

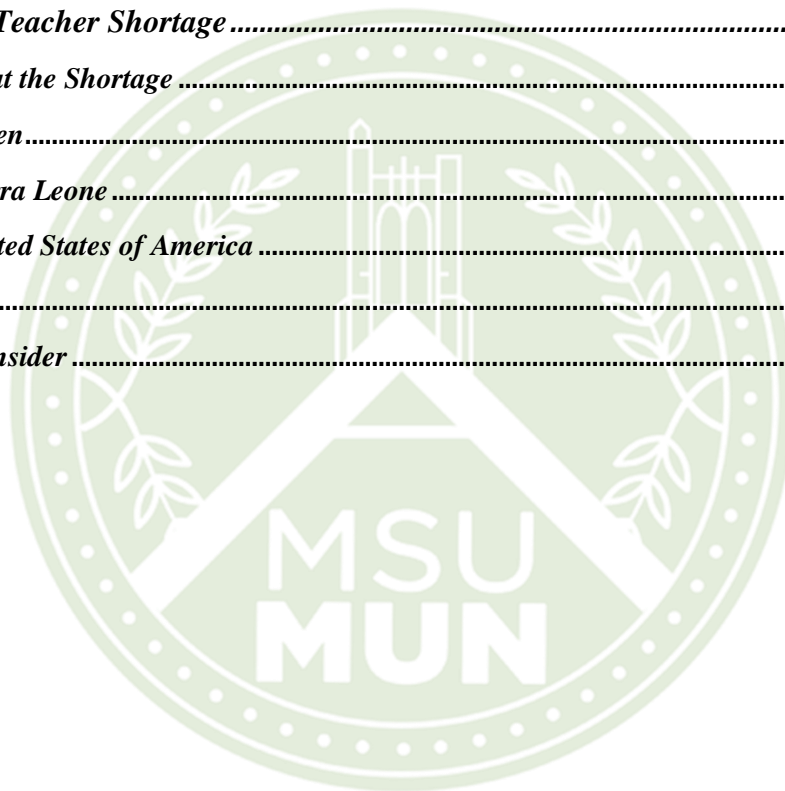
# **A Crumbling Curriculum: the SDG-4 Education Initiative 2030**



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Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan's twelve federally recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.”



## **Letters from the Dias**

Greetings Delegates!

Welcome to A Crumbling Curriculum: SDG-4 Education Initiative 2030! My name is Ryan Longo and I have the honor of being the chair of the UN committee on SDG-4 for MSUMUN XXII. I am currently a student at Michigan State University where I'm studying for a double major in Social Relations & Policy (through James Madison College) and Economics. While not necessarily fully encompassed by my degrees, my area of focus within my studies is in education policy. My hope over the next few years is to perform research on our education system and eventually work for the State of Michigan as an education policy analyst or advisor. Outside of academia, I am the president of the MSU breaking club (you may know this as breakdancing) and regularly travel around East Lansing and Michigan connecting with other dancers and communities. I look forward to working with all of you this year!

The institution of education within Michigan, the United States, and the larger world is of great importance to me and it brings me joy that we will get to take a much closer look at it. Most of you likely come from Public Schools like I did (and a select few from Charter or Private school) and have a surface level understanding of where our education systems can go wrong and the various hardships that students have to weather. I ask all of you to take your experiences with you to this committee and also allow yourselves to see yourselves within our global education system. We will be addressing difficult to solve issues that many nations have differentiating viewpoints on. Please think critically about not only how the United Nations can solve these issues but also what your nations consider to be "valuable" within education or even the purpose of education itself.

If you have any questions about the committee, collegiate MUN, or MSU, please do not hesitate to reach out at [GA3@msumun.org](mailto:GA3@msumun.org). We'd love to hear from you!

Best,

Ryan Longo



## Assistant Chair Introductions

Jasmine Jacobs

Hello everyone! My name is Jasmine Jacobs I am a Sophomore at Michigan State double majoring in Chemical Engineering and Political Science (a weird combo I know). I have been a part of Model United Nations since I was in high school and I can't wait to meet you all.

Currently, I work at Merit Laboratories as a Labatorie Technician where we test soils, waters, and air for harmful chemicals. In my free time, I play video games including "FarCry", "Fallout", "Stardew Valley" and many more. Just recently I bought my first gaming computer so I can game on the go. I also enjoy painting using acrylic paints. My specialty is cartoon-style paintings, as I like to paint popular cartoons from shows I watch.

Leah Doyle

Hi! My name is Leah Doyle and I am a sophomore at Michigan State studying Criminal Justice and Human Development. I have taken a big interest in the juvenile justice system and how it connects to schooling and school programs and hope to work somewhere in that field. I currently work for MSUPD and am in a professional fraternity here on campus. You can almost always catch me with a coffee in hand and a lot to say (I am not a fan of silence). In my freetime I like to rewatch episodes of Dance Moms and listen to my perfectly curated playlists. I am so excited to meet you all!

## **Topic 1 - Education Infrastructure**

A safe learning environment free from violence and hazard is a key factor in securing an education for a child in the world. This is because a healthy classroom is built on close student-teacher relationships, engaged learning, and enriching interactions, none of which can happen in an inherently unsafe environment. Even though primary education is one of the most critical things a nation can invest in to create a better future, the fundamental condition of being safe while in school has largely been neglected by or lost on policymakers in many nations. When schools fall apart, learning programs fail, and school atmospheres turns hostile, opportunities for economic growth and social movement are lost. The world has grown increasingly closer to universal primary education and the question of how to educate all the children of the world is almost answered. However, delegates of this committee must answer a new, much more pressing question: how do nations keep these education systems from falling apart?

You may be asking, what is education infrastructure? This kind of infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of an education system or school. There are three important aspects of education infrastructure to consider: (1) the physical attributes/facilities, (2) the atmosphere and environment for student social life and learning, and (3) the structure of learning. For example, you have the aspects you can physically see — buildings, classrooms, laboratories, and equipment — which are needed for the facilitation of learning. These may also include safety equipment such as fences, walls, cameras, locks, or shelters to protect students from weather hazards or violence. Education infrastructure also takes into account inclusion and security. Students need to learn in a positive environment that confers a feeling of safety and belonging. This often can be directly tied to the security of the school facilities and treatment by staff.



Unequal education within countries and between countries can be directly tied to certain aspects of education infrastructure. While for most nations, an enclosed classroom and chalkboard may be relatively obtainable, a school building with electricity or running water may be very difficult or next to impossible to acquire. What is considered progress towards better education infrastructure differs as each nation has different variables and values that must be considered. In the Netherlands, a school must have access to stable and bountiful electricity as well as internet to support a heavily technology driven educational system. But in the nation of Malawi, a stable power supply and access to the internet won't necessarily increase the size of classrooms or generate more class materials.

While many nations face unique issues, infrastructural issues tend to follow the same patterns. The most commonly understood pattern of infrastructural issues (and one that disproportionately affects developing nations) is *lack of resources*. Nations lack the initial resources to establish a strong school infrastructure. Considering that “seventy-nine percent of people in [developing] countries live without electricity,”<sup>1</sup> if countries have inconsistent or no power that will impact their learning since they can't read or write in the dark and it may make communication such as school-to-school and school-to-family extremely difficult. Another common pattern is *unsustainable architecture*. This infrastructural issue stems from the fact that buildings and educational programs degrade overtime. A school building established without consideration to climate or without a maintenance plan can quickly fall out of repair; A school program that has no training program feeding into it or system in place to replenish school supplies will fall apart after a few years. Finally, a third infrastructural issue pattern is one that makes itself present when school systems try to upgrade, this is *unscalable architecture*. A

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<sup>1</sup> Teixeira and Amoroso and Gresham, 2017

school that needs to support 15 additional students every year due to a growing population may not be designed well enough to have another room or floor tacked onto it. Furthermore, if a school wishes to implement laptops into their classrooms, if it does not have enough outlets installed in a classroom, they have to spend lots of resources renovating.

Infrastructure is the building block of safety and security. It is critical to match the needs of each region, nation, and city; there is no standard model. Some regions are impacted by changing weather, some will experience extreme heat or cold. Creating a standard model will only harm those who are not the standard, it may be a fast solution but not an equal one. Geographically, school architects need to focus on where a school can be built and if it should be built. How far is the commute for students and families, is the commute accessible and safe? What are the challenges faced in the area/region that is prominent to flooding, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, droughts, etc.? For example, natural disasters can be deadly to a school system as “schools are destroyed, educational infrastructure damaged, teachers and students displaced, and informational material lost.”<sup>2</sup> This can permanently close schools if there is no post-disaster plan in place to restore educational services.

Infrastructural issues in schools don't affect everyone within a single nation equally either. For example, bathrooms are an essential facility for women who are in their adolescence and may be getting their menstrual cycle for the first time. Women without the proper resources and facilities to support their menstrual health may feel embarrassed and socially alienated in their environment. When this happens in the school environment, it can significantly affect a student's focus in class, their ability to feel comfortable and safe in school, and lead to lower grades. For students in low-income areas or Global South nations, they may even have to stay

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<sup>2</sup> Fowler, 2018

home for an entire week every month due to lack of access to hygienic products. This low attendance can lead to these women being more likely to dropout. When schools lack hygienic infrastructure, it not only negatively affects all students, but it especially affects women.<sup>3</sup>

### ***What COVID-19 Taught Us***

COVID-19 is an example of an unforeseen event that educational institutions were not prepared for. Due to COVID-19, there was a dramatic increase in school closures as many schools could not provide proper sanitation or minimize social contact including social distancing and masks. Most schools had no procedure to handle learning during quarantine or the hygienic infrastructure to support post-pandemic learning. For example, the United States public school system went online completely using aids like “Zoom” and “Google Meets.” Using such aids were not only a challenge but a privilege since not every country’s student population has access to the internet or computers. The period of online classes caused a momentous shift from a structure built on attendance and limited personal space to a fully remote style that had to quickly and smoothly transition. The only reason nations like the United States could so quickly adapt to such a disruption in educational services is because they had previously established systems of administrators, extensive governmental bodies dedicated to schooling, and the resources to quickly mobilize massive groups of people.<sup>4</sup>

In many developed nations, after an extensive period of fully online classes, students were allowed back onto their respective campuses but were mandated to wear masks as a way to

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<sup>3</sup> Michel J, Mettler A, Schönerberger S, Gunz D. Period poverty: why it should be everybody’s business. *Journal of Global Health Reports*. 2022;6:e2022009. doi:10.29392/001c.32436

<sup>4</sup> Supporting students during the COVID-19 pandemic: Maximizing in-person learning and implementing effective practices for students in quarantine and isolation. *Supporting Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Maximizing In-Person Learning and Implementing Effective Practices for Students in Quarantine and Isolation* | U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus/supporting-students-during-covid-19-pandemic>

protect fellow students and staff. In many developing nations, this was not the case. Take for example Uganda; Uganda only reopened its schools in 2023<sup>5</sup> and its attempts to provide an education for students away from brick-and-mortar schools has largely failed with only 20% of families actually receiving learning materials.<sup>6</sup> Failures in both the United States and Uganda to quickly and intelligently adapt to disruptions have had dire consequences for students.

Educational facilities developed a hybrid plan, moved online, or shutdown. This caused instability affecting mental health and attendance. Students became much more disconnected from the classroom. In some regions, COVID-19 showed the raw power of this disconnection as “anxiety and depression have increased in children and particularly in adolescents as a result of COVID-19 itself and as a consequence of school changes.”<sup>7</sup> Having access to school gives students and their families access to certain “wraparound services.” Not all home life is ideal and school facilities can be safe spaces for children especially when “shelter, food, health care, and social well-being are all part of what children and adolescents, as well as their parents or guardians, depend on schools to provide.”<sup>8</sup> When the schools were shut down, the services they provided were no longer available, cutting off students from their support systems.

### ***What the UN has done***

The United Nations has spent many decades trying to tackle universal primary education and in doing so has developed many programs. In order to address cases where there is no

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<sup>5</sup> Blanshe, M., & Dahir, A. L. (2022, January 10). Uganda reopens schools after world's longest covid shutdown. The New York Times. Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/10/world/africa/uganda-schools-reopen.html>

<sup>6</sup> Blanshe, M. (2021, November 11). Nearly a third of Uganda's students may never return to school. The New York Times. Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/11/world/africa/covid-uganda-schools.html>

<sup>7</sup>“UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage,” <https://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage>. UNICEF, 2022.

<sup>8</sup>Hoofman, Jacob and Secord, Elizabeth. “The Effect of COVID-19 on Education,” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8445757/>. National Library of Medicine, 2021.

existing infrastructure, UNICEF architect Carlos Vasquez designed Transitional Learning Spaces (TLSs) and developed a fully-fledged guide on how to design, construct, and employ them in various nations. These TLSs were designed to be budget friendly and be able to be rolled out in several different environments. They were employed in Syria and the Philippines when many schools were destroyed or otherwise rendered unusable for extended periods of time<sup>9</sup>. UNESCO has even begun to invest heavily in mobile broadband services in order to bring in internet access where there is little to no established internet infrastructure for schools globally.<sup>10</sup> TLSs and broadband investments are a great example of how the UN has attempted to address education infrastructure issues arising from not only natural disasters or violent conflicts but also infrastructure that is completely missing.

The UN has also attempted to help out all nations with education infrastructure planning and school construction by providing standardized material and guidance. Anjlee Agarwal prepared a paper for the Global Education Monitoring Report titled “School Accessibility and Universal Design in School Infrastructure,” which not only defined detailed standards for school construction, but also provided full diagrams, annotated pictures, and checklists for measurements.<sup>11</sup> Nations without standardized construction plans can use resources such as this to construct safe environments without necessarily needing to train and hire experts to draft these up for them. This not only helps save time and money, but also establish global standards that nations can easily use to create safe, healthy, and productive school environments.

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<sup>9</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/world/compendium-transitional-learning-spaces-tls-resilient-design-and-construction#:~:text=A%20TLS%20is%20not%20a,staff%20space%20and%20perimeter%20fencing>.

<sup>10</sup> Mobile Technology the key to bringing 'education to all', says UN Broadband Commission. UNESCO. (2015, March 3). Retrieved January 16, 2023, from <https://en.unesco.org/news/mobile-technology-key-bringing-education-all-says-broadband-commission>

<sup>11</sup> Agarwal, Anjlee. School accessibility and universal design in school infrastructure. Global Education Monitoring Report Team. 2020 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373656>

### ***Something Must Be Done***

As a member of the SDG-4 Education committee, you have a very unique challenge ahead of you. You must figure out how the UN can assist its member states with addressing these issues of education infrastructure. Infrastructural projects are heavily resource intensive and require a lot of long-term planning to ensure education systems can support their communities for decades. UNESCO has tried many solutions including establishing global commission to help train educational professionals, assisted NGOs with sending experts abroad to assist with planning, and even sometimes helping provide technological capital and assistance for nations without it. Solutions for global education infrastructure have always been rife with barriers and it takes creative solutions to work around them.

### ***Questions to Consider:***

- Schools can also double as the centers of large communities, besides a classroom, what other facilities do schools in your nation generally require to serve those communities?
- What resources, programs, and capital actually go into making a productive classroom? If learning stretches beyond early childhood in your nation, what systems are in place to ensure a student fulfills the requirements to finish their education?
- What kinds of emergency plans do government have for when it's education system shutdown due to issues such as pandemic, natural disasters, or local crises?
- Nations each have unique cultural and economic needs, how are schools in those nations designed to meet those needs? Are they more STEM based, do they have a large focus on history or arts, do they specialize in trade skills?
- Students have to handle many challenges posed by poor infrastructure, in what ways are certain groups of people disproportionately affected by these issues?

## **Topic 2 - Global Teacher Shortage**

The institution of education is often credited as being a central component of successful future careers, healthy economies, and the advancement of the human race. In the year 2000, the United Nations put forth the goal of global universal primary education. However, when actually working towards this goal, nations face difficult questions and hurdles that must be discussed. Who is allowed to become a teacher? How many students can one teacher handle? What kind of training or expertise do educators need to be qualified to teach children? Questions like these have led to what is now a global crisis; by the end of 2022, the world was short by 5.2 million teachers.<sup>12</sup> What is responsible for this massive shortage and why are more people not entering the profession?

Education, both through formal and informal institutions, is the fundamental mode for transferring the world's knowledge to people. Through it, people get the opportunity to learn about the world and its culture. The gift of education endows a common bond that unites the globe as humans across hundreds of countries can connect with each other. Education serves the world in other ways; it reduces poverty, increases economic prosperity, and empowers women and children.<sup>13</sup> Some systems of education exist through small community centers, and others are products of complex nation-wide machines. However, there is one undeniable fact shared by every education system... at the center of it all is one irreplaceable cog: *teachers*.

UNESCO published a report called "Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All" which explains that nations must invest in quality teachers as a long-term strategy for continuing education. One point of the report that is reiterated constantly throughout is the idea that a

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<sup>12</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Global Education Monitoring Report Team. (2019). *Meeting commitments: are countries on track to achieve SDG 4?* <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369009.locale=en>

<sup>13</sup> From Access to Empowerment UNESCO, 2019

country's education system can only be as good as their teachers and instructional staff.<sup>14</sup>

Teachers play many roles in the classroom which contribute to a quality education for a child.

Teachers are an expert in pedagogy which they leverage to teach children new concepts.

Teachers build interpersonal relationships with children which develop their social skills and ability to navigate their community. They are a lifeline which provides connectivity, excitement, hope, and security to children who may not have access to those things at home.<sup>15</sup> This is the main reason why the UN offers the ideas to recruit teachers locally and employ them in areas where they have similar backgrounds to the students.

### ***A Deeper Look at the Shortage***

Teachers are not leaving their classrooms behind for selfish reasons; the profession is chronically underpaid, working conditions tend to be poor, and school administrations often fail to meet the needs of educators.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the responsibilities of teachers only grow with increasing class sizes. Managing a classroom requires patience, emotional understanding, and a willingness to dedicate a considerable amount of time towards lesson planning and development. When burdens like these on teachers increase and the benefits that teachers receive in return for their work decrease, it quickly leads to stress and burnout.<sup>17</sup> These issues tend to go unresolved, so it is not surprising that the number of teachers entering the profession has failed to fill the gap left by the teachers that have left or retired.

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<sup>14</sup> “Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All” 2013/14 EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, January 29, 2014, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2013/>

<sup>15</sup> “Education,” <https://www.unicef.org/education>. UNICEF.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, S. (2022, June 3). Are teachers underpaid? around the world, people say yes. Education Week. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from

<sup>17</sup> Miya, N. (2017, August 30). Why teachers are leaving their profession. Drum. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.news24.com/drum/archive/why-teachers-are-leaving-their-profession-20170830>



The 5.2 million missing teachers are not simply divided across the countries evenly either; certain areas are experiencing more of a strain than others. When looking at the education systems in different nations, inequality is stark. In North Africa and Asia, the percentage of trained teachers has stagnated, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, it has dropped significantly from 85 percent to less than 65 percent. In the UNESCO report, “Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All,” a study in the Sierra Leone education system found that “nearly a quarter of the 476 teachers surveyed had only a basic education and lacked certified training to become a teacher.” As evident by Sierra Leone's case, while the gap exists in almost every member state, those in Sub-Saharan Africa have been most affected by the shortage.

Many nations do not have holistic or well-developed teacher education programs. It is important to recognize the nation's lack of infrastructure to address teacher shortages. For some nations, it may be as simple as restructuring policy and reallocating resources; however, for developing nations, there may not be any centralized policy at all or an existing institution to fund. Many nations have attempted to circumvent this issue by focusing on sourcing from local communities; however, there is only so much human capital available in local areas, and it is difficult to develop if general education is poor.

### ***UN Actions Taken***

Since the United Nations establishment of its goal of universal primary education, UNESCO has produced much literature and established many global programs catered specifically for teachers. For example, there is an annual Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report to highlight key issues in education. UNESCO releases these reports and aims to highlight key issues surrounding education. The GEM Reports were established in 2002 as a forum for nations to report on their welfare and quality of education. It fulfills the UN SDG-4 goal for

education which requires sound evidence and analysis to support policymaking, facilitating good practice, and holding those accountable for fulfilling their commitments. The GEM report is the global public good that serves this purpose. The report is independently reported on a country-by-country basis and is hosted and published by UNESCO. At the 2015 World Education Forum, 160 governments were mandated to add to the report explaining the nation's progress on education as well as what national and international strategies were implemented throughout the year. The reports are based on multiple sources of data and successfully fulfill its mandate by providing evidence of education interventions and problems to its audience. The GEM Reports help to draw more attention to the issues within education, including the shortage of teachers.<sup>18</sup>

Through reports like these, UNESCO has been able to establish two important programs: the Global Teacher Campus and the International Task Force on Teachers, also known as the Teacher Task Force (TTF). The Global Teacher Campus is an online teacher training service that any teacher or education institution can access digitally. According to the United Nations, this service is designed to develop “digital skills and pedagogical competencies for online, remote and hybrid education” as a way to address training losses suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike many online services, it's specifically only for educators and not students, its ultimate goal is to develop teachers to be better suited for classroom and curriculum management. It also serves an important purpose of helping establish technical literacy so that skill can be passed on through a teacher into their students.<sup>19</sup> While the Global Teacher Campus is free, it has one fatal flaw: it can only be accessed through the internet. For this reason, any

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<sup>18</sup> *Non-state actors in education*. UNESCO.org. (n.d.). Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en>

<sup>19</sup> UNESCO. (n.d.). Global teacher campus. Global Teacher Campus - Global Education Coalition. Retrieved December 18, 2022, from <https://globaleducationcoalition.unesco.org/global-teacher-campus>

educator without access to electricity, computers, or the internet (which is quite common in developing nations<sup>20</sup>) cannot interface with the program and loses out on its benefits.

The Teacher Task Force (TFF) is an international body which is made up of nations, NGOs, CSOs, and other foundations which are dedicated to the development of SDG-4 in the scope of teachers. Their biggest and most pronounced goal is to encourage and help develop new research and knowledge for teachers and disseminate it to educators. Furthermore, it serves as an advocate organization for teachers globally and actively encourages non-discriminatory teaching environments. In order to see its messages and suggestions implemented in nations, it brings together governments in forums for policy learning with the end goal of establishing “good practices and common standards through improved contextualization.” Most importantly, it is a good node for inexperienced policymakers and educators to learn how to start building an education system from the ground up.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Case Study: Sierra Leone***

In Western Africa, Sierra Leone is one of many nations that has long struggled to fill the classrooms of its school. However, in recent years, it has made major advances in the training of new teachers to help curb the effects of uneducated youth. The Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and UNICEF partnered on a project to create a National Baseline Assessment to help the government find out exactly what and where education needs more support. In 2021, the program ran the first baseline assessment and found specific areas where more money was needed to help make teachers more effective and raise literacy rates.

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<sup>20</sup> Fowler, Victoria. “10 Facts About Third World Countries or Developing Nations,” <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-third-world-countries/#:~:text=10%20Facts%20About%20Third%20World%20Countries%201%20The,and%20nutrition%20resources%20are%20minimal.%20...%20More%20items>. Borgen Project, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> The International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. (2022, April 26). *Our mission*. Teacher Task Force. Retrieved December 18, 2022, from <https://teachertaskforce.org/who-we-are/our-mission>

The following findings are based on educators teaching primary school, specifically second, third, and fourth grade teachers and their feelings of literacy instruction and their opinions about learner performance and controversy.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 25: Teacher Certification Levels**

Highest education level	Percent
Teacher Certificate	49.2%
Higher Teacher Certificate Primary	10.7%
Higher Teacher Certificate Secondary	1.7%
Basic Education Certificate	3.6%
West African Senior School Certificate	20.6%
Diploma in Teaching	1.5%
Bachelor's in education or other	0.6%
Master's in education or other	0.2%
None	0.6%
Other	11.3%

A lot of surprising data was uncovered about the demographics of teachers in Sierra Leone. Namely, nearly 25% of teachers surveyed only had a basic education or a West African Senior School certificate. Furthermore, there is an average time difference of six years between when a teacher began working and when the teacher actually became certified. In the Sierra Leone education system, it was more common to start work without a certificate. Even among teachers with over 10 years of experience in the system, 22% of those teachers were not certified. The study heavily suggested the upgrading and certifying in-service teachers through targeted training was critical to ensure a consistent, and immediate supply of teachers.

The results of this report suggest that Sierra Leone's existing teacher training system was in need of much work. In the system, about 60% of teachers have not received professional development training within the past two years. Of that same group of teachers, only about 35%

<sup>22</sup> "Sierra Leone National Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessment baseline study," Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, MBSSE (Sierra Leone); Global Partnership for Education; UNICEF. November, 2021.

of them received in-service training on how to teach letter sounds. This means that only 35% of teachers know how to look for and teach the three skills needed for reading success: letter sound knowledge, phonological awareness, and alphabetic principle. These findings corroborate student findings where 50% of learners were unable to pronounce a letter correctly. When it comes to teaching literacy in Sierra Leone (or any nation for that matter), equipping your teachers with the right language arts tools is a necessity.

### ***Case Study: United States of America***

In the United States, there is a teacher shortage as well. This came into the limelight after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The switch to online instruction put teachers in a difficult place and many felt that the profession was not the same as when they entered. The stress of the pandemic,<sup>23</sup> confusing curriculum from school boards, low paychecks, and an overall disrespect for the profession caused a wave of teachers quitting. The National Education Association, one of America's largest teacher unions, estimates that there is a 360,000 teacher and staff shortage across the country.<sup>24</sup>

The teacher shortage in the United States has both political and economic origins. School districts are often squeezed for money as the majority of their income goes directly towards labor costs. States in the US tend to have the resources to increase the size of school budgets but don't do it for ideological reasons. Many policymakers in the United States are beginning to rethink the meaning of "American education" and its purpose in the larger economy. There has been a heavy push to privatize primary and secondary schools, implementing a market competitiveness

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<sup>23</sup> Hoofman, Jacob and Secord, Elizabeth. "The Effect of COVID-19 on Education," <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8445757/>. National Library of Medicine, 2021

<sup>24</sup> Maiers, S. (2022, April 10). *NEA issues report providing solutions to mitigate the educator shortage crisis*. NEA. Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/nea-issues-report-providing-solutions-mitigate-educator-shortage-crisis>

strategy to force schools that work as efficiently as possible. However, this has had direct consequences for teachers. With rising inflation and shrinking school budgets, money moved away from public schools to private programs have decreased the real value of teachers' salaries.<sup>25</sup>

The National Education Association offers fixes such as hiring more teacher aids so the ratio of student to teacher lowers and increasing salary to match the work teachers put into their job. The Detroit Public School District in June of 2021 had over 1,000 applicants for only 140 vacancies. This happened because the district increased starting salaries by 33 percent, offered hazard pay for working during a pandemic, and included bonuses for challenging roles that require more training like special education or honors classes.<sup>26</sup>

### ***What Now?***

As delegates in the SDG-4 Education Initiative committee, you will have to address the global teacher shortage. What the United Nations has done to fix the shortage has largely failed to make a dent and much progress that has been made was reversed by the COVID-19 pandemic. You should first try and research what the United Nations has done to address the teacher shortage under Social Development Goal 4 and understand the programs that have been implemented (some are described above). Each nation will have their own unique context in these issues. Try to understand some of the larger issues that nations in the world deal with: lack of internet, no training programs, or poorly designed education systems. Once you do that, you can begin the committee's goal of solving the shortage through constructing new UN

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<sup>25</sup> Schneider J. & Berkshire J. (2020). *A wolf at the schoolhouse door: the dismantling of public education and the future of school*. New Press.

<sup>26</sup> French, R. (2021, June 14). *Detroit schools found a way to attract teachers: Pay them more*. Bridge Michigan. Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://www.bridgemi.com/talent-education/detroit-schools-found-way-attract-teachers-pay-them-more>

programs, fixing old ones, and discovering ways that nations can work together to help one another. Don't be afraid to think big. While the United Nation's resources are intensely finite, it still has the power to organize experts and put boots on the ground to execute projects in nations who need it.

### *Questions to Consider*

- There are often many different approaches to education. How does your nation's view of education and culture inform what its model education system would look like?
- Nations have issues retaining teachers oftentimes, what components of the profession drive teachers away and what components keep them in the profession?
- Many programs move teachers from places with many certified/trained teachers to places without; What are the problems and benefits associated with relocating teachers like this? (Teachers Without Borders, ect)
- What resources and systems are required to train teachers? What are the requirements that determine if a teacher is "certified" or qualified to teach in your nation?
- UN programs are becoming increasingly digital. Many nation's with shortages also has poor access to the internet, so how can the UN reach these teachers who are most inaccessible?