



The International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030

Call for Greater Investment in Teachers and Teaching

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Worldwide, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted huge variations between and within countries in the capacity of education systems to shift to distance and hybrid education models, to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning and to protect the well-being of teachers, educators and students. It has also exposed and deepened the disparities that affect the ability of governments, schools and teachers to respond effectively to challenges, threatening to leave the most vulnerable further behind. In the Global Education Meeting, on 13 July 2021, Member States and development partners made a case for the need to mobilize more funds and to use both domestic and international education financing in support of agreed priorities. This is the case of teachers and teaching, as reflected in SDG 4.

As schools reopen and education systems attempt to recover, **teachers** play a critical role in providing students with safe learning environments, remedial education, and differentiated teaching and learning models to meet evolving and emerging needs. After the recovery phase, additional efforts will be needed to build more resilient and sustainable education systems that can cater for new needs and tackle the long-term negative effects of the pandemic.

For education systems to **transform in the post-pandemic period, significant investments in strengthening the teaching profession are needed**, with an emphasis on equity. More teachers must be hired and education systems must be enabled to provide teachers with comprehensive support. Among other things, teachers need better access to continuing professional development as well as assistance and resources to facilitate blended and remedial teaching and learning, and both teachers and students need more socio-emotional support.

Urgent action must be taken to close the teacher gap

Before the tremendous disruptions caused by COVID-19, education systems worldwide were already challenged by a **chronic shortage of teachers**. This was particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa. [New projections](#) show that by 2030, countries in sub-Saharan Africa will need to recruit 15 million teachers: 6.1 million at primary level and 8.9 million at secondary level. Urgent investment is also needed in initial teacher education and continuing professional development. The pupil/trained teacher ratio in the region is close to one trained teacher per 58 pupils at primary level, while at secondary, it is approximately 43 pupils per trained teacher.

Education budgets and international aid to education have increased somewhat over the past decade, but the COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized progress and widened already large disparities between high- and low-income countries. Earlier this year, [the Education Finance Watch 2021 report estimated](#) that two-thirds of

low-income countries had cut their education budgets due to COVID-19. Moreover, recent investments in education have not borne sufficient fruit, with [large numbers of pupils not learning](#), undermining the increases in enrolment seen over the past decades.

If countries fail to recruit, train and retain a sufficient number of teachers, school leaders and education support staff, the effects of this crisis will last for several generations, disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged. In many countries, teachers are simply not being paid a living wage, further undermining education systems. The small size of the education budget in many developing countries leaves little room, after meeting teacher salary costs, for investment in teacher initial education, continuing professional development, or improving working conditions and infrastructure (in particular, access to connectivity and devices).

COVID-19 has further compounded the challenges for teachers working in countries affected by conflict and forced displacement prior to the pandemic, including refugee and national teachers. For teachers working in these contexts, professional development opportunities and pathways toward recognized certification and adequate compensation are typically limited.

In light of this, the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 urgently calls on national governments, the international community and education funders – both public and private – to invest in a [human-centred approach to recovery by](#) building resilient, teacher-supportive education systems focused on reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Building on its [Call for Action on Teachers](#), launched in March 2020, the International Taskforce on Teachers for Education 2030 calls on all relevant stakeholders to:

- 1) **Increase domestic and international funding.** Enhanced strategic and targeted domestic and international financial investments are needed to ensure there are enough qualified teachers to reach all learners, in particular those in marginalized and disadvantaged areas where teacher shortages are more acute. Domestic education budgets need to be increased or maintained to reach the internationally agreed benchmark of national education expenditure of 20% of GDP. Currently, low-income countries fall below this mark, [with an average rate of 16.5%](#). But increasing the share of the budget going to education will not be enough; the size of education budgets must grow, by means of expanding the tax base and growing domestic revenues in progressive ways and with fiscal justice. This way, rather than competing with other sectors for a fair share of overly limited budgets, education budgets can rise alongside those of health and other public services.

Many countries will need external support to meet professional development needs. International donors, therefore, need to [increase levels of aid to education to meet the international benchmark of 0.7% of gross national income](#), and to give priority to teachers and teaching as the key to attaining SDG 4. This means helping countries to meet funding gaps to cover professional development, training in blended learning, improved working conditions and socio-emotional support. The Global Partnership for Education has estimated it will spend 16% of its budget on teacher professional development and support over the next 5 years. While this is an important start, more will be needed to tackle global shortages of trained teachers.

- 2) **Develop holistic teacher policies, cost them properly, and implement them effectively**, especially in the countries with the most severe shortages. [Comprehensive national teacher policies](#), covering all dimensions from recruitment to professional development, continuing education and career progression, decent working conditions, accountability, supervision and support, are key to creating a well-trained and supported teaching workforce to sustain learning. Policies like this also enable countries to better understand where teachers are needed the most – both now and in the future – and to identify the most cost-effective interventions and the policy trade-offs required. The

development of holistic teacher policies should be properly costed and accompanied by solid implementation plans, and should be facilitated by long-term commitments from governments and partners.

- 3) **Invest in teacher capacity and autonomy.** The crisis has shown that, more than ever, investing in the transformation of the teaching profession is vital to ensure innovation, creativity and sustainability. This should be fostered by building teachers' capacities, strengthening their leadership and autonomy, improving the status of the profession, promoting career development and mobility, involving teachers in educational decision-making through strengthened bottom-up, inclusive processes, including social dialogue, and supporting teachers so that they can focus on teaching and learning.
- 4) **Invest in data and information systems** to ensure that investments in the teaching workforce are made through proven, cost-effective approaches. This includes better [teacher management](#), governance and payroll systems, as well as [geospatial analysis](#) and other systems which identify where teachers are needed most and need the greatest support. Information systems should in particular pay attention to understanding the needs of female teachers, [who play an important role in supporting girls' education](#) and have been particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Interventions that target women in recruitment and professional development are needed, financial and other incentives to encourage the retention of female teachers should be identified, and teacher preparation and curricula should be reviewed to ensure they deal specifically with gender issues. National and regional benchmarks on teachers need to be developed as a priority, with monitoring systems put into place, as part of the new [Global Coordination Mechanism of SDG 4](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a unique challenge for education systems and puts at risk gains in human capital development on an unprecedented scale. It also provides a unique opportunity to rebuild and invest in education systems in ways that do not simply prevent loss, but instead leapfrog where the world would have been without the pandemic. Central to this transformation is investing in teachers in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Teachers are key in the development of the citizens of the future, who need to be prepared to navigate the complexities of the world and to tackle the most pressing global challenges we are facing today – which means that preparing and supporting teachers is essential to meeting those critical challenges.

The [International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030](#) is a global network of over 155 members (including countries, UN members and regional organizations, civil society organizations, the teaching profession and foundations) working to promote teachers and teaching issues. Its Secretariat is hosted by UNESCO at its headquarters in Paris.