Chilean constitution. Article 35 of the proposed constitution states that education is “a primary and inalienable duty of the state”.

Defending the right to public education

For EI and its affiliates, the new constitution of Chile is a step forward in the defence of the right to public education and breaks with the neoliberal model established during the Pinochet dictatorship, which sees education as a commodity subject to profit making and private initiative.

On 4 August, the EILA Regional Committee delegation will meet with its affiliates in Chile and provide statements to the press. It is hoped that the EILA delegation will be able to discuss the defence of the right to education with political and government authorities, particularly the Chilean Ministry of Education and the Undersecretariats of Early Childhood Education and Higher Education.

On Friday 5 August, an event will be held in support of the approval of Chile's new Magna Carta. During the activity, the CPC, FAUECH and SINDIDOS will share their views on the text of the new constitution and the prospects for the 4 September referendum. The EILA Regional Committee will use the opportunity to express its support for the “I Approve” option for 4 September, in line with its

position defending public education as a social right guaranteed by the state. Messages of support for the new constitution from Education International affiliates from various continents will also be presented.

Chile's new constitution being put to the people in the 3 September referendum, was drafted by the Constitutional Convention elected on 15 and 16 May 2021, in response to the mandate of the national referendum of October 2020.

2. Nepal: Privatisation does not ensure equal access to education, more investment in public education is needed

The Research "Lessons from the COVID- Pandemic in Nepal" analyses the impact of COVID-19 on education, highlights the role of teacher unions in protecting the rights of teachers and calls for policy measures to protect decent learning conditions for students and decent employment conditions for teachers.

The research was led by Raj Kumar Baral and commissioned by the Institutional School Teachers' Union (ISTU), the Nepal National Teachers' Association (NNTA), and the Nepal Teachers' Association (NTA) – all three affiliated to Education International –, the German Foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Education International's Asia Pacific (EIAP) regional office. It was launched on 17th June 2022 in Kathmandu. The research was undertaken in the framework of the Education Internationals Global Response campaign against the privatisation and the commercialisation in/of education, with financial support from FES.

Research launch

ISTU representative Moti Ram Phuyal facilitated the first half of the launch, while NTA representative Yam P Bhusal facilitated the second half.

Addressing participants, FES representative Jonathan Menge highlighted FES activities around the globe and in Nepal in particular. He compared the education system in Germany with the Nepalese one, stressing the need for all children to see their right to education respected and for all teachers to get effective trade union rights.

EIAP Chief Regional Coordinator Anand Singh, in his remarks to the virtual launch reaffirmed the importance of the Global Response campaign against privatisation and commercialisation in education. He also stressed the need to protect children's right to education. Singh also presented the Global Response campaign activities in the Philippines, South Africa and Brazil.

NTA, NNTA and ISTU presidents all highlighted the importance of such a campaign to counter education privatisation in Nepal and shape the policy landscape of education. They noted that teachers, especially those in the private sector, are confronted with many difficulties. The unions, despite their many efforts to address issues linked to education privatisation, obtained little success.. They They argued that there is a need to develop a mechanism allowing unions and the government to collaborate in the event of future pandemics and other disasters.

NTA President Rajendra Raj Poudel explained: "About 50 thousand teachers lost their jobs during COVID, and privatisation increased in education. The Government must allocate at least 20% of the national budget for education. Privatisation is increasing inequality."

For NNTA President Bishnu Prasad Bhandari, “due to COVID, almost 25% of all schools have permanently closed. Besides, poor digitalisation of public schools made learning difficult for students, and teachers’ rights and welfare were blatantly violated during that period.”

"Investors in private schools did not care about teachers during the pandemic. Many teachers did not receive salaries. Education is not business - it is service. Government must stop privatisation and improve public education," insisted ISTU President Hom Kumar Thapa.

In his address, the representative of the Nepalese Ministry of Education, Hari Prasad Lamsal, emphasised the need to increase the education budget and improve the quality of public schools to reduce privatisation and commercialisation of education. He maintained that the public nature of education is defined by the possibility for all to access education, rather than only education provided by the state.

Reminding the audience of the findings of the recent UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report on inclusion and non-state actors in education, UNESCO representative Dhruba Regmi said that privatisation and commercialisation represent a worldwide challenge and must be considered in terms of education-funding as well as many other aspects.

Introducing his research, Raj Kumar Baral warned that public education is under threat from multinational investors in education. He also highlighted that the research shows that private institutions in education do not contribute to the public nature of education or enhance access to education as suggested by the Ministry representative. The research clearly points out a lack of political commitment to publicly fund education, allowing private institutions to take over public education, he said.

He went on to stress the oppression and exploitation of teachers and education workers in private and public schools. He also discussed union programmes that supported teachers and facilitated learning for students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research underlines that, “from a broader perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic also affected the ways private schools were managed as businesses and, more importantly, the job security, salaries, working conditions, and wellbeing of teachers and non-teaching staff. Consequently, the quality of education of millions of children has been affected. However, less of this effect has been observed in the high-class private schools in the Kathmandu Valley. Still, nearly 70 per cent of school-age children in Nepal have been affected and deprived of learning.”

It also shows that the pandemic highlighted how deleterious the privatisation and commercialisation of education are to the aims of teacher unionism. Education union leaders have a stronger case for public education as the pandemic has brought the shortcomings and inadequacies of privatised and commercialised education into sharper relief.

Research recommendations

Serving as an evidence base for the need for increased domestic investment in public education, the report recommends that education unions take the lead and take the following actions in critical areas to guide the post-pandemic recovery of the education sector and resist the further commercialisation and privatisation of education in Nepal:

- Launching a vigorous campaign, accompanied by lobbying and collective action at the grassroots, for increased state funding of public education to reverse the increasing trend of education privatisation.
- Initiating a campaign to improve not only the quality of education in schools, both public and private, but also the wellness, welfare, and working conditions of all education workers. Achieving such changes requires building a broader coalition within schools and among education unions pushing for strengthened public education in Nepal.
- Remaining vigilant on and resist plans for adopting public-private partnership models in education.
- Demanding transparency from authorities regarding public education expenditures to minimise the misuse of funds and ensure the observance by private schools of their financial obligations to help to identify possible undisclosed or unpaid tax liabilities to the government for which they must be held accountable.
- Lobbying for fair and equal representation in social and policy dialogue, governmental bodies' working groups, discussions, negotiations, communications, and other relevant spaces to engage policymakers and private owners, employers, and stakeholders in relation to the oversight and regulation of private schools.
- Conducting regular consultations with other education stakeholders, including students, parents and education support personnel, on the relationships between students' and teachers' rights, equity and inclusion, and the increasing privatisation of education in Nepal.
- Consolidating their goals, within their organisations, by reorienting members towards the immediate needs and challenges linked to post-pandemic recovery, engaging in discussions around universal quality education, and expanding their networks with other likeminded organisations and unions in Nepal.

The report also recommends that the federal government of Nepal, among other things:

- Substantially increases domestic funding of public education to improve its overall quality and ensures that public schools are adequately equipped with a large range of teaching and learning materials, facilities, and the digital or ICT infrastructure required for remote education.
- Subjects private education providers to stricter financial and operational regulations.
- Provides education workers in the private sector with the same legal protections, social safety net, and benefits as those in the public sector. For example, the federal government should make the enrolment of teachers and non-teaching staff in a contribution-based social security fund mandatory.
- Sets up an effective transitional strategy for emergencies in the education sector to prepare for future crises of the same magnitude as the COVID-19 pandemic. This process should involve laying out detailed policies and programmes, including strategic contingencies, alternative teaching-learning methodologies, safety protocols, and clear and comprehensive work plans for all stakeholders.

In his concluding remarks, Education International representative Sagar Nath Pyakurel condemned the fact that corporations are investing in education because of the possibilities of huge profits and turning education into a commodity.

Next steps in the fight against education privatisation

In the framework of the Global Response campaign, the second and third provincial planning meetings for this year – the first one was held from 18-19 June in Kathmandu – will be held in September.

The three Nepalese unions have formed a joint committee to conduct activities with FES, SASK-Finland and ActionAid. For the FES programme, ISTU representative Moti Ram Phuyal is working as a focal person for all three unions.

September

Highlights

1. Solidarity with colleagues in Iran

As the voice of teachers and education workers around the world, Education International stands in solidarity with the teachers and people of Iran and will continue to support their fight for rights and democracy. We are their voice!

Related Items

Statement: Teachers and trade unionists in Iran must be immediately and unconditionally released!

Education International, the global federation of educators, condemns the arrest of Iranian teacher trade unionists and demands their immediate and unconditional release.

The targeted repression against teachers advocating for their students, their communities and their rights as unionists must end.

We denounce the unjustifiable arrests in various cities of dozens of teachers on May Day, a date meant to celebrate workers around the world. We also demand an end to the detention and harassment of those who are peacefully advocating for the release of their colleagues.

Authorities are desperate to stop the peaceful trade union demonstrations over teachers' poor wages, the inadequate education budget and imprisonment of teacher trade unionists.

Those arrests and detentions are violations of freedom of association, the right to organise, and freedom of speech.

We demand the release, and the full respect of the human rights of Eskander Lotfi (Teachers' Trade Association of Mariwan, and spokesperson for the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Association);

Rasoul Bodaghi (Teachers' trade Association of Islamshahr, and a representative at the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Association);

Mohammad Habibi (Spokesperson for the Teachers' trade Association of Tehran);

Jafar Ebrahimi (Teachers' Trade Association of Tehran, Inspector of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Association);

Ali Akbar Baghani (Board member of Teachers' Trade Association of Tehran);

Mohsen Omrani (Teachers' Trade Association of Bushehr);

Mahmoud Malaki (Teachers' Trade Association of Bushehr);

Reza Amanifar (Teachers' Trade Association of Bushehr);

Asghar Hajeb (Teachers' Trade Association of Bushehr);

Hadi Sadeghzadeh (Teachers' Trade Association of Mashhad);

Shaban Mohammadi, (Teachers' Trade Association of Mariwan) arrested on May 11, 2022;

Masoud Nikkhah (Teachers' Trade Association of Mariwan)

We also reiterate the call of education unionists worldwide for the release of Esmail Abdi, former leader of the Tehran Teacher Association, who started a hunger strike on May Day. He has been condemned until 2031 on trumped up charges. The long imprisonment and ill treatment in the prison have severely affected his health. Esmail's family (wife and two daughters and son) are harassed and victimised by the security forces and at a serious risk.

Education International **calls on the Iranian Government to:**

- Unconditionally drop all charges against imprisoned trade unionists and human rights defenders in Iran.
- 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.
- Institutionalise dialogue with representative organisations of teachers and education personnel on issues related to the education policy and teachers.
- Respect the rights and privacy of the family members of the imprisoned leaders and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Resolution by Education International's Executive Board

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."

Iranian teachers continue to face repression, despite recent release of union officials

Last month, EI welcomed the release on bail of three Iranian teacher union activists. They were amongst the many teachers that have been arrested and detained since May Day in Iran. Despite the good news, the CCITTA and Education International call on the international teaching community to keep the pressure on the government of Iran.

Eskandar Lotfi, Shaban Mohammadi and Masoud Nikkhah are all members of the board of directors of the Teachers' Trade Association of Mariwan, in the Province of Kurdistan, Iran. Lotfi is also the spokesperson for the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA), Education International's affiliate.

The three teacher rights' activists were arrested in the [wave of repression that targeted teachers all over the country around May Day 2022](#). The authorities were desperate to stop the peaceful

trade union demonstrations over teachers' poor wages, the inadequate education budget and the imprisonment of teacher trade unionists. The authorities have since arrested, summoned, investigated and/or interrogated more than two hundred teachers on baseless and false national security charges, violating their rights to freedom of association, to organise, and to freedom of speech.

Lofti was eventually released on bail on 17 August 2022, and Mohammadi and Nikkhah on 20 August. All three were imposed disproportionate bails for their release and are still to face trial.

Several of the teachers arrested around May Day remain in detention, sometimes in solitary confinement, such as Rasoul Bodaghi, Jafar Ebrahimi, and Mohammad Habibi.

While in detention, Lofti, together with other detained teachers, went on hunger strike to protest the illegal and repressive actions of the security forces. He was urged by his colleagues to end his hunger strike after 10 days due to severely deteriorating health conditions. The families of many imprisoned labour activists also issued a joint open letter to denounce their continued illegal imprisonment and unacceptable detention conditions.

The CCITTA welcomed the release of their three members but strongly condemned the heavy bails that were issued for their release: "Such heavy bails are absolutely uncalled for and put extreme pressure on these trade union activists and their families and colleagues who have to put their homes and belongings up as collateral in lieu of cash."

The teacher organisation expressed gratitude towards Education International and its affiliates worldwide for their solidarity and called for their continued support: "The CCITTA wholeheartedly appreciates the ongoing support from our global union federation, the Education International, and all teachers' organizations and trade unions around the world for their support and solidarity. We count on your continued support to make sure that all jailed teachers and trade union activists in Iran are freed and our internationally recognized rights are respected."

Iranian teachers have long been advocating for their right to self-organize, better working conditions and free quality public education for all. They have also been at the forefront of pushing back against the increasing assaults of privatization on the education system.

Education International General Secretary David Edwards praised the courage of Iranian teachers and workers: "The level of bravery in the face of such violence & injustice is beyond what many of us can comprehend or imagine." Calling on the international teaching community to keep up solidarity, he reiterated the Education International's call for the immediate and unconditional release of all teachers and workers in Iran.

In December 2021, Education International's Executive Board 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."

Education International also reiterates its call for the release of Esmail Abdi, former leader of the Tehran Teacher Association. He has been condemned until 2031 on trumped up charges. The long imprisonment and ill treatment in the prison have severely affected his health. Esmail's

family (wife and two daughters and son) are harassed and victimised by the security forces and at a serious risk.

The targeted repression against teachers advocating for their students, their communities and their rights as unionists must end. Teacher unionists in Iran need solidarity more than ever.

Iran: Education International urges authorities to respect human rights amidst nationwide protests

Education International stands in solidarity with the brave protestors who take the streets throughout Iran to demand the respect of human rights by the authorities.

For months, Iranian teachers, workers and unionists have been exercising their fundamental right to freedom of assembly. Instead of engaging in dialogue with demonstrators, the authorities of Iran respond with repression, violence, and detentions.

The recent extrajudicial killing of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who died in police custody following her arrest for allegedly failing to comply with rules on women's dress, is shocking. She is another victim of Iran's sustained repression and systematic discrimination against women and workers.

Education International firmly rejects any state persecution for trade union activity, and will again report about the abusive detentions of teacher trade unionists to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Education International is also liaising with Amnesty International which adopted as Prisoner of Conscience Esmail Abdi, former Secretary General of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association. Abdi has been imprisoned since 2006 on trumped up charges of "propaganda against the State".

Education International will continue to demand that the Iranian authorities and government:

- immediately release all trade unionists detained in connection with their union activities;
- guarantee and protect the right to freedom of association and assembly for all citizens.

Education International remains committed to campaign for the observance of fundamental human rights for workers in Iran.

Iran: Education International demands the unconditional release of two French teacher unionists

Education International (EI) strongly condemns the cruel ploy by the Iranian authorities to extort a statement from two French unionists who are in captivity as "State hostages".

Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, two teacher unionists, members of Force Ouvrière France, were detained while on a private tourist trip to Iran in May 2022.

EI, an organisation which stands for freedom of association and expression around the world, demands their immediate and unconditional release and safe return to their families.

EI stands in solidarity and is in full support of the detained colleagues, their union and all those suffering persecution in Iran.

Global Unions condemn the brutality of the Iranian authorities and demand the release of all imprisoned trade unionists

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) and the Global Union Federations (GUFs) condemn the continued brutality of the Iranian authorities against their own people and call for stronger international pressure against the regime.

Some 100 people have been killed and many more injured as public fury over the killing of Mahsa Amini has continued. Amini was killed by religious police simply for not complying with the country's draconian dress code.

"The entire international trade union movement pays homage to the incredibly brave people who are standing up to the vicious repression being perpetrated by the leaders of the Iranian theocracy. The resistance is being led by women and girls who, at great risk to themselves, want to bring an end to the misogyny and subjugation of basic rights that are the essence of the religious and political elite. We salute them and stand with them in solidarity," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

"The recent arrests of Iranian and international trade unionists are a desperate attempt by the regime to silence their critics and recast public outrage as being externally manufactured. The workers of Iran and their brothers and sisters around the world know the truth and call for their immediate release," added Steve Cotton, Chair of the Council of Global Unions (CGU) and General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

Workers from all sectors have been at the forefront of the struggle for rights in Iran, which has one of the world's worst workers' rights records.

Many trade unionists are serving prison sentences for their advocacy of basic workers' rights and Iran is ranked fifth (no guarantee of rights) in the 2022 ITUC Global Rights Index.

We demand the release of all imprisoned trade unionists and all others unjustly detained in Iran.

Executive Board Resolution on Solidarity with Women and Girls in Iran

On September 16th, 2022, Mahsa Amini was detained by a "Guidance Patrol" in Iran for allegedly wearing a loose headscarf and thus violating Iranian dress laws. She was beaten and subsequently died. Her death sparked a furious response and protest among Iranian women and girls, who posted videos to social media (the hashtag #Mahsa_Amini) showing them removing their headscarves and cutting their hair. Women around the world did the same as a gesture of solidarity. Their protest quickly spread throughout the capital, Tehran, and many other communities throughout Iran.

Over the ensuing days, schoolgirls increasingly came to be at the forefront of the anti-regime protests. There has been widespread support for the protests from the international community.

These protests were met by government misinformation and denials of responsibility for Amini's death and by incredible levels of violence from security forces, which have targeted and raided

schools as part of their brutal response.

In light of current events in Iran and the decades-long oppression of women and suppression of their rights, the 60th Education International Executive Board, meeting in Brussels on 9-10 November 2022:

- a. denounces the Iranian government's attack on women's and girls' fundamental human rights and on their lives;
- b. calls on the Iranian authorities to end their violence against women and girls and calls on the authorities to enact legislation that enshrines women's right to freedom of association, freedom of expression, bodily autonomy, and security of the person;
- c. continues to stand in solidarity with Iranian teacher unions in their struggle for their right to free quality public education for all and for gender equality at all levels of society;
- d. calls for international solidarity with the people of Iran and for further pressure against the Iranian regime to hold them accountable for their repressive policies and actions against women and girls;
- e. calls on EI member organisations to send letters of protest and messages to the Iranian authorities advocating for an end to the violent attacks on women and girls and the full respect of their fundamental human rights.

#16Days | Woman, life, freedom!

The death of Jina Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish-Iranian woman has sparked nationwide protests in Iran since September. Educators and students were amongst the first to go on [strike](#) in protest against the Islamic regime's brutality and in support of Iranians fighting for their freedom.

As the voice of teachers and education workers around the world, Education International has [expressed solidarity](#) with the Iranian people and condemned the human rights violations of the Islamic regime. The call was echoed at the international level by the [International Trade Union Confederation](#). At the national level, despite union efforts to [raise awareness](#) of the issue, Iranian-Dutch educator and unionist Khazar Lotfi reflects on how the societal response has fallen short of truly supporting the female-led resistance in Iran and the need to amplify it.

Education matters and it should never be misused to oppress or force people in any type of way. However, this and worse is precisely what is happening in Iran where the educational community is the target of repression by the Islamic regime. Schools are not protected and educational environments that should be safe havens of knowledge and growth have turned into battlegrounds by the regime's forces who viciously beat down peaceful protesters, no matter their age.

"It is scary", my cousin tells me. On the rare occasion that she manages to circumvent the digital restrictions of the authorities, she shares her worries and hopes for the country and its future. One of her current personal struggles is her twelve-year-old son who keeps insisting that they "do something" because the whole country is on fire. Not unlike many other children in Iran, he

feels an urgency to contribute to the current uprisings. And not unlike many other parents in Iran, my cousin is worried for his life. According to activists and lawyers, at least [700 teenagers have been detained](#) so far and more than [50 have been killed](#). Education Minister Yousef Nouri admitted that an undisclosed number of children are being held in “[psychology centers](#)” for reform and reeducation, which are notoriously abusive. The situation in my homeland is dire, to say the least.

Ever since Jina Mahsa Amini’s death over two months ago, the Iranian people have been protesting to reclaim their freedom from the Islamic regime that has been holding the country hostage since 1979. The 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman died in custody after suffering severe abuse by the morality police in Tehran at the beginning of September. Jina was arrested for wearing the hijab inappropriately according to the theocratic regime’s stern laws. Her death enraged Iranians who have been deprived of basic human rights for decades and sparked nationwide protests.

My cousin and I share the same blood but I have been spared the same struggles since my parents fled the Islamic Republic when I was three. I wonder if I would have been as indifferent to the country’s state as most of my colleagues and acquaintances are in the Netherlands were it not for my heritage. At the same time, I am also an educator and as such, I shiver when hearing [reports of children being killed or seeing videos of students being attacked, beaten, and arrested on campus](#). I am reminded of our empty classrooms during covid, how eerie it was to walk through abandoned school buildings, and how saddened I felt to see a school without students. But at least I knew my students were free from violence. How terrible it must be to be an educator in Iran right now and fear for your students’ lives.

The Cooperative Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Associations was the first to openly [call upon educators and students to go on strike](#) in protest against the Islamic regime’s brutality. In an attempt to prevent the world from bearing witness to their horrific acts, the authorities in Iran have additionally imposed [digital blackouts](#). This increases the urgency of international attention and awareness regarding the awful situation there. The current [death toll is estimated at more than 400](#) and approximately [14,000 detained](#) protesters are at risk of receiving the death penalty after [227 Iranian parliamentarians issued a statement calling for the execution of protesters](#).

It has been over seven years since I last visited my country of birth, hugged my aunts, or hung out with my cousins. Now, every image I see from Iran includes people that remind me of them. When I see girls burning their headscarves I am reminded of the time my cousin got arrested in the heat of summer for inappropriate attire (her trousers were too short, showing her ankles); when I see people dancing openly in the streets, I am reminded of the weddings I attended where all guests broke the law’s gender-segregation rules by dancing together and celebrating in secret while fearing a disruption by the regime’s officers; and when I see youth playing cards as a way of protesting it reminds me of my religious grandmother shuffling a deck of them to keep herself busy during the lonely hours she spends at home since all of her children fled the country in the 90s.

The female-led resistance in Iran is standing up against the misogynistic and violently repressive apparatus of the totalitarian regime but only a few people and media outlets in the West have adequately reported about them or their diaspora’s massive protests abroad, like the [historical one in Berlin](#) where at least 80,000 people gathered to express their support for the protestors.

Particularly the Netherlands has remained cowardly quiet on the matter. From its ministers to its white feminists the protests have been either reduced to the issue of mandatory hijab in the Islamic republic or simply responded to by empty acts of symbolism, rather than any actual reprimands, neglecting the fact that women's rights are human rights and include more than the mere right to self-determination regarding garments.

I understand that Iran has a complicated history for those who are unfamiliar with it, but as educators, we must educate as well as be educated and, no matter what, always speak up against injustice and oppression. Education matters and it should never be misused to oppress or force people in any type of way. As unionists, we should therefore amplify the voices of the teachers and students in Iran whose freedom and lives are under attack and stand up for their rights. We should listen, read, teach and never hesitate to stand up for what is right and to give voice to "woman, life, freedom!"

2. Transforming Education Summit

Education International brought the voice of the teaching profession to world leaders at the Transforming Education Summit. The United Nations summit was convened to focus on education, and led to the creation of a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession.

Education International calls for a new deal for teachers at the Transforming Education Pre-Summit

Educators' insights on progress, challenges, and strategies for the future of education will all feature in Education International's contribution to UNESCO's Transforming Education Pre-Summit, taking place from 28-30 June in Paris, France.

The Pre-Summit precedes the inaugural Transforming Education Summit (TES), which will take place on 19 September in New York, U.S.A. This global meeting of Heads of State, convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, seeks to mobilise political ambition, action, solutions, and solidarity to accelerate progress on education and the 2030 Agenda and transform education.

"Governments must invest more in public education, a crucial public service and key to pandemic recovery. They must invest more in teachers and education support personnel, the single most important factors in achieving quality education. We must stand up to defend every student's right to have well-supported qualified teachers and a quality learning environment. Transforming education starts with a New Deal for teachers."

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

The Transforming Education Summit is a response to several crises in education. These include post pandemic-related learning losses, deepened and exacerbated inequities, and cuts to education budgets globally. It also aims to revitalise national and global efforts to achieve [Sustainable Development Goal 4 \(SDG4\)](#) on education.

Building global action for education

In preparation for the Transforming Education Summit, a participatory process across three intersecting workstreams - [national consultations](#), thematic action tracks, [public engagement](#) and mobilisation – has been put in place.

The thematic action tracks focus on five areas identified as preconditions for progress on SDG4. These areas are also regarded as essential for transforming education systems and should encourage country commitments and initiatives.

These are:

1. Equitable, safe, and healthy schools
2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
3. Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession
4. Digital learning
5. Education financing (domestic and international)

The [Pre-Summit](#) in Paris is a preparatory meeting of government ministers, including education and finance ministers, ahead of the Transforming Education Summit. The education community, including Education International, will discuss in depth the progress made, new challenges, and strategies to move education forward. The meeting's conclusions inform the commitments and calls to action that will be adopted in September. On 28 June, a Global Engagement Day will include technical meetings on the thematic action tracks and engagement with key stakeholders. The high-level engagement between ministers and stakeholders will take place from 29-30 June.

Invest in teachers, transform education

Education International's advocacy is focused on the need to increase the size and share of education funding to guarantee free quality public education for all students. It calls for countries to invest at least six per cent of Gross Domestic Product or 20 per cent of total government expenditure on public education.

An important part of this investment must be in teachers and education support personnel. Qualified teachers and education support personnel with decent employment conditions are prerequisite for quality education.

Increasing the size of national budgets requires domestic and global tax justice. In addition to increasing the tax base domestically, it is essential to ensure that private companies pay their fair share of taxes and that tax loopholes are closed. Austerity must be rejected. Equally, equitable funding should be developed to deploy resources to the geographical areas, institutions, and communities most in need.

To find out more about the TES Summit, [please click here](#).

The high-level sessions of the Pre-Summit will be livestreamed on the [UNESCO website](#).

Transforming the financing of education

Faced with an education timebomb, in September, Presidents and Prime Ministers will gather in New York for an unprecedented [Transforming Education Summit](#). Never before have Heads of

States have been convened to focus their attention exclusively on education, but this is now truly urgent as progress towards globally agreed education goals has faltered and there is an acute crisis in the financing of education. Many education systems were already chronically underfunded even before the combination of Covid and the invasion of Ukraine added pressure, with many education budgets now being cut for the first time in a generation. The key preparation meeting, gathering Ministers of Education from around the world, will take place in Paris from 28th-30th June and this meeting must make a breakthrough on education financing in at least six areas.

Firstly, the focus must **shift to domestic financing**. Over the past 40 years most international meetings and policy documents on education finance have focused on international aid or concessional loans. But these make up only 3% of the financing of education. **Over 97%** of finance comes from domestic sources and shifting attention is part of decolonising the whole understanding of education financing, moving beyond the North-South transfer of resources to look at universal, sustainable and systemic solutions. The [latest discussion paper on education finance](#) recognises this and reinforces the a well-established [international benchmark](#) that calls on governments to allocate between 15-20% of national budgets to education. Renewed commitment to this is important, especially for governments that are falling short, but even a 20% share of a small pie is a small amount and there is an urgent need to shift the focus to the size of the pie. This means going beyond the comfort zone of most people working on international education.

Secondly then, the focus must shift to size of national budgets overall and in particular to **action on tax**. The average low income country has a [tax-to-GDP ratio](#) of just 16%, falling way short of middle income countries that are nearer to 30% or high income countries that often exceed 40%. The IMF estimates that most countries could raise these ratios by [five percentage points](#) by 2030 – which would allow a [doubling of spending](#) on education and health and some other services. In the face of a cost of living crisis worldwide it is important that this expansion of tax revenues is based on [progressive tax reforms](#) that target the income and wealth of the individuals and companies who can most afford it. But national action needs to be matched by international action to ensure global tax rules are set in a fair way, for example through a [UN Tax Convention](#), as recently called for by [African Ministers of Finance](#).

Thirdly we need action on the new **global debt crisis** which means many countries are spending [more on debt servicing](#) than they do on education and health. This is another area where bold international action is needed, far beyond the recent [Debt Service Suspension Initiative](#) that offered too little help to too few countries at the height of Covid. Any country that spends more on debt servicing than on education ought to be prioritised for debt renegotiation and access to a new debt workout mechanism.

Fourthly we have to see a move away from the politics of **austerity**, particularly the pressure for cuts to public sector wage bills. The [Global Austerity Alert](#) raises an alarming picture and even the IMF headquarters has raised concerns that [a premature return to fiscal consolidation](#) could be damaging – but at country level austerity is often the IMF's default recommendation. This is felt most acutely in education when overall [public sector wage bill constraints](#) are recommended. Teachers are usually the largest group on the public sector wage bill, so any overall cuts or freezes end up blocking recruitment of new teachers (even where there are shortages) or blocking improvements in pay (even where teachers barely earn the minimum wage). The IMF could transform the financing of education by making an unequivocal commitment to stop using

these constraints and to actively encourage countries to increase the percentage of GDP spent on the wage bill. Nothing is more important to quality learning than quality teachers.

A fifth crucial change is about a **transformation in mindsets**. Owing to short-medium term economic cycles Ministers of Finance treat education spending as pure 'consumption' – but in the long-term, education is probably the soundest economic investment a country can make. There is a need to move towards a longer term view where investment in education is recognised for its contribution to economic and social development, facilitating a more strategic dialogue and acknowledging that the education sector is part of the core infrastructure of a country so spending should be protected even at the height of a recession.

Sixthly and finally, of course **aid and concessional loans** for education have a role to play - but these should not be the central focus. Perhaps most obviously, donors ought to deliver on their commitment to 0.7% of GNP in aid and they should also match the commitments expected of governments, allocating 15-20% of that aid to education (rather than the present 8%). But that aid needs to be offered in deep solidarity with countries, respecting sovereignty, and should be harmonised and aligned behind national education plans developed by governments with their own citizens. Increases in humanitarian aid for education should also be prioritised.

This six point plan represents a radical re-framing and a transformative approach to increasing the volume of financing for education that is gathering wide support already. It needs of course to be matched by actions to ensure finances are allocated equitably, efficiently and accountably – issues that are also elaborated on in the [official discussion paper on education finance](#).

In summary this means **increasing 4 Ss**: the **Size** of government budgets overall (determined by tax, debt, macro-economic policies, trade etc); the **Share** of national budgets dedicated to education; the **Sensitivity** of education budget allocations – driven by equity (seen in an inter-sectional way) and efficiency; and the **Scrutiny** of education spending in practice – so resources disbursed, spent and tracked in a transparent and accountable way, reaching the most disadvantaged communities.

When put together this could forge a *new global compact for education* that connects increased domestic commitments with international action on issues affecting education financing. Shaping such a bold compact for Heads of State to agree in New York in September is essential if we are to truly transform public education systems around the world.

Read the policy brief "[Education versus austerity. Why public sector wage bill constraints undermine teachers and public education systems -and must end](#)" (by Education International & ActionAid)

Transforming education starts with a new deal for teachers

Education International brought the voice of teachers and education support personnel everywhere to the Transforming Education Pre-Summit hosted by UNESCO in Paris from June 28 to 30.

The Pre-Summit brought together education ministers and vice-ministers from 154 countries and nearly 2000 participants. It aimed to energise global action on education in the lead-up to the Transforming Education Summit, which will take place on September 19 in New York City. Convened by United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, the Transforming Education Summit will bring together heads of state from around the world in order to mobilise political ambition, actions, solutions, and solidarity to accelerate progress on [Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all](#).

It will be the first time global leaders come together to focus on education, a sector severely affected by pandemic-related learning losses, deepened and exacerbated inequities, and cuts to education budgets globally.

“The Summit gives us the opportunity to build resilient education systems capable of delivering the quality inclusive education our students have a right to and deserve. Teachers are central to these systems. Governments must invest in teachers and ensure decent working conditions to end the teacher shortage. They must involve teachers in policy decisions through social dialogue. And they must trust teachers and respect their professional autonomy. Transforming education starts with a new deal for teachers.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

Summit discussions are centred around five action tracks identified as preconditions for progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4 and essential to transforming education systems. Country commitments and initiatives are encouraged in these areas:

1. Equitable, safe, and healthy schools
2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
3. Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession
4. Digital learning
5. Education financing (domestic and international)

A new deal for teachers

During the Pre-Summit, Education International called for a new deal for teachers and support personnel as a prerequisite to any meaningful transformation in education. As part of the new deal, governments must:

1. Increase investment in quality public education systems.
2. Guarantee labour rights and decent working conditions.
3. Invest in quality teacher training and professional development.
4. Trust and respect teachers and their pedagogical expertise.
5. Involve teacher unions in policy through social dialogue.

Schools are just buildings without teachers

Michelle Codrington Rogers, citizenship teacher from the UK and former president of NASUWT, took the stage at the Pre-Summit and delivered a powerful message from teachers everywhere to decision-makers at the event and beyond:

“Value teachers, pay teachers, trust teachers, and make sure that teachers are involved in the decision making. That's the only way we can transform education.”

Michelle Codrington Rogers | Citizenship teacher, UK

Watch her full intervention below.

Education International is represented on the Transforming Education Summit Advisory Committee by its General Secretary David Edwards. EI will continue to call for all countries to include education unions in the [national consultations](#) organised in the lead up to the Summit in September.

Teachers around the world mobilise to transform education. Join us!

1.6 billion students were out of school at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions are still struggling with trauma and learning loss. Teachers and education workers have done the impossible to support their students and school communities in this time of crisis. But the crushing workloads, poor pay, and lack of respect and autonomy are leading to burnout and a concerning number of educators leaving the profession they love.

Inequity, injustice, economic crisis, and harsh cuts to public education funding have put quality education for all at risk. Our students cannot wait. The time to act is now. We must transform education. Teachers and their unions are ready to lead this transformation!

What is at stake at the Transforming Education Summit

For the first time ever, heads of state from around the world are meeting to focus on education. Convened by the United Nations Secretary General, the [Transforming Education Summit](#) is taking place on 19 September 2022 in New York. This is an exceptional opportunity to get education back on track and work to ensure quality education for all by 2030.

Action is long overdue. The Summit is a crisis response: it aims to reverse the downward trends in education, with deepened and exacerbated inequity and cuts to education budgets. At the current pace, the world will fail to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all. Worse still, the COVID-19 pandemic has wiped out 20 years of education gains.

The Summit aims to rally political ambition, action, solutions, and solidarity to transform education.

Education unions mobilise

Education unions are actively advocating at national and international levels for the Summit to have concrete, tangible outcomes that advance teachers' status and rights, a commitment to investing in public education, and the fulfilment of the right to education for all.

Join our global movement to transform education

Here is what you can do to help make the Summit a turning point for education globally.

1. Use our advocacy toolkit!

If you are a union leader, [download and implement our policy toolkit](#) to advocate at the national level.

2. Speak up online

Make your voice heard on social media and ask your head of state to attend the Summit and make ambitious commitments to transform education.

Tag your head of state and feel free to use the suggested posts and images below.

?? We need to transform education ??

? The time is now!

On September 19, at the #TransformingEducation Summit, [my country/head of state] must commit to:

? Invest in teachers

? Support teachers

? Trust teachers

? Defend public education

? Students cannot wait! We need to transform education NOW!

On September 19, world leaders are meeting at the U.N. #TransformingEducation Summit.

[my country/head of state] must listen to teachers and commit to bold action.

? Here's how we can transform education ??

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

Tag us so we can share your message:

- @eduint on Twitter
- @EducationInternational on Facebook
- @eduint on Instagram

3. Amplify our messages

Spread the word by sharing the posts below.

4. Inform your colleagues

Let your colleagues know about the Summit and what is at stake. Here are some Zoom or Teams backgrounds for your online meetings.

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

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

5. Follow the Summit

On 19 September, make sure to watch the Summit proceedings and take note of the commitments made by your head of state. These are commitments they need to implement after the Summit and for which you can hold them accountable.

Education International will be at the Summit to speak up for teachers and education staff everywhere. Follow us on social media for regular updates from the Summit.

World leaders meet to transform education at global summit

The critically important role of governments as guarantors and providers of free quality public education for all has never been clearer. The United Nation's Transforming Education Summit (TES) a global meeting of Heads of State to focus on education, will take place on 19 September in New York. The TES seeks to mobilise the political action necessary to achieve quality public education for all. Education International will bring the voice of education workers at this historical Summit.

The [TES](#) is a response to several crises in education, including post pandemic-related learning losses and deepened inequities. It aims to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) on inclusive quality education for all. [UNESCO's latest estimates](#) show that there is a 148 billion dollar annual financing gap in the poorest countries to achieve SDG4. As a result of government cuts to education after the COVID pandemic, this could be exacerbated by almost a third.

But the pandemic has revealed only the tip of the education crisis iceberg. [Research by Education International](#) points to an overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession. Teachers are now asked to do much more with much fewer resources. Unsurprisingly, more and more teachers are leaving the profession and few young people see teaching as an attractive career. The global teacher shortage is very likely to increase dramatically because an exhausted workforce is being driven out of the profession.

“Education International is calling for urgent political attention to education-to the deepened inequity, the cuts to education budgets and the shortage of trained and qualified teachers, to mention just a few of the barriers to achieving quality education for all,” stated David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International.

“This summit is a powerful opportunity for every country to make a bold and meaningful commitment to education and to the profession that makes it possible.”

Transformation begins with qualified, respected and well-paid teachers

During the summit, the education community will be coming together to discuss in depth challenges and strategies for the future of education, particularly within and across [five thematic action tracks](#).

Education International's participation at the Summit will elevate the voices of education unions to ensure governments launch ambitious commitments to public education, but also to hold them accountable to implementing the reforms needed to transform education for a more sustainable future.

At the Summit, world leaders have the opportunity to show that they have been listening to the profession and to demonstrate that they understand what is needed to truly transform education for the better. Education International and its member affiliates around the world will be calling on them to increase the size and share of education funding to ensure that no child is left behind.

Specifically, Education International will be asking for heads of state to commit to:

1. Increase investment in quality public education systems.
2. Guarantee labour rights and good working conditions for teachers and education support personnel.
3. Invest in quality teacher training and professional development.
4. Trust and respect teachers and their pedagogical expertise.
5. Involve teacher unions in policy through social dialogue.

Government commitments made at TES can be viewed [live on UNTV](#) on the 19th September, or accessed on the [UN TES website](#) after the event.

Education International's key messages across each of the five TES thematic action tracks can be viewed [here](#).

"For this Summit to be a major turning point for education globally, we are calling on all heads of state to stand up to realize every student's right to have a well-supported qualified teacher and a quality learning environment. We want every government to include a focus on enhancing the status and rights of the profession: investing in teachers, trusting teachers, and involving teachers and support personnel in decision-making on education-related issues," Edwards added.

Teachers are ready to transform education — it's time for governments to step up

Despite the global crises facing the world, the power and optimism inherent in education will always provide hope for our future. To move forward from this pandemic, and the deepening inequities it exposed, we need to transform education by fully funding public education systems and investing in, supporting, and respecting teachers and education workers.

On the 19th of September, heads of state from around the world will come together to focus on education. The [United Nations' Transforming Education Summit](#) (TES) to be held in New York, seeks to mobilise the political action necessary to achieve inclusive and equitable quality public education for all.

The focus of the Summit could not be more urgent. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on the education sector. At the height of the pandemic, 1.6 billion students were out of school. Millions are still out of school or struggling with trauma. As the economic crisis, the climate emergency, and wars intensify the effect of the pandemic, educators have become the lifeline of nearly every school system in the world, the critical link for tens of millions of students. However, this critical lifeline is at risk.

While there is an increased public appreciation for the work teachers do, most governments have failed to make the necessary investments in education systems or provide the support teachers and education support personnel desperately need.

In too many places, the great applause has been replaced by devastating education budget cuts and impossible demands that leave teachers exhausted and burned-out.

[Research by Education International](#) points to an overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession. Experienced educators are leaving in droves the profession they love, fewer candidates aspire to replace them, and the global teacher shortage is reaching epic proportions. The dedication of teachers and education workers cannot make up for financially starved education institutions, top-down policies, or systems that fail to trust and respect the people dedicated to our students.

Therefore, as heads of state gather for the TES, Education International leaders around the world are calling on heads of state to commit to:

- Increase investment in quality public education systems.
- Guarantee labour rights and good working conditions for teachers and education support personnel.
- Invest in quality teacher training and professional development.
- Trust and respect teachers and their pedagogical expertise.
- Involve teacher unions in policy through social dialogue.

The critically important role and responsibility of governments as guarantors and providers of free quality public education has never been clearer. The critical role of teachers and support personnel has never been clearer. Therefore, if the TES is to be successful, heads of state at the Summit must commit to increase education funding to empower and retain a qualified teaching force and guarantee free quality public education for all.

Governments must invest more in public education, a crucial public service and key to pandemic recovery, and invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education. A more just, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable future is impossible without a clear and meaningful commitment to education.

All countries must fulfil their commitments to the international education financing targets laid out in the [Education 2030 Framework for Action](#). That is, prioritising education by designating at least

six per cent of Gross Domestic Product, and 20 per cent of total national expenditure, for public education.

Debt relief and debt justice is also crucial to ensure education spending is not undercut by debt servicing obligations. Increasing the size of government budgets through tax justice and progressive taxation is key.

Austerity must be rejected and harmful loan conditions and advice from international financial institutions that limit public sector spending must end. Education privatisation that threatens quality and equity, the proliferation of profit hungry private schools, commercialisation of public education must be reversed. Education must be sustainably funded.

It is time to commit to the transformative power of public education for each and every student, in nations large and small. It is time to move from words to action. We call on the world's governments to fulfil their obligation to free quality public education. The world's teachers, students, and learning communities are ready to build a better future. The world's governments must step up and do it right.

Education International brings the voice of the teaching profession to the Transforming Education Summit

Education International brought the voice of the teaching profession to world leaders at the Transforming Education Summit. The United Nations summit was convened to focus on education, and led to the creation of a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession.

“Transforming education is important because the solutions to every crisis we are facing begin with education. Whether it’s the climate crisis, the food security crisis, the democracy crisis or the conflict crisis, all can be traced back to education. We need to be ambitious but it is critical that financing matches the ambitions we are now setting.”

David Edwards | General Secretary, Education International

Representing over 32 million teachers and education support personnel across the world, Education International played a key role during the Summit’s thematic sessions, bringing key demands and proposals from classrooms everywhere to the United Nations.

A global movement to transform education

On September 19, Leaders Day, Mugwena Maluleke, Education International Vice-President and the General Secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union, took the floor in the United Nations General Assembly Hall to tell world leaders that only by working together with teachers and their unions, only by creating a global movement can education be transformed.

Watch his full message to Heads of State below.

During the Summit session dedicated to teachers, Education International President Susan Hopgood stressed the importance of social dialogue for transforming education. She stated: “The

starting point for governments should be that teachers and their unions are their partners. Our partnership can enable truly resistant quality education systems. Our partnership can be the transformation.” Watch her full intervention below.

No shortcuts: investing in teachers is imperative

Speaking at the Summit session on financing education, Johanna Jaara Åstrand, EI Vice-President for Europe, warned that 69 million more teachers were needed globally to achieve quality education for all by 2030. “If we want to transform education, investment is the only way. There are no shortcuts. The only way to stop teacher shortages is through investment in the profession”, she added. Åstrand called for tax justice and for the International Monetary Fund to lift public wage bill constraints in all countries experiencing a teacher shortage. Watch her full intervention below.

Teacher leadership transforms education

Becky Pringle, President of the National Education Association (United States), argued for teacher leadership and autonomy as critical elements of transforming education. “When I talk to members about why they want to leave the profession they tell me it's about respect, professional pay, teacher authority and autonomy. They want to be leaders in the classroom as they were meant to be,” she added.

Education must transform the world

Speaking during the Summit session on education for sustainable development, EI Executive Board Member and President of the American Federation of Teachers Randi Weingarten highlighted the transformative power of wholistic education. “Education must transform the world, making it more just and sustainable, while solving the climate crisis. Not only must educators prepare students for careers, but we must be able to develop and nurture the whole child, so that they become the leaders who make a difference in society”, she explained.

Making technology work for all students

EI's President also took the floor during the Summit session on the digital transformation of education. While recognising the potential of new technologies to accelerate progress towards SDG4, Susan Hopgood highlighted the profession's concerns around equity and the risk of expanding digital divides.

She also noted that students' and teachers' right to data privacy, the commercialisation of education, and the increasing reliance on corporations to deliver a universal right and public good such as education calls for careful consideration and a strong governance. Involving teachers in the governance of education technology is imperative in order to ensure that these new tools truly benefits all students.

New International Commission on the Teaching Profession

A first concrete outcome of the Transforming Education Summit is the creation of an International Commission on the Teaching Profession announced during the Summit by United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed.

"Teachers feel deeply disrespected and overwhelmed because they are constantly seen as tools rather than partners. A Global Commission on the Teaching Profession could illuminate solutions, many of which come from our profession itself, and match those with the political will and commitment required to meet this moment," explained David Edwards, EI General Secretary.

"The Commission is an opportunity to systematically bring together all the disparate strands of research and actions and weave them into a reinvented and clear social contract," he explained.

Edwards added the new initiative was a step in the right direction to ensure "that every learner has access to a professional, trained, and well supported teacher and that every teacher had access to the tools, time, and trust necessary to reach, teach, and inspire the generations and communities they have been entrusted to serve."

Teachers, not computers, are the beating heart of education

More than 130 countries committed to prioritise education at the United Nation's Transforming Education Summit (TES), a global meeting of Heads of State held in September in New York.

Amongst the many commitments and actions to transform education submitted in the [TES National Statements of Commitment](#), 80 per cent of countries highlighted one or more aspects of digital learning. Two-thirds made financial commitments to universalise broadband internet connectivity and to expand access to devices. Countries in which overcoming access gaps represent significant financial challenges also committed to "establishing or strengthening public-private partnerships with technology providers".

"Technology does not equal innovation. The source of effective innovation in education is the teaching profession itself. This was demonstrated during the pandemic."

In this race to spread technology as the solution to the education crisis, shockingly absent were commitments to increase investment in the teaching profession. Measures to address the alarming teacher shortages were almost entirely lacking. We will never truly transform education if education financing is steered towards edtech companies in the misguided hope that new technologies will provide a 'magic solution' to quality education, rather than invested in teachers, to fulfil every child's right to a trained and qualified teacher.

Teachers and the digital conundrum

With the spread of COVID, millions of teachers turned themselves into power users of various hardware and software to keep education alive for their students. However, the impact of the use of education technology at scale remains largely untested, unregulated, and its possible benefits for teaching and learning, unproven.

There is a growing need to explore and assess how digital technologies are being used across diverse contexts, and the impact this has on academic freedom, teacher well-being, terms and conditions of employment, quality education, data governance and data privacy. Furthermore, [research](#) by Education International shows that the increased and pervasive use of technology is adding to the exhaustion teachers feel, and that they are demanding their contracts address the overwhelming hours they spend online.

Within the context of [major technology companies playing an increased educational role](#), which introduces private for-profit motives to public schooling, there is also a growing need to carefully design and implement the use of technology to support the most marginalised. Failing to do so will result in a new form of digital inequality becoming deeply ingrained in our education systems. Moreover, governments must go beyond corporate data-driven approaches to education. Data collection and research relating to teachers and students' digital lives must respect their privacy and meet the highest ethical standards. In this respect, the funding and development of an alternative, open source, infrastructure for digital education that does not rely on significant collection of student data is essential.

We need to look past the anecdotes, and the marketing, and talk about the path and potential of education technology in our classrooms. The potential for education technologies to enhance teaching and learning is great indeed – as long as we keep our eyes on the goal: free, quality public education for every student.

Transformation starts with teachers

Technology does not equal innovation. The source of effective innovation in education is the teaching profession itself. This was demonstrated during the pandemic. A collaborative culture of innovation must be further developed. We need strong educational communities thriving in a collective setting. The use of education technology can only be as innovative as the educational community where it is implemented.

There is also a need to address the lack of structures and processes to assess the effectiveness of digital technologies in education. Teachers should be able to participate in this assessment by sharing their experiences and experimenting with different kinds of technology, including analogue and other broadly used technologies. However, 45 per cent of respondents to Education International's [survey](#) of education unions globally said that they were not consulted at all over the selection of educational technologies.

Education unions have a key role in catalysing conversations around digital learning and inserting education technology into pedagogical practice. Only when teachers and their collective organizations are part of the technology decision-making process will it work in support of quality teaching.

To get there, teachers must be valued as the indispensable professionals at the heart of education. The goal of ensuring equity must be evident and purposeful in the technology we use, for every student, everywhere. This is how we make transformation real. True transformation requires that governments tackle the global teacher shortage head-on, making teaching a more attractive profession through decent working conditions and enhancing the status of teachers.

We call on all governments to step up and do their part: invest in teachers, involve teachers, trust and respect teachers. Scale up creative ideas, not technology distribution. Teachers, not

computers, are the beating heart of education.

Headlines

1. Latin America and the world to celebrate Paulo Freire's legacy

This commemoration will take place at the closing of the events to mark Freire's centenary in Recife, Brazil.

Activities include the VI Meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement and the Meeting of the Education International Latin America (EILA) Network of Education Workers.

Education International Latin America (EILA) and the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación de Brasil (CNTE), together with the Latin American Network of Studies on Teachers' Work (Red ESTRADO), the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and other organisations that uphold the legacy of Paulo Freire, are the organizers of the events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Latin American educator Paulo Freire.

Recife, the city where Freire was born on 19 September 1921 and capital of the state of Pernambuco, will welcome international guests and representatives of EILA member organisations, who, together with participants from all corners of Brazil, will celebrate the closing of the events marking the centenary of Paulo Freire's birth.

The commemoration of Paulo Freire's centenary began on 19 September 2021, the 100th anniversary of his birth. The health measures imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic affected the holding of activities. They took place virtually and were broadcast live around the world. The political, cultural and pedagogical event took place on 19 September 2021 and the People's World Education Plenary on 20 September.

In 2022, at the close of the commemoration of Paulo Freire's centenary, face-to-face activities will be held from 17 to 20 September in Recife.

Women education workers' network

The EILA Women Education Workers' Network will resume its regional face-to-face meetings on 17 September, as part of the Freire centenary activities. At this meeting, women leaders from the region will discuss the EILA Campaign for the Ratification of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 and will present research on the situation of teachers in the context of the pandemic, carried out by the Feminist Centre for Information and Action (CEFEMINA). They will also reflect on the process of building Equality Policies in trade union organisations.

The Meeting will include a performance of the song 'Y Somos Todas' 'And We Are All [United]', the centrepiece of the Campaign for the Ratification of ILO C190. The performer Maf É Tulà will share the stage with the Brazilian percussion group Bruta Flor, who, in addition to playing 'And We Are All', will perform part of their repertoire.

The meeting's activities will continue on 18 September, with presentations on the current situation in each country and reflections on the Network's main areas of work in the near future.

Political and Cultural Event

Praia do Pina, on the coast of Recife, will be the venue for the Political and Cultural Event to commemorate Paulo Freire's centenary, to be held on 18 September in the afternoon. The activity will

begin with the performance of 'Y Somos Todas' by Maf É Tulà and Bruta Flor, and will include shows by Lia de Itamaracá, Silvério Pessoa and Chico César.

Cultural performances will alternate with messages from the Organising Committee, local, national and international organisations.

The People's World Education Plenary

The celebration of Freire's centenary will continue with the People's World Education Plenary, which will be held at the Concha Acústica of the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) on 19 September, the date of his birth.

This venue will be the background for reflections on Freire's influence and legacy in world education. Nita Freire, Eliete Santiago and Sergio Haddad will reflect on the importance of Paulo Freire's ideas and thinking for Brazilian education.

The People's World Education Plenary will conclude with a walk to the sculpture of Paulo Freire on the UFPE campus.

VI Meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement

EILA member organisations will once again meet in person at the Meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement (MPL), which will begin on the afternoon of 19 September in Recife.

The VI Meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement, like the other activities celebrating the Centenary of Paulo Freire, is the culmination of the commemoration that began a year ago, in September 2021. On that date, activities were carried out virtually, with the hope of holding face-to-face events in 2022.

The opening day of the VI Meeting of the MPL will include the Keynote Lecture 'A political reading of the reality of Latin America and outlook', by journalist Breno Altman.

On 20 September, Dr. Dalila Andrade and Mr. José Manuel Valverde will present research carried out in the context of the pandemic. Maritza Rojas from the Latin American Social Sciences Faculty – Costa Rica (FLACSO) will share with participants the conclusions of an evaluation of the work of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement.

The MPL meeting will include an opportunity for dialogue in working groups and a plenary session to present the key points. The activity will conclude with the presentation of the Declaration of the VI Meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement.

These activities are carried out with the solidarity support of sister organisations affiliated to Education International, Lärarförbundet in Sweden and UEN in Norway, as well as the important contribution of CNTE in Brazil.

2. Women education workers in Latin America join forces in the fight for gender equality in unions, education, and societies

The regional meeting of the Education International Latin America (EILA) Women Education Workers' Network, widely attended by women from almost every country in the region, took place in Recife, Brazil.

While the first day of the event focused on providing women with tools to strengthen the struggle for equality within their unions and their workplaces, the second day provided an opportunity for them to reflect on the current situation in the region, through presentations by women colleagues from a range of organisations.

On Sunday 18 September, the meeting began with recognition for the work of the Presidents and General Secretaries of organisations affiliated to EILA and represented at the event. Among them were Gilda Montero from ANDE (Costa Rica), Yorgina Alvarado from SEC (Costa Rica), Elbia Pereira from FUM-TEP (Uruguay), Aminta Rudas from MPU (Panama), Sonia Alesso from CTERA (Argentina), Yobana Salinas from Sindi2 (Chile) and several local women leaders.

The session provided an opportunity for reflection on the need to implement mechanisms that guarantee spaces for women and to keep up the struggle for equality within trade unions, including those where gains, such as a gender equality policy, have been secured.

Sandra Hernández, from Colprosumah (Honduras), spoke about the inequalities and violence that women have historically suffered in her country.

“We have a multi-ethnic country where 51% are women, yet it has the highest level of gender inequality in the region,” she said, while explaining that, despite the scope of the challenge, her organisation managed to approve its gender equality policy, a process that began at a meeting of the EILA Women Education Workers’ Network in 2019.

Gloria Arboleda of Aspu and María Eugenia Londoño of FECODE, both from Colombia, spoke of the new phase that their country has entered with the arrival of a leftist government: “Total peace is finally being sought, through dialogue with all sectors. It opens up new opportunities for Colombia and for the agenda of trade union organisations in a country that has never had a left-wing government,” explained Londoño.

Other organisations referred to the struggles they face in their country, such as Gloria Roque of Andes 21 de Junio (El Salvador), who spoke of the struggle to secure technological tools to help overcome the inequalities highlighted by the pandemic, or Paola Giménez of Otep-A (Paraguay), who told of her union’s struggle against the “educational transformation” agenda promoted by the World Bank in her country.

The representatives of CONADU (Argentina) spoke about the political persecution of the country’s Vice-President and the role of the trade unions because “we know that first they go after her, and then they’ll come after our rights”.

The participants agreed on the need for an education that recovers the history of the peoples of each country and the women who fought before us.

They also recognised that the new wave of leftist governments in Latin America is the time to secure new social gains as well as to strengthen grassroots organisation and women’s political participation.

Celebrating Paulo Freire with music and art

After the close of the Women Education Workers’ Network meeting, the participants went to Praia do Pina where a political-cultural event was being held to commemorate the close of the Paulo Freire centenary celebrations.

“Although the Brazilian government does not recognise Paulo Freire’s global importance, people from around the globe are mobilising to celebrate his centenary in the land where he was born,” said El Vice-President, Roberto Leao, before introducing the many international guests attending the event.

Artists such as Silvério Pessoa, Chicho César, Lia de Itamaracá, Costa Rica’s Maf É Tulá and Brazilian group Bruta Flor shared their music and highlighted the importance of keeping Freire’s legacy alive.

“It is essential that we resist and say that Paulo Freire lives on with us. It is our duty to carry forward his work, which represents an essential vision for the freedom and emancipation of peoples,” said Chico César, who insisted that remembering Freire and his thinking is, in itself, a form of resistance.

October

Highlights

1. World Teachers' Day 2022: We transform education

The leadership of teachers in transforming education is the theme of this year's World Teachers' Day – The Transformation of Education Begins with Teachers. Co-convened by Education International, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF, World Teachers' Day 2022 aims to highlight the work of teachers and call on governments to invest in teachers, involve teachers, trust and respect teachers.

Related Items

World Teachers' Day 2022: We transform education

On September 19 world leaders met at the United Nations and committed to transforming education everywhere. Teachers are at the heart of this transformation; they must be trusted and supported to make quality public education a reality for all students.

The leadership of teachers in transforming education is the theme of this year's World Teachers' Day – ***The Transformation of Education Begins with Teachers***. Co-convened by Education International, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF, World Teachers' Day 2022 aims to highlight the work of teachers and call on governments to invest in teachers, involve teachers, trust and respect teachers.

“To truly celebrate World Teachers' Day, we must go beyond thanking teachers. We must invest in quality public education systems. We call on governments everywhere to invest in teachers, guarantee labour rights and good working conditions, involve teachers in decision-making, and trust their pedagogical expertise. The transformation starts with teachers. We are the beating heart of education.”

David Edwards | General Secretary, Education International

Celebrate World Teachers' Day and join the movement to transform education!

Here are a few things you can do in your union, your school, or online to celebrate World Teachers' Day 2022.

1. Print and display this year's poster

In your school or your union, make sure everyone knows it's World Teachers' Day.

[Click here to download the high resolution poster in several languages!](#)

2. Speak up online!

Make your voice heard on social media and highlight teacher leadership in transforming education.

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

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

Teachers are the beating ?? of education.

? This #WorldTeachersDay, teachers around the world call on all governments to

? Invest in teachers

? Involve teachers

? Trust teachers

? Respect teachers

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

3. Share Education International messages

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

4. Tune in for the World Teachers' Day event hosted by UNESCO

Our General Secretary David Edwards will bring the voice of teachers everywhere to the opening ceremony of the World Teachers' Day event hosted by UNESCO in Paris. The event will begin at 10:00 am, Paris time, on October 5th. [Watch the event live on the UNESCO website.](#)

Other speakers include Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO; Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization; and Catherine Russel, Executive Director of UNICEF.

Teachers around the world deserve more than thanks, governments must listen

As teachers we believe that, despite the global crises facing the world, the power and optimism inherent in education will always provide hope for our future. We also know that to move forward from this pandemic, and the deepening inequities it exposed, we need to fully fund public education systems and invest in, support, and involve teachers.

To truly celebrate World Teachers' Day, governments around the world must commit to increase investment in quality public education systems, guarantee labor rights and good working

conditions for teachers and education support personnel, and to respect teachers and their pedagogical expertise.

COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on the education sector. At the height of the pandemic, 1.6 billion students were out of school. Millions are still not in the classroom, while others are struggling with trauma and loss. As the economic crisis, the climate emergency, and wars intensify, educators have become the lifeline of nearly every school system in the world, the critical link for tens of millions of students. However, this critical lifeline is at risk.

While there is an increased public appreciation for the work teachers do, most governments have failed to make the necessary investments or provide the support teachers and education personnel desperately need. In too many places, the applause and thank yous have been replaced by devastating education budget cuts and impossible demands that leave teachers exhausted and burned-out.

[Research by Education International](#) points to an overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession. Experienced educators are leaving en masse the profession they love, fewer candidates aspire to replace them, and the global teacher shortage is reaching epic proportions.

It is clear that the dedication of teachers cannot make up for financially starved education institutions, top-down policies, or systems that fail to trust and respect the people dedicated to students.

As the global voice of the teaching profession, with 383 members representing 32 million teachers worldwide, Education International is calling on governments to invest more in public education, a crucial public service and key to pandemic recovery, and support teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education. A more just, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable future is impossible without a clear and meaningful commitment to education.

It is time to commit to the transformative power of public education for each and every student, in nations large and small. We call on the world's governments to fulfil their obligation to free quality public education. The world's teachers, students, and learning communities are ready to build a better future. We are the beating heart of education.

About Education International

Education International (EI) is the Global Union Federation that brings together organisations of teachers and other education employees from across the world. Through 383 member organisations, EI represents more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories.

World Teachers Day: celebrations, struggles and an urgent call for governments to raise the status of the profession

On 5 October, the global education community marked World Teachers Day by celebrating the fundamental role educators play in a democratic society. Education International called on all governments to step up and do their part: invest in teachers, involve teachers, value and respect teachers, as the indispensable professionals at the heart of education.

World Teachers' Day is held annually to celebrate teachers around the globe. It commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the [1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#), which sets benchmarks regarding the rights and responsibilities of, as well as professional standards for, teachers. In addition, the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel was adopted in 1997.

The leadership of teachers in transforming education was the theme of this year's World Teachers' Day: The Transformation of Education Begins with Teachers. Co-convened by Education International, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF, World Teachers' Day 2022 aimed to highlight the work of teachers and call on governments to enhance the status of the teacher profession.

Education International brought the voice of teachers to the [official celebration event](#) held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. In his opening remarks, David Edwards, Education International's General Secretary stated: "Transformational teachers are more than merely the backbone of education. They are the beating heart that keeps schools alive and healthy. How a society treats its teachers reflects how much a society values its young."

The struggles of teachers currently under attack for defending democracy across the globe was also highlighted by Edwards: "Ukrainian teachers are being kidnapped and forced to teach an alternate reality. In Afghanistan, teachers who demand that their female students return to school are met with harassment and arrest. In parts of western Africa, teachers are targeted if they cannot recite a religious passage. In Hong Kong, teachers lost their right to association because they supported their students demands for democracy and self-rule. In Iran, brave teachers are standing for basic human rights and dignity in the face of brutal and unconscionable violence. In Lebanon, teachers working multiple shifts in schools that teach refugees struggle to earn enough money to pay their bus pass to school."

Antonia Wulff, Director of Research, Policy and Advocacy at Education International, highlighted that true transformation requires governments to tackle the [global teacher shortage](#) head-on. This should be done by making teaching a more attractive profession through decent working conditions, enhancing the status of teachers and, most importantly, trusting in teachers' pedagogical expertise, knowledge and classroom management.

Teachers, and their unions, transform education

Under the theme "Teachers transform education", Education International hosted an online event on World Teachers Day led by its Deputy General Secretary, Haldis Holst. The webinar provided a space for education unions to come together across borders, celebrate their achievements, take stock of the commitments made at the United Nation's [Transforming Education Summit](#) and strategise together about the way forward.??

To truly transform education, Education International's affiliates highlighted the need for governments to invest in teachers, guarantee labour rights and good working conditions, involve teachers in decision-making, and trust their pedagogical expertise.

The need for a critical pedagogy, as embodied in Paulo Freire's inspiring work, was highlighted as a key element for transforming education and society.

Education International's President, Susan Hopgood, stated: "The Transforming Education Summit was a first step towards securing increased financing for education. But we need to keep the momentum up and ensure that financing is directed to where it is needed most – not new technologies and not new public-private partnerships, but ensuring that every child has a well-trained and qualified teacher."

"Despite our challenges around the world, we know we are a profession of optimism and we have the solidarity and organised power, as unions, to create a better future together".

Revitalising the teaching profession in Africa

Education International's regional director in Africa, Dennis Sinyolo, brought the voice of African teachers to a [continental Symposium](#) for Educational Research and Innovation organised by the Global Partnership for Education in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In his remarks, Sinyolo encouraged African governments to demonstrate clear political will and commitment by investing in education and teachers and presented a 5-point plan for revitalising the teaching profession in Africa.

Teachers are the beating heart of education

As stated in an [open letter](#) from the teaching profession, Education International reiterated its call on the world's governments to fulfil their obligation to free quality public education. The world's teachers, students, and learning communities are ready to build a better future. Teachers are the beating heart of education.

World Teachers' Day Celebrations: Transforming Education Around the World

On October 5th, Education International and its affiliates around the globe celebrated [World Teachers' Day](#) in many different forms. Some affiliates approached the day with events, raised awareness, seminars and demonstrations. They all reaffirmed their commitment to transform education and ensure quality public education for all.

Mexico: A great opportunity to strengthen public education systems

On World Teachers' Day, EI's affiliate in Mexico, the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (SNTE) organised a hybrid event with 300 participants on site and 70,000 online. EI's member organisations from across the world also participated at the event. SNTE general secretary, Alfonso Cepeda Salas, referred to this year's theme, "The transformation of education begins with the teachers", as an urgent call for governments to improve the status of teachers, particularly in post pandemic times when we face school dropouts and loss of learning.

Cepeda Salas said that "we have a great opportunity to strengthen public education systems through the improvement of teachers' working conditions, guaranteeing their professional development and reducing their workload including administrative tasks. He pointed out that "teachers' substantive function is to educate".

Gabon: Ensuring the success of the governmental reforms to improve teachers' living and working conditions

The executive board of the *Syndicat de l'Éducation Nationale* (SENA) in Gabon celebrated World Teachers' Day in combination with the celebration of Pink October, dedicated to fighting female cancer. SENA reminded the Government of the urgency of fulfilling its commitments aiming to transform education in general and Gabonese schools in particular.

A series of awareness-raising actions were initiated in schools in the capital city and in the interior of the country.

Messages were sent to public authorities, while the union raised awareness among teachers and trade unionists to ensure the success of the reforms undertaken by the State and aiming to improve their living and working conditions.

Mongolia: Developing education into a leading sector of society

The Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Union (FMESU) celebrated World Teachers' Day in collaboration with the German foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Minister of Education and Science informed about his speech at the [Transforming Education Summit](#) and how the world is planning to transform education. In his speech to the United Nations, he had underlined the need to involve teachers and their representative bodies in areas such as climate change, digital transition, and the education sector.

During the celebration, it was also highlighted that member organisations from the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions (CMTU)– like the FMESU –will work together towards strengthening success achieved by resolving many issues together for benefit of the work of teachers and education employees, and to develop education into a leading sector.

Portugal: In the current context, education systems cannot do without properly qualified professionals

In Portugal, the *Federação Nacional dos Professores* (FENPROF) [sent a message from teachers and educators to the Government of Portugal, the Assembly of the Republic and all Portuguese people](#), warning that "World Teacher's Day is marked by an increasingly visible and worrying, lack of properly qualified teachers".

The union underlined that "the teaching profession is undervalued and losing value year after year. This loss of value is imposed upon it, and happens at social, professional and material levels, leading many among the youngest to abandon the profession and young generations not taking teacher training courses".

It was also adamant that ‘in the context of the global climate crisis, rapid technological transformation—particularly in the world of work, lower levels of trust in public institutions, the erosion of democratic values and an increase in disinformation, intolerance and hatred, education systems, a fortiori, cannot do without properly qualified professionals”.

This clearly highlights the deep need to value the teaching profession, value those who remain, recover those who abandoned and win young people when they make their choices for the future, FENPROF said.

The union therefore urged the Ministry of Education and the Government to:

- Respect teachers.
- Discuss and sign a Negotiation Protocol for the Legislature, which, among other, would take into account the full service time for career purposes, end precariousness, regularise working hours and allow fair retirement in terms of time and value of the pension.

Cape Verde: Government must resolve outstanding issues affecting education and teachers

The *Federação Cabo verdiana dos Professores* (FECAP) appealed to the Ministry of Education of Cape Verde to resolve outstanding issues affecting education and the classrooms, including the promotion of teachers.

A FECAP statement released on World Teachers’ Day demands new measures, particularly to ensure that teachers are automatically promoted. The statement reminds public authorities of their commitments made at the United Nations’ Transforming Education Summit in September. These commitments include increasing the quality of the public education system, guaranteeing labour rights and decent working conditions for teachers, investing in training, trusting and respecting teachers and involving their unions in political decisions through social dialogue.

“Once these commitments are made, the union hopes that the state budget will allocate funds to improve the condition of the teaching profession in 2023.”

FECAP General Secretary and member of Education International’s Africa Regional Committee, Abraão Borges.

Hungary: The fight for higher wages and call for support

The protest called for higher wages and aimed to raise awareness for teachers who got fired for protesting. People carried banners with quotes saying, “Do not sack our teachers” or “No teachers, no future” to emphasise the teacher’s shortage issue. The campaign “I want to teach” ensured that teachers can maintain their right to strike as the government has released a regulation making strikes in public education almost impossible.

The government claims that it would increase teachers wages once the European Commission releases the EU recovery funding for the country, however, it has been withheld due to rule-of-

law disputes.

The teachers and unions are planning to protest again on October 14, 2022.

Iraq/Kurdistan: Teachers' union raises the standards of education and learning

The Kurdistan Teachers Union (KTU) hosted a seminar on October 5th. The event focused on how the union can raise the standards of education and learning in the region.

The seminar also highlighted the need to:

- Establish more professional groups,
- Monitor the educational and teaching processes, and
- Offer projects to enhance teachers' quality of life.

The seminar included a presentation by educational trainer Khalid Hameed Khoshnaw who advised KTU to:

- Work on human rights issues, particularly defending teachers.
- Provide teaching aids and distributing flyers, pamphlets, magazines, books, and newspapers with the assistance of volunteer organisations and sponsors.
- Organise gatherings, seminars, conferences, and forums for science and education.

For the Kurdish teachers Union to reach their goals and enhance teachers' quality of life they received some of the following recommendations:

- As it is important to spread the teacher union's messages, lobbying groups must be established in the relevant governmental organisations and agencies.
- Setting up advisory councils and meetings to address key teacher and educational issues and provide teachers and other key stakeholders in the educational process with the required guidance.
- Obtain support from non-governmental organisations, at local, national, and international levels, as well as from businesses, the private sector, and request the United Nations to carry out initiatives and activities.

Headlines

1. Education unions honour a decade fighting for the rights of girls in and through education and renew their commitment for the future

This October 11th, Education International (EI) and its affiliates are proud to join in the global celebration marking the 10th International Day of the Girl Child. Our Time is Now - Our Rights, Our Future is the 2022 United Nations theme for the day, making clear that “girls are ready for a decade of acceleration forward. It is time for us all to stand accountable – with and for girls – and to invest in a future that believes in their agency, leadership and potential.”

As educators, we applaud and celebrate the many human rights advancements made by girls and for girls in the last decade. Over the past 20 years, gender gaps in school enrolment and attendance have been declining globally. We have also seen an increased awareness of and attention to issues impacting girls by communities, governments, and policymakers.

However, we also acknowledge the many gender inequities that remain, creating barriers to the fulfillment of the right to quality, public education for girls in all their diversity. In the most striking of cases, in Afghanistan, girls of secondary school age have been deprived of learning outright for over a year. As education is a right that supports the fulfillment of other rights, we know that we cannot wait another decade to solve the challenges we face, both old and new.

In the last decade, while we have seen more clearly the impacts of the climate crisis, girls, especially those in the Global South, have felt a disproportionate impact, as they are more likely to drop out or miss school due to climate impacts. However, closing the gender gap in education can help countries better adapt to the climate crisis and decrease the rate and impacts of climate change. [One study](#) found that the death toll due to climate change induced extreme weather events could be 60 percent lower by 2050 if 70 percent of girls achieved lower-secondary education.

Girls also experienced a disproportionate impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only threatens decades of progress made towards gender equality, but also puts girls around the world at risk of adolescent pregnancy, early and forced marriage, and violence. For many girls, school is more than a learning space, it is a lifeline.

On this day, there is a clear call for all partners to put girls at the forefront of change, welcoming them as partners in all decision-making spaces, to increase investments in women's networks and organisations, and to strengthen services for girls especially in times of crisis and recovery.

Education International salutes the courage, activism, and leadership of the many girls working diligently for a just, equitable and sustainable world in the past decade. It is their example that will propel progress going forward.

Education International and its affiliates renew their collective and professional commitment to advancing the rights of girls in and through education. We stand ready to serve as true partners in transforming education systems to fulfill the rights of girls in all their diversity in the next decade.

2. Statement | Myanmar: Global Unions call for the release of jailed trade unionists and the recognition of the NUG

The Global Unions, representing 200 million workers worldwide, call for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Myanmar, in particular the more than 60 trade unionists who have been unjustly incarcerated by the military junta since its coup in 2021. We demand the immediate dismissal of the trumped-up charges filed against all jailed democracy activists, strong assurances that their health and safety inside the prisons are secured, and their swift and safe return to their loved ones.

Their continued imprisonment is a travesty of justice and makes a mockery of democracy. Trade union rights are globally recognised and guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. For workers and trade unionists to be imprisoned for the exercise of these rights in the defence of democracy cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. Human and trade union rights are not suggestions – they are universal and inalienable rights that must be applied to all working people without discrimination and/or fear of repression.

Trade union rights can only thrive in a climate of democracy. They can only grow and flourish under governments that are committed to democratic processes and the rule of law. Thus, the Global Unions reaffirm their call to the United Nations General Assembly to recognise the credentials of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) as the one and true democratic government of the Myanmar people. By recognising the NUG, we safeguard the human and trade union rights of Myanmar's working people, and once and for all, put an end to the military junta's brutal dictatorship and false representation of the country before the international community.

The Global Unions also condemn in the strongest terms possible the widespread human rights abuses, torture and killings against Myanmar's democracy activists both inside and outside the prisons. We strongly urge the United Nations and all relevant international human rights institutions to take strong action on this matter and bring to justice all those responsible for these atrocities.

Trade unions must never rest until all trade unionists, everywhere in the world, are free from repression and abuse of their fundamental rights. Democracy is the right of all working people. Whenever and wherever there is tyranny, trade unions will respond with unity and solidarity.

3. Ghana: Campaign against privatisation and commercialisation of education

Taking stock of results achieved, member organisations of the Campaign Against the Privatisation and Commercialisation of Education (CAPCOE) have deplored an expanding privatisation of education – especially at basic level – in Ghana's remote areas, they welcomed the teacher's higher level of training as well as the reduction of the student-teacher ratio. They have also reiterated their support to increased investment and improved quality of public basic education, as well as their will to discourage the resort to private education at basic level.

Working alongside the Coalition of Concerned Teachers (CCT-Gh), and civil society organisations represented by the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC),

Education International's national affiliates, i.e., the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and the Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (TEWU) have been playing an active role in CAPCOE since its inception in 2016. In partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and Education International, CAPCOE has maintained a steadfast fight against privatisation with a focus on basic education. FES and EI provide financial and technical support.

CAPCOE's advocacy

CAPCOE's main objectives are to:

- Create public awareness of the rapid increase in commercialisation of education and its dangers for society.
- Advocate a halt in the expansion of Edu-business in Ghana.
- Advocate for the review of policies and acts that undermine public education.
- Demand the enforcement of policies and laws on private education by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the metropolitan/municipal/district assemblies.
- Urge government to invest more in public education, especially at basic level.
- Promote professionalism among teachers and education workers, providing teaching and learning resources.
- Ensure equitable access to quality public education.
- Build an alliance to campaign against the privatisation and commercialisation of education in Ghana.

CAPCOE observed that the growing privatisation of basic education prevented low-income citizens from accessing basic education on grounds of cost or affordability, especially in urban Ghana, where there were very few public basic schools. It is concerned that such situations prevent the realisation of the constitutional right to free basic education – guaranteed by the national Constitution – and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on Education in Ghana.

Over the past seven years, Ghana has witnessed a growth in low-fee for-profit schools (LFFPS) on the education landscape, especially in urban areas. The International Finance Corporation estimates that 40 per cent of Ghana's private basic schools are low fee in nature, operating in low-income areas within a complex regulatory environment and with little financing for education and trained teachers. In response, one of CAPCOE's focus has been to campaign against the emergence and growth of LFFPS because they are makeshift in nature, provide low-quality education in poor infrastructures, and exclude the poor on the grounds of fees.

In 2022, CAPCOE commissioned Africa Education Watch Executive Director Kofi Asare to conduct an impact assessment on CAPCOE activities from 2015 to 2021. The research identifies gaps and provides recommendations to develop a new advocacy strategy to confront the challenges in public pre-tertiary education in Ghana.

Meeting on 26 July for a validation meeting, Asare presented the preliminary report to the CAPCOE technical working group.

CAPCOE's successes and remaining challenges

The report acknowledges that CAPCOE remains a force in the anti-commercialisation and anti-privatisation struggle and advocacy for increased investments in public basic education in Ghana. CAPCOE's role in pushing away the Ghana Partnership Schools (GPS) project, through which the government sought to engage non-state actors to manage public basic schools, was a significant achievement in the anti-commercialisation campaign.

Despite its policy advocacy actions, LFFPS remain relevant in both urban and rural Ghana. The report observes that, during the seven years of CAPCOE's advocacy, while private schools grew by 60 per cent, public basic schools only grew by 12 per cent. Worryingly, LFFPS further grew at 17 per

cent per year even in disadvantaged districts, thereby increasing their relevance nationwide. This is primarily due to the declining investment in public basic education, causing slow growth of public basic schools and limiting access, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, making LFFPS the only alternative to access basic education in underserved communities, Asare explained.

However, the researcher noted that CAPCOE's advocacy for improved training of teachers to achieve teacher quality, professionalism, and enhanced learning outcomes has yielded some dividends, with an increase in the average percentage of trained teachers in the public basic system from 62 per cent at kindergarten level to 92 per cent, with primary and junior high school increasing from 75 per cent and 88 per cent to 96 per cent and 97 per cent respectively.

The increased teacher training also led to the deployment of over 120,000 more teachers, reducing the student-teacher ratio from 35 to 27 at kindergarten level, from 34 to 26 at primary level and from 16 to 12 in junior high school. The impact of this increased teacher deployment was unfortunately not felt in urban classrooms where infrastructure remained stagnant. For instance, the average basic school class size in the Greater Accra region is 50 students, and the average class sizes in many districts range from 60 and above.

Asare underlined that the reliance on irregular activity-based financing and members' capacity gaps in appreciating emerging dynamics in the education commercialisation landscape remain key challenges that still need to be overcome for CAPCOE's advocacy to make a greater impact.

The research therefore recommends:

- The development of a new medium-term advocacy strategy and plans in line with emerging issues in the commercialisation landscape and the new medium development term-plan (2022-2025) of the Ministry of Education.
- Regular project-based funding for the medium-term advocacy plan.
- Capacity enhancement of members in emerging issues related to commercialisation in the education sector, while re-strategising media and partner engagement.

4. Education unions on the move to rebuild in Asia-Pacific

The 9th Education International Asia-Pacific (EIAP) Regional Conference “Rebuilding the Asia-Pacific: Educators and their unions at the forefront towards a sustainable future” provided education trade unionists in the region and beyond with an extraordinary opportunity to connect, exchange experiences, new perspectives, fresh ideas, and delve deeper into achieving decent working conditions for all education sector employees, quality education for all children as well as sustainable and a just future for all.

From 18 to 20 October 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, union delegates from the Asia-Pacific region used many networking opportunities, listened to inspiring high-level presentations, and participated in in-depth sessions on key issues such as union renewal, climate change, gender equality, human and trade union rights, education financing, digitalisation, and innovation. The conference was preceded by a full day of pre-conference events dedicated to issues of women, higher education, climate change education, and youth in trade unions.

On Day 1, participants were welcomed by leaders of Cambodian education unions. Raising awareness about their situation, Ouk Chayavy, President of the Cambodia Independent Teachers

Association (CITTA), called for the reinstatement of 11 CITA members and the release of 5 jailed local unionists.

In his welcoming address, the Chairperson of the EIAP Regional Committee, Masaki Okajima of the Japan Teachers' Union, stressed that, after years of pandemic, it appears clearly that "online education cannot fully recover the benefits of school education. Schools are crucial to emotional, social, mental, and physical development." He also stressed that teacher wellbeing is directly connected to student wellbeing.

Governments must take immediate bold action to ensure quality education

"The notion that technology is a 'magic bullet' is misguided at best. It simply opens the door for profit-driven ed-tech companies more interested in data mining and their bottom line, than in quality education for all," Education International's President Susan Hopgood noted in her opening speech.

She said that "all teachers must have decent salaries, recognition, professional autonomy, and quality professional development. Governments must take bold action now."

Concerning the challenge to promote unionism among educators, she stressed that, "as leaders in our unions, our voices matter and they must be raised. We must confidently realise our own powerful presence, our own unique credibility to organise, to mobilise to fight disinformation and all anti-democratic forces."

In his remarks, Graeme Buckley, director of the Decent Work Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific within the International Labour Organization's Asia-Pacific office, deplored that "in many places, rights have been eroded, or voices dismissed in ways that are not constructive, and not conducive to social dialogue. That is where union action is critical: critical for putting teachers at the centre of transformative education, but critical also in defending the rights of workers. How trade unions respond to the challenges and the changes will determine the future of education."

In her video message to the conference, Ethel Agnes P Valenzuela, Director of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, maintained that "the climate crisis is also our education crisis. Education is also the main solution. We should take advantage of these opportunities to strengthen the competencies of teachers and school leaders to move towards resilience and sustainability in education systems across the region."

For Shoya Yoshida, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation's Asia Pacific Region, "trade unions must go beyond traditional trade unionism and must have the potential to work with various stakeholders in society, who place the greatest emphasis on decent work".

He went on to call on Education International "to play a crucial role," as "working conditions in your sector are directly linked to the quality of education and therefore the collective bargaining of your affiliates is relevant not only to the interests of teachers but also students, children, future generations, and society as a whole".

Teachers and students are at the forefront of democratic struggles

In his keynote address, Education International's General Secretary David Edwards emphasised that, in the EIAP region, teachers and students are at the forefront of democratic struggles. "The fight is

on. We know this is not simply a crisis for education. It's a crisis for democracy. Of course, open and free countries offer a better chance for people to live useful lives than closed dictatorships do. But democracy must be fierce. It must be organized to defeat its opponents. For democracy to thrive, we must fight. This means identifying institutions working against us. It means leveraging our power to control these institutions, to make these institutions work for our students and for our planet. Teachers have long been out front and in the lead."

On specific challenges the education trade union movement faces, he said that "public investment in a strong public sector is the only way to ensure that we get back on track for achieving inclusive and equitable education. Education International has been a leader in the effort to increase education investment via equitable, and effective taxation, calling on governments to step up and invest in teachers and education systems."

Edwards also announced: "On International Education Day, January 24, we will launch a campaign calling on all governments to invest in the future, invest in educators and education. I believe that together, as a united global union movement we can change the narrative and ensure that every government finally recognises that money spent on our profession (on our salaries, support, professional development and ensuring our wellbeing) is not a cost but a vital investment. This is how we rebuild education."

Developing the campaign strategy in the coming months, Education International is consulting with colleagues across all regions. "We must be out in front of this movement for change. This is no longer about persistence; it's about prevailing over the special interests. We are no longer rising to the challenges presented to us, we are raising a movement to meet the moment. For our students, for our planet, for our profession," Edwards concluded.

Asia-Pacific education unions embarked on a renewal journey

Anand Singh, EIAP Chief Regional Coordinator, reported on the work of the EIAP Regional Office for the past five years and the vision for the region as it embarks on a renewal journey.

He said that the reporting period is marked by the continuing chronic underfunding of education and expanding commercialisation and privatisation in/of education and public services, and by the impact of these conditions which were worsened by the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Education International and its unions in the Asia-Pacific persevered in supporting their members and in upholding the rights and wellbeing of educators and learners.

While it was an uncertain time of health and safety restrictions, almost universal school closures, and major shifts in how societies work, educators and their unions adapted and innovated to continue to promote and protect inclusive quality public education for all, advance the status and rights of teachers and education personnel, defend their trade union rights and professional freedoms, and build the collective strength and capacity to combat the persistent neoliberal and anti-union threats to public education.

"Amid this crisis in democracy, EIAP will continue advancing Education International's campaign for rights in the Asia-Pacific region: encouraging educators and their unions to participate in political and civil society actions, continue resisting authoritarian policies and work with civic-oriented networks to

lobby for a repeal of autocratic decisions, especially in education,” according to Singh.

Read the full report [here](#).

Post-pandemic education recovery and the future of work in education

Conference Day 2 opened with a panel entitled “Post-Pandemic Education Recovery and the Future of Work in Education”, moderated by Education International’s President Susan Hoggood. This plenary dove deep into the broader multi-sectoral interlinkages beyond education and included social protection, environment, rights, and solidarity, and focused on actions needed to ensure holistic and inclusive recovery.

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary Sharan Burrow reaffirmed ITUC's support for climate education: “We know that the climate crisis requires the strength of educators to be at the forefront of demanding just transition, where people and planet are put at the heart of all public policy. Your support, your demand for compulsory climate education is so important, and I am so pleased to be able to commit the ITUC to backing that global campaign”.

Apolinar Tolentino, regional representative of the BWI - the Global Union Federation grouping free and democratic unions with members in the Building, Building Materials, Wood, Forestry and Allied sectors - appealed to the conference delegates to actively defend democracy through its resolutions and plans of action. “State repression is happening not only in Myanmar. It is happening in the Philippines, in Cambodia, in Hong Kong. Without democracy, we cannot survive as a trade union movement. We will work with you together to ensure that the movement will survive by defending democracy.”

Meera Chandran, Assistant Professor at Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India, also presented the key results of their research on the impact of COVID-19 on education and teaching in the Asia-Pacific. Among other observations, she noted that “the topmost concern for many teachers was the lack of interaction with co-workers and their students. This was even more important than concerns about increased workload, which was considerable. Thus says a lot about the relational nature of teachers’ work.”

Participants broke out into sub-regional sessions: North Asia, South Asia, West Asia, Southeast Asia and Pacific.

Later, they split up into breakout sessions on the following themes: Invest in teachers, invest in education towards sustainable recovery; Defending human and trade union rights and democracy; Educators toward a just transition; Promoting inclusive recovery.

Getting ready to meet future challenges

The final day of the 9th #EIAP2022 Regional Conference began with a panel on “Education Unions Preparing to Meet Future Challenges”, moderated by Education International’s General Secretary David Edwards.

For Correna Haythorpe, Federal President of the Australian Education Union, “hope is essential to what we do, in our unions, and for our members. And it is very natural for us as teachers because we

have a fundamental belief in a better world – one that our students we go on to create, and one that we hope to shape through them.”

Highlighting the importance of giving youth and women access to leadership opportunities and platforms, Unifah Rosyidi, President of the *Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia*, said: “The most important thing is the leadership. I am now very happy because from the grassroots to the top level, so many young women are involved.”

Monika Sharma, Vice-Chairperson of the Women’s Wing of the All India Primary Teachers Federation, emphasised how unionists can benefit most from new opportunities for connectivity that arose since the pandemic. “Because of the sudden shift of education to online platforms, we teachers and student had to learn technology. At first it was a headache for all of us, but now we are taking advantage of it. As unionists, now we are able to organise any meeting, anytime, anywhere, in less time and with no expenditure. With the help of this new knowledge, we are now more comfortable being connected.”

Talking about the large proportion of youth and women at the helm of her union, Tsetsegmaa Gendenjamts, International Secretary of the Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Unions, stressed: “Out of 102 members of our executive board, more than 81% are women and 33% are youth. The Youth Standing Committee has 12 members and among them, five representatives are from secondary schools, three from kindergartens, two from universities and 1 from a rural area.”

Andy Tosasai of the Solomon Island National Teachers Association explained how during his term as president, the union resisted the downward trend in union membership. “The challenge of increasing and maintaining membership is a huge one. This year we have managed to increase the number of members and change the tide. This comes from the strengthening of the networks’ communication systems and recruitment and advocacy. Recruitment is an engagement that must be embraced to achieve increasing membership, regardless of the working environment. Recruitment should focus on the newly employed and young teachers.”

Conference’s resolutions adopted

Seven resolutions were adopted by delegates during the conference:

1. [Resolution on Solidarity with Iranian Teachers, Trade Unionists, and Protests](#)
2. [Resolution on Restrictions on Teachers’ Civil and Political Rights in the Republic of Korea](#)
3. [Resolution to Protect, Defend, and Promote Academic Freedom](#)
4. [Resolution on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
5. [Resolution on Gender Equality: Women in Education and their Unions](#)
6. [Resolution on the conference theme: “Rebuilding the Asia-Pacific: Educators and Their Unions at the Forefront Towards a Sustainable Future”](#)
7. [Resolution on the Climate Crisis](#)

The conference’s work finished with delegates welcoming [new members of the EIAP Regional Committee](#) and thanking the outgoing chairperson of the committee, Masaki Okajima, for his contribution and outstanding leadership of the region.

For more information on the conference, click [here](#).

5. Francophone education unions want to put governments back on track to achieve quality education

The Comité syndical francophone de l'éducation et de la formation (CSFEF), which brings together trade union representatives of French-speaking organisations affiliated to Education International, held its 18th CSFEF meeting in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 13 to 15 October. The debates focused, among other things, on the conditions for trade union activity, gender equality and the right of all to quality education.

Women's pre-meeting

For the first time at a CSFEF meeting, a [women's pre-meeting](#) was held before the main event, with 25 participants.

They recommended:

- Formalising the networking begun for this meeting by setting up a CSFEF “women’s” group; and
- Keeping this group going through online meetings, information sharing and exchanges of experience, tools for the promotion of girls' and women's rights in education, at work and their participation in trade unions.

PASEC Analysis

One of the round tables, on the [Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems](#) (PASEC) of the Conference of Ministers of Education of the States and Governments of the Francophonie (CONFEMEN), aroused a lot of interest.

In his presentation on PASEC 2019, the CONFEMEN representative, Konan Noël Kouassi, recalled that, at the request of the CSFEF, an Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee was set up. The CSFEF was able to delegate two representatives.

At the first meeting of this committee, a charter was adopted to ensure that the data from the PASEC survey, which now includes an evaluation of teachers, cannot be used for purposes other than the intended aim of improving education systems. This ethical charter stipulates that the survey should be anonymous, will not identify teachers or schools, and that the results should not be used to denigrate or sanction the teaching profession.

A second meeting of the Ethics Committee took place after the announcement of the results of the PASEC report on 21 December 2020 in Dakar, Senegal, to consider how to disseminate the results of this study. The CSFEF gave assurances that the data would remain anonymous and could not be used to sanction teachers. If the dissemination of the data were to enable a country or a group of researchers to identify teachers or groups of teachers, the committee should be convened.

In view of the education unions' strong expectation of social dialogue on the outcome of this survey and the recommendations in line with trade union demands, the CONFEMEN representative guaranteed that the objective is to ensure that initial and in-service teacher training is better adapted to educational needs.

He added that another important factor is having the satisfactory material conditions (premises, staff, teaching tools) with which to exercise one's profession, and that this is far from being the case in several countries.

The CONFEMEN representative also stressed the need to pay teachers properly for their work and to provide career prospects, which should be a key element for the quality of the education system.

Finally, he recognised the need to start learning in the child's mother tongue, not in French, for greater efficiency and success.

Statement ahead of the Francophonie Summit

The delegates also unanimously adopted a [Statement ahead of the Francophonie Summit](#) to be held on 19 and 20 November 2022 in Djerba, Tunisia. CSFEF President Jean-Hervé Cohen noted that States make commitments that are then not kept, so the role of trade unions will also be to ensure that the official statement that will conclude the summit of heads of state and government is implemented in practice.

CSFEF Secretary General Luc Allaire regretted that “we are clearly moving away from Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all. Because of the economic and energy crisis, there are many cuts in the budgets allocated to education. This is dramatic. We can only observe and deplore a shortage of teaching and educational support staff.”

Condemning the creeping privatisation of the education sector, he noted that “less public money in education means more private actors in the sector. This leads to more inequality, more inequity in access to quality education. Moreover, the educational staff hired by private institutions are often underpaid, underqualified and their unionisation is much more difficult.”

This is why, in their statement, the French-speaking education unions ask the Heads of State and Government to commit, as the World Bank has done, to freezing all direct and indirect investments in private for-profit education, in pre-school, primary and secondary education.

The Meeting also elected the [members of the CSFEF Executive Board](#) for a period of two years. This was an opportunity to thank the outgoing members, in particular Jean-Hervé Cohen who is stepping down as chair. He welcomed the election of the new Chair, Claire Guéville (SNES-FSU, France). It should be noted that, for the first time in its history, the CSFEF will be chaired by a woman and its Bureau will be composed of a majority of women: nine women and six men.

November

Highlights

1. 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

From the 25th of November to the 10th of December, Education International mobilised to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Related Items

#16Days | **Woman, life, freedom!**

The death of Jina Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish-Iranian woman has sparked nationwide protests in Iran since September. Educators and students were amongst the first to go on [strike](#) in protest against the Islamic regime's brutality and in support of Iranians fighting for their freedom.

As the voice of teachers and education workers around the world, Education International has [expressed solidarity](#) with the Iranian people and condemned the human rights violations of the Islamic regime. The call was echoed at the international level by the [International Trade Union Confederation](#). At the national level, despite union efforts to [raise awareness](#) of the issue, Iranian-Dutch educator and unionist Khazar Lotfi reflects on how the societal response has fallen short of truly supporting the female-led resistance in Iran and the need to amplify it.

Education matters and it should never be misused to oppress or force people in any type of way. However, this and worse is precisely what is happening in Iran where the educational community is the target of repression by the Islamic regime. Schools are not protected and educational environments that should be safe havens of knowledge and growth have turned into battlegrounds by the regime's forces who viciously beat down peaceful protesters, no matter their age.

"It is scary", my cousin tells me. On the rare occasion that she manages to circumvent the digital restrictions of the authorities, she shares her worries and hopes for the country and its future. One of her current personal struggles is her twelve-year-old son who keeps insisting that they "do something" because the whole country is on fire. Not unlike many other children in Iran, he feels an urgency to contribute to the current uprisings. And not unlike many other parents in Iran, my cousin is worried for his life. According to activists and lawyers, at least [700 teenagers have been detained](#) so far and more than [50 have been killed](#). Education Minister Yousef Nouri admitted that an undisclosed number of children are being held in "[psychology centers](#)" for reform and reeducation, which are notoriously abusive. The situation in my homeland is dire, to say the least.

Ever since Jina Mahsa Amini's death over two months ago, the Iranian people have been protesting to reclaim their freedom from the Islamic regime that has been holding the country hostage since 1979. The 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman died in custody after suffering severe abuse by the morality police in Tehran at the beginning of September. Jina was arrested for wearing the hijab inappropriately according to the theocratic regime's stern laws. Her death

enraged Iranians who have been deprived of basic human rights for decades and sparked nationwide protests.

My cousin and I share the same blood but I have been spared the same struggles since my parents fled the Islamic Republic when I was three. I wonder if I would have been as indifferent to the country's state as most of my colleagues and acquaintances are in the Netherlands were it not for my heritage. At the same time, I am also an educator and as such, I shiver when hearing [reports of children being killed or seeing videos of students being attacked, beaten, and arrested on campus](#). I am reminded of our empty classrooms during covid, how eerie it was to walk through abandoned school buildings, and how saddened I felt to see a school without students. But at least I knew my students were free from violence. How terrible it must be to be an educator in Iran right now and fear for your students' lives.

The Cooperative Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Associations was the first to openly [call upon educators and students to go on strike](#) in protest against the Islamic regime's brutality. In an attempt to prevent the world from bearing witness to their horrific acts, the authorities in Iran have additionally imposed [digital blackouts](#). This increases the urgency of international attention and awareness regarding the awful situation there. The current [death toll is estimated at more than 400](#) and approximately [14,000 detained](#) protesters are at risk of receiving the death penalty after [227 Iranian parliamentarians issued a statement calling for the execution of protesters](#).

It has been over seven years since I last visited my country of birth, hugged my aunts, or hung out with my cousins. Now, every image I see from Iran includes people that remind me of them. When I see girls burning their headscarves I am reminded of the time my cousin got arrested in the heat of summer for inappropriate attire (her trousers were too short, showing her ankles); when I see people dancing openly in the streets, I am reminded of the weddings I attended where all guests broke the law's gender-segregation rules by dancing together and celebrating in secret while fearing a disruption by the regime's officers; and when I see youth playing cards as a way of protesting it reminds me of my religious grandmother shuffling a deck of them to keep herself busy during the lonely hours she spends at home since all of her children fled the country in the 90s.

The female-led resistance in Iran is standing up against the misogynistic and violently repressive apparatus of the totalitarian regime but only a few people and media outlets in the West have adequately reported about them or their diaspora's massive protests abroad, like the [historical one in Berlin](#) where at least 80,000 people gathered to express their support for the protestors. Particularly the Netherlands has remained cowardly quiet on the matter. From its ministers to its white feminists the protests have been either reduced to the issue of mandatory hijab in the Islamic republic or simply responded to by empty acts of symbolism, rather than any actual reprimands, neglecting the fact that women's rights are human rights and include more than the mere right to self-determination regarding garments.

I understand that Iran has a complicated history for those who are unfamiliar with it, but as educators, we must educate as well as be educated and, no matter what, always speak up against injustice and oppression. Education matters and it should never be misused to oppress or force people in any type of way. As unionists, we should therefore amplify the voices of the teachers and students in Iran whose freedom and lives are under attack and stand up for their rights. We should listen, read, teach and never hesitate to stand up for what is right and to give

voice to “woman, life, freedom!”

#16Days | I was less afraid of a russian missile than of a russian soldier: Sexual violence as a weapon of war in Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked the beginning of a collective nightmare. Attacks against civilians, including sexual violence against women and girls have been used as part of the campaign of terror to intimidate the population. This first-hand account from Ukraine details the horrors war unleashed but also the unbreakable spirit of Ukrainians fighting for freedom.

The full-scale war in Ukraine has been going on for nine months. The russians [1] were allegedly going to capture most of our country in five days. They did not expect that Ukrainians loved their country and freedom and would not meet them with flowers and warm embraces.

The first days after the 24th of February were like another reality, a nightmare for all Ukrainians. People couldn't accept the fact that their lives changed in one moment, at 5 am when we heard the first sounds of missile strikes and explosions. We couldn't understand why it was happening to us, a peaceful nation, who just wanted to be free and independent.

I have two sons, four years old and 12 months old. My family and both my children spent several weeks after the start of the russian invasion in the basement of our house, together with our neighbours because of the constant shelling. My husband joined the local defence forces. The basement was absolutely unadapted for a long stay: it was February, cold, no beds, no kitchen to prepare food. The explosions outside did not allow us to sleep, the children were scared and cried constantly. It was the worst time, when you didn't know what to do, didn't know what the future may hold, your plans gone up in smoke. These were the feelings of every Ukrainian family, of every Ukrainian woman.

But what scared me the most was when the russian army was 3 kilometres away from our house. We had already heard about their cruelty. The fear for my children was probably the most terrifying and uncontrollable feeling. After the liberation of every new corner of Ukrainian land, every Ukrainian village or town, we see the overwhelming joy of freed people, but we also see the same horrible picture of occupation. Its signs are destruction, murder, and violence. It is painfully clear: the aggressor country widely uses violence against civilians, in particular sexual violence, as a weapon of war. Rape has become a too common practice of the russian occupiers.

In July, after four months of war, the UN reported it had received more than 150 complaints of sexual violence committed by russian troops in Ukraine and this is only the tip of the iceberg. The overwhelming majority of cases remain unreported as victims of sexual violence often refuse to speak to law enforcement agencies. They have experienced severe psychological trauma, so most do not want to recall those terrible events, some are afraid of a possible revenge by occupiers and fear for their relatives who are still under occupation.

Anyone can become a victim of rape in the occupied territories: men, women, even children. There are reported cases of rape at gunpoint in the presence of family members. According to one victim, a russian soldier explained the purpose of sexual violence: “so that Ukrainian women

would not want to have sexual contact with any man, to prevent them from giving birth to Ukrainian children”.

For us this is not just a war, this is genocide. Frankly speaking, after the photos and evidence of what the russians did in the first month of the war in the Kyiv region, I was less afraid of a russian missile than of a russian soldier.

After this nightmare I can't really imagine what psychological wounds caused by russian barbarities our children, our people will carry.

My colleagues from the eastern regions told me about the forced deportations of people, including teachers, and there is official evidence of this. Thousands of people and children have already been taken out of temporarily occupied territories to russian territory illegally, against their will. It's an act of kidnapping by the state. All these are crimes against humanity.

Teachers under occupation are in an extremely difficult situation. The Ukrainian education system is being destroyed in these territories. The “occupation authorities” force teachers to work according to the russian curricula. Teachers are threatened with torture and arrest, for refusing to cooperate with the occupiers. Parents who do not allow their children to go to school are threatened with having their children taken away to boarding institutions. It's hard to believe that this is happening in the centre of Europe in the 21st century.

The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, as many other trade unions in Ukraine, is actively supporting internally displaced people, contributing to humanitarian aid provision and providing assistance to its members in need.

We have no doubt that Ukraine will win and will be peaceful and free again. But the wounds run deep, and the physical and psychological trauma will not disappear overnight. It will take years if not entire lifetimes to come to terms with what we suffered and lost so unfairly. The sexual violence against women and girls, the attacks on civilians, the torture, all the innocent lives lost or changed forever cannot be forgotten. Ukrainian authorities are gathering evidence of war crimes in every newly liberated territory. We call on the international community to recognise russia as terrorist state, to ensure that these crimes do not go unpunished by mounting a determined effort to prosecute the perpetrators and those who unleashed this bloody war to the full extent of international law. Seeing justice done will be the first step towards healing and rebuilding our lives and our country.

This is the author's preferred spelling in sign of protest against the war of aggression on Ukraine.

#16Days | Ending the violence against Indigenous women and girls

The tragedy of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls must not continue to be part of the narrative of Canada. Indigenous women and girls have experienced colonial violence and genocide for hundreds of years and it must end.

[Tina Fontaine](#) was just 14 years old when she went missing in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Three days after she was last seen alive, her young body was pulled from the Red River. [Maisy Odjick](#) was 16 years old and her best friend [Shannon Alexander](#) was 17 years old when they disappeared

from their home community of Kitigan Zibi, a couple hours north of Ottawa, Ontario. They have never been found. [Tammy Nattaway](#), 16 years old, went missing in 2020 from Garden Hill First Nation in northern Manitoba. She also has not been found.

I mention these young women's names because they are the age of students in our classrooms. When I look at my students, I think of all the amazing possibilities for their future. My own daughter was the same age as Tina Fontaine when she died in 2014. I remember [Barbara Kentner](#) who, in 2017, was just 34 years old when she died in Thunder Bay, Ontario, due to complications from injuries she sustained after being hit by a trailer hitch that was thrown from a moving vehicle. I taught Barbara when she was in grade 10. In 1992, [Sandra Johnson](#) was 18 years old when her frozen body was found on a floodway in Thunder Bay. I went to high school with Sandra. These are just a few of the hundreds of names of missing and murdered women and girls. The story continues, and it needs to stop.

The 2004 data from Statistics Canada found that Indigenous women experienced much higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women 15 years and older were 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women. More recent data shows that between 2015 and 2020, Indigenous women accounted for 24 per cent of all female homicide victims in Canada, even though they make up just 5% of the country's female population. The statistics are not improving.

After Tina Fontaine was pulled from Winnipeg's Red River in 2014, Indigenous leaders from across this land, a place that we now know as Canada, rallied to renew calls for an inquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

In September 2016, the Government of Canada launched an entirely independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Over three years, the inquiry travelled across Canada and gathered stories from survivors and family members. In June 2019, the MMIWG National Inquiry released their [final report](#). The report shared findings that many Indigenous people had been stating for decades. We experience persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses, and these are the root cause behind Canada's horrific rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The Inquiry found that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada — [and 16 times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women.](#)"

In 2021, two years after the MMIWG Inquiry Final Report was released, the Government of Canada developed a [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan](#). Progress in addressing the issues has been minimal and painfully slow.

It is important to remember that this was not always part of our story. The tragedy of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2-spirit people is rooted in colonialism and colonial violence. Traditional Indigenous practices were often matriarchal. Women were water carriers and life givers. The sacred understandings of these roles were violated through the experience of colonial genocide on this land. There is much healing that is needed in our communities. I encourage all educators, administrators, superintendents, janitors, education assistants, and anyone else involved in education and schools to be open to understanding what Indigenous people face across Canada and help to educate the youth in our schools. As educators, you can

start by learning about the [National Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action](#). Read the [National Inquiry in Murdered and Missing Women and Girls Final Report and the 231 Calls to Justice](#). Canadians must learn how violence against Indigenous women and girls is part of longstanding colonial policies. It is our responsibility as educators to address the issues and shift the discourse so that all our students have an opportunity to live in communities where they are safe and valued.

#16Days | Brazilian women fighting to protect the Amazon

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international UN Women campaign that has been running since 1991 and which provides an opportunity to reflect on the issue of abuse suffered by women around the world. The campaign runs from 25 November to 10 December and this year it takes on special significance in Brazil. As the four long years of the Jair Bolsonaro administration come to an end, a period in which the environment came under systematic attack and environmental activists were persecuted, it is vital that we remember – and never forget – the struggle of the many women in Brazil who stand tall in defence of Mother Earth.

Nowhere have women played a more prominent role in Brazilian environmental activism than in the protection of the Amazon, the world's largest tropical rainforest. Regarded by many as the lungs of the Earth, it is the stage of a critical fight waged by many female activists in defence of both the rainforest and the Indigenous people that inhabit it. The continuous advance of agriculture, cattle ranching and illegal logging across huge swathes of the rainforest is the result of a deliberate policy implemented by the still-incumbent Brazilian president, a policy that involves the loosening of state control measures and regulatory and legal changes that have enabled the destruction of our greatest environmental asset over these last four years.

Many of the country's female environmental activists have paid the ultimate price for their resistance and many more have been persecuted. Women have always played a significant part in protecting the environment, long before the current president came to power. The death of American nun Dorothy Stang in 2005 at the hands of farmers in the region she chose to live in and defend left an indelible mark on Brazil's environmental struggle, which had now been shaped by her strength. During Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's first term in office, the police and criminal investigators successfully brought her killers to justice. With Lula da Silva returning to power after the 2022 Brazilian elections, the expectation is for the full force of the law to fall once more on those who insist on taking our lives for defending the world around us.

Aside from safeguarding that world, the main concern of Brazil's environmental defenders and activists is to protect their own lives. Many of the country's women and environmental activists experience this fear and anxiety every single day of their lives. It is a constant for anyone fighting to defend the Amazon. While this fear is felt by everybody, it is women who account for most of the victims in a country that has long been afflicted by structural sexism, leading to one of the highest rates of femicide in the world.

The army of female activists combatting the destruction of our planet is large and diverse. It is led by young women, Indigenous women and quilombola (Afro-Brazilian) women, who are the target of choice of people who put personal profit above all else, even if it costs thousands of lives and the very air we all breathe. That is why we must pay lasting tribute to these great women, who

deserve to live in safety. Among them is **Amanda da Cruz Costa**, a Brazilian environmental activist who is making history. A founder of the climate action group Perifa Sustentável Institute, she is a UN Global Compact Youth Adviser, UN Youth Ambassador, TedX Speaker and LinkedIn Top Voice and Creator, and also features on the #ForbesUnder30 list. Her fight is devoted entirely to the climate crisis and environmental racism, advocating for climate justice and sustainability and promoting youth engagement.

Another young female activist is the 21-year-old **Artemisa Xakriabá**, who represents two of the groups most threatened by environmental destruction: young and Indigenous people. Artemisa rose to prominence with a speech at the 2019 Youth Climate Summit. Speaking on behalf of more than 25 million people from the Indigenous communities of the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, she outlined the consequences of climate collapse for Indigenous peoples and the country as a whole. Then there is **Maria do Socorro Silva**, a quilombola (as the members of the communities formed by fugitive slaves in the days of slavery in Brazil are known) fighting against the environmental degradation caused by the largest aluminium refinery in the Amazon, in the Brazilian state of Para.

Also worthy of praise is **Sonia Guajajara**, one of the country's most prominent female Indigenous and environmental leaders. In 2018, she ran for the vice-presidency of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), the first time that an Indigenous person stood for the post. In 2022, she was elected federal Congresswoman for the state of Sao Paulo.

These are just some of the brave women who have taken on the fight to protect the environment. Now that the eyes of the world are on Brazil again following the election of Lula da Silva and considering the vital need to protect the environment in Brazil, particularly the Amazon, it is essential that we also focus our attention on the guarantees that the state must offer its environmental activists. They are driven by an unshakeable belief in justice and have been so cruelly persecuted for years.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign gains strength from women coming forward to the police and from the focus on justice and human rights. A country that damages the environment is also, almost as a matter of course, home to slave labour, child exploitation, abuse, land theft, and many other scourges.

May we protect women from all kinds of violence and safeguard their right to live in a society free of sexism and femicide. And may the fight to end gender-based violence also be embraced by everyone, including men.

#16Days | Using technology to foster meaningful conversations on gender-based violence

Over the past two years, the world has undergone massive changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These abrupt and unpredictable changes have required adjustments to how we work and have challenged us to re-think, re-assess and re-formulate our approaches and engagements. Gender at Work's engagement with Education International on capacity building for education union members was no different.

As the pandemic severely impacted learners, teachers and their organisations worldwide, Education International (EI) and [Gender at Work](#) (G@W) identified both the need and the

opportunity to take forward our work on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in the context where in-person meetings or workshops were suspended because of COVID-19. Therefore, along with EI and its member unions, we asked ourselves, "What will it take for education union leaders in Africa to use online approaches for strengthening the work of addressing SRGBV in the time of COVID?".

In 2021-22, Education International, with the technical support of Gender at Work and financial contribution from the National Education Association (USA), implemented [online learning circles](#) over a nine-month period to build further momentum among education unions in Africa to take action to end school-related gender-based violence. This initiative built on the previous skills and experiences gained by EI member organisations in the Africa region and the EI Africa Regional Office as part of the ' [Education Unions Take Action to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence](#) ' programme (2016-2019). The online initiative sought both to enable participants to update their understanding of how SRGBV was affecting their members and learners in the context of school closures and reopening(s) and to enhance the skills of union leaders to identify new strategies to address these challenges.

[We know from experience](#) that it is not easy to talk about gender-based violence in and around schools. Stories of bullying, harassment, corporal punishment or sexual assault, whether experienced by ourselves or others, can leave us feeling angry, fearful, hopeless or ashamed. As such, grappling with the complexities of SRGBV online was a puzzle, particularly in a changing world. It was tough to create a safe, open, vulnerable space virtually where people (union members and facilitators alike) felt held, comforted and heard. However, we quickly learnt that working with feminist principles of active listening, respect, ownership, and mutual trust goes a long way.

Further, to answer the above framing question, in our engagements with the union members, the approach we used is based on the idea that humans learn at various equally valued dimensions. They learn conceptually from the head level, from how they feel (heart level) regarding a particular issue, and from testing ideas and doing what they do to reach their goals from (feet level).

We focused on touching people at the heart level and creating spaces of mutual trust to foster conversation, sharing and story-telling. Due to COVID-19, [different forms of SRGBV have emerged or have been exacerbated in Africa](#) - such as pandemic-related lock-down trauma, alarming increase in early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and other contextual COVID-19 issues that have brought new dimensions to school-related gender-based violence. Unearthing these issues and learning and talking about them was essential. Knowing, understanding and grappling with the complexities of COVID-19 and school-related gender-based violence can stimulate and empower teachers, education support staff and union activists to mobilise and take action in their own contexts. As Rex Fyles, a G@W colleague says, "[At Gender at Work, we have seen this over and over again: sharing stories and connecting with others immediately spark action among unionist activists and educators](#)".

As a part of this initiative, in July-August 2021, Africa Women's Education Network members and the network's sub-regional structures, along with the EI Africa Regional Office staff met for three online webinars or 'Learning Circles'. They were conducted in three different language groups –

English, French and Portuguese. In a second phase, each sub-regional women's network organised webinars according to the particular needs and interests of the participating countries and unions. These webinars were planned and co-facilitated by the Gender at Work team and network coordinators. A final learning encounter brought back together the participants from the three initial 'learning circles' to share the insights gained and ideas for future action between the three different language groups. Over the course of this initiative, 28 women network coordinators, approximately 1,230 union leaders and members representing 27 unions in 21 countries in Africa participated in online webinars. All of these online workshops were facilitated via Zoom, an online video-conferencing platform, due to its availability and access globally and the unique cross-interpretation features it offers.

As such, technology was crucial to enable active participation. While the delivery of the capacity-building process was limited to Zoom, we used WhatsApp groups in tandem with the meetings to facilitate participation for those with limited internet access or bandwidth. All the interventions that emerged during the live Zoom sessions were simultaneously shared on project-related WhatsApp groups. The responses from participants who couldn't stay connected during the live sessions were shared in the Zoom room chat box. This approach ensured that participants were connected during the live session despite technological challenges and that they felt heard. Further, while we had simultaneous interpretation into English, French and Portuguese during the cross-regional workshops, the G@W team also facilitated different sections in different languages so that the participants didn't have to rely on the interpretation throughout the session or experience one-sound fatigue, which often comes with listening to workshops through the interpreter's voice. Multi-lingual facilitation also created an open space for sharing in the participants' preferred language. Throughout this initiative, we learnt, reflected and adapted as we went along.

This initiative has been a significant learning opportunity for everyone involved. At the beginning of 2021, we started this process with uncertainty about the progress of the pandemic or around creating safe, vulnerable online spaces that would foster deep conversations among union members on the complexities around COVID-19 and school-related gender-based violence. We learnt on the go and through our engagements with the network coordinators and EI member organisations who worked tirelessly to ensure meaningful collaborations to strengthen the work of addressing school-related gender-based violence during COVID-19. The experience of using online platforms will remain a key education and organising tool moving forward.

2. Teach for the Planet

In 2022, Teach for the Planet included a wealth of campaign activities advancing quality climate education and a just transition for all.

Education – a crucial piece of the climate justice and gender equality puzzle

For decades we have mobilised across the world and have worked towards gender equality, and increasingly over the last few years to address climate injustice. However, both fights have often been waged separately with far too little attention given to the critical areas where they overlap.

This International Women's Day puts a welcome spotlight on the common ground: on the ways in which climate change disproportionately impacts women and girls and on how advancing gender equality can empower women to take the lead in the fight for climate justice. In this complex landscape of intersecting vulnerabilities, education is a vital part of any effective solution.

Victims many times over: Climate and gender injustices

The gendered impact of climate change is not anecdotal. It is well documented and frankly, infuriating. The countries that contribute least to the problem shoulder the heaviest burden of the climate emergency, while the countries that created the problem and got rich in the process, can afford the luxury of a piecemeal response. Women and girls from marginalised backgrounds and in the poorest communities are the most vulnerable and feel the impact most acutely, not least because of the traditional gender roles they have been assigned since birth.

We are not short of examples. Floods often mean schools are either destroyed or become difficult to access. Longer journeys to school expose girls to sexual violence and harassment and often result in them dropping out. In times of climate-induced crises, such as a natural disaster, drought, or resource scarcity, girls are more likely than boys to be taken out of school to complete household chores like collecting water or taking care of siblings. Failing crops push families into poverty and many marry off their young daughters to have one less mouth to feed. Young brides become young mothers with little means to support their children and with no way of returning to their classrooms. Food insecurity disproportionately impacts [pregnant women](#). In Malawi, it is [estimated](#) that 1.5 million girls are at risk of becoming child brides due to the impacts of extreme weather events caused by climate change. Impoverished girls and women are often forced into sex work in the aftermath of a natural disaster, as [documented](#) in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008. After the 2009 bushfires in Australia, there was an [increase](#) in domestic violence against women and children.

Natural disasters such as floods, fires, and hurricanes caused by climate change displace millions of people annually from their homes, and 80% of those displaced by the effects of climate change are women. This forced migration often places women in precarious, unsafe, and unstable conditions. Migrant women are more likely to face poverty and are less likely to receive a quality education. When displaced, women and girls face increased vulnerability to human trafficking and sexual assault in overcrowded shelters.

The interplay of climate factors and patriarchal social norms, such as male ownership of land and assets, result in a feminisation of poverty, with women and girls – especially the most marginalised, such as Indigenous, disabled and/or racialised women and girls - locked into a never-ending cycle of deprivation and hardship.

While we must invest in girls' education, we must also transform education. In a time of climate emergency, quality climate education that is also gender-responsive is as essential as teaching reading and writing.

Harnessing the power of education for gender equality and climate action

How do we break this cycle? No matter how complex the solution, education – the greatest equaliser – is a fundamental part of it. The data shows that educated women and girls who are

involved in decision-making are a formidable force for change. They help their families and communities build resilience to economic and climate shocks, they accelerate recovery from climate catastrophes and adaptation to the effects of climate change. They are an immense source of untapped human potential. Empowering women and girls, giving them a voice will make the difference between success or failure both in terms of achieving gender equality and achieving climate justice.

While we must invest in girls' education, we must also transform education. In a time of climate emergency, quality climate education that is also gender-responsive is as essential as teaching reading and writing.

The [Education International Manifesto on Climate Change Education for All](#) outlines our profession's vision of how we can truly harness the power of education in the fight against climate change. Quality climate education must be based on science. It must be taught across all levels of education and across all subjects, recognising and explaining the varied social impacts of the climate crisis, including its disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable groups, women and girls among them. Curricula must be gender-responsive and take an intersectional approach. Climate change education must foster critical thinking and civic engagement, empowering our students to consider just and sustainable alternatives, and take informed action in their communities and beyond.

To ensure a just transition to a green economy, our education systems must also be updated so that students are equipped with the skills they need for future careers in a sustainable world.

It is thus vital that all students, all girls everywhere have access to quality climate education.

Women and girls: the missing voices in leadership

Women and girls are too often not given a seat at the international, national, or local tables, despite being key leaders in the movement for climate justice, and oftentimes the first responders to climate disasters.

Last November at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, which was the most well-attended COP in history despite COVID-19 restrictions, the average country delegation comprised 65% men to 35% women, a [regression](#) compared to the three prior COPs. While gender balance at COP has become gradually less unequal - COP1 was 88% male to 12% female - this situation remains a stark example of the systematic silencing of women's voices.

In a discussion with EI Deputy General Secretary, Haldis Holst, Vanessa Nakate, a young Ugandan climate activist, explained the critical links between women's leadership, girls' education, and the climate emergency:

“We know that if women are left on the side when it comes to decisions that pertain to our living on and survival of this planet, then we are bound to fail...No team can play with just half of the players, in football or any other game. Women and girls constitute more than half of the world's population, [but] if it's only men that are making decisions for our climate, then it's just half of the team, and half of the team cannot win. That's why it's important to have women on board in these leadership places and one of the ways that we can make that happen is have more girls educated and more women empowered [through education].”

When girls and women fully enjoy their human right to quality education, and when they are included in decision making at all levels, their families and communities benefit.

It is time to centre an intersectional approach to the challenges of gender inequality, insufficient quality education, and the climate change emergency for a more equitable and sustainable tomorrow. Partnerships must be formed with traditionally marginalised groups including women for climate resilient development. Women and girls in all their diversity must have access to the resources and tools they need to live safely in an environmentally sustainable world, and to lead fulfilling lives.

Gender equality and climate justice in the spotlight at the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) opened on March 14 at UN headquarters in New York, as well as online across the world, with a focus on “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”.

Delegates from Education International and other Global Unions are taking part in the Session and are calling for a gender-transformative and inclusive just transition for a green and caring world.

The gendered impact of the climate crisis

While the climate crisis affects everyone, its impacts are not felt equally. The countries that contributed least to the problem are now facing its gravest consequences. Women and girls from marginalised backgrounds and from the poorest communities are most vulnerable and feel the impact most acutely, not least because of the traditional gender roles that have been assigned since birth.

The gendered impact of the climate emergency is well documented. For example, 80% of those displaced by the effects of climate change are women. Systemic gender inequality means that women and girls have limited access to resources and decision-making power, which makes them less able to withstand and recover from climate-related disasters, and prevents them from accessing basic services, including healthcare, education, housing, and other recovery services.

Climate-induced disasters and climate-related conflict also exacerbate gender-based violence against women and girls, which maintains and reinforces gendered power imbalances and is a major obstacle to achieving gender equality.

In this complex landscape of intersecting vulnerabilities, the fight for gender equality and the fight for climate justice cannot be waged separately. Education unions at the CSW are working to highlight the critical role of education in achieving both gender equality and climate justice.

“It is not enough for education to be high-quality and accessible. It must be publicly funded and free. This must become a focal point in accelerating progress towards gender equality.”

Haldis Holst, Education International Deputy General Secretary

Advancing gender equality and climate justice through education

The Education International delegation at the CSW66 brings together 84 education union representatives from 32 countries. Educators are advocating for quality climate change education to be integrated “into curricula as a compulsory subject at all levels of education, including early childhood education, technical and vocational education, further and higher education, and adult education”.

Education and its critical role in a just transition to a green economy is highlighted in the [Global Unions' statement to the CSW66](#): “Education must be transformed to support the fight against climate change and to support a Just Transition. Students have a right to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to sustain our world for present and future generations, and to receive an education that prepares them for the world of work in a green economy.”

Speaking at a parallel event organised by the Global Unions, Dianne Woloschuk, Chair of the EI Status of Women Committee, presented EI's [Teach for the Planet campaign](#) and its [Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All](#), which outlines the profession's vision on how we can truly harness the power of education to strengthen a progressive and justice-based response to climate change. She stated:

“Our belief is that quality climate education, which is based on science and addresses the ethical, cultural, political, social, and economic dimensions of climate change, will equip students with the knowledge and tools they need to respond. They will gain critical thinking and team-building skills that they will need – now and in the future - to address the challenges brought about by the climate crisis.”

However, in order to fully realise the transformative potential of education, all barriers in terms of access to education must be removed. EI's Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst highlighted this point in her opening remarks to a CSW66 side event on securing quality education, 21st century skills and the successful transition from school to work in a digital world for women and girls:

“It is not enough for education to be high-quality and accessible. It must be publicly funded and free. This must become a focal point in accelerating progress towards gender equality.”

EI's Deputy General Secretary also stressed the imperative need to build resilient public education systems that can truly guarantee and deliver on the commitment of the universal right to education:

“The Covid-19 pandemic and the onslaught of climate disasters are showing us just what is at stake when education systems are not financed in ways that make them robust enough to withstand shocks and crises: the right to quality education that is publicly funded and free becomes an empty pipe dream for millions, particularly the most marginalised learners, such as girls.”

Global Unions at the CSW66

Delegations from Global Unions are representing over 80 million women workers from across the world at the CSW66. The [Global Unions' statement to the Commission on the Status of Women is available here](#).

The Global Unions are also hosting and participating in a number of parallel events. [Click here to see the full programme of Global Union events at the CSW66](#) and join the online discussions.

[Sign and share the EI Manifesto on Quality Climate Education for All](#) and join us in advocating for a gender-transformative and inclusive just transition for a green and caring world.

Education in climate policies: Are countries in North Africa and the Middle East making the grade?

Which countries are prioritising quality climate education for all? On March 31st, Education International presented our analysis of the extent to which education is included in MENA countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

This side event of the [Middle East and North Africa Climate Week 2022](#) discussed the role of education in the fight against the climate crisis and included a dialogue about how countries can step up their climate education ambition.

Analysis of newly submitted NDCs globally shows that despite the urgency of the climate crisis, countries around the world are failing to make the grade on climate education, a fundamental component of a sustainable future and a commitment made in Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, Article 6 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) work programme.

How do countries in the MENA region compare to the rest of the world on 6 criteria: policy ambition, pervasiveness, inclusiveness, quality, climate justice and system strengthening? Are their NDCs recognising the role of key stakeholders such as teachers and students when it comes to including education in climate policies and ensuring quality climate education for all? What can be learnt from countries that scored relatively high on the EI climate education report card?

This session explored these questions through an interactive online side event that highlighted the importance of harnessing the transformative, yet under-recognised role of education in addressing climate change.

Speakers included:

- **Hassan Ahmad**, President, Independent Teachers Union of Egypt (ISTT), Egypt and ACCRS Committee
- **Abdulawahed Hajji**, President, Kurdistan Teacher Union (KTU), Iraq.
- **Loay Naser**, International Relations Secretary, General Union of Workers in Teaching (GUWT), Jordan.
- **Christina Kwauk**, researcher, Kwauk & Associates.

Watch the event below:

- With interpretation in English:
- With interpretation in Arabic:

Iraq: Kurdistan's educators advance climate change education

The Kurdistan Teachers' Union (KTU) has called for the government of this Iraqi region to provide more funding and pay more attention to climate change and its impact on people. The KTU organised a series of informational seminars for its members during the national week dedicated to tackling climate change (25 April – 1 May).

The Kurdistan Teachers' Union (KTU) has called for the government of this Iraqi region to provide more funding and pay more attention to climate change and its impact on people. The KTU organised a series of informational seminars for its members during the national week dedicated to tackling climate change (25 April – 1 May).

Over 100 teachers participated in these events held in the KTU branches of the Halabja, Duhok, Kirkuk, and Raparin districts.

KTU President Abdalwahed M. Haje explained that the main causes of climate change and its serious consequences on the future of humanity were highlighted in detail during the events.

The seminars were run by climate experts, university teachers, and instructors.

Governmental carelessness and inaction

"Participants criticised the Government of Kurdistan for being careless because, as the main authority controlling and running the region, it has not paid enough attention to this crucial subject. It has not even allocated a budget to this issue," Haje outlined.

He said that vegetation covering Kurdistan is shrinking annually, leading to the region becoming a desert in the near future.

Haje also highlighted the disproportionate number of cars in Kurdistan – its population of approximately six million own two million cars. The government has not limited the importation of cars, which has allowed this situation to arise, he said. In addition, air pollution from factories is not strictly controlled, meaning that carbon dioxide emissions cannot be reduced. Significantly, the seminars emphasised that the subjects of environmental pollution and climate change have to be main subjects in the curricula. Students must be taught how to deal with these topics as well as possible.

Trade union proposals to mitigate the impact of climate change

During the seminars, participants identified the steps that need to be taken to prevent and reduce environmental pollution and climate change:

1. Insert climate change into the curricula so that it is taught at all education levels.
2. Open a special department within the College of Education training teachers to generate experts in this crucial field.
3. Pay more attention to the crisis facing vegetation cover. A planned 'green chain' of vegetation must be built around the cities.
4. Collect rain for use as about 40 billion cubic meters of freshwater are wasted every year and go directly to seas and rivers.

5. Reduce the use of private cars and build metros and roads for general transportation.
6. Use clean energy sources to produce electric power, instead of gasoline, currently a common way of providing electricity in Kurdistan. According to the union, gasoline releases 100 tonnes of CO₂ gas in the atmosphere every single second, largely explaining why the environment of cities has been completely damaged and polluted.
7. Prevent illegal refineries: tens of which are still functioning without any consideration for safety conditions, the union says.

To achieve these crucial aims, KTU is determined to continue organising similar seminars to prepare a comprehensive plan to present to the Government of Kurdistan, Haje stressed.

EI's 4th World Women's Conference rallies the power of women for change

A record number of women education unionists came together online for the 4th Education International World Women's Conference held from the 13 to 16th of June. Bringing together a profession largely dominated by women in many parts of the world, the Conference focused on mobilising and using women's power for change.

Education union power is women's power

In her opening speech, Susan Hopgood, Education International President, called on women education unionists everywhere to take action in order to counter the alarming developments of the last few years. From worsening gender inequalities caused by the pandemic, to sexual violence used as a weapon of war against women in Ukraine or the Democratic Republic of Congo, or the alarming rates of femicide in parts of Central and Latin America, the world is backsliding when it comes to women's rights and gender equality.

"As trade unionists, we recognise the importance of collective power: we build solidarity between workers so we can mobilise, organise and harness our collective power to defend and promote our rights. As education unions, we also defend and promote the rights of our students. In this Conference, as we think about and discuss what it means to refer to 'women's power', let us not forget that we are a profession that is largely dominated by women in most regions. So, in fact, in many of the places where we are joining the Conference from, education union power is women's power," Hopgood highlighted.

Using women's power for change

During the four Conference days, participants explored a wide range of topics and had the opportunity to hear from a variety of women leaders, from those occupying formal positions of power in governments and unions, to the young women who are leading the global movement for climate justice.

The first day of the Conference focused on women in leadership in government and education unions. High-level political leaders from Uganda, Jamaica, Morocco and New Zealand and the women who lead Education International as members of its Executive Board, shared their personal and professional journeys into leadership, the kinds of opportunities and barriers they encountered along the way, and personal stories that prepared them for a journey into leadership. Speakers also shared their views on the nature of power: how it's used, how it should

be used and its gendered dimensions.

The second day of the Conference explored insights from recent research into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women in unions and in education. The day also featured a storytelling session about the ways in which power operates in relation to gender, race, caste, socio-economic status, etc.

On the third day of the Conference, participants turned their attention to education union efforts to address and eradicate gender-based violence. Speakers from EI member organisations across regions discussed why eradicating gender-based violence in and around educational settings, in unions, and in society is a top union priority. Speakers also shared examples of how their unions are working to effect change on this critical issue. Education unions in Ukraine and Afghanistan whose members are currently experiencing the horrors of war or are trying to pick up the pieces in post conflict settings shared powerful experiences. The day closed with a panel featuring experts from different regions, who are bravely facing anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-critical race theory backlash in education.

The final day of the Conference was dedicated the future. The day featured an inspiring panel of young women leading the struggle for climate justice and for transformative climate action. In a discussion moderated by NASUWT's Michelle Codrington-Rogers, Mitzi Jonelle Tan from the Philippines, Vanessa Nakate from Uganda, Phoebe Hanson from the UK, and Laura Verónica Muñoz from Colombia, talked about what it takes to challenge traditional/structural power as a young woman in the context of a planetary emergency. Watch their conversation below.

Unions are our homes

In her closing remarks, Susan Hopgood encouraged women unionists to treat their unions as their homes. "Our unions must be models for what inclusive, sustainable, and values-led movements ought to look like, behave like, and feel like. Every time we approach the bargaining table, the media, the podium, or the streets, we dig deep into the foundation of our homes - our values," she stated. "We must ensure that the structures of our homes, whether it is informal networks, committees, professional development programmes, or our leadership boards, do not limit women to one floor, but enable them to reach every floor in the house."

Teach the Teacher: Students and teachers join forces for climate education

The student-led Teach the Teacher campaign continues with a new round of events around the world. The campaign is focused on educating teachers about climate change, climate justice, and equipping them with the resources and confidence they need to implement climate education in their classrooms.

One in four teachers needs more training to deliver education for sustainable development

A recent [survey conducted by Education International and UNESCO](#) among 58,000 teachers worldwide showed that 90% of teachers feel sustainable development and global citizenship are important topics and 80% of teachers want to continue learning about them. However, one in four teachers reported they need more support and training to teach these subjects.

The most common challenge faced by teachers in terms of skills was not being familiar with suitable pedagogies to teach sustainable development and global citizenship.

In terms of system level challenges, lack of curriculum coverage was identified as the most profound barrier. At the school level, the most frequently reported barrier was a lack of relevant equipment and tools. Teachers also suggested that students do not have sufficient voice on education for sustainable development and for global citizenship in schools, especially at primary level.

At the same time, students demand that climate education be included in curricula around the world.

"Climate change is the single biggest issue that will affect us today and in the future. As young people, we need to be taught about the crisis at hand, the solutions, and how we can make a difference. We deserve to learn about the issue that will define our future."

As part of its [Teach for the Planet](#) campaign, Education International has called for quality climate education for all and has put forward the [teaching profession's vision](#) on what it would take to achieve it. Teacher training and support for the profession are essential to delivering quality climate education rooted in science and with a civic action focus.

Students step up: Teach the Teacher

Organised by MockCOP, the Teach the Teacher campaign aims to encourage students to talk to their teachers about climate change. Consisting in workshops led by students and attended by teachers, the campaign aims to explain what it is like to be a young person in the midst of the climate emergency, what climate anxiety is, and how exploring climate action can help students turn their fear into power.

"Teach the Teacher is a campaign with students from across the globe coming together as one and showing education systems what they want to learn. Students want to know about their present and their future. They want to see institutions care because this is the world you're passing down to them. They want hope," said Aishwarya Puttur, Teach the Teacher campaign activist.

Teach the Teacher sessions have been organized in 50 schools across 21 countries so far. Hundreds of teachers have attended these sessions and provided stellar feedback:

"You have done such an amazing job! I am so proud of what you are doing and how hope is embedded in your work. Thank you for being such powerful leaders! I am truly grateful!"

"You had a lot of visuals and giving us access to your scripts as well is a great asset for us to review what you said. So much information in so little time! Great job! Your passion for the subject is very clear in the way you presented the information."

Get involved!

[Sign up today](#) to host a Teach the Teacher of your own! Campaign staff are available to train students on the best ways to lead the workshop. Find out more about Teach the Teacher from

the [campaign website](#).

Education unions build power for climate justice

Last week representatives from education unions across the world came together online to share experiences, build power, and strategise to advance Education International's Teach for the Planet campaign.

Hosted by Education International, the 6th quarterly meeting of the campaign network took place less than a month before the yearly global climate conference, COP 27. It provided an opportunity for information sharing in the lead up to this key advocacy moment, as well as for an exchange of perspectives on climate advocacy at the national level.

Ensuring a just transition for educators

The meeting opened with a conversation with researcher Alanah Torralba who conducted a study exploring education unions' vision for a just transition in the education sector.

The study, [Educators on a Heating Planet: Shaping Education Unions' Vision for a Just Transition](#) finds that educators are on the frontlines of climate change: every day, they are contending with the worst consequences of changes to the world's climate. From extreme hurricanes and storms to massive flooding, prolonged droughts, severe heatwaves, and sinking islands, climate change is already altering the education sector in indirect yet profound ways. Thus, educators are key stakeholders in the discussions surrounding climate action and the crucial project of shifting to a low-carbon world.

According to Torralba: "Educators are highly concerned about the impacts of climate change on the sector. They are united in saying that education systems are ill-prepared to deal with the impacts of climate change, which could also be attributed to the intensifying privatization of the sector. Hence, a just transition in education must primarily address the adaptation needs of educators and it also necessarily means a rejection of privatization. It must also include strengthening social protection schemes for educators, who are 'second responders' to the climate crisis. Finally, educators feel that they are intrinsically part of the communities that they serve and therefore their professional concerns cannot be separated from the concerns of the collective. Through a just transition framework, educators are finding a more hopeful and strategic view of workers fighting for climate justice and a better world."

Climate firmly on the agenda at the Transforming Education Summit

The campaign network also discussed the outcomes of the Transforming Education Summit, held at the UN in New York in September. Participants welcomed the focus on climate education during the Summit, noting that the [Youth Declaration](#) called for investment in climate education; young climate activist, Vanessa Nakate opened the conference calling for climate justice; and the UN Secretary General [urged countries](#) to reform curricula and pedagogy to advance education for sustainable development. Education International Executive Board members Randi Weingarten and Johanna Jaara Astrand made interventions highlighting the importance of [quality climate change education for all](#).

Regarding outcomes, one third of the national commitments made at the Summit included a commitment to integrating climate change education into curricula and to efforts to ensure school infrastructure exemplify carbon neutrality. The Summit was also the site for the launch of the [Greening Education Partnership](#), a UNESCO-led initiative to enhance education for sustainable development within schools, communities, teacher training and student learning.

Education unions for climate justice at COP 27

The network discussed EI's top demands for the Conference, which are included in EI's [COP 27 toolkit](#). The toolkit aims to support education unions in their national advocacy efforts and draws on a growing collection of EI research, including research on a [just transition](#), teacher [readiness to teach](#) climate education and [education's inclusion in nationally determined contributions](#).

With COP held this year in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, participants highlighted the importance of seeing through the Egyptian regime's greenwashing efforts and supporting [local activists](#) campaigning for human and trade union rights, freedom of speech, open civic space and the release of the ([estimated](#) 60 000) political prisoners in the country.

COP 27 will include a [ministerial meeting](#) on climate education and a meeting to advance the Greening Education partnership. EI will also host a side event on educators and the just transition. You can follow EI's engagement on social media and the Teach for the Planet campaign page and take part in the [Global Day of Action](#) for climate justice in your country on the 12th November.

Climate network members leading the way

Network members from every region shared experiences. Some reported on the impact of climate change on educators and education. For instance, we heard that in Fiji, students, teachers and communities living along the coastlines are having to be relocated due to rising sea levels and three more major cyclones are expected in the coming months. In the UK, we heard that extreme summer heatwaves had presented a dilemma – should schools be closed to keep children safe, or should school stay open to provide sanctuaries? With a lack of clear guidance from government, the union decided to advise educators to keep schools open, as students living in poverty faced suffering even higher temperatures at home.

Other unions spoke about priorities for the campaign. For instance, Sifiso Ndlovu, Executive Director of ZIMTA, Zimbabwe, highlighted that the climate crisis threatens inclusive economic development, peace and security, and democracy. Climate concerns need to be taken into account when decisions are made on development financing. SNTE, Mexico, noted that making progress on advocating for climate recovery requires commitment and collaboration across all sectors, as well as linking advocacy efforts with other intersecting work such as on broader environmental issues and gender equality.

The network's next meeting will be held in December.

Join us! Teach for the Planet at COP27

The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) is taking place in Egypt, from November 6th to the 18th. Education International will bring the Teach for the Planet campaign to COP27 to advocate for climate justice, quality climate education for all students, and a just

transition for all workers.

Get involved!

The Education International delegation attending the Conference in Egypt will advocate for the following critical changes:

1. Raise mitigation ambition.

To save humanity from climate catastrophe, we need drastic carbon emission cuts: 50% by 2030. Yet plans to cut ambitions as laid out in nationally determined contributions are not nearly ambitious enough. For COP 27 to be successful, governments must step up their ambition, and ensure that plans to decarbonise are realised through a just transition in collaboration with workers.

2. Ensure quality climate change education for all.

Education is a powerful tool to support both mitigation and adaptation efforts and should be recognised as such at COP 27. Governments must finance and implement reforms to include quality climate change education in curricula across subjects and grades, as well as in initial teacher training courses and professional development opportunities.

3. Ensure a just transition for all workers including educators.

Decent work, quality jobs, and meaningful social dialogue are the core of the just transition concept. Climate change is already impacting educators' working conditions, working lives, and workloads. Social protection systems must be scaled up to protect all workers, including teachers, researchers and education support personnel.

4. Step up action on adaptation, including in the education sector.

Extreme weather events are directly compromising the safety of students and educators and disrupting education. For example, 22 000 schools were destroyed during the floods in Pakistan in September 2022. Indirect consequences of climate change such as hunger and poverty in areas where families' livelihoods are lost to drought or floods also impact teaching and learning. All education infrastructure must be safe, sustainable, and resilient to climate impacts. Ensuring universal access to quality, gender-responsive education should be prioritised to support the adaptation needs of communities.

5. Commit more climate finance and fund loss and damage.

Governments, especially high-income countries who have been the leading contributors to climate change, must fulfil and exceed their objective to unlock one billion dollars in climate financing per year. Funding is needed to support loss and damage for impacted countries, as well as adaptation and mitigation efforts. A financing facility for loss and damage must be created, recognising the differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing countries.

Use our [COP27 Advocacy Toolkit](#) and join our campaign for quality climate education for all at COP27!

Tune in! Education International events at COP 27

The Education International delegation will be hosting and speaking in several events during the Conference. Find out more about our events below and tune in online!

Quality climate change education for all: What is it and how do we achieve it

November 9 | 17:00 to 18:00 EET

The world needs quality climate education for all. But what defines “quality” when it comes to climate change education? What does it look, sound, and feel like in the classroom and in communities? What impact does it have? And what steps do we have to take to make it a reality? This event will explore the key components of quality climate change education from the perspective of teachers, students, and policymakers and consider concrete strategies to achieve it.

Moderator: Antonia Wulff | Research, Policy and Advocacy Director, Education International

Panelists:

- Jennifer Cooper | Brent District Joint Secretary, National Education Union (NEU), UK
- Peter Wallet | UNESCO Teacher Task Force
- Saher Rashed Baig | Youth activist, global youth advocate for climate action, human rights and right to a healthy environment

The hybrid event will take place at the UNESCO pavilion at COP27, on Wednesday, November 9th, from 17:00 to 18:00 EET. To join online, [click here to register](#). The event will also be livestreamed on the [EI website](#).

Educators on a heating planet: Ensuring a just transition in the education sector

November 10 | 11:00 - 12:00 noon EET

The climate crisis can be felt in the education sector here and now. Educators' work and lives are being impacted by climate change in countries across the world. To ensure the right to quality education for all students and the right to decent work for all educators in the context of the climate emergency, education systems need to be urgently transformed.

This panel will discuss concrete strategies to ensure a just transition in the education sector. It will explore how to adapt education institutions to be safe and resilient to extreme weather events, as well as carbon-neutral and sustainable. It will also look at the role of quality education to ensure students are climate literate and have the knowledge and skills to take part in the green economy and demand a just transition. Finally it will look at the role of educators in mobilising alongside other workers, students and civil society for a just transition, decent work for all and climate justice more broadly.

Moderator: Antonia Wulff | Research, Policy and Advocacy Director, Education International

Panelists:

- Joy Hernandez | Communications and Advocacy Officer, ITUC-AP
- Sifiso Ndlovu | CEO, Zimbabwe Teachers' Association
- Jenny Cooper | Brent District Joint Secretary, National Education Union (NEU), UK
- Mitzi Jonelle Tan | Climate activist, Fridays for Future, Philippines

The hybrid event will take place at the Climate Education pavilion at COP27, on Thursday, November 10th, from 11:00 to 12:00 noon EET. The event will be livestreamed on the [EI website](#) and social media.

More climate education at COP27

Education International delegates will also be taking the floor in other events, including:

- **Youth and educators for global climate action: Participation, collaboration, and implementation of UNESCO's greening education partnership**

November 10 | 09:00 – 10:30 EET

This event highlights youth participation, collaboration, and input in the development, design, and implementation of Greening Education Partnership led by UNESCO. This intergenerational, intersectoral panel centers youth voices in conversation with civil society, educator, philanthropy, think tanks, professional associations, and labor to reflect on the process and opportunities present in the Partnership.

Sifiso Ndlovu, CEO of the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association, will be speaking for the teaching profession on this panel.

- **Inaugural meeting on Greening Education Partnership: Getting every learner climate-ready**

November 10 | 12:30 – 13:30 EET

The UN Secretary General's Transforming Education Summit strongly confirmed that education must be transformed to fully contribute to solutions to the global climate and environmental crisis.

The session will: present the new Greening Education Partnership, its aim and purpose, and how it will function; build on the Member States support at TES, this session is to mobilize commitment and action from key stakeholders relevant to ACE; discuss coordination and contribution of all relevant actors in support of the education partnership; and collect pledges and commitments from key stakeholders.

Antonia Wulff, Research, Policy and Advocacy Director of Education International, will be participating in the panel discussion.

[Click here](#) to register and join the event online!

- **Climate education: Empowering youth and adults with knowledge and skills for a sustainable future**

November 14 | 15:00 - 16:30 EET

The event will bring together global youth activists, educators, government, labor and NGO leaders to discuss links between climate education and opportunities for civic engagement, economic opportunity, and a just transition.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, will be contributing to the discussion.

• **Youth demand quality climate education: Outcome of global survey**

November 15 | 14:30 – 15:30 EET

This session will be an occasion for a deep dive into the youth demands that have been compiled in the 'Youth demand quality climate change education' publication. Voices of young people will be brought together to highlight what they think is quality climate change education and how they wish the current education systems to change.

The expert panel will discuss the ways and means to translate youth asks and demands into concrete actions, particularly into curriculum guidelines for policymakers and educators. Antonia Wulff, Research, Policy and Advocacy Director of Education International, will be participating in the panel discussion.

The event will take place on Tuesday, November 15th, from 14:30 to 15:30 EET. To follow the event online, [click here to register](#).

Another key event is the **Ministerial session on climate education** which will take place on November 10, from 16:00 to 17:30 EET. The session will feature a dialogue between Ministers of education/environment and young people on concrete ways to transform education to tackle climate change.

[The session will be livestreamed here](#). Tune in!

Activists are the catalyst: Human rights and inclusion concerns in Egypt

COP is usually a key moment for environmental activists from around the world to exercise their right to protest government inaction on the climate crisis and to put forward their demands. At COP26 in Glasgow, education unionists marched alongside other trade unionists, indigenous activists, youth, and locals numbering about 100,000 people. COP27 will not be the same.

Egypt's government has a history of violating human rights, yet has been given the opportunity to host this crucial global meeting. The government has announced that there will be demonstrations permitted at the Conference but these are very likely to be controlled by the government. Meanwhile, many activists, researchers, journalists, political figures and trade unionists and others remain imprisoned unfairly and the Egyptian regime continues to crack down on civil liberties.

“As we fight climate change, we must also defend human rights.”

David Edwards | Education International General Secretary

Education International calls on the Egyptian government to immediately release all those detained for practicing their rights to freedom of expression and to ensure freedom of speech and assembly for all participants at COP27 without fear of reprisals.

The Egyptian Human Rights Coalition on COP27 provides more information about the individuals arbitrarily detained and what you can do to support the call for their release and to open up civic space in Egypt.

[Sign the petition here.](#)

COP 27 is another cop out – but education unions continue to build the change our planet needs

As the 27th United Nations climate change conference (COP) came to a close, it was clear that the global political community had, once again, failed. Despite [unequivocal scientific evidence](#) that human-induced climate change is causing widespread losses and greenhouse gas emission must rapidly decline, the conference did not agree to phasing out the use of fossil fuels. Instead, the [Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan](#) simply reiterated the call to phasedown “unabated coal power”, thereby signifying a lack of progress on mitigation and a refusal to commit to taking the most crucial actions necessary to limit global warming to within 1.5 degree.

However, there were some victories. After years of campaigning from civil society including trade unions, COP 27 agreed to establish a fund for loss and damage. The fund still needs to be operationalized and money must be put into it, but this historic decision finally recognises the meaning of climate justice - that those countries who caused climate change must pay up and compensate those countries that despite emitting little, are suffering from the most devastating climate impacts.

Furthermore, union demands were heard, as the conference decision recognised that a just transition to a low carbon economy requires social dialogue with workers. In education, this means that education unions must be at the table to negotiate contract and policy reforms as [the sector and educators' working lives are increasingly impacted by the climate crisis](#). The conference decision also called for social protection, but failed to explicitly recognise labour rights.

Meanwhile, the abysmal human rights record and the lack of civic space within the host nation, Egypt, was front and centre of international reporting on the COP presidency, despite the government's efforts to portray itself as leaders in sustainability. During the conference, EI Executive Board members called for an end to violations of freedom of expression in the country and the release of all arbitrarily detained activists. COP has brought these issues into the spotlight, but [continued pressure](#) is necessary to ensure that Alaa Abdel Fattah and others are freed.

Education's role is recognised, but no new country commitments made

Education is not at the core of COP negotiations, and it remains largely unrecognised by countries' nationally determined contributions. [EI's recent research](#) shows that of 140 new or updated NDCs submitted to the UNFCCC since 2021, only about a third mention education, most of these countries with greater climate vulnerability. However, education is a key pillar of the [Action for Climate Empowerment](#) agenda, for which a four year [action plan](#) under the Glasgow work programme was agreed at COP 27. The plan mandates, among other things, the UNFCCC

Secretariat to map and collate guidelines and good practices on climate education annually.

Climate education is quickly becoming a more visible topic at the COP and in the unofficial programme. This year, for the first time, there was a [Climate Education Hub](#) – a pavilion devoted entirely to events and discussions on the climate-education nexus. Here, two weeks of event programming focused on multiple aspects of climate education. For example, the pavilion was a space for indigenous youth to highlight the importance of climate education that respects indigenous knowledge. It was also the site for the launch of the Coalition for Climate Education – a large consortium of young climate activists and organisations mobilising to achieve universal climate literacy.

EI hosted two events during COP, one panel which explored what constitutes “[quality](#)” [climate change education](#) and the other focused on how to ensure a [just transition in education](#). These valuable in-depth discussions between representatives from the teaching profession, youth, and international organisations highlighted the importance of collaboration to transform, decolonise, reform and fund education systems to be climate resilient and guarantee a just transition for the education workforce.

Making education infrastructure resilient to the impacts of climate change was also a key issue. From the most extreme impacts, such as the 22,000 schools destroyed by floods in Pakistan in September, to school closures caused by storms and heat waves in Europe, educators are keenly aware of the vulnerability of outdated infrastructure:

“Our school buildings are not resilient to the kind of weather that we are experiencing with global warming. As a union, we are working to get our buildings retrofitted and we see this as a matter of urgency.”

Jenny Cooper | National Education Union, UK

EI also participated in the inaugural meeting of the [UNESCO Greening Education Partnership](#) which seeks to mobilise countries to take concrete actions towards greening their education systems. During the meeting, EI shared the [education union movement’s vision for quality climate change education for all](#) and committed to support the partnership.

During the event, EI’s Director of Policy, Research and Advocacy, Antonia Wulff, also stressed the critical role of public education, stating: “We need to invest in our public education systems in order to ensure quality climate education for all students, everywhere. Some countries spend more on fossil fuel subsidies than they do on education. We must demand real change.”

EI championed the initiative alongside youth representatives in [an event focused on discussing the partnership’s implementation](#), pointing out in particular the importance of professional development for teachers on climate education. Sifiso Ndlovu, CEO of the Zimbabwe Teachers’ Association, highlighted this point, stating: “We must green the capacities of our teachers and support them to remain relevant so that they can in turn support their students with the

knowledge they need to navigate the climate crisis.”

The COP programme included a [ministerial event](#) with ministers of education and environment in dialogue with youth on transforming education to tackle climate change. The aim was to build on commitments made at the first ever Education and Environment Ministers Summit held at COP26. However, the COP 27 ministerial was disappointingly less high profile than the year before (perhaps unsurprising as the [Egyptian presidency’s nationally determined contribution does not mention education even once](#)). At COP 26 only 22 commitments were made, but no new commitments were made at COP 27. The event also showed that the education sector is not immune to greenwashing, with countries eager to portray themselves as climate education champions on the international stage, even when meaningful policy changes at the national level may not have occurred. Nonetheless, youth demands were clear: with [70% of youth surveyed](#) saying they cannot explain climate change, systems urgently need to change to ensure all students receive quality climate education.

What now? Implementation: we need more, we need it now

In the [closing remarks from the trade union delegation](#), the workers movement asked: “How much longer will you put profits before people and planet? This was to be the implementation COP, the Africa COP. But implementation is not on the scale or at the speed that workers need in Africa and world-wide. We need more, we need it now”. Indeed, time is running out. We need action, not more empty talk.

As the sun sets on COP 27, EI will continue to fight for climate justice alongside trade unionists of all sectors. We will also continue to demand a just transition for all educators and quality climate change education for all students, everywhere. We will support and promote the success of the [UNESCO Greening Education Partnership](#), so that by 2030, every country has sustainable education institutions, climate education in the curriculum, teachers that are trained and supported to teach for climate action, and climate education opportunities for adults. We will also continue to encourage all governments to recognise education as a powerful tool to address the climate crisis. This means including education in updated nationally determined contributions, but also directing climate funds towards adaption of education systems (currently only 0.03% of climate finance is allocated to education).

COP 28 will take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in November 2023. According to philanthropic organisation, Dubai Cares, this next COP is set to include an entire day devoted to education. This would bring welcome attention to our sector. However, whether or not this conference brings the international recognition we need of education’s powerful role for mitigation and adaption, education unions around the world are relentlessly campaigning at the local, national and regional levels. EI members continue to drive forward the [demands of the Teach for the Planet campaign](#) in their countries.

The latest example comes from the University and College Union (UCU) in the UK. Together with colleagues in India, UCU produced a video on the devastating impacts of extreme weather events on educators and students. Watch it below!

An exciting year of activism for quality climate education for all

As the second year of the Teach for the Planet campaign draws to a close, we look back at some of the highlights of 2022, including increasing recognition of education in climate policy, putting climate issues firmly on the agenda for education policy at the international level, and enhancing union understanding of a just transition in the education sector.

In 2022, Teach for the Planet included a wealth of campaign activities advancing quality climate education and a just transition for all.

Climate firmly on the agenda for education policy

One of the main objectives of the campaign is to ensure quality climate education is available to all students everywhere. To achieve this goal, we have been working to influence education policy making processes at the international level, emphasising the key role education must play in fighting climate change.

At the Transforming Education Summit hosted by the United Nations in September, EI Executive Board Members Randi Weingarten and Johanna Jaara Astrand spoke about quality climate change education for all and reiterated [the teaching profession's vision of how to achieve it](#).

The Youth Declaration and the Secretary General's Vision statement both called for action to ensure education systems respond to the climate crisis. A third of national commitments made for the Summit pledged to integrate climate change education into curricula and to green school infrastructure.

EI is also proud to be a founding member of UNESCO's Greening Education Partnership, which was launched this year with the aim of supporting and encouraging governments to transform schools, learning, teacher training, and communities to enable quality climate education.

Education as a valuable tool in climate policies

During 2022, we continued our global analysis of the inclusion of education in countries' climate policies.

A first update of the research conducted for EI by Christina Kwauk was published in March and focused on the level of [climate education ambition in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) region](#). Launched during the first ever [MENA Climate Week](#), the study found that the region falls far behind other countries when it comes to harnessing the power of education in their climate policies. However, education unions in the region are stepping up their advocacy for quality climate education.

In November, EI launched the [final update](#) of our global analysis [ahead of COP27](#). The study analysed 140 nationally determined contributions (about 73% of parties to the Paris Agreement). Only one third of countries mention education at all and none live up to the ambition of [EI's Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All](#).

At COP27, the EI delegation joined young activists and the global union movement to call for climate education, a just transition, and climate justice for all. Recognition of education's role in addressing the climate crisis is growing and education is set to be a key theme of COP 28.

A just transition in the education sector

In October we launched [new research](#) exploring the impact of the climate crisis on education and educators' vision of a just transition in their sector. The study showed that education unions advocate for a broad notion of a just transition, both defending educators' right to decent work in the context of the worsening climate crisis and calling for adapted public education systems that prepare students with green skills and to take climate action.

At COP27, EI hosted an event that brought together union leaders and activists to discuss how we can work to ensure a just transition in education. Watch the event below!

Gender equality for a sustainable tomorrow

The gendered impacts of the climate crisis and the young women rising to lead the way towards a sustainable future were also featured prominently in the campaign this year.

On March 8th, International Women's Day, two podcasts gave climate activists and union leaders the opportunity to discuss the intersections of gender equality and climate justice. At the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), EI President Susan Hopgood highlighted the critical role of social dialogue and climate education for a women and worker led just transition to a green economy.

In June, the 4th EI World Women's Conference featured a special session on the young women who power climate justice. The "Meet the Movement Movers" session saw Michelle Codrington-Rogers (NASUWT, UK) leading an inspiring and mobilising conversation with climate activists Laura Verónica Muñoz (Colombia), Mitzi Jonelle Tan (the Philippines), Phoebe Hanson (UK), and Vanessa Nakate (Uganda).

Education unions mobilised

The Teach for the Planet campaign is led by a large group of education unions from across the world, coming together to form the EI Climate Network. The Network met four times in 2022, sharing projects and ideas that drive climate activism in the education sector.

In its latest meeting (13 December 2022), the Network participated in a teach-in led by [Indigenous Climate Action](#) in order to learn about the organisation's efforts to decolonise climate policy in Canada and how educators can center Indigenous perspectives, values, knowledge, and solutions on climate change in their classrooms, unions, and communities.

Education unions are determined to continue this important work in 2023 and beyond.

Headlines

1. From research to global action for quality public education

Education International brought together over 100 leading researchers from education unions across the globe to explore how research can underpin union action for quality education.

The 17th meeting of the Education International Research Network took place on 26-27 October in Brussels, Belgium, for the first time in a hybrid format. Over two days of presentations, debates, and interactive breakout sessions, the status of teachers as well as education privatisation and education funding were at the core of the discussions this year.

Updates on past, new, and upcoming [research](#) commissioned by Education International, both at the global and the regional level, were shared with participants. These included research on teacher leadership and formative assessment and the impact of digital assessment on the teaching profession, climate change education, the privatisation and commercialisation of education, as well as education financing with a focus on teachers' wage bill constraints.

Participants from Education International member organisations across the world also had the opportunity to share relevant research done at the national level and the strategies used to influence education policy, using research for advocacy and promoting union activism.

Interactive breakout sessions were organised on key issues including artificial intelligence, education technology, equity and privatisation, the status of teachers and a sectoral approach to research for education support personnel, amongst others.

Raising the status of the teaching profession

On the first day of the Research Network meeting, a presentation about the upcoming 2024 edition of the Global Report on the Status of Teachers delivered by John Bangs, special consultant to Education International, opened the discussion on how collective research can serve as a reference for education unions' advocacy work to effect change. This [triennial global report](#) presents the voice of teachers and education workers across all levels of education, gathering data on multiple aspects impacting the profession, including working conditions, rights and standards, as well as teacher autonomy and leadership.

This was followed by an in-depth discussion on the status of teachers and the teaching profession. Sam Sellar from the University of Manchester (UK) presented the preliminary findings of a [pilot study](#) on teacher professional autonomy and digital assessment, done in partnership with teacher organisations in South Africa, Iceland, and British Columbia (Canada). Against the backdrop of changes introduced by the digitalisation of assessment, the research investigates teachers' perspectives on the future of professional practices related to assessment.

An international research team from the University of Toronto in Canada launched the [Teacher-led Learning Circles Project](#), developed by Education International and funded by the Jacobs Foundation. The project aims to develop teacher leadership and practice on the use of formative assessment to improve students' learning. It looks into 7 target countries: Brazil, Columbia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, South Korea, and Switzerland. Carol Campbell and Danielle LaPointe-McEwan presented the findings of the [first report](#) of the project, which provides a review of relevant

research, as well as teacher approaches to their leadership and practice of formative assessment.

Digitalisation and the future of work: an online course

Education International's online capacity building platform, the Academy for Labour Movement Activists (ALMA) launched its first course on the digitalisation of education for members of the Research Network. Based on Education International's research [Teaching with Tech](#), by Christina Colclough, the course provides union activists with crucial skills to be able to protect and develop their own rights, autonomy, and freedoms as education becomes increasingly digitalised. The ALMA platform will soon be accessible to all Education International member organisations.

Advocating for public education financing to confront privatisation

On the second day, the spotlight was placed on education financing and the growing privatisation and commercialisation of education and how research has become an essential tool allowing education unions to build evidence-based messages against the pro-privatisation global hegemonic narrative.

Prachi Srivastava, from Western University in Canada, gave a presentation on the different levels of private sector engagement during the pandemic and the threat it poses to rebuilding education, showing how education disruptions exposed not only individual, but also institutional inequities. Srivastava emphasised the need to protect financial resources for education, a key pillar for resilience, and target them to the students that need them most.

Mauro Moschetti, from the Autonomous University of Barcelona in Spain, offered an overview of crosscutting privatisation trends through the case studies of Colombia and Paraguay. These include the naturalisation of public-private partnerships within the education sector, an expanding market of low-fee for profit schools, and the decisive role of multisector coalitions and networks in the promotion of privatisation in and of education in the Latin American region.

The perspective of teacher unions was given by Eric Angel Carbonu, president of Education International's affiliate in Ghana, the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT). Ghana is one of the target countries of Education International's [Global Response project](#) and education unions have mobilised through the Campaign Against the Privatisation and Commercialisation of Education ([CAPCOE](#)), a national coalition to confront, halt, and reverse privatisation trends in the country.

Carbonu shared his analysis about the growing privatisation in the country, particularly at the primary level. "Privatisation is not an event. It is a process. It comes in a very subtle flow", he stated. Carbonu went on to explain that public funding for education was not going to the core areas, such as teacher salaries or infrastructure, identifying an investigation into where the money has been spent as a potential area of research moving forward .

Education International's General Secretary, David Edwards closed the Research Network meeting emphasising the importance of forging international solidarity to confront the many challenges of these post-pandemic times:

“Education International’s Research Network continues to play a crucial role in sharing the experiences of teachers, education support personnel and their unions worldwide as we defend the right to education, quality terms of employment and trade union rights.”

The photo album of Education International's 17th Research Network meeting can be [accessed here](#)

2. Global education union leaders call for investment in education and renew their call to international solidarity

For the first time in 3 years, the Education International’s Executive Board (ExBo) met in person to take stock of the state of education, highlight the work of EI on behalf of members, and recommit to solidarity with teachers and unionists around the world.

The meeting, held in Brussels, was a powerful opportunity for global representatives of the teaching profession and education workers to reconnect in person for the first time since the start of the COVID pandemic and look forward to furthering the work of EI.

In the face of COVID, Education International advanced the agenda of members

Despite the severe disruptions caused by the COVID pandemic, felt in every corner of the world, Education International continued and expanded its advocacy at all levels for quality public education, human rights, and the status of the profession.

As reported by EI General Secretary, David Edwards during his progress report, from Ukraine, to Afghanistan, to Iran and in every region of the world, EI has been at the forefront of education issues, supporting and engaging with members.

One of the highlights of this advocacy was the [Transforming Education Summit](#) (TES), where governments from around the world committed to take concrete actions to support public education and invest in the teaching profession. This included the creation of an International Commission on the Teaching Profession, which will lead on global issues.

Education International brought the voice of the teaching profession to world leaders at TES, underlining challenges and strategies for a new deal for teachers, for the future of education, particularly within and across five thematic action tracks. Specifically, it asked for heads of state to commit to:

1. Increase investment in quality public education systems.
2. Guarantee labour rights and good working conditions for teachers and education support personnel.
3. Invest in quality teacher training and professional development.
4. Trust and respect teachers and their pedagogical expertise.
5. Involve teacher unions in policy through social dialogue.

The report also highlighted the power of solidarity and concluded with a message from the new minister of Labour of Colombia, Gloria Ramírez, former President of the *Federación Colombiana de*

Trabajadores de la Educación (FECODE), an EI member organisation in Colombia.

The EI leaders also welcomed the victory of Lula in Brazil, highlighting this was a victory for workers' rights, social and climate justice.

Recalling the words of EI's founding President Mary Hatwood Futrell, Edwards concluded its report by stressing that "one thing seems certain: as the need for equity persists, the push for progress will be equally persistent".

Green light to new Education International's campaign

While at its last meeting in May 2022, the ExBo agreed that Education International's next campaign would focus on increased investment in quality public education, it decided during its 60th meeting that this campaign will be articulated around three main pillars:

1. Increase public education financing and invest in the education workforce;
2. Confronting, halting and reversing the privatisation and commercialisation of education;
3. Strengthening the narrative for quality public education.

The campaign, to be launched on 24 January, the International Day of Education, will support EI member organisations as they push back against austerity and challenge education budget cuts.

Iran: Solidarity with women and girls

The ExBo also adopted a [Resolution on Iran](#), specifically focusing on and supporting women and girls in this country, denouncing the Iranian government's attack on women's and girls' fundamental human rights and on their lives, urging the country's public authorities to ensure that they can decide in full autonomy how to lead their lives, particularly by getting an education.

Education International and its member organisations continue "to stand in solidarity with Iranian teacher unions in their struggle for their right to free quality public education for all and for gender equality at all levels of society", and call "for international solidarity with the people of Iran and for further pressure against the Iranian regime to hold them accountable for their repressive policies and actions against women and girls".

Solidarity with Ukraine

Education International's ExBo member and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten reported on the [mission in Ukraine](#) of a delegation of the AFT and the Polish education trade union ZNP, where they met national and local leaders of Ukrainian education union and Education International's affiliate, the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine.

The Education International's leaders reiterated their full support to the Ukrainian educators, students and people.

Theme for upcoming World Congresses

The ExBo choose the following theme for the 9th and 10th World Congresses: "Growing our unions, elevating our professions, defending democracy".

It is confident that this theme ties together the efforts to enhance the status of the profession and strengthen the education union movement with the defense for democratic values, principles and systems. It places the teaching profession and its autonomy, and the role and rights of trade unions

at the heart of a well-functioning democracy, and recognises the contribution of education unions to democratic societies.

3. Global push for quality early childhood education

An active delegation of Education International (EI) and member organisations' representatives participated in the UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE), where it underlined the need to “reaffirm the right of every young child to quality care and education from birth” and urged governments to renew their commitment to and investment in the Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.2.

Education starts early

From 14-16 November in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, representatives of several member states of UNESCO, experts from all over the world and representatives from civil society organisations attended the conference to exchange experiences, discuss strategies and make commitments on the four main conference themes: Inclusion, quality and well-being; ECCE workforce and caregivers; Programme innovations; and Policy, governance and finance.

Although its delegation was small, with five delegates onsite – including the Union of Education Norway (UEN), the Alliance of Concerned Teachers-the Philippines (ACT-Philippines), and the Zambia National Union of Teachers (ZNUT) –, EI had a strong presence at the conference with multiple engagements. Several union representatives also followed the conference online.

Supporting ECE public sector and personnel

The delegation joined other civil society actors on 13 November at the pre-Conference Civil Society Forum, to share best practices and propose solutions for the challenges facing the early childhood education (ECE) sector.

On 14 November, an EI/International Labour Organization (ILO)/UNESCO parallel event brought together relevant stakeholders and decision-makers to explore the role of the professionalisation of ECE personnel in advancing the achievement of the SDG 4 target 4.2. In addition to a presentation on the global status of the ECCE profession and the current challenges facing ECCE providers today, two panels focused on the importance of standards, certification and the recognition of prior learning in order to ensure quality services among all ECCE stakeholders and institutions.

Addressing participants to this parallel event, UEN Senior Advisor Nicolai Stensig said: “What our teachers are fighting for in Norway is not so different from the experiences of ECE teachers and education support service personnel around the world. We know that quality and inclusive ECE early childhood education is a public good and fundamental human right, and that ECE teachers in state and non-state institutions deserve decent working conditions and to be treated as the professionals they are.”

An EI hosted event, titled “Early Childhood Educators: Raising the Status of the Profession”, was well-attended on 15 November. It highlighted the experiences of the ECE workforce, what progress has been made in improving working and professional conditions of work for the sector, and the challenges posed by privatisation, shrinking autonomy, and precarious working conditions, all of which influence the status of the profession and offer solutions for developing a quality and sustainable ECE workforce.

Taking the floor, ACT's Nancy Calado noted that ,“to improve the working condition of ECE teachers, they need to receive a salary that would not only make both ends meet, but something that they can be proud of. A salary that they can live decently. Most, if not all, ECE teachers are living from paycheck to paycheck and giving them the salary, they deserve would make them work productively without being emotionally and mentally stressed.”

The ECE Deputy Director of ZNUT, Emma Phiri Benkele, was also adamant that “we can transform ECE with women in this sector. We know that having women leaders in position of influence generates broader societal impact. There is also an influence on pay equity and changing workplace policies in ways that benefit both men and women.”

Need to implement the ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for ECE personnel

Another event was hosted on that day in partnership with ILO to discuss and exchange experiences on the promotion of decent ECCE personnel working conditions and the recognition of the profession. The importance of the [ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel](#) was fundamental to the session.

To mark the 10-year anniversary of these Guidelines next year, EI is organising activities to celebrate the importance of this invaluable tool to promote decent work for ECE personnel globally. EI affiliates are invited to participate in these activities [here](#).

Five-point policy plan for ECE

Dennis Sinyolo, EI's African Regional Director, later took the floor in the high-level session “ECCE workforce and caregivers”, where he strengthened the importance of developing a five-point policy plan that promotes the professionalisation of teachers in the ECCE sector, ensures resources to teach effectively, increases salaries for ECCE personnel, and assure governments' commitment to invest in ECCE and educators.

Tashkent Declaration and Commitments for Action

EI also held observer status on the drafting committee of the Tashkent Declaration and Commitments for Action, which was the main achievement of the WCECCE. With strong language on the importance of gender equality, social dialogue, regulation of nonstate actors, and government investment in the provision of ECE, the Declaration is a strong first step transforming ECE.

The Tashkent Declaration is available [here](#) in English, with further translations forthcoming from UNESCO.

December

Headlines

1. Building Momentum to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence in the Time of COVID-19

In 2021-22, Education International (EI), with the technical support of Gender at Work (G@W) and financial contribution from the National Education Association (NEA, USA) implemented a nine-month learning cycle to build further momentum among education unions in Africa to take action to end School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV).

This initiative built on the previous skills, experience and commitment gained by EI member organisations in the Africa region, and the EI Africa Regional Office as part of the ‘ [Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV](#)’ programme (2016-2019). As the pandemic was severely impacting learners, teachers and their organizations around the world, EI and its member unions asked themselves:

What will it take for education union leaders in Africa to use online approaches for strengthening the work of addressing SRGBV in the time of COVID?

The initiative sought both to enable participants to update their understanding of how SRGBV was affecting their members and learners in the context of school closures and reopenings and to enhance the skills of union leaders to identify new strategies to address these challenges, particularly through the use of online platforms and encounters.

This report shares the main results, lessons learned and ideas for future action that emerged from this series of webinars. The content of the report comes entirely from the statements, insights and commitments made by the participants themselves. The initiative produced detailed reports after each of the 15 online encounters, which offer a wealth of further detail. This report provides an overview and a sampling of these rich discussions.

2. Human Rights Day: Education unions mobilise and organise in defence of human rights everywhere

As the world marks 74 years since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the struggle for dignity, freedom, and justice for all continues. Unions are leading this global effort, working together across borders and continents for the fundamental principle of human dignity.

Despite the progress achieved in the past decades, the overlapping crises the world is facing today threaten to send us back decades in the fight for human rights. The climate crisis, the pandemic, wars, rising authoritarianism, and the cost of living crisis are reshaping the world.

For millions of children and youth, the all-important and enabling right to education is at risk, threatening to change the course of their lives and their communities for ever. The figures are staggering. [Over 244 million children were out of school globally in 2021](#). While the number of children excluded from education has been decreasing in most parts of the world, in Sub-Saharan

Africa it has been on the rise, as the region struggles with the impact of compounding crises.

Education unions fight for their students' right to education, as well as the rights of educators. The global education union movement has championed Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education for all and work to ensure every student has a qualified and well supported teacher.

However, the rights of workers, including educators, are also being chipped away. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear: everyone has the right to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment. Everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone has the right to just and favourable remuneration. And everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions to protect these rights.

Trade union rights are an integral part of human rights and essential for democracy. Trade unions, social dialogue, and collective bargaining are tools for workers to seek justice, gain recognition of their dignity, and make progress based on collective interests. Trade union rights are also a critical instrument to build fairer and more equal societies based on social and economic justice. In the case of education, trade unions enable educators to defend another fundamental right - the right to education.

Even in many democratic countries that are not drifting in an authoritarian direction, the space for trade union organising and bargaining has been shrinking. That includes limitations on the right to strike, limiting the scope of bargaining, and insecure contracts and other precarious work affecting millions of people.

To support education unions everywhere in their struggle to defend their members' rights, Education International has developed the [Trade Union Rights Toolkit](#). The toolkit aims to equip education unions to formulate cases when their rights are violated and defend their cases based on the fundamental rights of the global community.

The toolkit provides practical guidance on how unions can represent education workers and submit complaints to international and regional bodies when States seek to obstruct education unions from working on behalf of their members and violate their rights. It includes basic information for affiliates about their rights; the international and regional mechanisms available to put pressure on States to guarantee the exercise of those rights; and the role of Education International both in supporting members' actions and as the leading international advocate for the rights of education workers.

Through this toolkit and through every aspect of our work and advocacy, we continue to defend and promote the right to education, the right to decent work, and human rights as a whole. The global education union movement stands in solidarity with all human rights activists working to deliver on the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for everyone, everywhere.

3. Trade union rights toolkit

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4. Arab educators ready to transform their unions to transform education

At the 6th Biennial Conference of the Education International's Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (EI ACCRS), around 80 education unionists representing 28 organisations in 18 countries debated on "Transforming unions to transform education - Where are we? What role for education unions? What's next?".

The conference, held from 14-15 December, in Amman, Jordan, was preceded by pre-conference events, including the Equity Caucus, a session on Education in Emergencies in the Arab region and the Higher Education Caucus.

Investment in education systems and educators to fight inequality and ensure democracy

Opening the conference, EI President Susan Hopgood stated that during "the COVID-19 pandemic, closings and the uneven and limited availability of distance learning (only 48 per cent of students in the region have access to the internet at home) deepened inequalities and injustice".

She also noted that few of the funds available for pandemic relief were used to support education – globally 3 per cent and less in Arab countries. "The weakening or collapse of education systems has had a devastating impact on the teaching profession. The neglect of education and the impact of crises that have caused so much suffering and injustice, have made saving public education and supporting its professionals more urgent than ever," she stressed.

For her, "it is true that many governments have real finance problems. In many cases, it is hard to finance not only education, but also other vital areas like health care, housing, transportation, and infrastructure. That means that there needs to be an alternative to competition on which budget lines get the biggest cuts. The most significant remedy would be tax justice. History has shown that the most successful public-private partnerships have been corporations paying taxes: adding to public revenue rather than profiting from it."

"Inequality is destroying communities and weakening democracy. Peace is threatened by authoritarians and conflicts are growing rather than being resolved," she added and stressed that the survival of life on this planet is not only a pre-occupation of citizens, but also "a source of frustration as governments fail to take measures to reduce the damage of carbon emissions".

Hopgood also announced that Education International will launch a major campaign on the International Day of Education, the 24th of January. "This campaign will support member organisations in their fights against austerity programmes and budget cuts and build a consensus for fundamental changes; a transformation based on improving the environment for professional teachers."

Educators are essential to transforming education and mitigating the global education crisis

Keynote speaker Tamimi Darwazeh Abeer, Director of capacity building and learning at the Arab Campaign for Education and Alternate Board Member of the Global Partnership for Education, expressed support for the EI's upcoming campaign aiming to Increase public spending on education: "We call on all national and international parties and governments, including Arab teachers unions, to enhance joint action, coordination and true cooperation on the basis of respect, appreciation and recognition of the right of our peoples and societies to live in dignity, prosperity and peace, to ensure quality, equitable and inclusive education for all and to enhance learning opportunities throughout life for all, as enshrined in the UN sustainable development goal (SDG) 4."

She also underlined: "One thing is clear: educators are essential to transforming education and mitigating the global education crisis. An investment in teachers is an investment in the future and is a prerequisite for the transformative power of education."

She added that the Arab Campaign for Education for All is preparing to launch a regional advocacy campaign to demand that governments provide adequate and sustainable financing that meets the basic and emerging needs of the education sector.

ACCRS report

Manal Hdaife, Chairperson of the EI ACCRS and leader of the Public Primary School Teachers' League in Lebanon, and EI's Dalila El Barhmi presented the regional report.

The report notes that the public debt increased in most Arab countries while inequality is increasing and public education is decreasing. Member organisations pressured governments to strengthen efforts to achieve SDG 4 and called for increased funding for education.

It also insists that teachers in the Arab region face unprecedented challenges as they strive to provide education to millions of children affected by conflict and poverty. Drawing from lessons learnt is critical to build more resilient education systems with teachers at the center.

The report further stresses that member organisations in Arab countries are experiencing poor working conditions with bad educational environments. There is a digital divide, a lack of infrastructure, and half of the students do not have access to Internet for their education.

It also clearly shows that existing education policies in Arab countries are clearly inadequate to tackle climate change crises and equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitude to sustain our planet. Arab educators are ready to join the EI Teach For the Planet campaign.

On Day 2 of the EI ACCRS Conference, member organisations discussed top priorities for education in the Arab region.

On sustainable investment to transform education, delegates condemned the push towards privatisation of the education sector, and called on governments to improve their budgets and on international organisations for financial support and advice regarding curricula.

They also called on governments to cooperate and respect the right to peaceful strikes without cutting salaries and wages, and on unions to put pressure on governments to protect teachers' rights.

“Two thirds of low income countries have drastically cut their budgets on education and teachers. This impacts the working conditions of teachers: salaries are low and decreased in real terms, or frozen,” said EI Deputy General secretary Haldis Holst, who went on detailing the three pillars of the next EI campaign:

1. Investing in public quality education, investing in the profession
2. Confronting, stopping and reversing the path of privatisation and trade in education
3. Transforming the narrative for quality public education

ILO supervisory system ensures the full application of international norms on the teaching profession

Taking the floor for the International Labour Organization (ILO), Senior Specialist Lejo Sibbel explained the regular ILO supervisory system which serves to create a dialogue between the ILO and governments to ensure the full application of Conventions and Recommendations in law and in practice.

He also insisted that the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel provide guidance for governments, employers, teacher unions and other stakeholders in crafting effective teacher policies.

Resolution on Transforming unions to transform education

During the conference, delegates adopted a Resolution on Transforming unions to transform education, which urges governments to protect human rights and respect international labour standards and recognise the value of education to sustainable development and to building decent, prosperous, and fair societies. They are asked to participate in and contribute to UN efforts to transform education.

The resolution further calls on governments to fully fund quality, public education, improve the status of teachers and ensure that there is quality teacher training and professional development.

Finally, it reaffirms the commitment of education organisations to free and independent trade unionism.

Key goal: ensuring all boys and girls have access to public quality education for a better future

In her final remarks, EI President Susan Hopgood noted that “The issues and challenges are enormous, but we must not just talk about them, we must work together so we can make changes. We need to ensure that children, boys and girls, have access to public quality education for a better future.”

Congratulating the delegates on being able to talk about key issues in education in Arab countries in terms of what can be done and how to bring change collectively, she highlighted that “transforming unions is a theme a tremendous importance to tackle while getting to the task of transforming education. The next campaign needs to be relevant in your countries and for your members, and we need the unions to translate the message and pass it on.”

Concluding the 6th Biennial Conference of the EI ACCRS, chairperson Manal Hdaife stated: “I invite you to be united, cohesive, unified, on an equal footing, hand in hand, to advance our unions to transform education. We hope that we will be acting according to the responsibility you have entrusted to us, and we will return to our unions with significant lessons and inspirational ideas. Our aspiration and hope that nothing is impossible. We have not lost and will not lose hope.”

5. Belarus: Education International denounces the political trials against union leaders

Education International stands in solidarity with union leaders targeted in Belarus for their trade union activities and the anti-war stance taken by their organisation, the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Aliaksandr Yarashuk (Chairperson), Siarhei Antusevich (Vice-chairperson), and Iryna But-Husaim (Press secretary and Accountant), were all arrested on 19 April 2022, when the Lukashenko regime further [intensified its crackdown on independent unions](#), and have been in detention until now, waiting for trial. There are currently at least 23 unionists who are detained in Belarus. The trial began on 20 December in Minsk, Belarus.

“Democracy and unionism are interrelated. Trade unions can only fully and freely function in democracies. Democracies cannot be complete without independent trade unions. Education International stands firm with independent unions in that common fight, in Belarus and elsewhere,” stated Education International’s General Secretary David Edwards, who reaffirmed the support of Education International to the independent trade unions of Belarus in the defense of the rights and of democracy.

“Education International will continue to support the workers, teachers and students of Belarus in their struggle for rights, freedoms and democracy. We call on the authorities for the release of all detained unionists and the end of the crackdown on independent trade unions,” he added.

In July, the Supreme Court of Belarus liquidated and dissolved the BKDP and four other major unions. The authorities also engaged in a defamation campaign, threatening to prosecute anyone associated with BKDP and its affiliates.

Repression campaign against unions and activists

The [repression against independent unions and activists](#) 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.

Following the dissolution of BKDP, a new independent workers centre in Belarus, Salidarnast, was created to take over the mission and activities of its predecessor. As the legal successor of the BKDP, Salidarnast defines its primary missions as the restoration of an independent trade union movement in Belarus and the defense of all unionists and activists detained for political reasons.

Salidarnast has launched an [online campaign](#) on the union platform Labourstart to call for the release of all the activists and the end to the prosecution of independent trade unionists in Belarus.

The gross violations of trade union rights by the Lukashenko regime have been condemned by the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), of which Aliaksandr Yarashuk is an acting member. Meeting in a special sitting in November and in view of the continuous disrespect for the international labour standards by the government of Belarus, the ILO initiated the most serious procedure within its mandate that will lead to sanctions on the government of Belarus.

6. The John Thompson programme, a tool for union development and renewal

This year's John Thompson Fellowship (JTF) programme for North Asia contributed to direct and valuable exchanges of experience, ideas, and best practices across Education International's member organisations in the region. It also boosted union renewal and the participation of young unionists.

A training took place from 3-10 August 2022 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in the framework of the JTF programme. It represented the culmination of the two years of online training which started in February 2021. Representatives of the National Teachers' Association (NTA)/Taiwan, the Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Unions (FMESU), the Japan Teachers' Union (JTU), the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU/South Korea), as well as AIPTF Innovative Project Coordinator Nitin Kumar, participated.

The training was coordinated by the Director of the Education International Asia-Pacific (EIAP) regional office Anand Singh and EI's Undarmaa Batsukh, as well as three resource persons, i.e. Beverley Park of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), Nicole Calnan of the Australian Education Union (AEU) and Eva Elmstedt Frisk of the *Lärarförbundet*/Sweden.

Key union-related issues tackled

Topics covered during the JTF programme training ranged from leadership to campaigning and effective messaging, from gender equality to union finances, recruitment, and from engagement to the vision and mission of unions. The discussions, in presential, contributed to more direct and valuable exchange of experience, ideas, and best practices across the organisations, and fostering solidarity among the organisations in the sub-region Singh explained.

He went on underline difficulties participants will face back home after this training: "Many participants noted that much convincing is still needed to further update existing union policies and provisions, and deplored the insufficient budgets available to lead such programmes in their home countries, a continuous decrease in union membership, an insufficient engagement and participation of young members coupled with low recruitment rates within the youth".

Developing youth leadership

He however insisted that "youth leadership and the presence of young participants added a unique dynamic to the overall programme. It was interesting to note that the young members felt more motivated and connected to their unions and the work they carry out after the training. It also served as a learning platform for many members about their unions and why they do what they do."

He also recognised that the online part of the training programme was essential to familiarise participants with the main issues and topics and to ensure that they came prepared with basic information needed for the in-person training. "For future training linked to the JTF programme, we

will certainly use virtual tools to efficiently do the preparatory work ahead of the meeting in presential,” he said.

He concluded by welcoming the fact that “the John Thompson Fellowship Programme for North Asia was successfully implemented. Knowledge acquired through the programme was transmitted by participants to union colleagues. The participants and the unions have committed, as individuals and as collective beings, to an action plan focused on increasing the engagement, presence, and participation of young members in the union activities.”

As a follow-up to the programme, Singh concluded, EIAP committed to continue supporting the participants to work on the priorities they identified for their unions, to provide avenues to the participants to upgrade their skills and establish channels for regular communication and exchange of ideas and experiences.

Participants infused knowledge gained into their unions

“The JTF programme was wonderful,” stressed Tamaki Terazawa, Director of the JTU Department of International Affairs, adding that “the online training sessions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were well-organised, with much knowledge and insights, plus they provided us with spaces to exchange views and experiences. Also, each organisation had the opportunity to develop and moderate one session based on its own theme, which was very important and much appreciated.”

Asked if she learnt anything from other participants that was then useful to her in her own union, Terazawa was clear that she “learned a lot from all three other Education International member organisations. For instance, I was made aware that KTU has been at the forefront for democratising South Korea since its establishment. I believe that it was very challenging for KTU members, but they were successful. Also, KTU regained its legal status after they won a case in front of their national supreme court. I was generally very impressed by KTU's genuine unionism.”

She also mentioned that JTU participants in the JTF programme are members of their union's Youth Committee and reported to JTF and shared the training details with other members. The Youth Committee made use of the translated programme documents and messages from resource persons.

For Terazawa, “the most important thing we learned was about leadership. The other JTU participants, the Director of the Youth Committee and the Vice-President of a union branch at prefecture level, are taking initiatives as leaders in accordance with what they learned to try and renew the union.”

She also wished to show her appreciation and gratitude towards the training's resource persons: “Beverley, Nicole and Eva created a welcoming atmosphere, respected participants' views, and gave significant inputs. Thanks to them, I enjoyed this important programme.”

Successful online training paved the way to profitable face-to-face discussions

Beverley Park of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, resource person for the JTF programme, agreed that, because of the pandemic, “the online version of the programme evolved – and was more successful than we dreamt”.

Before we even began though, she said, there was a needs assessment done through the EIAP regional office. “We knew that the starting point would be to introduce the participants from the four

unions to the 'idea' of the programme – the foundational principles – and to situate the programme in the research on union renewal that was carried out in the region. This was done mostly with the Education International staff and resource persons presenting.”

Then, she added, the group was given “homework”, asking them to come prepared with one clear thing which they presented to each other. Following their presentations, we did analysis, gave feedback and asked for elaboration.

Park also noted that the face-to-face sessions were different because of the first phase online, as “the participants knew each other and were eager to meet. There were strong bonds from day One. This is typically something that we must work on – breaking down barriers of competition/pride/mistrust and helping participants to let down their guard and ask others for help.”

She also remarked that thanks to the fact that participants had already dealt with some themes online, “we could go much more in-depth with the content. We scaled back on some of the activities we might typically do and dived right into the content as of the first afternoon.”

She further stressed the importance of having excellent internet access and electrical services to engage in proper distance training. Having someone coordinate the meeting – schedule, communicate, troubleshoot, and offer the technical tools support – and solid interpretation was critical in her view.

Congratulating JTF programme participants for being “excellent ‘students’ in that they always completed tasks, they were always present and always very actively engaged”, Park reminded that “those of us who were present at the EIAP Regional conference in Siem Reap took the opportunity to connect and heard reports of good things happening by way of follow-up, in Taiwan and in Mongolia in particular. And it is no coincidence that in those delegations there were decision-makers. South Korea and Japan are reporting activity, but they must convince their decision-makers since they were not in the programme.”

We have planned in January 2023 an online follow-up session when the participants will be expected to report on progress and when participants left Kuala Lumpur at the end of the session, they were all committed to staying in contact and fully expected that there would be formal follow-up as well, Park also stressed.

Saying that the amount and level of learning among and between the groups was “phenomenal”, she went on to say that, while many of the activities required them to share on a particular theme – e.g., how we recruit; how we engage youth members; how we organise and campaign; how we communicate; how we build leadership; etc. –, participants went well beyond that, constantly in problem-solving mode, solving many of the communications issues, and breaks were spent often in front of flipcharts as they went deeper into understanding a union’s strategy.

She concluded: “It is fair to say that while YES, they learned from each other, the facilitation team learned a lot as well. It was an extremely demanding but also an extremely rich experience for everyone”.

Background

The JTF programme aims to offer participants the opportunity to:

- Examine the elements of a well-run union.
- Reflect on the mission of their organisation.
- Examine their “reason for being”, to reaffirm their commitment to that cause.
- Analyse their current level of effectiveness and their capacity.
- Develop practical leadership and managerial skills that will make them more effective as teachers/union leaders.
- Gain understanding, knowledge and skills to advocate for their rights and for other educational and social issues.
- Promote equity and representation within unions.

In Asia-Pacific, the JTF training is guided by the research [“Union Renewal in the Education Sector: Prospects for the Asia-Pacific report”](#), by Professor Michele Ford and Dr. Kristy Ward. The report, launched in June 2021, 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. It revitalised, strengthened, and enriched the work of teacher unions.