



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals

## World Teachers' Day 2018

The right to education means  
the right to a qualified teacher

### Concept Note

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#### *World Teachers' Day*

Held annually on 5 October since 1994, World Teachers' Day (WTD) commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. This Recommendation sets forth the rights and responsibilities of teachers and standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, and teaching and learning conditions. To complement the 1966 Recommendation, the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel was adopted in 1997 to cover teaching and research personnel in higher education.

With the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, and the dedicated target (SDG 4.c) recognizing teachers as key to the achievement of the 2030 Education Agenda, World Teachers' Day has become the occasion to mark achievements and reflect on ways to counter the remaining challenges for the promotion of the teaching profession. The day is celebrated through a global event at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, with regional and country events worldwide.

World Teachers' Day is co-convened in partnership with UNICEF, UNDP, the International Labour Organization, and Education International. This year, the day coincides with the awarding of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the UNESCO-Hamdan bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers.

#### *Theme of WTD 2018: "The right to education means the right to a qualified teacher"*

World Teachers' Day 2018 will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that recognizes education as a key fundamental right and establishes an entitlement to free compulsory education, ensuring inclusive and equitable access for all children.

This year's theme, "The right to education means the right to a qualified teacher," has been chosen to remind the global community that the right to education cannot be achieved without the right to trained and qualified teachers. Even today, a continuing challenge worldwide is the shortage of teachers. There are an estimated 264 million children and youth still out of school globally. To reach the 2030 Education Goals of universal primary and secondary education, the world needs to recruit almost 69 million new teachers.<sup>1</sup> This 'teacher gap' is more pronounced among vulnerable populations, such as girls, children with disabilities, refugee and migrant children, or poor children living in rural or remote areas.

#### *Teachers are key to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all*

Education transforms lives: it is the driver of economic and social development; it promotes peace, tolerance, and social inclusion; and is key to eradicating poverty and achieving personal fulfilment.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs39-the-world-needs-almost-69-million-new-teachers-to-reach-the-2030-education-goals-2016-en.pdf>.

Teachers are the means through which education is transmitted: without teachers, the goal of universal primary and secondary education, a fundamental human right, cannot be met.

However, projections indicate that there is a global shortage of teachers. Across the world (developed and developing regions combined), it will be necessary to recruit almost 69 million new teachers by 2030 to expand access to the 264 million children and youth out of school, and to replace those who are expected to leave the workforce.<sup>2</sup> The need is most severe in sub-Saharan Africa: 21% of primary school-age children, 36% of lower secondary school-age adolescents, and 57% of upper secondary school-age youth were not enrolled in school in 2015 (the year with the latest available data). Furthermore, sub-Saharan Africa faces the most urgent need in filling the teacher gap: an estimated 17 million teachers are needed with 70% of countries facing an acute shortage at the primary level and 90% at the secondary level.

Teacher shortages are hampering efforts in many low-income countries to achieving quality, equitable, and inclusive education. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, one policy mechanism to filling the teacher gap is to hire teachers on non-permanent contractual arrangements. So-called 'contract teachers' are used as an emergency measure and do not need to meet the same training and qualification requirements as permanent teachers. However, a recent study of 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa indicates that the employment of contract teachers has been increasing, rather than decreasing, the equity gap in education.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, these contract teachers, who tend to be younger and less experienced, receive lower salaries and have limited access to pre-service or in-service training.

Yet we know that factors such as years of experience, quality of teacher preparation and access to professional development opportunities have repeatedly been shown to impact teacher quality and student learning.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, contract teachers tend to be deployed to hard-to-staff remote or rural locations with negative consequences on their absentee rates and retention. This raises concerns about the unequal allocation of financial resources to children who are most marginalized.

In some countries, addressing teacher shortages, while at the same time providing universal access to a growing number of children and youth, has meant increasing class sizes. The pupil/teacher ratio in low-income countries was 41 for primary education and 23 for secondary education in 2015, in comparison to 14 and 13 for primary and secondary education, respectively, in high-income countries.<sup>5</sup> In practice, this means that 1 teacher is responsible for providing instruction to a group of 41 students in a low-income country, for example, in comparison to a teacher in a high-income country who is responsible for a group of 14 students. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia have the highest pupil/teacher ratios (39 for primary and 21 for secondary in sub-Saharan Africa; 33 and 30 for primary and secondary, respectively, for Southern Asia), reflecting the urgent need in filling the teacher gaps in these regions. Large class sizes have been shown to have a negative impact on students' learning, especially if they are staffed by teachers who are not trained to manage large groups of students or who do not have the skills to differentiate instruction to diverse groups of learners.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. (2017). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Dembelé, M. Shugar, A. & Niang, F. (in preparation). A review of the use of contract teachers in sub-Saharan Africa. A comparative synthesis.

<sup>4</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., B. Berry, and A. Thoreson (2001), "Does teacher certification matter? Evaluating the evidence", *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 23/1, pp. 57-77. Muñoz, M.A. and F.C. Chang (2007), "The elusive relationship between teacher characteristics and student academic growth: A longitudinal multilevel model for change", *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, Vol. 20, pp. 147-164. Wayne, A.J. and P. Youngs (2003), "Teacher characteristics and student achievement gains: A review", *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 73/1, pp. 89-122.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO. (2017). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. (2017). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf>.

Well-trained and qualified teachers are at the heart of quality education. However, in low-income countries, many classrooms are staffed by teachers who are not qualified or trained to teach. As of 2015, only 62% of primary-school teachers and 45% of secondary-school teachers in sub-Saharan Africa had successfully completed the minimum pedagogical training required for becoming a teacher according to national standards.<sup>7</sup> In some sub-Saharan African countries (e.g., Eritrea, Niger, and Ghana), the percentage of trained teachers has dropped since 2000.

More disconcerting is that the minimum requirements for pedagogical training differ among countries, and differences are not well documented. Countries differ in regards to programme duration and curriculum content, extent of and quality of field experience (i.e., practice teaching), and availability and duration of induction and mentoring. For example, teacher education programmes can last from one to four years, may or may not include a period of supervised teaching practice, and may or may not require an academic qualification. Such qualitative differences in the training and qualifications of teachers affect instructional quality in the classroom and ultimately students' learning achievement. For example, in a study of 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa,<sup>8</sup> students taught by teachers who had higher reading or mathematics scores performed better in those subjects than those taught by teachers with lower scores.<sup>9</sup>

When countries resort to hiring teachers on temporary contracts, increasing class sizes, or employing teachers that have not been sufficiently trained, students' learning suffers. Although there is currently no global estimate, available data suggest that many students are not meeting the minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics in primary and secondary education, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. In these contexts, children often arrive in school unprepared to learn due to malnutrition, poverty, or lack of nurture by caregivers which harm early brain development.<sup>10</sup> These early disadvantages are further hampered by teachers who are poorly-trained or unqualified to provide instruction adapted to students' individual abilities. Indeed, research suggests that in low-income countries, teacher quality matters more than in wealthier countries.

### ***World Teachers' Day 2018 Spotlight: Teaching in crisis and emergency contexts***

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 65.3 million people, of which 21.3 million are under 18 years of age, were forced into leaving their homes due to limited employment opportunities, ethnic or religious persecutions, armed conflict or violence, political crises, or natural disasters.<sup>11</sup> In some parts of the world, large segments of the population miss out on educational opportunities due to forced or involuntary migration. More than one-third of out-of-school children and youth globally live in conflict-affected areas; 55% of whom are girls. In 2017, about 20,000 unaccompanied and separated children arrived in Europe, an increase of 31% since 2016.<sup>12</sup>

When education is interrupted due to forced or involuntary migration, children's right to education is weakened. For example, in areas affected by armed conflicts or natural disasters, schools, books and educational infrastructures are lost or damaged. Teachers are also lost, as they too may be forced to leave their home.

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<sup>7</sup> UNESCO. (2017). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zanzibar, and Zimbabwe. Countries participated in the assessment of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality.

<sup>9</sup> Hungi, N. (2011). Accounting for variations in the quality of primary and secondary education. Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality.

<sup>10</sup> The World Bank. (2018). World Development Report 2018. Learning to realize education's promise. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28340/211096ov.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/Concept%20Note%205%20April%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children>.

In emergency situations, teachers are in short supply. Often, humanitarian agencies must recruit teachers with no pedagogical training and no preparation for working in fragile or crisis contexts, making them vulnerable to violence and abuse.<sup>13</sup> Those who may have a teaching qualification may be asked to teach subjects for which they have no pedagogical training, impacting the quality of instruction and learning outcomes.<sup>14</sup>

In emergency and post-conflict situations, children's emotional and social well-being is often negatively impacted, and teachers are key to helping children cope with the new situation and improve their wellbeing.<sup>15</sup> However, new teachers may be unprepared to respond to the additional complexities of working with vulnerable children and youth. Like regular teachers, teachers working in emergency and crisis contexts should be carefully recruited and trained, with access to strong support systems and specialized professional development for building the competencies and skills to work with refugee and migrant children.

### *Closing the teacher gap*

Clearly, closing the teacher gap will necessitate much stronger commitments to not only recruit and train new teachers, but also to ensure that sufficient resources are invested to keep teachers in the profession. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of teachers in shaping the success of future generations, teaching, in far too many contexts, is not regarded as a valued profession, and many countries face challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. This is because wages for teachers in many countries are not comparable to professionals with similar education and training levels, workloads have increased, working conditions are deteriorating, and teachers are increasingly employed under precarious contracts.<sup>16</sup> For example, in the study of 15 countries in Southern Africa, it was found that teachers lacked the basic necessities for teaching and learning: teacher guides, writing boards, paper and pencils.<sup>17</sup> The lack of trained teachers, low salaries, and poor working conditions in many parts of the world are jeopardizing prospects for quality and equitable education for all, and in particular for the most marginalized and vulnerable populations.

As the profession is too often being associated with inadequate training, poor career prospects, and lack of professional autonomy, the general prestige of teachers has suffered. As early as 1966, the importance of a valued teaching profession was spelled out in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. This standard-setting instrument defines "status" as the "standing or regard accorded to teachers, as evidenced by the level of appreciation of the importance of their function and of their competence in performing it, and the working conditions, remuneration and other material benefits accorded them relative to other professional groups."<sup>18</sup> To foster public esteem for teachers and encourage the development of the teaching profession, the 1966 Recommendation set out the rights and responsibilities of teachers. Providing high-quality instruction is teachers' core responsibility. But teachers also have rights, such as the right to contribute to education policy development, the right to professional freedom, as well as the right to decent working conditions and adequate remuneration.

A poorly valued teaching profession has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. This is why the international community, in adopting the Education 2030 Agenda, has committed to ensuring that "teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/4-barriers-teachers-professional-development-fragile-contexts>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ineesite.org/en/teachers>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/3b8a1ba94.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> UNESCO. (2017). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Hungi, N. et al., (2011). SACMEQ III Project Results: Levels and trends in school resources among SACMEQ school systems. Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality.

<sup>18</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/teachers/ceart>.

qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.”<sup>19</sup>

At the heart of the right to education, therefore, is a highly-valued, qualified, and well-trained teaching profession.

### *What can the international community do?*

This World Teachers’ Day, as we commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we invite the global community to celebrate teachers and the centrality of teachers in the right to a quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all.

We invite UNESCO Field Offices and Regional Bureaus, governments, schools, teachers, and the international community to reflect on and discuss how to address the challenge of increasing the supply of well-trained and qualified teachers.

Suggested topics for showcase and discussion may include:

- Success stories of schools or communities where teachers have made a difference for marginalized or vulnerable children living in emergency or crisis contexts.
- Promising examples of how countries have been able to successfully deploy trained and qualified teachers to remote or rural areas.
- Examples of how governments, teachers’ organizations, and the private sector can work together to mobilize the financing needed to increase the recruitment and training of teachers.
- Innovative approaches to keeping teachers motivated to remain in the profession and to improve the quality of teaching.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656E.pdf>.