



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Education
Sector

International Education Day 2021

Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation

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#EducationDay

This third International Education Day occurs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to a global learning disruption of unprecedented scale and severity. The closure of schools, universities and other learning institutions, as well as the interruption of many literacy and lifelong learning programmes, has affected the lives of 1.6 billion students in over 190 countries. Governments everywhere moved swiftly to offer alternative solutions, but at least one third of the world's students were not able to access remote learning, while it is estimated that those in low-and lower-middle-income countries have lost nearly four months of schooling compared to six weeks in high-income ones. And, unfortunately, the disruption is still very much 'with us'.

The pandemic has amplified social, economic and digital inequalities, putting a generation at risk of a learning catastrophe as the UN Secretary-General warned in his Policy Brief on Education and COVID-19. But it has also shone light on the centrality of education for every society, as a public common good and the bedrock of social cohesion, well-being and opportunity. As the pandemic enters or worsens second and third waves of COVID-19, forcing countries into new lockdowns, many schools have remained open, even as other institutions and businesses are shut, testifying to the unique importance of their role in society, and the multiple risks – academic, socio-emotional and economic - of relying solely on remote learning solutions.

At the same time, the pandemic has been a wake-up call – to make education systems more resilient to crisis, and more inclusive, flexible and sustainable. It has shown the capacity of systems to innovate, expanding the frontiers of learning possibilities; the enterprise of teachers to ensure learning

continuity; and highlighted the immense value education holds for learners, families and communities—indeed losing something, even if only temporarily, functions to clarify its worth.

Action to respond to the pandemic disruption has unlocked and inspired new partnerships, as reflected in UNESCO's Global Education Coalition that has rallied 160 partners since its launch in March 2020. It has brought organizations together to advocate and galvanize support to education, as witnessed by the Save Our Future Campaign. It has catalyzed cooperation between governments in the early days of the crisis and, more recently, at an extraordinary session of the Global Education Meeting convened by UNESCO, Ghana, Norway and the United Kingdom in October 2020. On this occasion, heads of state and government and ministers from over 70 countries endorsed a Declaration expressing strong commitment to protect education financing and outlining measures to be adopted through the end of 2021 to safeguard education by:

1. Taking every measure to reopen schools safely and inclusively;
2. Supporting all teachers as frontline workers and prioritizing their training and professional development;
3. Investing in skills development for inclusive recovery;
4. Narrowing the digital divide that has prevented one third of the world's students from accessing education during school closures;
5. Protecting if not increasing education budgets; ensuring that stimulus packages support measures to mitigate learning losses and get the most vulnerable back to school; and increasing the volume, effectiveness and predictability of aid to education.

As a new year begins, now is the time to step up collaboration and international solidarity to place education and lifelong learning at the centre of the recovery and the transformation towards more inclusive, safe and sustainable societies. It is the time to invest in better gearing education systems everywhere to the reality of interdependence that the pandemic has driven in, and to making education a vehicle to foster social justice, peace, respect for diversity, human rights and democratic values.

This International Education Day aims to:

- Highlight commitments and follow-up actions taken to protect education through the recovery, increase inclusion and combat drop-out
- Celebrate initiatives being led by governments, educators, organizations—from global to grassroots efforts—as well as partnerships demonstrating the potential to recommit education to the principles of equity and relevance
- Highlight best practices in laws and policies on equitable finance for education that effectively and efficiently target the most disadvantaged via a tool featured on UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report website, PEER.
- Give voice to the COVID-19 generation to express their concerns and aspirations in the face of a future marked by an economic recession and climate change.

As in 2020, this Day will be organized in partnership with several partners, including the Global Partnership for Education and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CRI), and feature the participation of partners from the Global Education Coalition. Capturing the spirit of the International Day of Education, CRI and UNESCO have spearheaded a Learning Planet Festival to celebrate learning in all contexts and share innovations that fulfill the potential of every learner, no matter what their circumstances.

International Education Day will be celebrated on Monday January 25, 2021.