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Education International
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Internacional de la Educación

World Teachers' Day

Joint Statement from

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on the occasion of World Teachers' Day 2020

“Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”

Every year, World Teachers' Day reminds us of the critical role teachers play in achieving inclusive, quality education for all.

This year's World Teachers' Day has an even greater significance in light of the challenges that teachers have faced during the COVID-19 crisis. As the pandemic has shown, they make a crucial contribution to ensuring continuity of learning and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their students.

Because of COVID-19, nearly 1.6 billion learners – more than 90% of the world's total enrolled student population – have been affected by school closures. The COVID-19 crisis has also affected over 63 million teachers, highlighted persistent weaknesses in many education systems and exacerbated inequalities, with devastating consequences for the most marginalized.

In this crisis, teachers have shown, as they have done so often, great leadership and innovation in ensuring that #LearningNeverStops, that no learner is left behind. Around the world, they have worked individually and collectively to find solutions and create new learning environments for their students to allow education to continue. Their role advising on school reopening plans and supporting students with the return to school is just as important.

We now need to think beyond COVID-19 and work to build greater resilience in our education systems, so we can respond quickly and effectively to these and other such crises. This means protecting education financing, investing in high-quality initial teacher education, as well as continuing the professional development of the existing teacher workforce.

Without urgent action and increased investment, a learning crisis could turn into a learning catastrophe. Even before COVID-19, more than half of all ten-year-olds in low- to middle-income countries could not understand a simple written story.

To build a more resilient teacher workforce in times of crisis, all teachers should be equipped with digital and pedagogical skills to teach remotely, online, and through blended or hybrid learning, whether in high-, low- or no-tech environments. Governments should ensure the availability of digital infrastructure and connectivity everywhere, including in rural and remote areas.

In the context of COVID-19, governments, social partners and other key actors have an even greater responsibility regarding teachers. We call on governments to protect teachers' safety, health, and wellbeing, as well as their employment, to continue improving teachers' working conditions, and to involve teachers and their representative organizations in the COVID-19 educational response and recovery.

Today, we collectively celebrate teachers for their continued commitment to their students and for contributing to the achievement of the 2030 targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4. We commend educators for the central role they have played, and continue to play, in responding to and recovering from this pandemic.

Now is the time to recognize the role of teachers in helping to ensure a generation of students can reach their full potential, and the importance of education for short-term stimulus, economic growth and social cohesion, during and after COVID-19.

Now is the time to reimagine education and achieve our vision of equal access to quality learning for every child and young person.