



International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030

14th Policy Dialogue Forum Final Report

*Addressing global teacher shortages:
Dignifying, diversifying and valorising the profession*

Short Summary

This report of the 14th Policy Dialogue Forum (PDF) of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2023 (Teacher Task Force, or TTF) contributes to the global movement to address teacher shortages and elevate the status of the teaching profession. It begins by highlighting key findings and recommendations from the event, structured around three main themes: addressing common challenges leading to teacher shortages, strengthening policies for teacher professionalisation, and promoting national and international cooperation to address shortages. Each theme is organised into subsections capturing key insights from presentations, discussions and exchanges held during plenary and breakout sessions. The content, including policy examples, is derived from the forum and subsequent sessions, with references provided where feasible for further information on specific programs or policies. Additionally, the report includes brief summaries of the three side events and five parallel regional meetings that took place at the forum. Finally, the report concludes with a strong call to action for the international community to address teacher shortages worldwide.



A group of students performing on the first day of the 14th Policy Dialogue Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa.
Photo credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

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Abbreviations

ABEGS	Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States
AI	Artificial intelligence
AU	African Union
CARICOM	The Caribbean Community
EMIS	education management information system
EU	European Union
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GDP	gross domestic product
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GRT	Global Report on Teachers
HLP	High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession
ICT	information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCED-T	International Standard Classification of Teacher Training Programmes
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSTED	National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (Malawi)
OSRSG CAAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict
PDF	Policy Dialogue Forum of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation
SEL	socio-emotional learning
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TES	Transforming Education Summit
TMIS	teacher management information system
TTF	International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030

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A session of the Policy Dialogue Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa, February 2024.
Photo credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

Introduction

There is global consensus and compelling data showing that teachers are the most important intra-school factor to ensure the quality of education and the success and wellbeing of students, yet countries around the world are facing large and chronic teacher shortages. New projections show that the world will need 44 million more teachers to reach universal primary and secondary education by the year 2030 (UNESCO and Teacher Task Force, 2024). While noteworthy, the issue of teacher shortages goes well beyond this figure. Many current teachers lack proper training, qualifications, support or remuneration, and we find shortages in geographic and thematic areas around the world; shortages in terms of linguistic and cultural diversity, a shortage of male teachers in early years education and of female teachers in higher-level and scientific tracks. These challenges lead to teacher shortages in terms of both quantity and quality.

We cannot talk about improving the impact of education without improving teachers.

H.E. Matsie Angelina Matsheka, Minister of Basic Education, South Africa, Opening Ceremony

Reversing global teacher shortages is a multifaceted task, but it starts with the core ideas of dignifying, diversifying and valorising the profession. Teachers do vital work and have enormous impacts on students, and yet too often they continue to have low status and esteem in their professional lives. To reverse this trend, systems need to enact strategic, holistic policy solutions that raise the prestige of the profession to better attract high quality candidates and retain teachers already in the workforce. This process must not only focus on providing adequate pay and decent working conditions, but also on strengthening the professionalisation of the teaching career and promoting social dialogue to amplify the voice of teachers, including in education policy making.

We need to acknowledge the current worth of teachers and the crucial role they play in shaping the future...Beside teaching and imparting knowledge to the future generation, teachers play a crucial role in fostering critical thinking, inspiring dreams, and pushing the limits of human potential.

H.E. Mr. Paul Mashatile, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Opening Ceremony

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath strained education systems, causing burnout and exhaustion among teachers. These challenging conditions exacerbated teacher attrition and added to pre-existing teacher shortages. The international community has since placed greater emphasis on teacher shortages with a renewed focus to tackle this important– and global– issue. This final report for the 14th Policy Dialogue Forum (PDF) of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (Teacher Task Force) summarizes the key discussions entertained in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 to 28 February of 2024. The PDF facilitated the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experiences regarding the root causes and pervasive consequences of teacher shortages and, most importantly, provided a platform for policy dialogue and learning around potential solutions to dignify, diversify and valorise the teaching profession.

To expedite global attention to education, accelerate the pace to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by 2030, and transform the purpose and delivery of education, the UN Secretary-General convened the Transforming Education Summit (TES) in 2022 to help mobilise national commitments around education and a number of key issues, including teachers. Directly following TES, the Secretary-General also convened a High-Level Panel (HLP) on the Teaching Profession to develop a plan of action and recommendations for a new vision of the profession. Those recommendations were officially released in conjunction with UNESCO's and the TTF's 2024 Global Report on Teachers at the 14th PDF. The Global Report on Teachers (GRT) provides the state of the art of teacher shortages based on new global, regional and national projections and further data analysis, while also highlighting the challenges leading to shortages. As a follow up on the implementation of the HLP recommendations, the GRT also provides a host of policy solutions to address the issue of teacher shortages (see Box 1).

Box 1. Summaries of the HLP on the Teaching Profession recommendations and the GRT

The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession was supported jointly by UNESCO and the ILO and was made up of 18 members that included government and ministry officials, union representatives, teachers and civil society members. As part of its mandate, the Panel developed a set of 59 recommendations to transform the teaching profession. These recommendations serve as a road map to achieving SDG 4 and align with both the Global Report on Teachers as well as the themes and policy examples shared at the Policy Dialogue Forum. They include key topics such as:

- Providing quality conditions for teachers, learners and communities
- Developing national policies for teacher recruitment, deployment and compensation
- Utilising social dialogue in policy formulation
- Empowering teachers as knowledge producers and facilitators
- Promoting quality training opportunities
- Establishing work-life balance and decent working conditions
- Offering teachers autonomy and pedagogical freedom
- Promoting equity and diversity
- Financing education with a minimum of 6 per cent of a country's GDP and 20 per cent of public government spending

The Global Report on Teachers also launched at the 14th PDF and explores the issue of teacher shortages from multiple avenues. The GRT serves as a key resource to not only monitor the status of the teaching profession in achieving SDG target 4.c, but also to identify knowledge gaps and better inform policy, legislation and governance. Using the most recent data, it projects that the world needs 44 million additional teachers by 2030 to reach universal primary and secondary education. The report breaks this data down both geographically and by level to give an in-depth state of the art of the profession.

The GRT also explores the root causes leading to teacher shortages as well as potential levers and policy examples that address the issue. The levers align not only with the HLP recommendations and policies discussed at the 14th PDF, but also with the International Commission on the Futures of Education's report to develop a new social contract for education with teachers at the centre of this process. This new contract would recast education as a collaborative profession that emphasises lifelong learning and recognises teachers as knowledge producers and policy partners. Finally, the GRT explores data around the financing of education, highlighting that current levels are not enough to meet global targets. Key recommendations of the report are as follows:

- Develop holistic teacher policies
- Collect more and better data
- Transform teacher education and professional development
- Improve the working conditions of teachers
- Ensure adequate funding
- Enhance international cooperation

The present report adds to the global momentum of working to address teacher shortages by providing a summary of the key findings, recommendations and good practices reported from participants of the 14th PDF. The content of this report, including policy examples, is derived from the presentations, policy discussions and exchanges that occurred at the forum and subsequent sessions. Where feasible and beneficial, the reported examples and data are supported with references or links to provide more information about specific programmes or policies.

This report follows the structure of the forum by exploring teacher shortages across three main themes:

1: Addressing common challenges leading to teacher shortages.

Teacher shortages can stem from a host of factors. The most common ones are related to quantitative gaps caused by newly created teaching positions or high rates of attrition, while others are linked to qualitative gaps due to a lack of training or certification. Some questions explored in this section include:

- What are the driving causes of teacher shortages and how are systems adapting to meet these challenges?
- What strategies have systems used to promote equity and reduce shortages among specific teaching populations?
- How do working conditions change for teachers working in crisis or other difficult situations and what can systems do to better support these teachers?

2: Strengthening policies for the professionalisation of the teacher workforce.

Policies around professionalisation— such as those dealing with teacher's lifelong learning and promoting teacher voice can prove vital in raising the teaching profession's attractiveness. Some questions explored in this section include:

- How have systems raised the prestige of the profession by transforming professional development into lifelong learning opportunities?
- What role can teacher unions and social dialogue play in policymaking aimed to enhance teacher recruitment and retention?

3: Promoting national and international cooperation to address teacher shortages.

To enact holistic strategies that address teacher shortages, countries need to adequately fund necessary policy measures. Likewise, data must be utilised to properly manage all teachers throughout their entire careers.

National and international cooperation can play a vital role in aiding governments to sustainably finance their education systems and to better utilise data systems in handling their teaching workforce. Some questions explored in this section include:

- How can governments ensure the teaching profession is dignified by enhancing funding, data and advocacy for teachers?
- What role does the international community play in this process?

Key insights and recommendations

The following key insights and recommendations emerged from presentations and discussions about addressing teacher shortages during the 14th Policy Dialogue Forum:

Key insights

Key Insight 1: Dignify teaching by improving wages, working conditions and recognition

As a core method of improving the attractiveness of the profession, it is imperative for systems to ensure the dignity of teachers through adequate pay and decent working conditions. Addressing these factors, along with recognising the difficult work that teachers do, can go a long way to attracting quality candidates to the profession and improving teacher motivation and retention.

Key Insight 2: Raise teaching quality through improved education and standards

A lack of qualified teachers can severely threaten the learning outcomes of students. To reduce qualitative shortages, systems need to ensure quality initial teacher education programmes and lifelong professional development based on standards and accreditation methods developed with inputs from teacher educators, teachers and their organisations.

Key Insight 3: Promote diversity and equity in the teaching profession

A more diverse teaching corps that reflects the full diversity of its students, classrooms and communities can have positive impacts on the quality and relevance of education while also promoting a more equitable work force. Policies regarding teacher recruitment should focus on developing fair and diverse hiring measures regarding factors such as gender, language or ethnicity.

Key Insight 4: Recognise and support the needs of teachers working in difficult situations

Teachers working in schools facing emergencies, crisis, violence or other unusually difficult situations– such as schools that are in rural or hard to reach locations, those that lack resources or infrastructure or those in highly impoverished areas– may also face some of the most difficult working conditions. These teachers need targeted support and recognition to ensure they have the necessary resources and stay motivated to remain on the job.

Key Insight 5: Amplify the voice of teachers

Teacher voice and social dialogue need to be incorporated into all policies that affect teachers. Collective bargaining and salary negotiations are an important aspect of this, but teachers and teacher unions should also have input throughout education policy development and implementation processes, especially regarding working conditions, professional development or other teacher-centric measures.

Key Insight 6: Develop teachers to be enablers of knowledge, values, and learning

To achieve their full potential, teachers need to develop into professionals that can effectively enable students to learn, grow and develop. By developing teachers into lifelong learners, systems can ensure teachers remain facilitators of knowledge, mediators of values and meaning-makers, instilling a love for learning in students and teaching by example as they learn throughout their careers.

Key Insight 7: Leverage technology to further empower the teaching workforce

Given the fast-evolving nature of technological development, systems and teachers need to continuously adapt and train to take advantage of emerging technologies. Systems should not only utilise technology to offer better opportunities for training and collaboration and lower the administrative workload of teachers, but they should also ensure teachers are trained and comfortable using technological tools in the classroom. Even so, technology should be viewed as a tool among many others, and systems should clearly designate the terms and situations in which technology is used so that it can effectively support teachers and learners.

Key Insight 8: Invest in teachers and teacher policies at the domestic level

Countries need to develop realistic and sustainable financing methods to ensure that education and teacher-related policies are properly funded. While international support and donor aid can help some countries alleviate their economic burden temporarily, these funds cannot replace domestic financing. Governments need to continue to work to develop actionable strategies and innovative plans for funding, while the international community should enhance aid and cooperation.

Key Insight 9: Improve the production and use of data for teacher management

Properly collecting and utilising data has important implications for better managing teacher recruitment, deployment, retention and professionalisation among other dimensions affecting teachers. By improving data management systems such as a teacher management information system (TMIS), countries are better equipped to track, project and address teacher shortages.

Key Insight 10: Advance teaching into a career that makes a difference

In a world facing a multitude of crises, teaching should serve as an innovative career that helps make sense of current situations and move towards future solutions. Teachers need to have inputs on developing strategies and curricula for addressing issues such as climate change, sustainable development, global citizenship and social justice.



Ms. Matsie Angelina Motshekga, former Minister of Basic Education and current Minister of Defence and Military Veterans of South Africa, speaks on a panel in Johannesburg, South Africa, February 2024.

Photo credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa

Recommendations

1. Actively engage teachers to better understand the issues that are leading to shortages

Systems cannot hope to remedy teacher shortages without first fully understanding the nature of the problem. To do this, education leaders need to actively engage teachers and teacher organisations to both understand the challenges that are driving teachers away from the profession as well as ideas on how to address those issues. Social dialogue plays an important role in this process, and teachers and unions should remain engaged with policy makers in developing and implementing new initiatives.

2. Establish national commissions to examine the issue of shortages and develop strategies and policies to tackle shortages

Recommendations and best practices that emerge from the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, the Global Report on Teachers and the Policy Dialogue Forum cannot be left as mere suggestions. Countries need to develop strategies for leveraging these recommendations into action items that can be monitored and evaluated. Establishing national commissions to systematically examine shortages and their causes and then address them through evidence-based responses could be an effective step for countries to begin this process.

3. Promote teachers and teaching as a global public good

The world needs to safeguard teachers and the teaching profession to better meet goals around equity and quality in education. Teacher positions are simply too important and valuable to be driven by the market. Promoting teachers as a public good may improve equity in education and help build political will and social value around the profession.

4. Create sustainable financing methods for education and teachers

Without the proper investment in education and teachers, countries are going to continue to struggle with teacher shortages, impacting access to quality education. As countries rarely have immediate and simple solutions to develop sustainable education financing, they need to develop innovative and comprehensive financial strategies to provide sustainable funding for one of their most valuable human resources in education— teachers.

5. Develop teacher policies that are holistic and interconnected

No single policy initiative can solve the issue of teacher shortages for any system. When developing holistic and comprehensive policies, systems should consider the big picture and how teacher dimensions are interconnected to raise the prestige of the profession. For example, a teacher's lifelong learning journey, career pathway, appraisal system and remuneration all intertwine. Policies should complement and build off each other to reflect this interconnected nature.

6. Collect more and better data and train education personnel to utilise it

Globally, there remains a lack of quality data regarding teacher shortages and staffing levels. Systems need to continue to work to strengthen their data collection methodologies, processes, networks as well as the technical proficiency of their staffs. This will not only pay off at the national level to help fill open teaching posts more efficiently, but it will also allow for more timely and accurate global needs projections. With the increased prevalence of smart phones and internet access, systems could also consider conducting enhanced outreach through online surveys to gather larger data sets and incorporate the voice of larger numbers of teachers.

7. Revise international normative instruments to improve the status of teachers

After nearly 60 years, the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers remains the international standard on teacher status, while the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997) is the only specialized instrument on the matter. While these are still relevant, both recommendations need to be further developed to cover a wide range of societal changes that were not previously addressed, including gender equality, technology and artificial intelligence, teacher mobility, violence and other recent phenomena.



. The current Minister of Basic Education of South Africa, Ms. Siviwe Gwarube speaks at the Policy Dialogue Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa February 2024. Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

Main Topic 1. Addressing common challenges leading to teacher shortages

Teacher shortages stem from many causes. Some countries face rapidly growing populations and/or have made great strides in reducing the number of out-of-school children, resulting in the need for teachers to fill newly created posts. On the other hand, countries in all regions and income levels often struggle to attract and retain enough teachers due to low wages, poor working conditions or a lack of support and recognition (UNESCO-IIEP, 2019). Yet other systems face a dearth of qualified teachers and rely heavily on teachers that lack the proper training or qualification

If there are not sufficient teachers to teach, we will have countries and continents lacking skills to transform.

-Honourable John Ntim Fordjour, Deputy Minister of General Education in Ghana, Ministerial Panel

Due to the complex nature of teacher shortages and the causes behind them, there is no established blueprint for systems to enact that can immediately solve the problem. Hence, education planners and policy makers need to develop holistic strategies that take contextual factors into account and raise the attractiveness of the profession over time. Coordinated and carefully planned strategies, such as the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NSTED) and the Education Reform Programme in Malawi (see Box 2) and the [Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development](#) in South Africa, are key to successful policy measures. Countries facing shortages may need to develop their own strategic frameworks or establish national commissions to identify contextual challenges leading to teacher shortages and develop policy solutions moving forward.

Box 2. Holistic policy measures in Malawi to address teacher shortages

Malawi faces large teacher shortages across all levels of education, needing nearly 120,000 primary teachers and more than 50,000 secondary teachers to meet national targets for 2030. A host of challenges has led to these shortages, including inadequate school facilities, poor housing options, inconsistent deployment and a lack of teacher education and professional development opportunities. Malawi has undertaken a variety of initiatives to combat these issues under the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development and Malawi Education Reform Programme, as well as in partnerships with international organisations.

As a part of NSTED, Malawi has built four new teacher education colleges to address issues with access to teacher education, improving national enrolment of teacher trainees by 40 per cent. To provide better school facilities, projects in conjunction with the World Bank and USAID have built 38 new secondary schools as well as new classroom blocks, laboratories, libraries and latrines. A continuous professional development framework has also allowed for the implementation of in-service training and career progression for teachers. Malawi has historically struggled with inconsistent teacher deployment to remote or rural schools due to a lack of resources. They have worked to address this issue by establishing hardship allowances and constructing more than 40 homes to motivate female teachers to live and teach in areas around hard-to-reach schools.

Source: Mr. Zizwa Chisi Msukuma, Director of Teacher Education, Malawi, presenting in Breakout Session 1.1 'Managing teacher shortages, elevating the status and working conditions of teachers'

The following subsections explore some strategies and good practices that countries have enacted to address different dimensions of the teacher shortage. These include quantitative and qualitative shortages, a lack of diversity and equity in workforces as well as a shortage of teachers working in the most difficult situations. These strategies can help form the building blocks for countries looking to develop their own national plans.

Addressing quantitative teacher shortages

Systems may opt for widely varying solutions to address quantitative shortages, depending on the nature of the challenge. Some countries facing a need for high numbers of new teaching posts may need to continuously ramp up teacher recruitment while others may need to focus on dignifying the profession to attract high-quality candidates.

Enhanced recruitment campaigns for teachers can help fill shortages, but they need to be properly designed and implemented so that systems do not simply fill openings with unqualified teachers. Historically, Indonesia has faced shortages in rural areas and relied on high numbers of contract teachers to fill gaps. To combat this challenge, the government undertook a national recruitment campaign that aimed to recruit 1,000,000 new qualified teachers (The Republic of Indonesia Cabinet Secretary, 2021) with a ministry representative reporting that approximately 850,000 have already qualified in the past three years. Zambia also faced their own shortages and implemented multiple rounds of recruitment to fill the openings (Syakalima, 2022). Forum participants emphasized that in both countries, successful recruitment efforts took advantage of strong political commitment, a cooperative effort between national strategy and local implementation and setting minimum quality standards that new teachers had to meet.

Key Insight 1: Dignify the teaching profession by improving wages, working conditions and recognition

When the teaching profession lacks prestige due to low pay, poor working conditions or a lack of recognition, the career may become unattractive to future and current teachers alike. One of the most straightforward policy solutions to this issue is to improve teacher pay or provide other financial incentives. Though an important aspect of dignifying the career, raising pay may prove to be most effective when it is enacted in conjunction with other policies aimed at elevating the status of teaching. Facing teachers leaving for opportunities in other countries, Jamaica has not only increased salaries, but also improved living conditions, ensured retirements and provided

psychosocial support through the '[return to happiness](#)' programme. South Africa offered monetary incentives for teachers but struggled to financially sustain them, so the country shifted to other motivation methods that focus on acknowledgement and building communities with teachers and teacher assistants. Ghana has also implemented pay raises for their teachers, and these came as part of a larger strategy to raise the prestige of teaching (see Box 3).

Box 3. Dignifying the teaching profession in Ghana

Ghana established new teacher policy in 2018 that aimed to attract the best and brightest into the teaching profession. They have tried to raise the prestige of the profession through recent pay increases of 30 and 23 per cent, with another 25 per cent increase expected later in 2024. The annual Ghana Teacher Prize also recognizes an outstanding teacher in the country with a 3-bedroom house in any area they want to live.

Going beyond financial incentives to dignify teaching, Ghana has also raised the minimum qualification to teach from a 3-year to a 4 year-diploma and ensuring teachers can pass minimum standards to teach. In conjunction with UNESCO, and thanks to funding from the Norwegian government, they have also adopted a competency framework for teacher training which aims to train teachers to prepare students for topics such as environmental education and crisis, digital skills and digital economy.

Source: Hon. John Ntim Fordjour, Deputy Minister of General Education, Ghana, presenting in the Ministerial Panel

Dignifying teaching by improving working conditions and offering recognition allows systems many more options for improving the prestige of the profession. Raising teachers' social status and their value in society can impact teachers' motivation and job satisfaction as well as the effect teachers believe they can have on student outcomes. Ecuador has worked in this realm, with the Ministry of Education designating April as the 'month for the valorisation of teachers' to both acknowledge their hard work as well as specifically encourage teachers to provide ideas on improving the national curriculum.

Dignity depends on recognition of value. This means working conditions that enable [teachers] to carry out work with regard to skill and judgement.

H.E. Mr. Mohamed Belhocine, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the African Union Commission, Ministerial Panel

Awards offer yet another method of recognising and dignifying teachers. The UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Teacher Development seeks to honour the agents of change in schools by recognizing teacher development programmes, splitting a US \$300,000 prize between three biennial winners. The African Union also holds an annual competition to find the 10 Best Teachers in Africa, offering each an award of US \$10,000 (African Union, 2022).

Forum participants noted that teachers at the early childhood level especially tend to face stigma and lack recognition and professional development or career progression options. Systems would do well to better recognise teachers at this level and offer them more access to training and ongoing development in the same manner that they do for teachers at primary and secondary levels. For instance, the [Twigire Mumikino Rwanda](#) project works with early childhood educators to support developing teachers to lead learning through play. The programme has reached more than 2,500 early childhood teachers through multiple platforms and includes discussion boards, peer support and in-school mentoring.

Addressing qualitative teacher shortages

Teachers that do not meet minimum qualifications may in turn jeopardize the quality of education that students receive. Forum participants highlighted that this is a critical issue globally, especially in many countries in sub-

Saharan Africa. Systems can develop policies focused on teacher training and recruitment as well as standards and accreditation to help tackle quality issues.

Key Insight 2: Raise teaching quality through improved education and standards

For systems seeking to overcome qualitative shortages, increasing enrolment in teacher training programmes, elevating these and improving the training infrastructure may help address gaps. This could include reforming initial teacher education so it is provided at a higher education level, building more teacher training institutes—as noted in Malawi in Box 2— or improving the overall quality of initial and continuous professional development. For example, Finland has developed high-quality, research-based teacher education programmes with the assistance of its [National Teacher Education Forum](#). This group, consisting of teachers, students, school leaders and other stakeholders, uses research-based techniques to strengthen and provide quality assurance to teacher education programmes. Finland’s strong initial teacher education has allowed them to develop highly trained teachers, raise the prestige of the profession and enhance their autonomy. Meanwhile, the [Regional Centre for Quality and Excellence in Education](#) has developed a framework for teacher training based on best practices and existing experience in Arab countries. This has led to the development of technical courses to better train teachers.

Some countries face qualitative shortages of teachers in specific subjects, in localized areas or both. To address localized shortages, education systems need to ensure they are recruiting teachers of all necessary subjects to teach, and deploying them with attention to equity and inclusion, particularly in attention to rural or marginalised communities, while also offering these recruits quality training opportunities. Ecuador, for instance, has placed an emphasis on ongoing training and professionalization, especially focusing on teachers in rural, marginalized, multicultural and multilingual settings.

We are living in a global space and must benchmark ourselves against global standards.

Ms. Denise Stoney-James, Deputy Programme Manager, Education, CARICOM, Plenary 1 ‘Addressing common challenges leading to teacher shortages’



A group of attendees and panellists in discussion on the first day of the forum.
Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

Other initiatives to systemically improve the quality of teachers revolve around developing common standards and accreditation methods. Bhutan has a national set of teaching standards that provide expectations and guidelines for the teaching profession (see Box 4). The Chilean government has passed a law that sets standards for what universities must offer in their teaching training programmes. The only other profession in the country that needs similar accreditation is medicine. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has developed [regional standards](#) which member states then use to develop their own national standards. This provides the region with an agreed set of qualifications for teachers which allows them to move more easily between systems and countries with fewer worries about quality issues.

Box 4. Promoting quality teaching in Bhutan

Bhutan has undertaken several initiatives that seek to ensure the quality of their teachers. The Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers serve as a foundational reference point for teacher recruitment, professional development, and career progression. There are seven distinct standards:

1. Skills to deal with diversity of learners
2. Skills to create necessary learning environments
3. Content and pedagogical knowledge
4. Planning and teaching skills
5. Assessment and reporting skills
6. Skills to promote personal growth and professional development
7. Knowledge of professional engagement and Bhutanese values

Building off these standards, Bhutan has also established requirements and incentives for teachers to receive quality initial and ongoing training. Teachers are provided with scholarships to complete bachelor's and master's degrees as well as funds to conduct ongoing action research. There are also immersion programmes for teachers to attend in schools in India and other countries in the region. Finally, 80 hours of professional development are required annually– 40 from the ministry of education and 40 at the school or district level.

Source: Ms. Tashi Lhamo, Chief Programme Officer at Teacher Development Division in the Ministry of Education and Skill Development, Bhutan, presenting in Breakout Session 2.1 'Recruiting enough qualified teachers and providing teacher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all'

Promoting diversity and equity

Fostering equity and diversity among teachers proves vital not only for a healthy, fully functioning teaching workforce, but also from a child rights perspective. Various international conventions and rules have granted children the right to a quality, equitable education. With shortages of teachers based on gender, language or ethnicity, systems may prevent students from realizing their guaranteed rights.

'Men lead and women teach' is an adage that needs to be eradicated.

Ms. Ella Mokgalane, CEO, South African Council for Educators, Breakout Session 1.2 'Diversifying the teacher workforce and building equity through inclusive policies'

Gender is one of the most important and common dimensions where systems struggle to maintain a proper balance. Forum participants noted that gender equity proves vital in teacher work forces to challenge historical gender stereotypes and norms. For example, women tend to be underrepresented in school leadership roles globally, depriving female students of role models in leadership positions.



Carlos Vargas, Chief of the Section for Teacher Development and Head of the Secretariat of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa

Key Insight 3: Promote diversity and equity in the teaching profession.

Systems can take several actions to try and address a gender inequality in their teaching staffs. Initially, they can capture teachers' voices on issues to help design strategies that promote gender inclusion and equity. The [Tarbiyah 21](#) initiative is a teacher-focused website and newsletter for the Arab region that acts as a repository for promising teaching and learning practices. Through this platform, teachers have raised their voices on diversifying the profession, especially by encouraging female students and teachers to engage in the digital transformation of education and STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) also provides support and advocacy to promote women in education with many of their own initiatives (see Box 5).

Box 5. Promoting women in education in Africa

FAWE is a pan-African NGO working across 33 countries to promote gender equality for girls and women in education. The organisation has advocated for access and retention of girls in schools over the past 30 years. This work is important as female teachers are underrepresented at higher levels of education in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and quality teachers are needed to challenge gender stereotypes.

FAWE has developed several interventions to expedite progress towards these goals. First, in partnership with the African Union, they developed the Gender Equality Strategy for the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025) to serve as a tool for integration, inclusion, equity and gender equality. FAWE also works to train teachers in gender responsive pedagogy to build their capacities to

identify and address gender biases. Looking to the future, FAWE has also facilitated the *Tuseme* programme which builds the capacity of girls and boys to speak out on issues affecting them.

Source: Ms. Catherine Asego, Senior Advocacy and partnership Officer, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), presenting in Breakout Session 1.2 'Diversifying the teacher workforce and building equity through inclusive policies'

While gender remains at the forefront of many diversity initiatives, systems should ensure an equitable teacher work force across all dimensions. For example, developing mother-tongue based education can help with teaching and learning outcomes and impact self-respect for students and teachers. However, many systems struggle to recruit and train teachers in needed mother-tongue languages. To combat this, South Africa developed a framework for teacher education and development that highlights areas of emphasis such as promoting linguistic diversity and bilingual teaching. Likewise, the Twigire Mumikino Rwanda programme has developed a professional development learning management system with a multi-lingual user interface.

Inclusion, equity and diversity for the 21st century teacher workforce is an essential policy imperative.

Ms. Hana Yoshimoto, Chief of Education, UNICEF South Africa, Breakout Session 1.2 'Diversifying the teacher workforce and building equity through inclusive policies'

Solving shortages related to equity and diversity can be complex, especially when school and system leaders must navigate a host of competing interests. Concerns emerged from panellists about school leaders facing tensions between trying to meet the aims of equity and inclusion in hiring practices while also producing the expected results in large-scale assessments. They noted that when agendas prioritise national exam scores or global rankings, it can objectify students and restrain teachers from developing inclusive classrooms and responsive teaching and learning. Participants called for moving away from narrow performance outcomes based simply on standardized assessments and towards preparing teachers to better design more equitable learning experiences, so all students succeed and achieve the desirable learning outcomes. This focus should also extend to training all teachers to work as reflective practitioners and challenge gender and other possible forms of discrimination deriving from the standardization of education, despite the diversity of cultures and socioeconomic strata present in the classroom.

Recognizing and supporting teachers in crisis and marginalized situations

While teacher shortages can affect systems in any context, they may especially appear in the most difficult situations. Often, disadvantages intersect and multiply to make situations worse in the most marginalized schools, where students typically need the most attention and support; where working conditions are most difficult; and where teachers are typically younger, less experienced and have received less training.

Refugee teachers deserve all our respect – they may be traumatized themselves, but they are still standing in front of traumatized children.

Ms. Heike Kuhn, Head of the Education Division at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), TTF Co-Chair, ECW Executive Committee Co-Chair, Germany, Breakout 1.3 'Finding and supporting teachers in emergency and crisis situations'

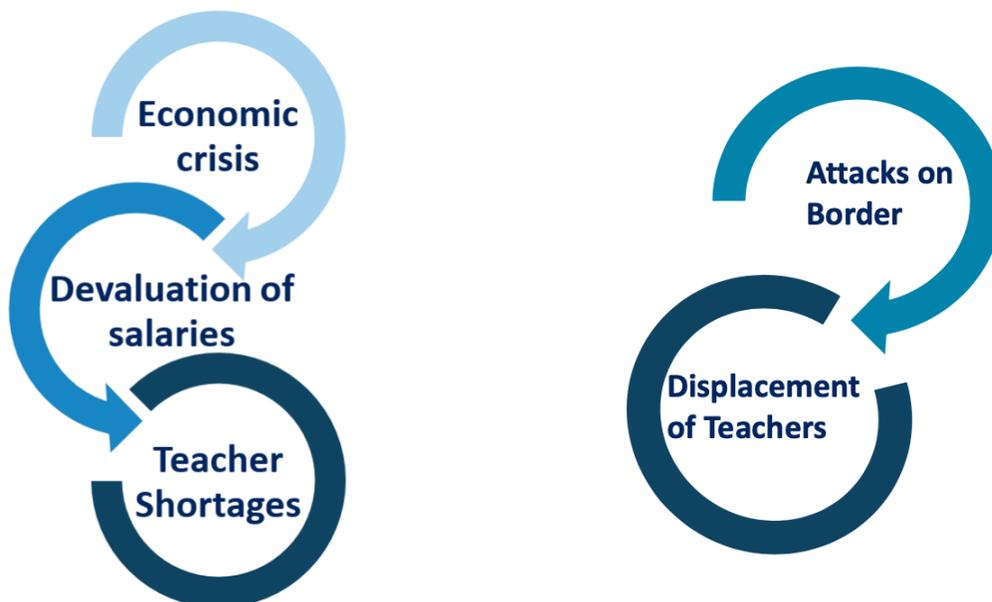
Conflict or other emergency situations can offer particularly difficult working circumstances for teachers, as they may simultaneously face economic and humanitarian crises (see for example Lebanon's case in Box 6). On the job, teachers can often face critical issues such as reduced or delayed pay, a lack of transportation or accommodation, lack of access to training or professional development and large class sizes. A shortage of comprehensive data and the variable nature of crisis-affected contexts can also make it difficult for officials to predict attrition, design strategies to prevent it or offer the proper support for teachers.

Key Insight 4: Recognise and support the needs of teachers working in difficult situations

A key solution to these challenges is to collect more data about the realities that teachers in these situations are facing and support them with the resources they need. A joint project between the UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG CAAC) has begun work to develop a guide for teachers of children in armed conflict. The project will map resources and stakeholders, determining the contents of the guide based on what teachers require. Some key needs include mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), socio-emotional learning (SEL), trauma responsive education, flexible learning options and technical and livelihood skills.

Box 6. Supporting teachers facing multiple crises in Lebanon

Lebanon has faced multiple crises that have led to teacher shortages in recent years. The first is an economic crisis where teachers' salaries have lost more than 90 per cent of their value since 2019 (Maalouf, 2023), while taxes rose twentyfold. At the same time, hostilities near the border since October 2023 have led to the closure of dozens of schools and the displacement of numerous teachers (UNICEF, 2023).



The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has sought to address these issues in several ways. To correct the devalued income teachers receive, they issued a decree in 2023 that raised teacher salaries, increased transportation allowances and offered financial productivity incentives. The Educational Centre for Research and Development has worked to train more than 17,000 teachers in 2 years to help with the recovery plan for teachers in maths and language. At the same time, more than 1,500 teachers have received training on social and emotional learning with additional e-resources available for all teachers. Lastly, there have been efforts to place teachers back into areas where they were displaced while also implementing specific programming for forcibly displaced students.

Source: Ms. Tassama Saleh, Teacher and teachers' trainer, Member of CRDP and TTF Lebanon focal point, presenting in Breakout Session 1.3 'Finding and supporting teachers in emergency and crisis situations'

While teachers in crisis or conflict settings may face some of the most difficult working conditions, systems should also recognise and support teachers working in rural, hard-to-reach or other marginalised communities. China has placed a focus on improving support for teachers in rural areas to raise the quality of education and reduce shortages in those areas. Efforts have included building more initial training institutions and encouraging newly

certified and recently retired teachers to take posts in rural regions. Since 2013, living allowances have supplemented approximately 1.3 million teachers in 72,500 schools in rural areas, while 5.7 million affordable housing units have been provided and more than 600,000 dormitories have been constructed (China Daily, 2022).

Main Topic 2. Strengthening policies for the professionalization of the teacher workforce

Dignifying and diversifying the teaching profession are vital steps to address some of the core challenges behind teacher shortages. But, to continue to transform teaching into a more prestigious and attractive career, systems will need policies and strategies to enhance the professionalisation of teaching.

Policies to ensure strong professionalism– such as providing high quality initial teacher education, training and professional development, collaboration, social dialogue and enhanced career pathways– are highly interrelated and build on each other throughout a teacher’s career. For example, advancing along horizontal career paths (by earning promotions but staying in the classroom) could include training and mentorship requirements to achieve promotion. Likewise, collaborative opportunities could be offered as part of a lifelong learning training plan for teachers. While raising the professional status of teachers can improve motivation and job satisfaction and ultimately lead to raising the attractiveness of the profession, these measures need to be prioritized and intentionally designed into teachers’ schedules. Teachers already facing heavy workloads cannot simply be expected to take on additional training and collaboration responsibilities.

We urge teacher unions and teachers themselves to step out of their comfort zones and accompany governments, learners, young people and other key partners on this journey of transformation.

-Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Opening Ceremony

The following subsections explore three specific topics around professionalising the teaching career in more depth: amplifying teachers’ voices through social dialogue, turning teachers into lifelong learners, and utilising technology to both connect and train teachers more efficiently.

Emphasising social dialogue and teacher voice

As a pervasive theme throughout the PDF, participants repeatedly emphasised that teacher voices and social dialogue need to guide policies related to teachers. Teacher organisations and unions can be fundamental in this process by engaging in policy dialogue to ensure teachers have adequate pay and good working conditions. Going a step further, teachers themselves can also play a key role in helping policy-makers design strategies to professionalise the career and transform the teaching profession.

Key Insight 5: Amplify the voice of teachers

The first step to applying teachers’ voices to policy design and implementation is ensuring there are outlets for them to be heard. Forum participants emphasised the need for countries to recognise teacher unions and allow for negotiations and collective bargaining around contracts and working conditions. One panellist, representing a union in South Africa, spoke to how the country has better amplified the voice of teachers since 1994, recognising both the freedom of association for teachers and collective bargaining. It is also important that unions and union leaders have the proper training to work effectively. For instance, Education International Africa has disseminated [tools and frameworks](#) to help guide unions on how to improve their mechanisms for dialogue at the national level.

Beyond union representation, it is also important for systems to directly collect teacher feedback about the realities and needs they face on an everyday basis. With the growth in access to the internet and smart phones, calls came for developing large-scale online surveys for teachers and school leaders. This would allow systems

to better drill down on the challenges they are facing and take more targeted approaches to correcting the issues leading to teacher shortages. Ecuador has developed strategies for teachers to actively participate and contribute to their national education plan, raising their voices up as leaders in communities (see Box 7).

It's impossible to get to a profession that makes sense without dialogue and consensus with the teaching bodies.

-Ms. Lilia Concha Carreño, Director, CPEIP, Ministry of Education, Chile, Plenary 2 'Strengthening policies for the professionalisation of the teacher workforce'

As planners and policy makers take steps to develop strategies that can reduce shortages, teachers need to have a voice in the process. Participants stressed that teachers are not involved at all in the process of developing policies in many countries. On the other hand, countries such as Peru, Chile and Ecuador have reformed their teacher training through social dialogue, participation and agreements between ministry officials and teachers. Likewise, supported by UNESCO, Ghana started work in 2017 to develop a new comprehensive national teacher policy. The government consulted teachers and unions throughout the entire process, ensuring they had a voice in the new policies. Finland has granted its teachers high levels of autonomy and agency, allowing them to take charge of student assessment and design curricula and policy. This has allowed teachers to feel they are active in decision-making and raised their status as professionals.

Box 7. Granting teachers a voice in developing policy in Ecuador

Ecuador has prioritised amplifying teacher voices as a part of their strategy for raising the dignity of the profession. The government views teachers as community leaders and agents of change that can transform society. They have set up large-scale social dialogue efforts with teachers to develop and promote their [national education plan](#). Learning groups have allowed teachers to explain the challenges they face and express ideas on how to correct them. These inputs directly contributed to the design and structure of new policy. Ecuador then entrusts teachers as community leaders to be the main promoters of new policy as it is rolled out to the public. These strategies all build towards the revalorization and professionalisation of the career where teachers act as researchers and each one has an important place in the system.

Source: Ms. Nancy Lorena Morocho Quimbiulco, Deputy-Secretary of Education, Ecuador, presenting in Breakout Session 2.3 'Valorising the teaching profession and teachers' voice'

Valorising teaching with lifelong learning opportunities

While the first major theme of the PDF discussed overall teacher shortages and the importance of training to develop enough qualified teachers, raising the status and professionalism of the career requires lifelong learning opportunities. This goal requires an integrated approach to quality training, moving from initial education and practicum to induction programmes to continuous professional development programmes. In a rapidly changing world, it is important that teachers remain lifelong learners and continue to engage with emerging pedagogical strategies and global issues such as climate change and social justice. To continue to act as effective facilitators for student learning and development, teachers themselves need to constantly learn and grow in their professional lives.

Key Insight 6: Develop teachers to be enablers of knowledge, values and learning

The path to lifelong learning begins with initial teacher education. In training future teachers to become both producers and consumers of knowledge, teacher training institutions prepare teachers who are life-long learners. For instance, the University of Johannesburg has developed a teaching school that develops pedagogical knowledge while also ensuring future teachers are comfortable to do their own research. As part of their programme, the university pairs future teachers with mentors in high-functioning schools. This relationship allows

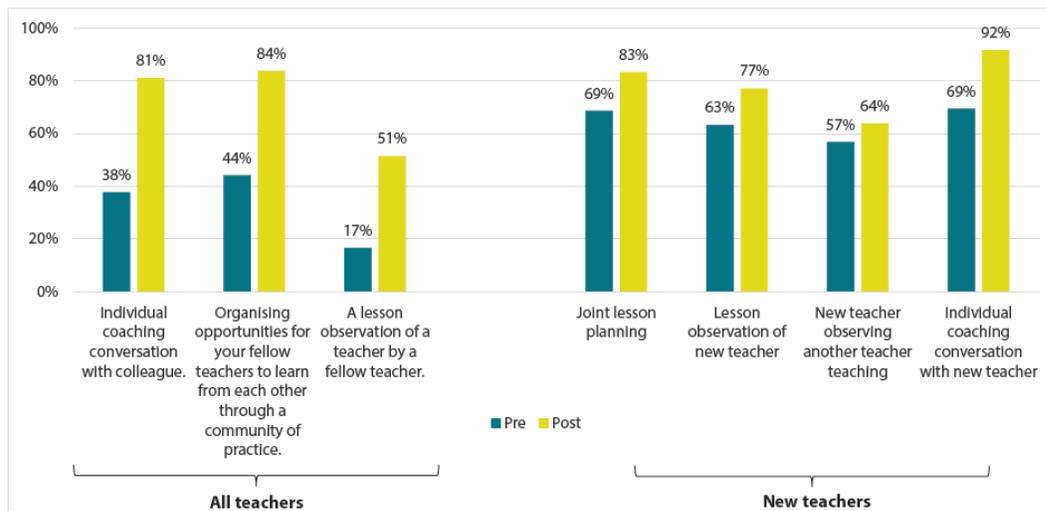
the student-teachers to enter an apprenticeship with their mentor and better understand actions taken in the classroom.

While further training and professional development are important throughout a teacher’s career, induction and mentoring programmes in the early years prove particularly important. Younger and novice teachers require extra support and training to maintain their motivation and confidence, as research has shown that they are an especially vulnerable group to attrition. An evaluation of a 5-year pilot induction programme in Rwanda found that induction activities had positive effects on emotional exhaustion, teacher efficacy and work satisfaction for young teachers (see Box 8). As part of their newly designed teacher policy initiatives, Chile has also implemented a mentoring programme where new teachers are assigned an experienced colleague to help with growth and development. Mentorship roles such as these can allow experienced teachers to impart knowledge, skills and values to new teachers while also putting value to their gained experience.

Box 8. Empowering young teachers in Rwanda through induction programmes

Rwanda developed a pilot induction programme to better support young teachers and help them transition into the profession. Results from a randomized controlled trial showed that induction not only had positive outcomes on new teachers in terms of receiving support and mentoring, but it also had positive impacts on all teachers within the school (Cabus et al., 2020). Participation rates in lesson observations of colleagues, communities of practice and individual coaching conversations increased among all teachers, not just those participating in induction (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of school-based mentors organizing at least monthly support activities



Several recommendations stemmed from the programme study, including engaging tutors from teacher training colleges to serve as mentors beyond the school and monitoring the induction process to ensure progress against established indicators. Rwanda’s induction programme highlighted that empowering and supporting newly qualified teachers is a crucial step towards addressing teacher shortages. Induction and mentorship programmes can potentially offer systems a low-cost and effective solution to contribute to teacher retention and job satisfaction.

Source: Mr. Tom Vandenbosch, Director of Programmes, VVOB and Mr. Gerrit Coetzee, Strategic Education Advisor: Partnerships and Advocacy, VVOB, presenting in Breakout Session 2.1 ‘Recruiting enough qualified teachers and providing teacher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all’

The time teachers spend working outside of the classroom needs to be valorised as it is the moment when they plan their teaching, train, and work collectively with their peers.

-Ms. Lilia Concha Carreño, Director, CPEIP, Ministry of Education, Chile, Plenary 2 'Strengthening policies for the professionalisation of the teacher workforce'

As teachers advance out of their initial induction and mentoring programmes early in their careers, systems need to establish quality professional development opportunities so teachers can continue to grow. This includes not only providing appropriate training sessions but also ensuring that teachers have time built into their schedules to attend. As teachers progress through their careers in Chile, they participate in a process of continuing education and evaluation, to include completing a portfolio and a series of disciplinary tests. The results help guide the ongoing training that they receive. The Regional Centre for Quality and Excellence in Education, based in Saudi Arabia, has developed initiatives in conjunction with universities in Arab countries to develop training programmes for teachers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. These trainings help promote lifelong learning among teachers while also allowing them to work towards additional qualifications, certifications and professional standards.



Shafika Isaacs shares UNESCO's Framework on Teacher AI Competencies Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa

Utilising technology to better connect and train teachers

To support the ongoing training and collaborative efforts to professionalise teachers, emerging technologies offer education systems some innovative new possibilities. By integrating blended or fully online training sessions, systems can improve access to high-quality teacher training. Systems can also leverage online platforms to deliver enhanced professional development and collaborative tools, thus boosting teachers' motivation.

The digital revolution and artificial intelligence must be pedagogically harnessed by teachers and integrated through active and human-centred teaching and learning methods and practices.

-Ms. Shafika Isaacs, Professor, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, referencing the UN High Level Panel on the Teaching Profession Recommendations in Breakout 2.2 'Leveraging technologies to support the transformation of teaching and learning'

Even so, technology– especially artificial intelligence (AI)– cannot be viewed as a replacement for human interaction and must be properly integrated to achieve positive effects. To provide systems with some assistance in this realm, UNESCO has developed guidance frameworks such as [the Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\) Competency Framework for Teachers](#) for pre- and in-service teacher training on the use of ICTs across the education system. More recently, UNESCO has also developed an [AI Competency Framework for Teachers](#) to define the knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers should have to understand the roles of AI in education and utilize AI in their teaching practices in an ethical and effective manner. Given the nature of AI technology and its rapidly expanding capacity, the framework also has as its main principles to enable teacher rights, autonomy and agency; guide transformative teaching; and support teacher education policy and practice.

Key Insight 7: Leverage technology to further empower the teaching workforce

No matter the technology, teachers need to remain at the centre of the design process. Panellists emphasised that technological applications should be developed around teachers' needs and skill level. This is especially important for teachers that lack experience or confidence using technology. For example, analysis from the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) countries found that most teachers lack access to information and communication technology while approximately one third of primary teachers felt 'not very' or 'not at all' confident using ICT in the classroom (UNICEF, 2022). To rectify this, participants noted that 9 of 11 countries in the region have defined ICT standards and are working to improve teacher training and professional development so teachers can become more comfortable.

When used properly, technology can offer systems a valuable tool in raising the professionalism of teaching by providing enhanced opportunities for training and collaboration. In the wake of school closures due to COVID-19, Indonesia has incorporated technology into training efforts across multiple platforms that reach more than 3 million teachers (see Box 9). Another innovative programme is the '[Future Teacher Kit](#)', which has been implemented in both Botswana and Jamaica and uses technology for teacher professional development and peer learning. The programme uses WhatsApp to send teachers messages with content that focuses on three key topics: digital skills, teaching of foundational learning and 21st century skills. This allows teachers to get training on their mobile devices and access to a community of practice with other teachers for peer learning. The project coordinator for the programme spoke at the forum and revealed that early assessment surveys show that 79 per cent of teachers reported that the programme has directly impacted their work.

Box 9. Developing an education technology ecosystem in Indonesia

In the spring of 2020, 96 per cent of schools in Indonesia had to shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This reality led to a radical transformation and integration of digital technology into their education system. Indonesia worked to develop a systems approach to technology that ensured users and their needs were central to the design process.

Indonesia now has an education technology ecosystem serving about 17,000 Islands, 438,000 schools, 3 million teacher and 50 million students. It is composed of several platforms that offer options for professional development modules, reports on national assessment results as well as budget planning and management. The professional development platform alone has more than 3 million active users (including more than 80,000 from rural areas), 785,000 pieces of content, and 21,000 teaching tools.



Provide high quality digital teaching resources

The Emancipated Teaching platform provides **differentiated learning modules**, tutorials on the new **curriculum** framework, curated **teaching materials**, as well as space for teachers to share **best practices** and find **inspiration from peers** on how to improve their teaching quality.

4m+

total logged-in users
(3m+ active users)

80k+

users from rural areas
(43% of teachers in rural areas)



785k+

content
uploaded

by **150k+**

teachers to
inspire each other



5k+

topics of self-learning modules



21k+

teaching
tools

7m+

downloads by

1.2m+

teachers



95k+

teachers community
across the nation

Source: Mr. Iwan Syahril, Director General for Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia, presenting in Breakout Session 2.2 'Leveraging technologies to support the transformation of teaching and learning'

More than just utilising technology for their own training and collaboration, teachers also need opportunities to integrate innovative practices into their classrooms. This can keep them at the forefront of professional practices and better enable their students to gain 21st century skills. For example, the '[Apps for Good](#)' programme in Portugal seeks to turn young learners from being consumers of technology to producers of technological solutions to problems they identify in their communities. It does this by training and supporting teachers on how to use digital technology in their teaching practices and create more meaningful learning experiences for their students. The programme received the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Teacher Development in 2020 and has now spread to official professional development programmes in the country.

Main topic 3. Promoting national and international cooperation to address teacher shortages

Due to the complex and multifaceted nature of teacher shortages, attempts to solve the challenge demand the promotion of national and international cooperation. Sustainable financing as well as data collection and utilisation are two enormous challenges that require coordination and cooperation for many countries to tackle. At the same time, countries and the larger international community need to rally together to set a new agenda for teaching that transforms the career into a highly esteemed role that is attractive for today's youth.

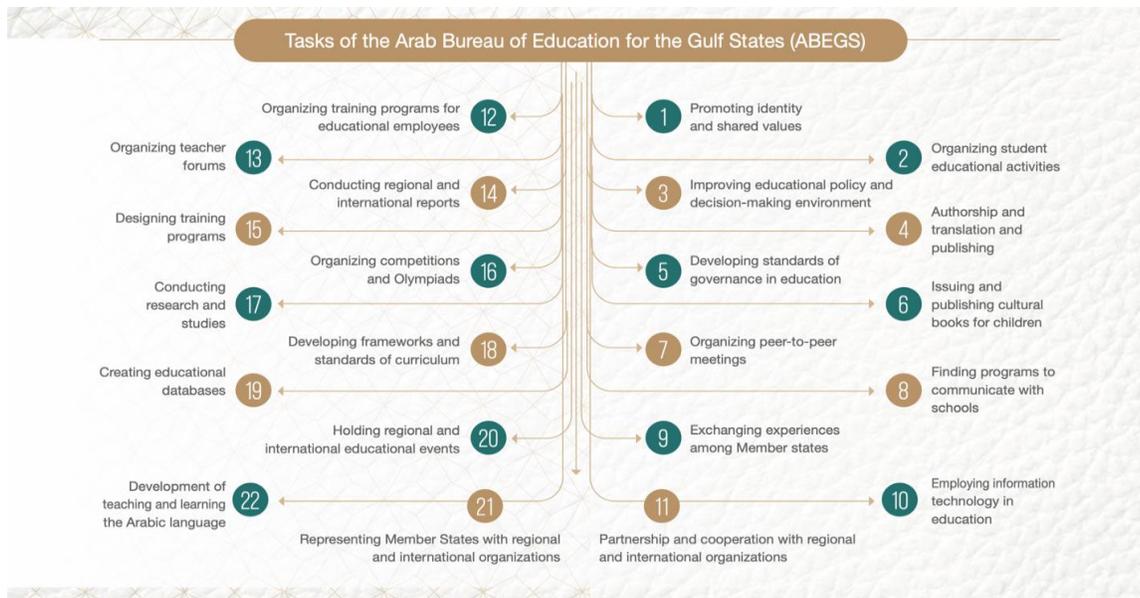
By teaching students to solve global problems, they come to realize the power of teaching.

-Mr. Ilan Enverga, Youth representative of the SDG4 High-level Steering Committee, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Plenary 3 'Promoting national and international cooperation to address teacher shortages'

The international community can play several key roles in supporting countries to reduce and eliminate teacher shortages. An example could include working with governments and other stakeholders to revise and update international normative instruments, such as the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers and UNESCO's 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. Updates could seek to include modern challenges not addressed in the original instruments– such as issues around gender equality or technology. International organisations can also drive a new agenda to prioritise the transformation of the teaching profession and raise and amplify the voice of teachers and their needs. While countries should be the main drivers of their own system improvement, the international community can complement and support national actions through policy development and exchange, funding or ensuring data availability. Finally, international organisations can facilitate cooperation between countries and support regional initiatives (see Box 10).

Box 10. Building regional support for teachers in the Gulf States

The Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) has operated for over 50 years and has developed programmes of collaboration among Gulf States on both the economic and education sectors. The Bureau has worked to make the teaching profession more attractive through training and professional development, especially to build new skills such as working with ICT and developing critical thinking.



Source: ABEGS, n.d.: p. 17

The Bureau works with four affiliated specialised centres to help achieve their aims:

1. **The Arab Centre for Educational Research for Gulf States** in Kuwait works to contribute to developing curricula, educational research and assessments for member states.
2. **The Arab Centre for Educational Training in the Gulf States** in Qatar seeks to improve the performance of education leaders and provide them with the latest knowledge and technology to enhance professional development.
3. **The Educational Centre for Arabic Language in Gulf States** in the United Arab Emirates uses modern methods to preserve the status and significance of the Arabic language in curricula.
4. **The Arabian Gulf University** in the Kingdom of Bahrain is a joint effort of member states to promote areas of specialisation in higher education in line with international developments and regional need (ABEGS, n.d.)

Source: Mr. Abdurahman Mohammed Al-Asmi, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), presenting in Plenary 3 'Promoting national and international cooperation to address teacher shortages'

Cooperation is also imperative at the national level to help address the challenges leading to teacher shortages. For example, ensuring enough funding or creating the infrastructure needed for high-functioning data collection will typically require coordination between education leaders and officials in other ministries or departments. Therefore, countries need to work cooperatively to provide the support and funding needed so that systems can recruit, train and manage a quality teaching workforce.

Whether at the national or international level, cooperation can drive policy exchange and allow for learning from the successful approaches of others. Events such as the 14th Policy Dialogue Forum of the TTF provide opportunities for policy learning from a wide range of countries and contexts from around the world. However, discussion of good practices and policy exchange can and should also occur at the regional, national, local or even school level. Disseminating successful policy ideas to the widest possible audience can play an important role in developing the teaching profession towards a more attractive and professionalised career.



Adhishree Parasnis, Chief of Communications and Advocacy at Global School Leaders on the second day of the forum, February 27, 2024. Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

The following subsections explore national and international cooperation across three major areas: sustainably financing the teaching profession, enhancing data usage and developing policies that promote a new agenda for teaching.

Financing the teaching profession sustainably

One of the most difficult aspects of creating and implementing new policies for addressing teacher shortages comes from a lack of financing. Teacher-related costs typically make up most of education budgets, with teacher salaries accounting for approximately 75 per cent of spending in low- and lower-middle income countries (GPE, 2022).

Investing in teachers is investing in a common future.

*Mr. Gert Janssens, Education Advisor, ENABEL, Belgium, presentation in Breakout Session 3.1
'Sustainably financing the policies that target teacher shortages'*

While teachers and related policies may be expensive, participants called for a shift in perspective on teacher-related spending: they are worth the investment as the cornerstones of education systems. Additionally, panellists noted that recruiting underqualified and contract teachers may seem like an attractive policy option in the short term due to budget constraints, but these short-term gains may mask longer-term costs. Ministries may incur additional costs since temporary teachers with poorer working conditions also leave the profession at higher rates resulting in ongoing expenses associated with hiring and training new recruits. These short-term solutions imply further costs to society including poorer learning outcomes and limited opportunities for lifelong learning or employment down the line.

To end shortages, governments must first find realistic and sustainable financing measures to fund education and teachers.

-Mr. Tinti Enoch Rabotapi, Chief Director, Department of Basic Education, and TTF Co-Chair, South Africa, Plenary 3 'Promoting national and international cooperation to address teacher shortages'

Many low-income countries face economic situations that make fully funding education a difficult reality. Forum participants noted that 73 per cent of African countries are in- or at risk of- debt distress while more than half are spending over 12 per cent of public budgets on debt. At the same time, panellists noted that estimates place global revenue loss at US \$480 billion per year due to tax abuse¹. For comparison, UNESCO estimates a US \$97 billion financing gap annually to fund the achievement of SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2023). Countries need to work cooperatively at both the national and international level to develop sustainable policies that can overcome these difficult economic situations.

Key Insight 8: Invest in teachers and teacher policies at the domestic level

From a long-term perspective, sustainable education financing must come from domestic sources, which could include innovative ways of raising funds for education. For example, Chad has struggled to fund teacher salaries and has turned to a combination of international aid and new taxes on mobile communications and exports to directly finance education. Even so, they still face shortfalls in the budget and require ongoing support. Other efforts to finance policies to address teacher shortages include developing more efficient spending methods, as estimates hold that up to one third of education spending is ineffective (World Bank, 2023). Panellists highlighted the World Bank's Programme for Results (P4R), which is a financing instrument that focuses on strengthening

¹ In this case, 'tax abuse' refers to the usage of tax havens by either corporations or individuals to underpay or avoid tax payments. The estimate comes from a report that can be found at the following: <https://taxjustice.net/reports/the-state-of-tax-justice-2023/>

institutional capacity by disbursing funds only when agreed upon results have been achieved by the borrower (World Bank, n.d.).

Coordinated efforts from regional and international partners can also help countries spend more efficiently. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) works with 88 partner countries to help identify key areas for policy reform and then assist in developing a design for improvement (see Box 11). The EU [Regional Teacher Initiative for Africa](#) (RTIA) is based on a multi partner collaboration, including the African Union and UNESCO as well as organisations from France (Expertise France), Belgium (APEFE, VVOB, and Enabel) and Finland (EDUFI). This initiative aims to provide countries with policy support, testing and scaling of effective solutions for teacher professional development, and the building of research partnerships both between countries within Africa and between the African Union and the European Union. By building effective policies and programmes together across the region, this can help ease financial burdens on individual countries.

Box 11. Promoting domestic policy development and efficient spending

The Global Partnership for Education develops partnerships with countries through compacts that outline areas for reform and how partners will work together with the government to implement change. GPE believes that sustainable funding for education must come from domestic financing. To support this goal, they use incentives and results-based financing to support governments to both increase domestic spending and ensure that resources are equitably and efficiently deployed. Nearly 90 per cent of their funding supports activities directly related to teachers, such as training, mentoring and management. GPE also promotes the sharing of good practices through their [knowledge innovation and exchange](#) hubs (KIX Hubs) that work to build partner capacity and scale innovation. This type of evidence-based system helps in developing more responsive and transformative policies.

Source: Ms. Krystyna Sonnenberg, Education Specialist, Global Partnership for Education, presenting in Breakout 3.1 'Sustainably financing the policies that target teacher shortages'

Enhancing data usage to target teacher shortages

Effectively using education data and teacher statistics has important implications for teacher shortages in several ways. Data can help identify various gaps or challenges and therefore inform more precise policy-making to select good practices for developing and managing teaching workforces. For instance, by better understanding the lack of qualifications, high pupil-teacher ratios and regional disparities related to gender or subject specialisations, education systems can more efficiently and equitably recruit, train and deploy qualified teachers to those schools or regions facing the most urgent shortages.

Central to this Policy Dialogue Forum, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and, more recently, the Teacher Task Force have used different data given its important potential for forecasting future global, regional and national teacher recruitment needs that can help set priorities. For instance, the Global Report on Teachers discusses the fact that the world needs 44 million more teachers by 2030 to meet universal primary and secondary education: 13 million in primary and 31 million for secondary education. At the country level, SDG 4 benchmarks have been developed to provide monitoring that is based off countries' starting points and specific contexts. This allows countries to create realistic national plans and targets while also providing focus on data gaps for key indicators that systems need for teacher management purposes.

A lack of accurate and timely data hinders efforts to estimate and then properly address teacher shortages.

-Peter Wallet, Project Officer, UNESCO's Section for Teacher Development and TTF Secretariat, Breakout Session 3.2 'Using enhanced data to improve teacher management'

Though vitally important, the availability and monitoring of high-quality data remains a major challenge in countries around the world. Many systems face significant challenges to collect necessary data to properly track

and manage teachers. This could be due to a lack of access, timely reporting, the absence of well-developed and supported education management information system (EMIS) or a lack of trained personnel on how to input, collect and manage the requisite information. Other challenges stem from a lack of comparability of data due to different definitions of what classifies as a ‘qualified’ teacher. This lack of classification has hampered comparisons between national benchmarks that track countries’ progress towards SDG 4 and the Target 4.c indicators (see Box 12). Like financing, these challenges mean that national and international cooperation are vital to ensure quality and timely data collection and utilisation.

Box 12. SDG Target 4.c Indicators

The aim of Target 4.c of the Sustainable Development Goals is to ‘[b]y 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States’. To help track the progress of this target, seven specific indicators have been developed. These include:

- **Indicator 4.c.1.** Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level.
- **Indicator 4.c.2.** Pupil-trained teacher ratio by education level.
- **Indicator 4.c.3.** Percentage of teachers qualified according to national standards, by education level and type of institution.
- **Indicator 4.c.4.** Pupil-qualified teacher ratio by education level.
- **Indicator 4.c.5.** Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification.
- **Indicator 4.c.6.** Teacher attrition rate by education level.
- **Indicator 4.c.7.** Percentage of teachers who received in-service training in the last 12 months and by type of training.

Source: UIS, 2023



Fatou Niang, former Coordinator of the Teacher Task Force, presenting the key takeaways of the Forum.
Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

Key Insight 9: Improve data utilisation for better teacher management

To combat the issue of a lack of comparable data related to teachers' qualifications and the training they have had through accredited teacher training programmes, UNESCO has developed the [International Standard Classification of Teacher Training Programmes](#) (ISCED-T) which provides a framework for cross-national data comparison. While still a work in progress, this tool could serve as a means to help provide more accurate monitoring of global targets related to the quality of teacher education and practice.

At the national level, data collection systems need to consider data throughout teachers' entire career, beginning with the recruitment and education of trainees all the way through pensions paid out for retirement. Teacher management information systems (TMIS) can prove vital for systems to collect, process and apply data in an efficient and effective manner. For example, Uganda has developed an effective TMIS that has helped them better manage their teaching work force (see Box 13).

Box 13. Developing a Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) in Uganda

Uganda has developed a TMIS to better support their teachers and ministry of education personnel. Before establishing the system, teachers had to physically go to the city of Kampala to register in the official system. The new TMIS however provides a user-friendly, mobile approach that eases the burden on teachers and improves the data collection, thus enhancing the capacity of the ministry to manage various dimensions related to the teacher workforce. Teachers register according to grade level, region and subject that they teach, allowing officials to monitor shortages across any of these categories. While the updated TMIS has marked improvement from a manual system, challenges still occur due to a lack of technological skills and equipment and unreliable connectivity in some parts of the country.

Source: Ms. Annet Mugisha Kajura, Assistant Commissioner Teacher Training and Development, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda, presenting in Breakout 3.2 'Using enhanced data to improve teacher management'

Data can also prove important to help countries forecast teacher needs, both across entire systems and within specific regions or contexts. Beyond the model used by the TTF to project global and regional teacher recruitment needs for 2030, South Africa has [utilised data collection](#) on child populations and age profiles as well as data on teachers including age, salary level and qualification status. This allows them to project overall regional teacher needs and overall budgetary requirements to cover different salary levels. Jordan [uses multiple sources of data](#)—to include geographical mapping of schools, numbers of students and teachers, and teacher participation in training programmes— to project where shortages of qualified teachers might occur. Sierra Leone has also used both [spatial analysis](#) and the number of qualified teachers to determine shortages in certain subjects such as math and sciences as well as in remote schools. This data in turn has helped to inform recruitment campaigns in STEM subjects to correct some of the identified gaps. Recognizing the need for continual updating and system improvement, results have led to efforts to continue to improve their data collection systems.

When data collection systems such as EMIS and TMIS better capture and reflect the nature of teacher shortages through enhanced data analysis— whether that be in terms of geography, subject taught or teacher demographics—they can support and inform better decision-making in deploying teachers more equitably. In this way, planners can more efficiently address many of the common challenges discussed previously, namely quantitative and qualitative shortages as well as shortages stemming from a lack of diversity and equity.



Panellists captured the attention of audience members on the first day of the forum, 26 February, 2024.
Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

Developing policies to forge a new agenda for teachers

The modern world faces not only multiple crises ranging from armed conflict to climate change to poverty and mass migration, but it also faces a rapidly changing work environment due to the emergence of new digital technologies, in particular artificial intelligence. In this context, what happens with the youth and the future of society is enormously important. How then do education systems forge a new agenda for teachers and the teaching profession to improve its attractiveness and the quality of education moving forward? While there is no simple answer to this question, it will entail national and international cooperation to drive the profession forward in an everchanging world.

We cannot solve our problems with the same policies. To reach new destinations we need to build new roads and include young people to build a future we're proud of.

-Mr. Ilan Enverga, Youth representative of the SDG4 High-level Steering Committee, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Plenary 3 'Promoting national and international cooperation to address teacher shortages'

Within schools, forum participants highlighted the importance of building the capacity of school and education leaders to foster a collaborative and innovative atmosphere for teachers. Promoting intergenerational dialogue and allowing the younger generation of teachers to contribute to decision-making and curriculum development could help raise the attractiveness of the profession for today's youth. Panellists also noted how important it was for young teachers to want to change the system from within instead of complaining about it from the outside.

Key Insight 10: Advance teaching into a career that makes a difference

Concerns emerged in the forum about whether the global narrative around teacher shortages and the status of the profession had become too negative and if the global community was undermining their own efforts to attract new teachers. Panellists discussed the importance of not only highlighting global challenges, but also promoting the idea of a pedagogy of hope (Freire, 1992). In this way, systems can instil the idea in teachers that there is still an opening for them to create a better world and they can be the drivers of that change through their work. By promoting the teaching of subjects such as global citizenship and education for sustainable development, teachers and students both can begin to work towards solving global problems and realise the true power of teaching.

Side events and regional meetings

In addition to the plenary and breakout sessions, three side events and five regional meetings took place at the 14th Policy Dialogue Forum. Discussions in these sessions explored diverse themes relating to the teaching profession and provided additional dialogue and perspective to the forum's main theme of addressing teacher shortages. The following subsections provide brief summaries of these events.

Side Event 1: Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) consultation on leadership

Leadership at all levels of education systems can play a vital role in addressing the issues leading to teacher shortages. This first side event provided an opportunity for consultation on the 2024/2025 GEM Report, which focuses on leadership and covers school leaders, system leaders as well as political and non-state actor leadership. Participants in this session specifically discussed the critical role of school leaders to drive positive change in schools and communities and provide more favourable working conditions for teachers and various education leaders alike.

Panellists noted that good school leaders prioritize democratic practices, inclusive decision-making, and collaboration within the educational community. They have a clear vision, promote shared values, and create a conducive environment to teaching and learning. By providing pedagogical and instructional leadership, school leaders can develop a more supportive and professional working environment for teachers. At the same time, school leaders require adequate support, resources, and training. This includes ongoing professional development, induction programs and peer-to-peer support. Panellists also highlighted the importance of building school leaders' capacity in data analysis so that they can be better prepared to make more informed decisions.

Side Event 2: Developing diversity and inclusion in the teaching workforce– what opportunities are there for stakeholders to collaborate and learn?

The second side event explored measures that systems can take to improve diversity among their teachers. Panellists specifically noted the importance of preparing teachers to model inclusive learning environments for students and fostering inclusion in classrooms. Discussions of how to promote diversity largely mirrored the key points of discussions on strategies for reducing teacher shortages in general.

Panelists emphasized the importance of developing a school culture that both accepts and attracts diversity. An example emerged of some teachers in Africa being forced to speak and teach in English or other colonial languages in which they lacked training or expertise. To prevent teachers from facing this type of difficult situation, policies should not only promote diversity and inclusion but also protect and support teachers by encouraging local and mother tongue language usage. Another key issue arose around the need of ongoing training and preparation to develop inclusive teaching practices. Initial teacher education programmes should develop their curricula to reflect practical, inclusive training methods for future teachers. Professional development programs should also include mentoring sessions for young teachers and creating inclusive communities of practice. A final

key issue involved the proper deployment and management of teachers. Systems need to develop inclusive recruitment and deployment strategies to ensure that all schools promote a diverse teaching work force.

Side Event 3: The African Union Year of Education and the EU Regional Teacher Initiative

The African Union designated 2024 as the Year of Education, and this final side event explored the role of teachers during this time of heightened focus and excitement. Panellists discussed several important topics, including raising the quality of teachers, recognising the importance of unions and civil society organisations, and countries working together to better scale initiatives across the Continent.

Multiple participants spoke of the importance of ensuring quality education in the African Union with higher quality teachers. Better teachers can then build students into global citizens ready for 21st century jobs and challenges– a key focus for the region, and the theme of the Year. To ensure governments are held responsible for the commitments to education they have made, panellists spoke to the importance of unions and civil society organisations. These groups can help improve working conditions by representing teachers and ensuring governments understand the nature and causes of teacher shortages. Finally, programmes such as the EU Regional Teacher Initiative for Africa can help connect countries to work together and scale proven initiatives. The programme provides funding and expertise to complement national action, scale initiatives proven to work and produce global goods that build the evidence base.

Regional Meetings

Participants also came together in five separate meetings to discuss region-specific issues for Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These sessions offered a valuable opportunity for participants from different countries to foster collaboration, exchange best practices, develop policy ideas and facilitate opportunities for networking and relationship building with others in their region. While each session focused on challenges and solutions specific to their region, there were also many common themes.

Similar issues emerged from the five sessions, many of which closely aligned with issues discussed in the plenary and breakout sessions. Some of these included a lack of attractiveness for the teaching profession, inadequate training and support, poor working conditions and a shortage of qualified or specialised teachers (such as in certain subject areas or those working in rural or remote areas). Other issues emerged more strongly in certain regions, such as the issue of brain drain. Africa and countries in the Caribbean have experienced this situation where qualified teachers migrate to other countries in search of better pay or working conditions. Other regions, such as the Arab States and parts of Africa, reported that economic recessions, political instability or conflicts had an impact on education systems and led to shortages. Finally, insufficient coordination between systems and teacher training institutions and a lack of regulation of the profession emerged as issues leading to shortages in Asia and the Pacific and Africa.

Across all regions, participants noted the importance of member engagement, representation, communication and resource mobilisation to address teacher shortages. Participants in the Arab States and Africa sessions especially highlighted the importance of regional collaboration and coordination to reduce shortages sustainably. Similarly, the North America and Europe group outlined methods for enhancing engagement among networks in the region to specifically address shortages. Other key strategies discussed across all meetings included improving teacher training and development, enhancing data collection and professionalising the teaching workforce.



Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO with Ms. Matsie Angelina Motshekga, the former Minister of Basic Education and current Minister of Defence and Military Veterans. Photo Credit: Ministry of Basic Education, South Africa.

Closing remarks

The teaching profession lies at the heart of SDG 4, but ongoing global shortages threaten the goal of ensuring that every child has an inclusive and equitable quality education. Whether facing quantitative or qualitative shortages, systems that lack properly trained and motivated teachers put the quality of the education in jeopardy. Even though the situation may sound dire, discussions throughout the forum highlighted numerous tools and examples of best practices to help guide the path forward.

We have hope because we have examples that some countries are doing well.

*-Mr. Borhene Chakroun, Director for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO HQ,
Breakout Session 3.3 'Forging a new Agenda for the teaching profession'*

At the most basic level, systems must ensure they have established teaching as a dignified and diverse profession. Some of the most common challenges that lead to teacher shortages stem from poor working conditions, low pay, or a simple lack of recognition. If countries begin to view and promote teachers as a vital public good, they can also begin to raise the status of the profession and solve many of these fundamental issues. At the same time, this support and recognition must not be reserved only for teachers working in privileged schools or settings. All teachers need to be supported and recognised for their work.

To truly transform the profession into one that is attractive for today's youth moving forward, systems will need to go beyond simply meeting the minimum thresholds for teachers to stay in the job. This process will involve increased professionalisation through collaborative opportunities and lifelong learning initiatives. Importantly,

teachers themselves need to help drive this process by raising their voices and providing inputs on decision- and policy-making processes. A resounding refrain repeated throughout the Forum was the notion of ‘nothing about teachers without teachers’.

However, all the best practices highlighted throughout this report will not simply occur inside a vacuum within education systems. To reduce global teacher shortages, it will take tremendous amounts of national and international cooperation. This type of collaboration can especially drive improvements in financing education and data utilisation, which are vital to ensure that teachers can be both funded and properly managed and tracked. Moreover, national and international cooperation can provide vital opportunities for policy exchange and learning as well as the spreading of innovative ideas.

This 14th Policy Dialogue Forum comes at a unique moment in history regarding momentum around raising the prestige of the teaching profession. Building off the Transforming Education Summit and the establishment of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, this forum marks a culmination of outputs regarding teachers. The High-Level Panel’s recommendations give us the ‘what’ for a list of actionable items to address global teacher shortages, while the Global Report on Teachers provides us with the ‘how’ and the ‘where’. Now, this Policy Dialogue Forum has given us the ‘with whom’. The international community cannot let this momentum wane moving forward. Now is the time to take concrete actions to drive the changes required in systems to raise the esteem of teaching and reduce global teacher shortages.

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