

**Message from Mr Khaled El-Enany,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the
International Day of Education**

24 January 2026

On this International Day of Education, UNESCO is putting young people in the spotlight.

It is our collective responsibility to offer younger generations, through education, better prospects for the future than those of the generations that came before. It is with this in mind that UNESCO helps its Member States to ensure that access to quality education is a reality for all, and not a privilege of the few.

Around the world, UNESCO implements major educational programmes to unlock the potential of the millions of young people who need it most. This is the “UNESCO for the people” that we are striving to build.

UNESCO runs large-scale education programmes using funds from the Global Partnership for Education. This is the case in places such as Côte d'Ivoire, Cambodia, Ukraine and Chad, where nearly 100,000 out-of-school young people have been able to return to school.

We also work in the most challenging contexts, amid crises. In Haiti, for instance, we are supporting community schools in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods. In Afghanistan, we have established literacy programmes for young women. In Gaza, we are helping to maintain learning continuity and providing young people with vital psychological assistance. We also act in the aftermath of crises, as is the case in Iraq, where we have renovated more than 400 classrooms in the province of Nineveh.

However, access to education is not enough. At a time when climate challenges and technological changes are affecting traditional teaching methods on a large scale, education can no longer be conceived of without young people's input; it can no longer ignore the voices of those it is intended to benefit. Young people must be included in the construction of education.

Yet according to a new UNESCO study, while four out of five countries report having consulted young people on educational laws and policies in the last three years, only one out of five youth and student organizations feels that students and youth are genuinely working hand-in-hand with their governments.

Because education systems are more effective when designed in collaboration with the people they are intended to serve, UNESCO calls for greater involvement of young people in the development of the education policies and decision-making processes which affect them.

It is this conviction that drives UNESCO's work. Today we are presenting a new study under the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, developed in collaboration with the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs. This edition of the GEM Report includes, for the first time, an international indicator for measuring young people's

actual participation in the development of education policies, thereby responding to a request made in 2022 by young people themselves at the Transforming Education Summit.

In the same spirit, we are launching a new cohort of the SDG4 Youth & Student Network: 110 young people from 80 countries, involved in consultations on the future of education and the post-2030 global agenda.

On this International Day of Education, we are reaffirming a simple yet powerful belief: the belief that young people have a rightful place at the decision-making table – not only as beneficiaries, but also as full-fledged partners.