International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030

*Background paper 2025*

# Teacher wellbeing and the shaping of teacher shortages in crisis-affected contexts

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Education 2030

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## Acronyms

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| CAI | Creative Associates International |
| CBES | Cox's Bazar Education Sector |
| FARC | Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia |
| FECODE | Federación Colombiana de Educadores |
| GCPEA | Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IIEP | International Institute for Educational Planning |
| INEE | Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies |
| MHPSS | Mental Health and Psychosocial Support |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NUG | National Unity Government of Myanmar |
| OCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PSS-SEL | Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| TES | Transforming Education Summit |
| TiCC | Teachers in Crisis Contexts |
| UIS | UNESCO Institute for Statistics |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

## Abstract

Difficult to attain local-level data suggests that conflict, a sudden influx of refugees, and/or the burden of teaching in under-resourced environments can accelerate teacher attrition and compound teacher shortages, as defined by a lack of qualified teaching personnel, extreme pupil to teacher ratios, and/or teachers who are insufficiently supported to teach. Despite this emergent knowledge, we do not yet have a global-level understanding of the correlation between teachers' work conditions, their wellbeing, and attrition rates in crisis-affected contexts. Due to a lack of standardised teacher wellbeing indicators and fragmented reporting, the extent to which teacher wellbeing determines rates of attrition is more anecdotal than an empirical fact. To illustrate this reality and work towards improved attention and funding for teacher wellbeing research, policy, and practice – so that qualified and appropriately remunerated teachers can be attracted to, rewarded by, and retained in the profession – this paper draws from United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4c data on the supply and retention of qualified teachers and four teacher wellbeing contextualization studies from Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Palestine. Analysis of this data reveals two valuable insights: 1) national-level data can mask teacher wellbeing issues, attrition rates, and teacher shortages within local-level crises, and 2) the work of teaching is a protective and a risk factor in teachers' lives. In other words, teachers' work conditions in crisis-affected contexts and their sense of wellbeing are coterminous with their willingness to teach.

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## 1. Introduction

The profession of teaching is at once celebrated and in a state of crisis. Globally, teachers are caught at the confluence of this tension and challenges pertaining to teacher recruitment and retention demand urgent action from policy makers and teacher unions alike (Horner et al., 2015). Teachers' diminishing status, paltry salaries, inadequate professional development, and the rise of educational technology compound the myriad challenges that they face (UNESCO, 2020; 2023b; UNHCR, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Together, this can affect teachers' wellbeing and disincentivize individuals from entering and staying in the profession (D'Sa, 2023; Harmsen et al. 2018; Marshall et al. 2022). Such concerns have now become global priorities, as reflected at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit where the term 'teachers' was the second most referred to theme in 168 attending governments' statements of commitment (Crawford et al., 2022; Lewin and Stuart, 2003).

As the case studies presented in this background paper illustrate, teacher shortages are pronounced and nuanced in contexts affected by conflict, environmental crises and forced displacement. In addition to the expected roles associated with providing a basic education, teachers are charged with numerous expanded roles such as fostering a sense of belonging and psychosocial wellbeing among displaced and traumatised pupils (Falk, 2023; Kirk and Winthrop, 2008; UNHCR, 2017). Yet, an overlooked fact is that most teachers in crisis-affected contexts are also survivors of violence, experience their own forced displacement, and contend with a similar array of wellbeing challenges as the children they teach (Adelman, 2019; Brandt and Lopes Cardozo, 2023; GCPEA, 2022; Mendenhall, Gomez, and Varni, 2019a; West and Ring, 2015; Shepler, 2011). This reality negatively impacts teachers' sense of self-efficacy – the belief that one's actions influence an intended outcome – which, in turn, affects their motivation to persist in the profession (Bandura, 1997; Carninus et al., 2012; Schleicher, 2017). With this dynamic in mind, teachers in crisis-affected contexts should be at the forefront of humanitarian financing and receive considerably more professional development and psychosocial support than they currently do. Until now, however, teacher wellbeing has been a forgotten factor in the basic right to protection and a quality education in crisis-affected settings (Brookings, 2022; Henderson, 2023).

Among the many definitions of wellbeing that are applied to teachers' work, one that is commonly cited refers to teacher wellbeing as how "teachers feel and function in their jobs" (D'Sa, 2023; Falk et al., 2019). But as recent studies spotlight, the concept of teacher wellbeing needs to move beyond "blurred and overly broad definitions" and account for the interdependent influence of teachers' work on teachers' lives and the impact of teachers' lived realities on their work (D'Sa et al., 2023. p.2). For this reason, Amartya Sen's (1999) theory of 'development as freedom' inspires an updated definition of teacher wellbeing to fit the purpose of this paper: being able to function to one's fullest capabilities, free from physical and psychological harm, as a committed professional and active contributor to a community.

Scholarly studies and humanitarian guidance show how teaching has become a wellbeing risk in and of itself, where the conditions of teaching undermine the status and dignity of the profession and contribute to high levels of attrition (Falk et al., 2019; INEE, 2022; Wolf et al., 2016). At the same time, a less discussed fact is that the work of teaching in settings of conflict and forced displacement can offer crisis-affected individuals a sense of purpose and protection. For those who teach, the identity and agency associated with their roles can help (re)orient uncertain present and future realities (Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Falk al. 2019; 2023; Kirk, 2008). A key question that this paper therefore seeks to address is: how can state actors and humanitarian partners bolster the protective elements of teaching to attract and retain a sufficient number of teachers in the workforce, in crisis-affected contexts?

To address this question, the fact that teacher wellbeing in crisis-affected contexts is poorly understood and its relationship to teacher shortages is under theorised needs to be considered

(Brookings, 2022; D'Sa, 2023; Mendenhall et al. 2018; Right to Play, 2022). It is well documented that teacher shortages have an unequal effect on the most geographically and economically disadvantaged parts of the world (Mendenhall et al. 2019; Mulkeen et al., 2017). Moreover, it is known that female teachers are the most adversely affected by harmful gender norms and are underrepresented in teacher numbers in crisis-affected contexts, with concerning downstream effects on girls' learning and wellbeing (Kirk and Winthrop, 2008; Mendenhall et al., 2019; Wolf et al. 2015). But as case studies from Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Palestine in this paper show, the characteristics of teacher shortages at a local level are often masked by the averages that are presented in national-level statistics. Teacher attrition – a proxy measure for teacher shortages – is also the most under-reported indicator (4.c.6) in the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database. Further still, from the case study examples below, while Myanmar experiences a high rate of teacher attrition compared to low rates of attrition in Colombia and Palestine, poor teacher subject expertise and deteriorating teacher wellbeing shape a different type of teacher shortage dynamic not captured by current indicators and data. Together, these facts mean that the nuanced teacher workforce policy and resourcing needs of crisis-affected contexts are often misunderstood and underfunded.

Disaggregated local, national, and global level data on teacher wellbeing in crisis contexts are sorely missing. Difficult to attain local data shows that conflict and the sudden influx of refugees often results in teacher shortages, as defined by a lack of teaching personnel, extreme teacher to student ratios, or individuals who are insufficiently qualified to teach (Mendenhall et al. 2019; Mulkeen et al., 2017; Nicolai, 2016). Despite this knowledge, however, we still do not have an empirical understanding of the long-term effects of poor teacher wellbeing on teacher shortages in crisis-affected contexts. Thus, without standardised indicators for teacher wellbeing and due to the fragmented monitoring and reporting of teacher attrition data in crisis-affected settings, the extent to which poor wellbeing determines higher rates of teacher attrition is more anecdotal than an assertive fact (D'Sa et al., 2023).

## 1.1 Organization of this background paper

To substantiate the need for research that defines teacher wellbeing in crisis-affected contexts and articulates its contribution to teacher shortages, this background paper is organised by three sections. The first section provides a literature-informed definition of teacher profiles and wellbeing challenges in crisis contexts, with a particular focus on teachers' expected and expanded roles and implications for their wellbeing from a policy and practice point of view. This includes the risks teachers face; the gendered effects of teachers' work; and how teacher wellbeing is associated with recruitment, retention, and attrition challenges in crisis-affected settings.

The following section focuses on the standardisation and contextualization of teacher wellbeing for crisis contexts as a promising practice. Building off Falk et al.'s (2019) Teacher Wellbeing Landscape Review, which conceptualises a socio-ecological framework of the interacting factors that promote or impede teacher wellbeing, products from the INEE Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit (2022) are synthesised and central findings from the resource mapping, gap analysis, and guidance note projects are presented. To highlight nascent developments in teacher wellbeing policy and advocacy, case studies from Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Palestine are introduced to contextualise the operationalization of teacher wellbeing. Alongside recent literature and relevant data for the SDG target 4c indicators, which focus on teacher supply, this section juxtaposes national-level teacher shortage data with local-level realities to demonstrate how conceptualizations of teacher wellbeing and the measurement of teacher shortages can be a barrier to the uptake and promotion of teacher wellbeing policies in crisis-affected settings (INEE, 2022).

> *"Sometimes I ask myself if it is because I am a refugee teacher that I suffer? But then I realise that it is because not everyone prioritises education." South Sudanese refugee teacher in Uganda*

# 2. How teacher wellbeing shapes teacher shortages in crisis contexts

## 2.1 Different types of crisis contexts

To promote a broader understanding of the term 'crisis-affected contexts', it is important to define the different types of crises that teachers work in. Fragile states refer to nations like present day Afghanistan or Yemen, where a constellation of the following factors are present: political instability; poor governance and inadequate public services; economic weaknesses; acute humanitarian needs in the form of shelter, nutrition and protection; and, ethnic and/or sectarian conflict (ICRC, 2017; World Bank, 2023). In Yemen, for example, teachers often go months without pay and in rebel Houthi-controlled regions teachers regularly experience air-strikes on their schools (Al-Aswadi, 2018; GCPEA, 2019; Multhanna et al., 2022; Taher et al., 2022).

A conflict-affected context is where ethnic groups, political rivals, or states carry out high-, medium-, or low intensity acts of violence within or across national borders. However, these settings might not constitute a fragile state due to the continuation of economic activity and public services, albeit weakened by conflict. As imperfect examples, Ukraine or Sudan might represent high-intensity conflict-affected contexts, Syria and Myanmar are medium-intensity conflict-affected contexts, and Palestine's West Bank or El Salvador are low-intensity conflict-affected contexts. In El Salvador, for instance, widespread gang violence more so than war threatens the functioning of 65 percent of schools and teachers across the nation (Soares et al., 2021). Within conflict-affected contexts like these internal displacement also occurs where displaced populations seek protection in camp or urban settings within a country's borders. Examples include the roughly 140 thousand Rohingya residing in IDP camps within Myanmar's Rakhine State (UNHCR, 2021) or the urban IDP populations of the Central African Republic's capital, Bangui, who number over 40 thousand (OCHA, 2022).

Refugee hosting contexts might also be fragile and/or conflict affected states but are often more stable neighbouring states such as Jordan, Türkiye or Uganda. They include camp-based or urban populations who have fled violence, persecution, or existential environmental risks (e.g. drought, flooding, or earthquakes) and seek asylum in a country other than their own. Kenya's Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, which host a respective 220 and 170 thousand registered refugees from Somalia and South Sudan, are the product of sectarian tensions, prolonged droughts, poor governance, and/or weak economies. Urban settings include Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, where over 100 thousand Rohingya asylum seekers who fled apartheid-like conditions and extreme violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state are based (UNHCR, 2021). Rohingya asylum seekers and refugees in Kuala Lumpur are forced to pursue a meagre and high-risk existence in the informal economy. Due to Malaysia's United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and Protocol (1967) non-signatory status, Rohingya are not afforded the protections or social services of their peers who are detained in the camps of Cox's Bazar, which operate under a delicate memorandum of understanding between the UNHCR and the non-signatory Government of Bangladesh (Galache, 2020).

## 2.2 Teacher profiles in crisis contexts

The different profiles of teachers working in crisis contexts determines the disparate recognition, compensation, and status that they receive. Factors might include teachers' prior educational experiences and academic qualifications; the employment conditions under which they work; and/or their displacement status (Mendenhall et al. 2018). For example, many Syrian refugee teachers working in Lebanon hold higher-education qualifications and/or had previous teaching experience in Syria, which influences their ability to work as teachers of refugee pupils in non-formal schools and alternative education centres (Adelman, 2019; Pherali et al. 2020). On the other hand, among the approximately 950 thousand Rohingya in Cox's Bazar only 530 individuals had engaged in post-secondary education before fleeing Myanmar (CBES, 2021). As such, Rohingya teachers, many of whom

are highly motivated and skilled, are referred to by the Bangladesh Government as 'volunteer facilitators' and are paid woeful incentive stipends for their critical work (Henderson, forthcoming; Hossain, 2023; Shohel, 2022).

Due to a lack of alternative employment opportunities and surplus human resources, many refugee- or IDP-hosting contexts do not experience teacher shortages in the same way that stable or developed country settings do. However, the work of teaching in crisis-affected contexts often occurs in conditions that are not conducive to job satisfaction, a sense of self-efficacy, or adequate compensation; factors that are shown to impede teacher motivation and retention (Bengtsson, 2022; Collie et al., 2012; Harmsen, 2018; Zee and Koomen, 2016). At the same time, multiple studies cite teachers' strong sense of purpose, self-identity as agents of change, alongside many other protective factors that determine their positive motivation to teach (Kirk and Winthrop, 2008; Falk et al. 2023; Pherali et al., 2020; Shah, 2023; UNESCO IIEP, 2022).

In crisis-affected contexts, teachers are recruited through diverse employment arrangements which can also impact retention and attrition rates (Kirk and Winthrop, 2008; Mendenhall et al. 2018; Richardson, 2018). At one end of the spectrum, qualified and certified teachers maintain state employment or continue to work in private institutions. In the middle of the spectrum, teachers are formally employed, trained, and regularly paid by non-governmental or humanitarian agencies on short- or medium -term contracts. At the other end of the spectrum, teachers are nominated or enlisted as volunteer, incentive, or community teachers – thereby undermining the status of their work – and receive irregular training, short or no contracts, and inadequate stipends for their roles (Kirk and Winthrop, 2007; Ring and West, 2015; Mendenhall et al. 2018).

Nationally registered teachers are teachers who gained their teaching qualification and certification in their country of citizenship and are registered to teach in national schools. In fragile contexts like Yemen or conflict-affected settings like Palestine's West Bank, nationally registered teachers experience a slew of challenges relating to poor bureaucracy, economic weakness, and ongoing violence (Al-Aswadi, 2018; Al-Qadasi, 2023; CAI, 2015; Pepe et al., 2019). Teachers travel to and from the classroom each day amid targeted attacks and threats to their homes, education facilities, and lives (Al-Qadasi, 2023; Shah, 2023). National or host-community teachers also work with forcibly displaced children and adolescents in camp and urban refugee schools. In some contexts, where UNHCR's policy for national system inclusion is realised, national or host-community teachers will also teach asylum seeker or refugee children in national schools, as is the case for Venezuelan children in Colombia and for South Sudanese refugee children in Uganda (Reddick and Dryden-Peterson, 2021; Rodriguez and Becerra, 2022; UNHCR, 2019). Often, retired national teachers also volunteer in refugee education facilities to fill skills gaps and scaffold language learning needs, as is common for Rohingya pupils in Malaysia (UNICEF, 2022; Mendenhall and Henderson, forthcoming).

Internally displaced teachers are often nationally registered teachers who are themselves internally displaced by conflict or an environmental disaster and, like others in their community, are working in host-community schools but within their own country's borders. A key challenge faced by IDP teachers is maintaining state employment and receiving salaries and other benefits and entitlements from the government, as many IDP teachers working in Northeast Syria have experienced (Abu-Amsha, 2023; Brandt, 2019; Dolan et al., 2012; Mendenhall et al., 2018).

Refugee teachers are teachers who teach in refugee-specific learning centres in camps or urban settlements, most often for United Nations or NGO-funded schools as in Kakuma or Cox's Bazar. Most often, this category of teachers have no or very little teaching experience and are unable to gain certification through their ongoing work (Wiseman and Galegher, 2016). For teachers who were certified in their country of origin, their qualifications are often not recognized by host-governments, which further undermines their status and security (Mendenhall and Falk, 2023; Tsegaye, 2022). Refugee

teachers are seldom offered formal contracts, or they are only offered temporary employment arrangements (Dryden-Peterson, 2009; 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2018; Richardson et al., 2018; Senan, 2012). In a majority of contexts refugee teachers are also unrecognised and unprotected by national teacher unions due to their unqualified or uncertified status within national systems.

IDP and refugee teachers are often referred to as 'spontaneous' or 'tentative' teachers due to the sudden or delegated nature of their recruitment and the uncertainty of their employment (Kirk and Winthrop, 2008; Mendenhall et al., 2018). This relates to their short-term or non-existent contracts and teachers' desire for more stable and better paid employment elsewhere (ibid). At the same time, such teachers are considered 'alternatively qualified' due to their strong understanding of and affinity with children's lived experiences and their learning and psychosocial needs (Kirk and Winthrop, 2007; 2008; 2013; Richardson, 2018).

The final profile of teachers are known as **returnee teachers**. These individuals are refugee or IDP teachers who continue their work as teachers once they return to their place of origin, often motivated to help rebuild children's lives and in doing so rebuild the nation (Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Falk et al. 2023; Shepler, 2011). Pertinent examples include South Sudanese refugees who returned from Kenya to teach in South Sudan (Falk et al., 2023) or Sierra Leonean and Liberian teachers who returned home from Guinea to teach (Shepler, 2011). These teachers often received training from NGOs and may have taught for many years in a camp-based context, but they also struggle to have their skills and experiences recognized by education authorities at home which stymies their re-entry into the profession and hampers their sense of self-reliance (Mendenhall et al., 2018; Sesnan, 2012).

## 2.3 The gendered nature of teachers' expected and expanded roles

For many years, advocates have argued that teachers are frontline professionals in emergencies as they triage children and adolescents' complex learning and psychosocial needs and create environments of safety, security, and routine (Henderson, 2023; UNICEF, 2006). Teachers have also been at the heart of education sector recovery as schools grapple with the effects of COVID-19. Though the scale of the pandemic was unprecedented — disrupting the work of more than 100 million teachers — many had already been teaching on the frontlines of conflict and displacement for years (Henderson and Falk, 2021; Sherif et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Thus, COVID-19 compounded many of the stressors that teachers in crisis contexts already contended with and further eroded teachers' basic right to the compensation, dignity, and protection that they deserve (Henderson and Falk, 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

In Falk, Shephard, and Mendenhall's (2023) study on teacher wellbeing and student relationships with host-community teachers in Uganda's Palabek and South Sudan's Torit refugee settlements and with returnee teachers in Juba, South Sudan, they found that teachers defined themselves by three key roles: 1) educator, 2) caretaker and counsellor, and 3) nation builder. Teachers provided examples of how, as trusted adults in children's lives, they are the go-to person as children try to cope with the struggles of food insecurity or early and forced child marriage, gender-based violence, and pregnancy (Falk et al., 2023). However, findings show that these roles both "enhance and impede teacher well-being in complex, complementary, and contradictory ways" (ibid. p.2). At once, teachers report feelings of pride, happiness, and purpose as they experience growth in their pupils and receive positive feedback from the protective spaces that they provide (ibid). But they also experience a deep sense of inadequacy when they do not have the knowledge and skills to deliver adequate academic and psychosocial support (ibid). This echoes findings from Soares et al.'s (2021) research on El Salvadorean pupils' and teachers' socioemotional regulation, where pupils' negative emotional responses to poverty and their ongoing exposure to conflict correlates with violent classroom behaviours, thus causing higher rates of stress and burnout for teachers who lack the professional skill to de-escalate the realities of their work.

The work of teaching has always reached beyond foundational numeracy, literacy, and academic subjects to include pastoral care and psychosocial support. For teachers in crisis-affected contexts, however, this burden is exacerbated by the fact that many children and adolescents are orphaned by war or their parents – due to the trauma of extreme poverty, displacement, or their own entanglement in conflict – are unable to provide the formative and nurturing care that children and adolescents require (Aguilar and Retamal, 2009; Kirk and Winthrop, 2008; Sommers, 2004; Wessells, 2015). This means that teachers often fulfil roles that normally fall within the parents' domain of care. Highlighting the effect of this reality on teacher wellbeing, teachers of Venezuelan refugees in Colombia cite incidents of domestic violence and the "lack of co-responsibility of the families" as a major stressor contributing to their own poor wellbeing and burnout (INEE, 2022). Teachers who navigate the consequences of conflict can also lack the necessary support systems to "cope and bounce back from traumatic events" while being expected to help children and adolescents in their care (Wolf et al. 2015. p.25).

The stressors of these expanded roles are experienced most acutely by female teachers who contend with the double burden of gendered domestic work and negotiate the effects of harmful norms and vulnerability to gender-based violence (Kirk, 2010; Kirk and Winthrop, 2007; 2008; UNICEF, 2020). Hence, while 64 percent of all teachers worldwide identify as female, in crisis-affected contexts multiple risk factors contribute to significant shortages of female teachers, which has a severe washback effect on girls' education and the future teacher workforce (Ferris and Winthrop, 2010; Sperling and Winthrop, 2016; UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2020). As seen in Myanmar, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war deters women from joining the profession in remote regions where ethnic conflict is rife (Maber et al., 2019). In many conflict-affected settings, such as the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo, schools are also occupied for military operations by state or separatist armed forces, which puts female teachers at further risk of harassment and sexual abuse (GCPEA, 2022). Gender-responsive provisions such as a lack of segregated WASH facilities and poor menstrual health management support is often overlooked or altogether neglected, meaning that schools are hostile and exclusionary spaces for female teachers and pupils.

It is known that female teachers are a vital school-level predictor for girls' academic achievement and retention, thus for girls who do attend school a lack of female teachers undermines investments in their learning, development, and life outcomes (Kirk, 2004; 2007; 2010; UNFPA, 2019; Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). The following statistics therefore highlight this reality and project future teacher shortages: in Chad, female teachers make up just 20 percent of the primary and eight percent of the secondary teacher workforce (Word Bank, 2021). In Ethiopia's displaced population settings, females represent only 3.8 percent of the teacher workforce in Gambella and 6.2 percent in Tigray (Bengtsson, 2020; Carvalho, 2022). In Dadaab, Kenya, 10 percent of refugee teachers are female (UNHCR, 2013; UNHCR, 2017). And across the 36 refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, under 10 percent of Rohingya teachers are female (UNICEF, 2022).

> *"The [COVID19] situation required me to work more and more at home and affected my household chores as a wife and a mother. My social relationships had shrunk to the extreme and made me stressed, anxious and mentally and physically tired most of the time." Teacher, Palestine (INEE, 2022)*

## 2.4 The risks teachers face in crisis contexts

Teachers in crisis contexts regularly come under attack while carrying out their fundamental work, which jeopardises many teachers' strong sense of resilience, purpose, and wellbeing (GCPEA, 2014; Wolf et al., 2015). In 2020 and 2021 alone, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) identified 630 attacks on school pupils, teachers, and education personnel across 28 profiled countries (GCPEA, 2022). In some contexts, teachers are threatened, abducted, or killed because they represent

the state or for their membership in teachers' unions. In other conflicts, teachers are killed or injured by explosive weapons on their way to or from school or in violent clashes between armed groups. In addition, where schools and universities are used as bases and barracks, such as in Yemen, these facilities can be targeted by opposing force shelling and ground attacks, which also places teachers' lives at considerable risk (GCPEA, 2014; GCPEA, 2022). Globally, incidents of military use of schools and universities more than doubled between 2020 and 2021 (GCPEA, 2022).

The effects of these realities are profound. For example, in Colombia many teachers report that threats and acts of violence shift the quality of their teaching practices. Some teachers report that violence alters their sense of trust and the authenticity of their engagement with pupils and their families. Teachers also report that they avoid teaching certain subjects due to the violence that state-sanctioned histories can incite at a local level (FECODE, 2021; GCPEA, 2014). Some teachers who actively engage in peacebuilding efforts to curb the recruitment of youth into armed forces have also been targeted by paramilitary groups (FECODE, 2021). In the El Salado community, for example, all 25 teachers working at one school received messages from a paramilitary group threatening to dismember them on their way to school (GCPEA, 2022). Incidents like these are not isolated.

In Afghanistan, the re-ascendence of the Taliban has resulted in numerous education leaders being threatened, arrested, or killed for promoting girls' education (Al Jazeera, 2023; GCPEA, 2021). In Burkina Faso, over 230 teachers were targeted with violence by paramilitary groups in 2020 (Amnesty International, 2021). Armed extremists like Boko Haram in Nigeria oppose western-oriented education and have thus threatened, killed, or abducted teachers to prevent them from teaching national curricula (GCPEA, 2022). In Syria, GCPEA (2022) describes how resistance forces forcibly conscript teachers. In Myanmar, where the country's democratically elected government was deposed in a 2021 coup, teachers aligned with the resistance National Unity Government (NUG) have been targeted by the military junta's forces. Over 40 teachers in Myanmar were abducted and killed in 2021 alone (Save the Children, 2021). In multiple contexts, teachers share that their morale is deeply affected by attacks on their colleagues, with the daily insecurity that they experience making it almost impossible to teach (Amnesty International, 2013).

Research has tended to instrumentalize teacher wellbeing for its influence on educational quality and children's wellbeing (INEE, 2021). For example, Ring and West (2015) note how trauma compromises teachers' capability to fulfil the functions of their roles. Likewise, Wolf et al. (2015) consider the effects of poor teacher wellbeing on education system quality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As one of the first empirical studies to conceptualise and measure teacher wellbeing in a crisis context, Wolf et al. (2015) apply the concept 'cumulative risk' to describe the accumulation of stressors and adverse conditions that affect teachers' work and wellbeing. Their findings show that there is a statistically significant and negative relationship between cumulative risk and teachers' motivation to teach ($b = -.032$, $p < .001$), meaning that the more risk teachers' experience in their work the less motivated they are to remain in the profession. Similarly, their findings demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between cumulative risk and burnout ($b = .068$, $p < .01$), meaning that the higher a teachers' exposure to cumulative risk the more likely they are to report burnout. As INEE (2022) promotes, however, teacher wellbeing needs to be an outcome in and of itself; not just an input for better child wellbeing and learning outcomes. Thus, for teachers to be able to function to their fullest capabilities, free from physical and psychological harm, teacher wellbeing and the prioritisation of teachers' protection must be at the forefront of teacher-focused policy and funding.

> *"You expect refugee teachers to be agents of change, but you refuse to provide us with the resources we need for our own agency." Former South Sudanese refugee teacher in Kenya*

## 3. The INEE Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit contextualization case studies

In 2019, USAID and INEE co-published the Landscape Review: Teacher Well-being in Low Resource, Crisis, and Conflict-affected Settings (Falk et al., 2019). With a bespoke and multi-level socio-ecological framework of the protective and risk factors that promote or impede teacher wellbeing, this work consolidated evidence on how crises compound issues in educational access, progress, and outcomes for teachers (Falk et al., 2019). Building on this work, Education Cannot Wait funded the three phase INEE Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit project which was conceptualised and implemented by INEE's Teachers in Crisis Contexts (TiCC) and Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning (PSS-SEL) Working Groups. Where Falk et al.'s (2019) work strengthened a structural understanding of teacher wellbeing in crisis-affected contexts, the Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit identified gaps in current resourcing and, from the findings, devised global guidance to standardise an approach to teacher wellbeing policy and practice.

Consultancy teams from Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Palestine then conducted teacher wellbeing contextualization studies for INEE. To draw associations between teacher wellbeing and the nuance of teacher shortages in crisis-affected contexts, for the purposes of this paper data from SDG target 4c indicators and recent literature analysing the realities of teachers' work and wellbeing in each of the contextualization settings are presented below. These details are integrated with findings from the INEE teacher wellbeing studies to show how complex crises within national-level contexts can affect teacher supply in ways that are not captured through current datasets and national level statistical analysis.

> *"What is available is sometimes entirely inappropriate. When you say do yoga and meditate, it is not relevant for Syria . . . [teachers] do other things [to de-stress] and it can be offensive or inappropriate to such an extent that they refuse to listen. Tell me to breathe? In a war zone?" Humanitarian sector practitioner, Syria (INEE, 2021)*

Following the publication of the INEE Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit, INEE's TiCC and PSS-SEL Working Groups sought to address a key recommendation. They focused on the predominantly Global North production and orientation of teacher wellbeing resources and homed in on recommendation 4 from the Gap Analysis publication, which states: "Invest in adaptation guides to support the contextualization of the [teacher wellbeing] materials" (p.6).

For future policy and practice, the TiCC and PSS-SEL working groups wanted to know what investments and processes were needed to support the contextualization of teacher wellbeing in crisis-affected contexts. Practically, they sought to understand the adaptations that are required to make the concept of teacher wellbeing and associated policies and practices relevant to teachers. Four consultancy teams representing Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Palestine were recruited and tasked with the following objective: document the guidance note contextualization process in your specific context to model the adaptation of teacher wellbeing initiatives in similar settings (Smith and Henderson, 2022). In leaving the scope of work broad and less prescriptive, INEE opened the process of contextualization to be locally defined and led.

As stated in the Guidance Note on teacher wellbeing, for a "teacher to flourish inside the classroom, they need the conditions, opportunities, and support to flourish outside the classroom, too" (INEE, 2022. p.4). On this point, the Guidance Note recommendations are organised by three principles across each of the five domains of INEE's (2010) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies. The principles are: 1) Promote mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for teachers, 2b) Create more enabling work environments for teachers, and 3) Enhance teacher voice, agency, and leadership. Below, these principles are used alongside the UIS SDG 4c indicator data to organise findings from

each of the respective country contextualization case studies.

> *"While contextualization may be a common concept in the development and humanitarian sphere, the concept was foreign to many stakeholders, particularly those working on the ground, such as teachers and school administrators." INEE Teacher Wellbeing Contextualization Project*

## 3.1 Myanmar

Since the military coup that overthrew Myanmar's democratically elected government in 2021, teachers have been at the forefront of the civil disobedience and armed resistance activities that entail significant personal and professional costs (INEE, 2022f). Working in a conflict-affected state setting, the Myanmar consultancy team thus confronted considerable individual danger to undertake this work, especially as National Unity Government (NUG) teachers in Myanmar who collaborate with foreign institutions are targeted by Myanmar's military intelligence. Given recent events, the data and literature informing this case study is from before and after the 2021 coup. As can be seen in table 1 below, each of the selected SDG indicators in Myanmar's national statistics represent a high proportion of qualified teachers, positive pupil to trained teacher ratios, and reasonable parity of teacher salaries with comparable professions. However, a teacher attrition rate of 11 percent is somewhat high (UIS, 2018). As is further discussed, however, even pre-coup these statistics did not capture the full reality of teacher shortages in Myanmar.

Table 1: Myanmar: Teacher shortage relevant SDG 4 data (2018)

| Sustainable Development Goal | Primary | Lower-Secondary | Upper-Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications to teach (%) | 95.34 | 89.54 | 87.72 |
| 4c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio (headcount basis) | 25.55 | 30.62 | |
| 4c.5: Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes | 0.94 | 1.03 | - |
| 4c.6: Teacher attrition rate, both sexes (%) | 11.54 | - | - |

*Source*: UIS database.

There is a high level of respect for teachers in Myanmar, especially as teaching fits within the five 'societal gems' of Buddhism, which are the buddha, monks, scriptures, parents, and teachers (Htang, 2018; Maber et al., 2019). Moreover, teachers' express strong internal motivation factors for wanting to teach but admit that an inherent element of teaching is 'self-sacrifice' (Niskanen and Buske, 2019). The most popular reasons for becoming a teacher relate to the sacredness of teaching, the desire to share knowledge and cause learning, and the desire to help future generations succeed in life (Htang, 2018; Maber et al., 2019). Moreover, with strong gender parity across many aspects of society, Myanmar enjoyed positive representation of female teachers, with as many as 85 percent of teaching positions being filled by women (UNESCO, 2018). It is argued, however, that this is due to chronic underinvestment in education and the fact that inadequate salaries deterred men from joining the profession (Maber et al., 2019).

Myanmar's national-level SDG 4c data hides or does not include more rural and/or conflict-affected settings like Kachin and Karen states or the Rohingya context of Northern Rakhine (Htang, 2018; Kayah, 2022; Maber et al., 2019). It is thus likely that these contexts represent the almost 150 thousand teacher vacancies reported by the Myanmar Government in 2017 (NESP 2017; Yi, 2017). In one respect, these

shortages are due to low rates of school completion among conflict-affected ethnic minorities like the Karen. As many as 32 percent of the Karen population have never been to school and only 10 percent have completed school (Shiohata, 2018). Some commentators also suggest that the feminization of the workforce and the gendered risks posed by working in isolated conflict-affected states have contributed to teacher shortages. Landmines, active conflict, and gender-based violence towards female teachers have dissuaded potential recruits (Maber et al., 2019).

Following the 2021 military coup which left 1,400 people dead and 240 thousand displaced, teachers report a staggering increase in violent threats. Eleven thousand academics and 125 thousand teachers have been suspended from their jobs due to their anti-coup sentiments (Cohen et al. 2022; Soe, 2021). It is also estimated that over 300 thousand teachers resigned from their roles in solidarity with their peers, many of whom have joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and now teach online for NUG schools. As a result, teachers continue to be arrested, tortured, and killed for refusing to teach the Myanmar Curriculum (GCPEA, 2022; INEE, 2022f). In this sense, the work of teaching in Myanmar is a risk factor in and of itself.

The concept of 'teacher wellbeing' and its local equivalents are not used or commonly understood. As such, the INEE consultants found that they had to spell wellbeing out as the "physical, emotional, and/or social satisfaction" that comes from or is negatively impacted by the work of teaching (INEE, 2022f). When surveyed on the strategies that teachers used in Myanmar to support their own mental health and wellbeing (Principle 1), many referred to their spiritual identity as Buddhists and recommended meditation practices. Others also referred to traditional foods as a source of calm, like the ubiquitous tea leaf salad. Teachers also associated access to quality professional development as a mental health intervention, which signals the sense of capability and functioning that teachers desire in their work (Benevene et al., 2020). Given the cohort's predominantly virtual status, teachers also recommended access to online sessions with internationally trained mental health counsellors.

Regarding the need for enabling work environments (Principle 2), surveyed teachers reported that their current work context represents dire safety standards, financial instability, intermittent internet connectivity, and a poor understanding of online teaching techniques to keep their pupils engaged (INEE, 2022g). Moreover, surveyed teachers reported that their pupils are exposed to significant risk by joining illegal NUG classes, which caused teachers considerable distress. As elsewhere, teachers also desired more voice, agency, and leadership opportunities in their work (Principle 3). They wanted a greater role in curriculum design and resource selection, in the kinds of professional development opportunities available to them, and to have a greater say in the administration and management policies of the online NUG schools.

## 3.2 Palestine (West Bank)

At the time of writing, the West Bank of Palestine represents a context of low-intensity conflict (ICRC, 2017; World Bank, 2023). However, ongoing attacks on Palestinian schools by the Israeli military and far-right settler populations equate to a continuous and intensifying crisis (Harsha et al., 2016; Veronesse et al. 2017). There are regular reports of teargas, stun grenades, rubber coated bullets, and other weapons of war being used in or near schools and against teachers and pupils (Shah, 2023). Between 2019 and September 2021, 22 teachers were injured during Israeli military activities at schools in the West Bank alone (GCPEA, 2022). As illustrated in table 2 below, however, Palestine's SDG data is up to date and contains impressive national statistics relating to each of the selected SDG indicators. One hundred percent of teachers hold the minimum qualifications to teach; there are attractive student to trained teacher ratios at primary and secondary school; teachers earn sixty percent more than compatriots in comparable positions; and there is a low attrition rate of under seven percent across all school levels (UIS, 2021).

Table 2: Palestine - Teacher shortage relevant SDG 4 data (2021)

| Sustainable Development Goal | Primary | Lower-Secondary | Upper-Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications to teach (%) | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 4c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio (headcount basis) | 21.21 | 17.44 | |
| 4c.5: Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes | 1.66 | 1.66 | 1.66 |
| 4c.6: Teacher attrition rate, both sexes (%) | 5.09 | 3.80 | 6.29 |

*Source*: UIS database.

In Palestine, teaching is a highly valued profession, with advocates believing that teaching has the potential to unite and empower Palestinians in the pursuit of peace (Veronese et al. 2018). Palestine also has an oversupply of teachers. Yet, as reported by the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2008), recruiting high quality candidates to the teaching profession is a persistent challenge. The political reality of Israeli occupation in the West Bank limits teachers' movement, involves dehumanising daily checkpoints, and exerts a negative influence on teachers' mental health, wellbeing, and their willingness to teach (Veronesse et al. 2017). Because of this, some scholars counter the positive perceptions of teaching by claiming a negative overall sentiment due to inadequate pay and poor levels of professional development and psychosocial support (Shinn, 2012). Teachers in Palestine also report a poor sense of professional worth and feelings of exhaustion in relation to their work (Shah, 2023). Experiences like these explain Palestinian teachers' lack of motivation and professional commitment, despite the context's reasonably low rates of attrition (Nicolai, 2007). In this sense, the case of Palestine represents an issue of teacher quality and a context-driven failure to attract and retain higher calibre candidates to the profession, more so than an over-supply of teachers.

*"Although the term 'contextualization' is known to many stakeholders, at the grassroots level it is completely new." - Key informant, Palestine*

The INEE consultant in Palestine focused on the perspectives of stakeholders at multiple levels of the education system, many of whom were encountering the concept of teacher wellbeing for the first time. Overall, there was a contradictory tension on the extent to which teacher wellbeing was perceived as a luxury, as one key informant states: "teachers still lack basic needs such as professional development, sufficient salaries, and safe working conditions" (Assaf, 2022). However, another key informant states that teacher wellbeing should be a "basic and integrated focus" of all teacher development policies (INEE, 2022h. p17). They also acknowledged that misconceptions about teacher wellbeing and how policies can be implemented causes confusion among policy makers and teachers alike. Nevertheless, as one teacher shared, "I know this is just a survey … but I am very happy … as it shows someone, somewhere is caring (INEE, 2022h. p.4).

On access to MHPSS (Principle 1), Palestinian focus groups and survey participants recommended that

schools integrate confidential psychosocial referral pathways for teachers in parallel with what is offered for children and adolescents. It was also recommended that initiatives are established to de-stigmatize and normalise teachers' mental health needs. For Principle 2 on enabling work environments, the most common recommendation from participants related to Israel's overall occupation of the West Bank, stating that schools cannot meaningfully enable teacher wellbeing until military violence and settler violations cease. In more practical terms, participants recommend the removal of the military barriers and checkpoints around schools that impede teachers' safe access to school. Moreover, degrading daily body searches cause teachers considerable humiliation and a loss of professional dignity. For teacher agency, voice, and leadership (Principle 3) participants recommended that teachers develop their own literacy of psychosocial learning needs, for which they recognised the need for localised resources. As teachers develop their own skills in these areas, participants recommended that teachers lead communities of practice to ensure that a locally driven and appropriate culture of mental health communication is nurtured among their peers (INEE, 2022h).

## 3.3 Kenya

*"Why tell the truth and lose my job?" Key informant, teacher, Kenya*

There is ample SDG data for children and adolescents in Kenya. However, as shown in table 3 below scarce statistics are available for the SDG indicators relating to teacher supply and quality. The only available statistic on UNESCO and World Bank databases is from 2012 and shows that 99.61 percent of upper-secondary teachers held the minimum qualification to teach.

**Table 3**: Kenya - Teacher shortage relevant SDG 4 data (2012)

| Sustainable Development Goal | Primary | Lower-Secondary | Upper-Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications to teach (%) | - | - | 99.61 |
| 4c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio in primary education (headcount basis) | - | - | |
| 4c.5: Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes | - | - | - |
| 4c.6: Teacher attrition rate, both sexes (%) | - | - | - |

*Source*: UIS database.

Although there are incidents of low-intensity conflict and large refugee hosting settlements, as a country Kenya is not considered a crisis-affected context. Peripheral border regions like Garissa which hosts the Dadaab refugee camp and Turkana, where Kakuma refugee camp is located, however experience the effects of climate change, social tensions relating to food and resource scarcity, and geographic isolation from state services (Bellino and Dryden-Peterson, 2018). In Garissa, for example, insecurity is a major determinant of teacher attrition due to attacks on teachers by the Somali terror group Al-Shabab (Odhiambo et al., 2015; Scott-Villiers et al., 2015; UNESCO IIEP, 2022). In the Rift Valley land-related intercommunal conflicts have also influenced teachers to abandon their positions (Ndiwa, 2011).

In terms of overall teacher shortages, the number of unemployed trained teachers in Kenya is larger than the number of employed teachers (Abdi, 2019). But Kenya suffers from national budget constraints and an insufficient number of registered subject specialists to fill vacancies in the aforementioned regions (Cobbold, 2015). In which case, teacher shortages are defined by inadequate supply of teachers relative to demand, the deployment of non-specialist or under-qualified teachers, and oversized pupil to teacher ratios in crisis-affected regions where teachers are reluctant to work (Gray and Behan, 2005).

For refugee hosting contexts in particular, where 86 percent of all teachers are refugees, many have only attained a secondary school qualification within the camps and eighty percent of teachers have never received any pre- or in-service professional development support (Bellino and Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Mendenhall et al. 2018; Mendenhall and Falk, 2023). Refugee hosting contexts are also afflicted by gender imbalances which are largely due to harmful gender norms. This means that gender-based violence, early and forced child marriage, and general insecurity results in fewer females finishing school and qualifying to teach (UNESCO IIEP, 2022). Teacher shortages are not only represented by the scattered preparation of otherwise committed and 'alternatively qualified' teachers, but also by the extreme pupil to teacher ratios that they contend with (Kirk and Winthrop, 2007; Mendenhall et al. 2018; Mendenhall and Falk, 2023). Thus, symbolic of the difficult conditions in which teachers work, only 18 percent of refugee teachers want to be teaching in three years' time and just four percent of host-community teachers aspire for the same (UNESCO IIEP, 2022).

Untenable conditions like these have a detrimental effect on teacher wellbeing, which contributes to poor motivation and low aspirations (Mendenhall et al., 2019; UNESCO IIEP, 2022). Beyond their everyday realities, refugee 'incentive' teachers describe asymmetrical benefits between themselves and host-community teachers as contributing to their poor motivation. This refers to the health insurance, medical care, and maternity leave afforded to Kenyan host-community teachers that refugee teachers are denied (Mendenhall et al. 2019). As such, teacher wellbeing and issues with retention and attrition are tacitly connected to the policies and practices that donors, humanitarian agencies, and state actors employ (Ring and West, 2015; UNESCO IIEP, 2022).

The INEE consultancy team in Kenya worked with teachers in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Turkana County (n=127). Because the concept of 'teacher wellbeing' was not well understood, they deferred to 'being well' and 'being capable and confident' as proxies. These terms were informed by focus group interviews with teachers in which the results aligned with scholarly evidence showing that confidence, a sense of self-efficacy, and job satisfaction are the most influential determinants of teacher wellbeing (Canrinus et al. 2012; Dreer, 2021). Teachers discussed a sense of being 'stable' with regards to their emotional, physical, and social health needs. They also mention the importance of 'competence' in that having the knowledge and skills required to teach can mitigate the stress of teaching.

Although 'teacher wellbeing' was new, the participants were positive about a research process that centred the daily struggles of teachers' work. Throughout the consultation, participants became more aware of the full social ecology of their wellbeing (Falk et al. 2019; INEE, 2022). This means that the inter-dependence of wellbeing at home, at work, and in the community became clear. By engaging in this process, teachers also experienced the agency of their own problem solving on issues of concern. However, due to the stigmatisation of mental ill health, some teachers did not feel at ease with the task. As one refugee teacher expressed: "Why tell the truth and lose my job?" The consultants also reported that local NGOs misinterpreted the exercise as an NGO compliance and accountability effort rather than a teacher-centred endeavour.

Over 55 percent of the surveyed teachers cited workload and time constraints as the biggest cause of stress. More than 50 percent also reported that their work caused physical health challenges, including headaches, pains, and nausea, which many related to the poor water and sanitation facilities at their schools. Just over 43 percent of teachers also cited food insecurity and poor nutrition as a cause of poor wellbeing. In terms of the teachers' recommendations for improving access to mental health and psychosocial support (Principle 1), teachers brought attention to the lack of counselling available to teachers, self-reporting a perceived rise in depression and suicidality among primary school teachers in particular. Teachers also questioned how their teaching environments were empowering or enabling, stating that long delays in replacing teachers who have resigned, were sick, or had died shifted the burden onto overworked colleagues (Principle 2). As such, they called for improved teacher

replacement processes as a key wellbeing strategy. Teachers also discussed the fact that many of their children are ex child-soldiers who respond to distress through violence and project their trauma onto teachers. In this regard, teachers cite that their own lack of psychosocial support skills leaves them feeling disempowered. As one teacher commented "Not being trained does not only affect our wellbeing but it also affects the wellbeing of the learner" (INEE, 2022). Finally, for Principle 3 on teacher voice, agency, and leadership, many teachers complained of their exclusion from needs assessment and planning processes for their own professional development, stating that top-down and irrelevant interventions add undue stress to their work and provide more burdens than benefits. In line with the positive outcomes of Mendenhall et al.'s (2019) Teachers for Teachers initiative, as a wellbeing strategy teachers in Kakuma recommended the improved inclusion of teachers in professional development planning, design, and delivery.

## 3.4 Colombia

At a national level, Colombia has impressive data for the selected SDG target 4c indicators. Over 90 percent of teachers have the minimum required qualifications to teach and child to teacher ratios are significantly lower than the global average of 42:1 (UIS, 2021). Teachers in Colombia also earn more than two times that of professionals requiring similar qualifications. As can be expected, Colombia's teacher attrition rate is very low by international standards.

Table 4: Colombia - Teacher shortage relevant SDG 4 data (2021)

| Sustainable Development Goal | Primary | Lower-Secondary | Upper-Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum qualifications required to teach (%) | 94.40 | 97.15 | 98.09 |
| 4c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio in primary education (headcount basis) | 24.68 | 26.88 | |
| 4c.5: Average teacher salary in relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, both sexes | 2.14 | 2.14 | 2.14 |
| 4c.6: Teacher attrition rate, both sexes (%) | 2.23 | 4.24 | 2.26 |

*Source*: UIS database.

Despite Colombia's recent history of conflict, mass internal displacement, and an influx of refugees from neighbouring Venezuela, its prioritisation of education in national policy contributes to high levels of engagement and retention among the country's teacher workforce, which speaks to the attractiveness of the profession (Rodriguez and Becerra, 2022; UNESCO IIEP, 2019). For example, teachers working in rural contexts receive higher salaries than their urban counterparts (Inter-American Development Bank, 2018). With over 80 percent of teachers reporting a moderate to high level of satisfaction with their work, Colombia ranks second among 48 nations participating in the TALIS survey (OECD, 2019). Colombian teachers report the third highest level of self-efficacy among surveyed nations, with nearly 100 percent believing they are able to help their pupils to value learning (OECD, 2019). Colombia also ranks lower than the OECD average (18 percent) of teachers reporting a high level of stress in their work (14 percent) (OECD, 2019).

Colombia still confronts the effects of its own violent history, however, as progress towards an ostensible peace is still defined by a conflict that has left over two million people internally displaced (Rodriguez and Becerra, 2022). To the present day, the effects include threats to peace from members of FARC splinter groups and territorial disputes between armed groups associated with illicit crop production (ibid). For teachers, this means that many pupils are suffering from the emotional uneasiness that comes with displacement, including the loss of land, loved ones, and the identity of

home (ibid). As such, the dynamics of classroom spaces are transformed, and teachers are forced to develop strategies to cope with the manifestations of pain and trauma that pupils bring to school (ibid).

Relating to Colombia's hosting of 1.8 million Venezuelan refugees, in line with UNHCR's (2019) advocacy for national system inclusion, over 460 thousand Venezuelan children are able to continue their formal schooling in Colombia (Cadavid-González and Allsopp, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Further to this, there are encouraging reports of school leaders and host-community teachers fostering environments that nurture a sense of belonging among refugee children who otherwise face marginalisation at a community level (World Bank, 2022). This has all come at a cost, however, with host-community teachers and school leaders carrying much of the administrative burden of national-level refugee inclusion policies. With child to teacher ratios ballooning from 24:1 to 43:1 in refugee hosting schools, teachers believe the quality of education has been compromised due to relative teacher shortages and a lack of professional development opportunities for supporting refugee children (ibid). As a teacher in Cartagena reflected, while the government assigns inclusive policies, it is up to a reduced ratio of teachers to meet a growing number of displaced learners' psychosocial and developmental needs. Consequently, teachers report a sense of being over extended and under supported (ibid).

INEE contextualization findings mirror much of what the literature reveals. In particular, consultants report on the gendered aspect of these new expectations. Female teachers experience higher levels of stress and fatigue especially as they are expected to maintain household duties. This was exacerbated during the pandemic, where cases of gender-based violence against female pupils and teachers also increased (INEE, 2022e). Given the intensive needs of the population, many female teachers struggle to separate home and professional lives, which adds to a feeling of being overwhelmed and burned out. Thus, many teachers recommend support to establish better boundaries to prevent their work from encroaching upon their home lives (INEE, 2022e).

More than half of the teachers interviewed (n=127) shared experiences of mental distress and feelings of hopelessness about the future. Yet teacher beliefs "do not support emotional expression, either because it is seen as a lack of professionalism or as a sign of weakness" (INEE, 2022. p.28). Due to the stigma of mental ill-health and to protect homelife boundaries, teachers ask that better access to psychosocial counselling during work hours is provided (Principle 1). To create a more enabling work environment (Principle 2), teachers also propose that parents are provided with intensive support on how to better nurture their children's psychosocial and learning needs. Teachers are overburdened by 'co-responsibility' for children's wellbeing and as such feel they are losing empathy, becoming complacent about their own professional development, and are more willing to abscond from school. Finally, in contrast to TALIS findings at the national level, more than half of the teachers working in refugee hosting settings feel that their work is not valued by society (INEE, 2022; OECD, 2019). These dynamics point towards a crisis within a crisis; Colombia's positive progress to promote teaching as a profession, bolster the teacher supply, and include refugee pupils in national schools could be undone by poor teacher wellbeing and the diminishing attractiveness of teaching in refugee hosting contexts.

Nonetheless, teachers in the INEE contextualization study still reported a high level of agency. They are able to choose the content of their classes and can make autonomous decisions about the pedagogical approaches they use. They also have choice in terms of the content and skills focus of their professional development activities (Principle 3). These are all factors which are shown to improve teacher job satisfaction and retention (Priestly et al. 2021). Many of the studies included in this background paper demonstrate how teachers' work and wellbeing are coterminous but not singular in terms of teachers' experiences (Falk et al., 2023). As this Colombia case study shows, teachers can experience high levels of mental health distress and, at the same time, report high levels of purpose and job satisfaction. In this sense, the INEE contextualization for Colombia reports that

teachers have a high level of resilience and adaptability with many teachers claiming that the refugee crisis has had no or very little impact on their work. Moreover, teachers demonstrated positive self-awareness around their wellbeing and psychological self-care strategies. Teachers reported that there is a strong sense of mutual care amongst teachers and refer to pursuits like cooking, gardening, faith-based activities, and sports as bringing relief to otherwise stressful roles.

## 4. Looking to the future: Recommendations

*"Is there a teacher shortage, or a shortage of care for teachers?" Stephanie Bengtsson, Transforming Education Summit, 2022*

To understand how teacher wellbeing is associated with teacher supply issues, this background paper asks how state actors and humanitarian partners can bolster the protective elements of teaching to attract and retain a sufficient number of teachers in the workforce. The diverse crises in which teachers live and the different profiles that determine the conditions of their work – including teachers' expected and expanded roles, the gendered implications of their work, and the violence that teachers face each day – constitute the risk factors that impede teacher wellbeing and retention. These factors do not allow teachers to function at their fullest capabilities or live free from physical and psychological harm. However, contrary and parallel cases of teachers finding purpose and protection in the status and orientation of teaching offers a way forward (Dryden-Peterson, 2022; Falk et al. 2023).

The literature and INEE case studies show how being safe and feeling capable allows teachers' to flourish as committed professionals. While the current crises that afflict Myanmar or Palestine's West Bank are beyond the influence of education policy, the international community has a moral duty to protect teachers' rights and wellbeing, as outlined in the 1966 UNESCO-ILO Recommendations on the Status of Teachers. Through the INEE Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit and case studies, global frameworks and teachers' voices should guide coordinated and evidence informed action for effective teacher wellbeing policy and practice at a local level.

As stated in this paper's introduction, teachers were the second most referred to thematic priority at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit in New York (Crawford et al., 2022). Suitably, this paper concludes with four high-level recommendations from the TES pre-summit event on the transformation of teachers' work in crisis-affected contexts (UNHCR, 2022). In line with the literature and teachers' voices from Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Palestine, to improve teacher wellbeing and supply in crisis contexts TES meeting participants collectively agreed that government policy makers, donors, and humanitarian actors prioritise, fund, and implement the following recommendations:

Reform barriers to entry: *"For refugee, crisis-recruited, and community teachers who are not formally qualified or members of teacher unions, we ask that barriers to entry for pre- and in-service teacher education and associated credentials and certification are addressed systematically, and that pathways to qualification are reconfigured in order to improve access to and performance in the profession. Support for bridging, upskilling and teacher readiness programmes can also support the attainment of teachers' qualifications for under qualified refugee teachers."*

Invest in psychosocial support for teachers: *"... teachers lack access to psychosocial support services that enhance their own recovery from the acute and chronic trauma of conflict and displacement. We ask that this is remedied through the prioritisation of teacher well-being through commensurate policy and humanitarian, national and international investments in the relevant social services sector in each country or region."*

Include refugee and community teachers in national unions: *"We ask that refugee teachers enjoy the right to freedom of association and are able to join national teacher unions. Unions should organise*

*and support refugee teachers/teachers in refugee settings to ensure that the issues they face are addressed through social dialogue, collective bargaining, and national union campaigns."*

Provide pathways for professionalisation and career progression: *"We ask that host-country governments and humanitarian agencies set in place harmonised professional pathways so that education support personnel, including refugee paraprofessionals and/or teaching assistants, have fast-tracked access to national teacher education and professional development initiatives that allow them to become qualified teachers within a national education systems".* UNHCR (2022)

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