



## World Teachers' Day 2020

### Overview

5 to 12 October 2020

English, French, Arabic, and Spanish interpretation available.

### Introduction

Every year on 5 October since 1994, UNESCO celebrates [World Teachers' Day](#) (WTD) to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the [1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#). It sets forth the rights and responsibilities of teachers, and standards for their initial preparation, ongoing professional development, recruitment, employment, teaching and learning conditions. It also contains numerous recommendations for teachers' participation in educational decisions through social dialogue and negotiation with educational authorities. Complementing this landmark achievement, WTD also commemorates the adoption in 1997 of the [UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#) which sets forth the rights and responsibilities of higher-education teaching and research personnel.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including [Goal 4 on Education](#), recognizes teachers (Target 4.c) as key to the achievement of the 2030 Education Agenda. WTD provides an annual occasion to take stock of achievements and raise awareness around challenges facing teachers and their role in the achievement of the global education targets. This year WTD will be celebrated with the theme, "Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future."

## Rationale for the choice of theme

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At its peak, the recent COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures directly affected 1.6 billion students at all levels and 63 million primary and secondary teachers. In many cases, teachers were required to conduct online learning but lacked basic ICT tools in their own homes. In many places teachers also found themselves unable to continue education because many households lacked the technology and connectivity to allow students to learn online. Globally, for instance, approximately 50% and 43% of learners, respectively, lack computers or the internet in the home. Teachers themselves are under significant strain and many lack a network and system of psychosocial support from education leaders and the greater community. In many cases, teachers often have the double duty of looking after their own children at home while trying to teach online and facilitate the continuance of education and learning.

An unprecedented event, the COVID-19 pandemic challenges already constrained education systems in various new ways resulting in a revision of how teachers teach and more generally work. While the topic of leadership has been somewhat neglected amongst the multitude of issues facing the teaching profession in the push towards achieving the SDG 4 and Education 2030 goals, the issue of teacher leadership in relation to crisis responses is not just timely, but critical in terms of the contributions teachers have recently made to provide remote learning, support vulnerable populations, re-open schools, and ensure that learning gaps in the curriculum are being mitigated. The chosen theme also considers the role of teachers in building resilience and shaping the future of education and the teaching profession.

The COVID-19 crisis created a unique situation for teacher leadership, creativity and innovation to be demonstrated. Around the world, teachers are working individually and collectively to find solutions and create new learning environments for their students to ensure that learning can be continued. In most cases without much warning and with little time to prepare, teachers have had to modify or condense the curriculum and adapt lesson plans to carry on with instruction, whether via the internet, mobile phone, television, or radio broadcast. In many low-income countries, with poor or no connectivity to the internet or mobile networks, teachers have prepared take-home packages for their students. The move to online learning has required capacity for innovation and creativity never before attempted in order to keep children engaged and learning. Some teachers are posting their lessons online for the benefit of all; others check-in with their students through WhatsApp, while others visit homes to pick up work and bring back revisions and feedback. Teachers have formed communities of practice and support groups through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Without much guidance or pedagogical support from education authorities, the frontline workers of the education sector are showing great capacity and flexibility to adapt to an ever-evolving situation in order to keep children and youth learning.

Teachers face other challenges beyond the current and other crises; overall the early twenty-first century has not been an easy time to be a teacher. There has been, without doubt, a decline in the status of the teaching profession globally, and respect for teachers more generally. Worldwide there is growing concern about the competence and qualification levels of teachers to the extent that families no longer systematically support teachers' authority or the concept of teachers in loco parentis. In many countries, this can be attributed to teachers' low level of qualifications and training. For instance, data show that in primary and secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa, only 64% and 50% of teachers, respectively, are trained. In some countries, including those in Western Africa and South Asia, it is also related to the practice of filling teacher gaps with a growing cadre of para-professionals and community volunteers. If this were not enough, the combined concern about competence and the drive to deskill teachers has led some prominent academics to urge a rethink of the very notion of "expertise," suggesting that technology and artificial intelligence could soon make redundant many human tasks that were once the historic preserve of 'professions,' replacing them with automation.

Under ordinary circumstances, policymakers face critical challenges to identify which balance of policy options to recruitment, teacher education and continuing professional development, incentives, support and motivation offer an effective professional and personal development strategy for teachers and other education personnel to develop as leaders. During the COVID-19 crisis and the return to school—if these issues are not properly addressed—policymakers might miss the opportunity to develop a new cadre of talented teachers with a leadership mindset to effectively establish the new global, regional and country level aspirations countries need in these challenging times.

One of the fundamental aspects of SDG 4 is the shift from the overriding issue of education access to quality and learning outcomes. Teacher leadership will be essential for inclusive and quality education and allows for a broader interpretation and greater role for teachers beyond their traditional role. It expands on teachers' central role as leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Consequently, education stakeholders and global partners are increasing their focus on the issue of education leadership and how teachers, head teachers, principals and others play important roles. By choosing to focus World Teachers' Day 2020 on leadership, UNESCO and its co-convening partners wish to draw global attention to this neglected issue and to invite education stakeholders to reflect on what teacher leadership means in the context of Education 2030. These discussions will also contribute to UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative which is exploring how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet.

## Virtual programme

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[World Teachers' Day](#) is typically celebrated on 5 October at UNESCO and worldwide through UNESCO field offices and institutes. Events are organized in collaboration with UNESCO institutes, field offices, and other development partners. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, World Teachers' Day celebration in 2020 will be entirely virtual. Virtual WTD will be celebrated through a week-long series of online interactive events beginning on 5 October with the official opening ceremony in the presence of UNESCO's Director-General Ms Audrey Azoulay, followed by official statements by the heads of the co-convening partners, ILO, UNICEF, and Education International. This year, WTD coincides with the award ceremony of the 6th Edition of the [UNESCO-Hamdan bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers](#). The Prize, awarded every two years, amounts to US\$300,000 equally divided among three winners whose projects aim to improve the performance and effectiveness of teachers. The Prize will be awarded virtually following the opening ceremony in the presence of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum of the United Arab Emirates.

The opening ceremony will also feature the official launch of the new TTF Knowledge Platform, financed by the Hamdan Foundation. This is a flagship product of the [International Taskforce on Teachers for Education 2030](#) (TTF), commonly known as the Teacher Task Force. The Teacher Task Force is a global alliance of national governments, intergovernmental organizations, international development agencies, civil society organizations, and private sector organizations working to raise awareness and expand knowledge on teachers with a view to attaining the SDG 4 goals. UNESCO is a permanent member of the Teacher Task Force. The official closing ceremony, to take place on 12 October, is a joint World Teachers' Day & [Mobile Learning Week](#) event with a special showcase of the innovative use of technology for teacher professional development and mentoring during the time of COVID-19.

## How to register

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All events are open to the public. Events will be interactive via online platforms (e.g., Zoom, WebEx) that allow for simultaneous interpretation to facilitate open discussion among speakers, panellists, and participants at large. To register, click on the registration link provided in the programme on the next page. Additional resources including agendas, concept notes, policy briefs, and research reports can also be accessed through the links provided in the programme. The programme is updated regularly on our [World Teachers' Day](#) website. Check back often!

# World Teachers' Day 2020

5-12 October 2020

All times Paris (GMT +2)



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Monday, 5 October 13.00 - 15.30**

**World Teachers' Day 2020 Opening Ceremony & Award Ceremony of the 6th Edition of the UNESCO - Hamdan Teacher Prize**

**Languages:** English, French, Arabic, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Monday, 5 October 16.00 - 17.30**

**Feature Session on Teacher Leadership – Showcasing Grassroots Teacher Initiatives in Response to School Closures**

**Languages:** English, French, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Tuesday, 6 October 10.00 - 11.30**

**Youth and Adult Literacy Educators: Status, Challenges and Opportunities Towards Professionalization**

**Languages:** English, French, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Background report](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Tuesday, 6 October 16.00 - 17.30**

**Teachers at the Forefront of Crisis and Change: Examining the Relevance of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers**

**Languages:** English, French, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Wednesday, 7 October 09.00 to 11.00**

**Teacher Task Force Asia-Pacific Regional Virtual Meeting**

**Languages:** English

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Wednesday, 7 October 10.00 - 11.30**

**Joint UNESCO-IIEP-Education Development Trust Session – Change agents: The emergence of professional learning leaders at the middle tier of education systems**

**Languages:** English, French

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Wednesday, 7 October 15.00 - 16.30**

**Teacher Task Force Africa Regional Virtual Meeting**

**Languages:** English

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Wednesday, 7 October 16.00 - 17.30**

**Joint UNESCO-Teach For All Session – Lessons from this worldwide experiment in distance learning**

**Languages:** English, French, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Thursday, 8 October 10.00 - 11.30**

**Teacher Task Force Arab States Regional Virtual Meeting**

**Languages:** English, French, Arabic

**Links:**  
- [Agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Thursday, 8 October 11.00 - 12.30**

**Professionalization of Early Childhood Teachers: The Missing Piece for Strong Leadership?**

**Languages:** English, French

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Thursday, 8 October 14.00 - 15.30**

**Industry Experience of TVET Teachers in Times of Crisis**

**Languages:** English, French

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Thursday, 8 October 15.00 - 16.30**

**Teacher Task Force Africa Regional Virtual Meeting**

**Languages:** French

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Thursday, 8 October 16.00 - 17.30**

**Education in crisis: Are higher education teachers leading in action?**

**Languages:** English, French, Arabic

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Friday, 9 October 11.00 - 12.30**

**Joint IIEP-UNESCO – Education Development Trust Session – Promising policies to support teacher management in refugee settings: A multi-country research initiative**

**Languages:** English

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Friday, 9 October 13.00 - 15.00**

**Varkey Foundation “Rebuild” Summit – A global conversation on how teacher leadership can rebuild education.**

**Languages:** English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian

**Links:**  
- [Registration](#)

**Friday, 9 October 16.30 - 18.00**

**UNESCO Global Teacher Campus**

**Languages:** English, French, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)

**Monday, 12 October 15.30 - 17.00**

**World Teachers' Day 2020 Closing Ceremony & Mobile Learning Week 2020 Joint Session: Best practices for supporting teachers to facilitate distance learning**

**Languages:** English, French, Spanish

**Links:**  
- [Concept note and agenda](#)  
- [Registration](#)



#WorldTeachersDay

## Stay in touch

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<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldteachersday>



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