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National Education Coalitions Reimagine the Future of Education in Africa

Africa national education coalitions (NEC) closed 2025 with a powerful message from Johannesburg: despite shrinking aid, rising debt, and deepening crises, African coalitions are building a bold, evidence-based movement for education justice. From 17-20 November 2025, national education coalitions, youth organisations, Generation Digital partners, and key allies met in Johannesburg, South Africa, for the Africa Regional Exchange Learning and Sharing Workshop organised by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). The regional meeting was strategically timed to coincide with the G20 meetings and the GCE Board meeting, and set against the backdrop of the African Union's Decade of Accelerated Action for the Transformation of Education and Skills Development (2025-2034).

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Opening the workshop, GCE Global Coordinator Grant Kasawanjete described four “storms” reshaping education in Africa: deepening social and political polarisation, the retreat of multilateralism, sharp cuts in Official Development Assistance (ODA), and an escalating debt crisis that pushes many governments to spend more on repayments than on education and health. Participants heard a keynote from the African Union Commission’s Education Division outlining the new Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2026-2035) and the AU Decade of Education, with seven strategic pillars ranging from foundational learning and teacher professionalisation to education in emergencies, climate resilience, and digital transformation. This framing positioned NECs as critical partners in turning continental frameworks into national-level change.

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Learning from VNRs, SDG 4 and Education in Emergencies

Knowledge-exchange sessions showcased how African NECs are turning training into impact. Coalitions from The Gambia, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Ethiopia shared how they used the 2024 regional workshop to prepare for the 2025 High-Level Political Forum - drafting spotlight reports, engaging Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes, and delivering hard-hitting statements that linked SDG 4 to wider agendas such as debt, gender, and climate.

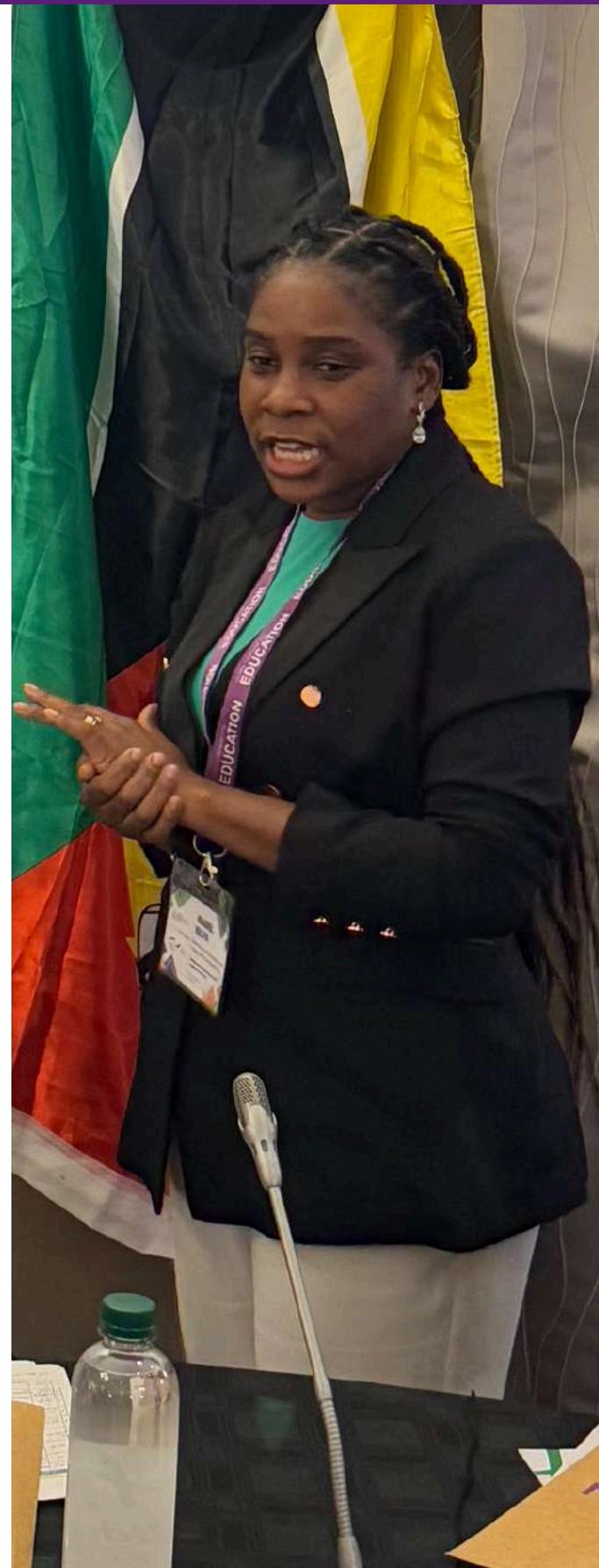
Looking ahead to 2026, when 36 countries will undergo VNRs, including 16 African states, coalitions committed to early engagement with governments and to using SDG 4.7 (knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development) as an entry point to connect education with water, energy, infrastructure, cities, and partnerships. Another key thread was Education in Emergencies (EiE), a seven-country research initiative (including Somalia, South Sudan, Chad, Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso) is documenting how conflict, displacement, and climate disasters are shutting millions of children out of school, and insisting that communities, teachers, and learners themselves sit at the centre of policy responses.

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Green EdTech, Digital Futures, and Gender Justice

The workshop also looked firmly to the future. Sessions on Green EdTech explored how education technology can support climate awareness and climate-resilient learning while avoiding energy-intensive, exclusionary models that deepen the digital divide. A dedicated discussion on the African Union's Digital Education Strategy examined how NECs can influence national digital policies, from connectivity and devices to teacher training and safe, inclusive platforms. Youth and Generation Digital partners turned the room into a “gallery walk”, presenting AI research, digital literacy work with teachers, and grassroots EdTech initiatives from Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and beyond, demonstrating that young activists are not just beneficiaries but co-creators of digital education strategies. In parallel, a session on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion highlighted how coalitions in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Cameroon, and Guinea are integrating gender-transformative approaches into their advocacy, connecting national campaigns with regional commitments on women's and girls' education.



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Stronger Coalitions, Stronger Movement

Throughout the four days, coalitions reflected honestly on governance, membership, and shrinking civic space, and shared practical strategies for staying resilient such as more transparent decision-making, diversified funding, systematic member engagement, and peer-to-peer learning across countries such as Benin, Ghana, and Mozambique. By the final day, participants had co-developed an advocacy roadmap that links immediate priorities, such as the 2026 VNRs, the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), EiE research, and Education Out Loud (EOL) 2.0 preparation, to longer-term work on Green EdTech, digital education, and monitoring the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and the African Union Decade of Education.

The workshop closed with strong commitments to keep sharing through the GCE Learning Hub, deepen collaboration with regional networks and the African Union, and speak with a united voice on education financing, public education, and the right of every child, youth, and adult in Africa to learn, dream, and thrive.

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Weaving Climate Justice Through Education: Reflections from CLADE on COP30 and the People's Summit in Belém

From 11-15 November 2025, Belém (Brazil) hosted the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP30) and the People's Summit Towards COP30. In this context, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) reaffirmed its commitment to the human right to education, and to environmental, climate and gender justice, by curating a special transmedia feature that brought together key debates, reflections and experiences from these spaces of dialogue and collective action.



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During COP30 and the People's Summit, CLADE launched its position paper "For the Human Right to Education with Environmental, Climate and Gender Justice", developed with broad participation from its membership. The document argued that climate change posed a significant threat and that education must play a central role in preparing populations for climate action, integrating human rights, intersectoral and intersectional approaches to build an equitable world with social and climate justice.

The paper underlined that environmental and climate justice should be a central pillar of transformative public education systems that question the dominant development model based on exploitation of nature and wealth accumulation. It also stressed that the most vulnerable groups, who are least responsible for climate change, were the most affected yet often held crucial knowledge to drive real solutions.

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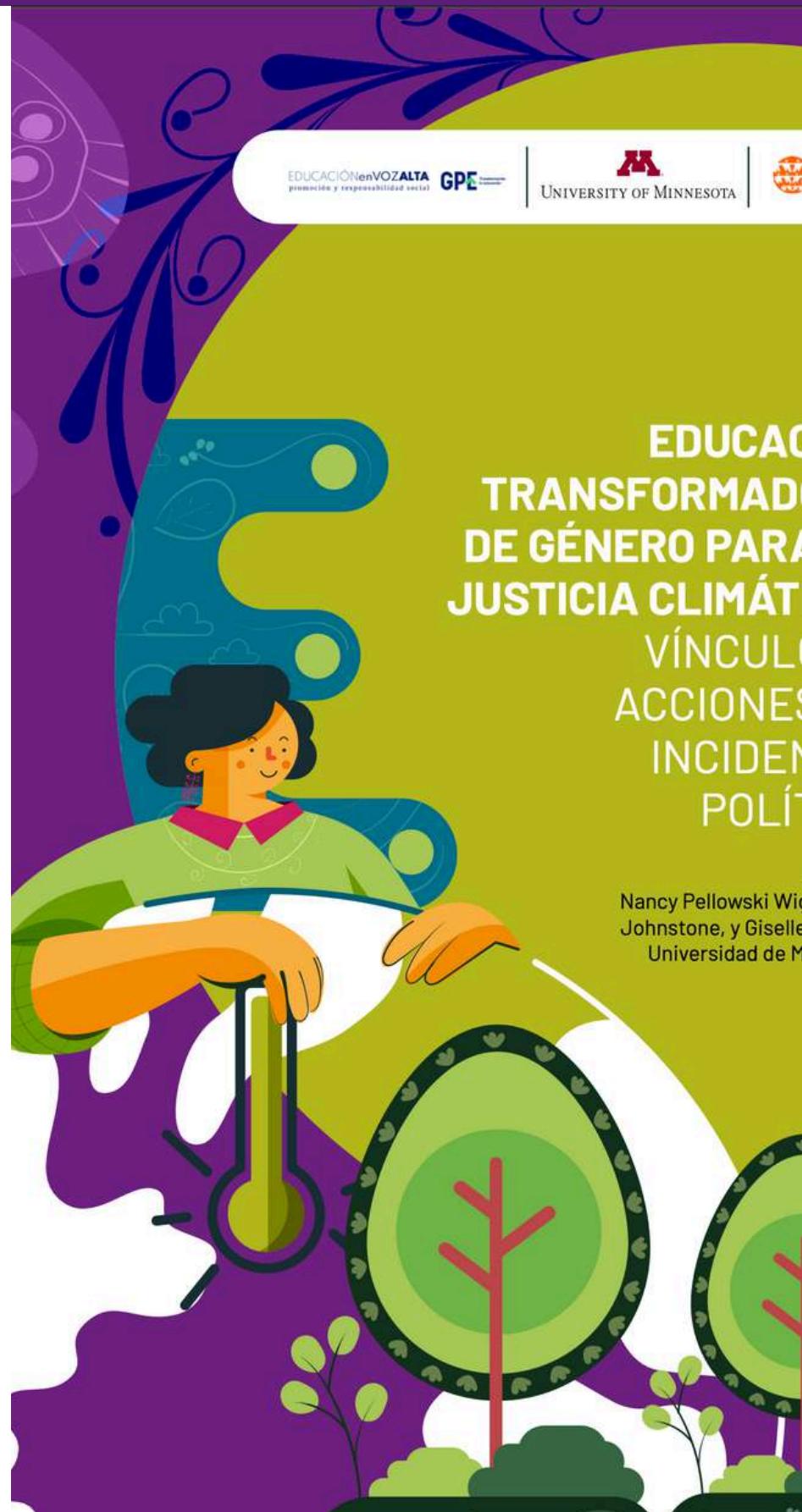
On 12 November, in the framework of the People's Summit and COP30, CLADE launched the study "Approach to Climate Justice in National School Curricula in Latin America and the Caribbean". The study, presented by Israel Quirino, Programmes Assistant at CLADE, analysed how public basic education curricula in countries such as Bolivia, El Salvador, Honduras and Peru addressed climate change, and to what extent they incorporated notions of intersectorality, intersectionality, climate justice, indigenous and Afro-descendant knowledge, and Gender Transformative Education (GTE).

The launch took place during the event 'Education Pathway for Environmental Justice: democratic education as the root of critical environmental education and confronting the climate crisis', held at the Faculty of Education of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). Organised by the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education, the event brought together teachers, researchers, activists, parliamentarians and civil society organisations committed to strengthening critical and transformative environmental education.

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Another key publication highlighted at COP30 was the report 'Gender Transformative Education for Climate Justice: connections and advocacy actions'. The report sought to link Gender Transformative Education (GTE) with climate justice by summarising existing literature on gender, climate-related disasters and the role of education in reducing inequalities, and by identifying the connections between gender and climate justice within international agreements.



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The report adopted a gender-transformative and intersectional lens to identify the impacts of climate disasters on schooling and wellbeing, particularly for girls and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. It offered advocacy recommendations to strengthen both GTE and climate justice, positioning education as central to confronting climate emergencies.

On 14 November, the Casa Futura space hosted the launch of the 'Little Big Knowledges Glossary', produced by ActionAid. This publication compiled terms related to climate justice, constructed from the perceptions, experiences and language of children and adolescents from diverse Brazilian territories.

The glossary was the result of a three-year education and participatory process implemented by ActionAid and 15 partner organisations in seven territories across six Brazilian states, including urban peripheries, rural communities, indigenous lands and quilombola territories (Afro-Brazilian community). Through workshops using words and drawings, children collectively created meanings for concepts such as "environmental racism", "water", "sanitation" and "housing", strengthening their autonomy and critical awareness of rights and territories.

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On 14 November, CLADE, together with the Council of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL), convened a conversation circle titled “Community Popular Education in the Pan-Amazon: Sustainable territories, political advocacy and food sovereignty in education and climate agendas”. Held in the framework of the People’s Summit, the event followed on from the [Pan-Amazon Social Forum](#) (FOSPA), held in September in Bogotá, Colombia, where experiences and campaigns around food sovereignty, just transitions and territorial defence were shared.

Participants discussed how defending the human right to education in Amazonian territories required popular, intercultural and community education that is committed to environmental and climate justice, gender transformation and overcoming inequalities. As Israel Quirino emphasised, education in the region was both a victim of extreme climate events and a key driver for overcoming the climate crisis.

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CLADE Brings Voices For Peace at Regional High-level Meeting in Latin America and the Caribbean

From 12 to 14 November 2025, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) took part in the High-Level Regional Meeting 'Latin America and the Caribbean as a Territory of Peace', convened by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic in Santo Domingo. The event gathered representatives of ministries of education, teachers' organisations, youth and civil society to explore how education can become a powerful tool for building more just, peaceful and sustainable societies in the region.



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The meeting aimed to contribute to a common framework of action to integrate the 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development into education systems, strengthening national capacities and promoting South-South cooperation. Participants also worked on a roadmap for implementing the Recommendation, advancing transformative education policies, promoting exchange among diverse actors and presenting key tools for its application in schools and communities.

CLADE participated with its strong regional perspective as a plural network of civil society organisations committed to the right to education, advocating for transformative, public, secular and free education throughout life as a responsibility of the State. This vision aligns with the 2023 Recommendation, developed with the input of over 3,000 specialists from 130 countries, which positions education as a driver of change in the face of contemporary global challenges. CLADE stressed that education for peace must span the entire learning pathway, from early childhood to youth and adult education, transforming hierarchical and discriminatory cultural patterns towards a shared horizon of human rights for all.

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During the meeting, María Elena Urbano, coordinator of the Colombian Coalition for the Right to Education and member of CLADE's steering committee, presented three concrete initiatives that show how peace can be built from local territories.

- **Early childhood:** A project in partnership with OMEP in Honduras and Guatemala promotes Gender Transformative Education (GTE) in early childhood, with inclusive, community-based experiences that place girls and boys as protagonists of learning through play, dialogic learning and community educational management.
- **Rural settings:** An initiative in Haiti, Nicaragua and Honduras seeks to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and promote equity in rural schools through participatory action research, enabling students to identify and design their own prevention strategies and to break the silence around violence.
- **Youth and adult education (EPJA):** Processes in Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia and Guatemala focus on strengthening youth and adult education systems and advancing GTE through technical working groups and dialogue with education authorities, securing recognition of civil society as a key actor and generating evidence for advocacy.

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These experiences show how peace is built throughout life within educational spaces, encouraging people to recognise themselves as subjects with voice, knowledge and dreams, and moving away from patriarchal and adult-centric paradigms towards cultures of care and respect. Gender Transformative Education is understood here as a comprehensive educational approach that seeks to reconfigure power relations and challenge systems that perpetuate inequality and oppression, including patriarchy, racism and colonialism.

The 2023 Recommendation: A Global Normative Landmark

The 2023 UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development updates the historic 1974 Recommendation, which first brought countries together to make education a key factor for peace and international understanding. It remains the only global normative instrument that defines how education can and should be used to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development. Drawing on the 2021 Futures of Education report and the 2022 Transforming Education Summit, the Recommendation connects issues such as human rights, digital technologies, climate change, gender equality, health, well-being and cultural diversity, and underscores that building and sustaining peace is an ongoing process that depends on the daily actions of every person.

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Snapshots from the Arab Region

Advancing peace and crisis-responsive education

On 25 November 2025 in Cairo, Dr. Refaat Sabbah, President of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and Secretary General of the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) joined a regional meeting to design a roadmap for implementing UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development, bringing together ministries, UN agencies, civil society, and youth from across the Arab region. The same day, ACEA hosted a regional webinar from Amman on "Flexible Education Responsive to Crises," where experts from Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, Egypt, and Syria shared practical ways to keep learning going during conflict and emergencies.



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On 12-13 November 2025 in Beirut, ACEA participated in UNESCO's High-Level Event launching the Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies 2025–2030, with Dr. Sabbah chairing a session on crisis-sensitive systems that prioritise teachers and marginalised learners. ACEA and partners also contributed to dialogues on applying INEE Minimum Standards in Lebanon and to ALECSO's Foresight Plan 2026–2035, focused on smart, flexible, and inclusive education in the region.

Defending public education and teachers' dignity

At the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha (4-6 November 2025), ACEA underlined that education funding gaps are political choices and called for progressive taxation and global tax cooperation to finance public systems.

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In a 5th November high-level session, ACEA warned against unregulated privatisation and proposed a Global Fund for Teachers' Salaries in crisis settings to ensure education remains a public good and a universal right.

ACEA's World Teachers' Day actions placed teachers at the centre of transformation. A regional dialogue on 28 October 2025 highlighted teachers' roles amid digitalisation, climate change, and artificial intelligence, while a 5 October 2025 statement demanded job security, psychosocial support, safe environments, and fair remuneration, and honoured teachers lost in Gaza. National coalitions in Tunisia and Jordan held forums and assemblies on digital education, governance, and professional development, reinforcing civil society's leadership on quality and equity.

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Standing with Palestine and crisis-affected learners

ACEA and its partners highlighted voices from crisis contexts. A Syrian Network for Education webinar on 18 October 2025 examined the challenges of returning students and rebuilding an inclusive system in Syria. On 22 November 2025, the “Voices from Beneath the Rubble” seminar, led by the Palestinian Education Coalition, the Teacher Creativity Centre, and ACEA, highlighted teachers’ psychological burdens and set out recommendations on psychosocial support, alternative learning tools, and inclusive approaches for out-of-school children and learners with disabilities.

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In Ramallah on 14 October 2025, the “Education in the Face of Genocide” webinar documented the destruction of Palestine’s education system and framed schooling as both resistance and survival.

Participants called for rebuilding schools, integrating psychosocial support, safeguarding curriculum independence, protecting UNRWA’s role, and establishing a national observatory to track violations, affirming that defending education is inseparable from defending Palestinian identity and the right to exist.



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Innovating educational media and lifelong learning

On 5 November 2025, ACEA launched the first meeting of its Regional Educational Media Cooperative, aiming to build a critical, resilient media sector that partners with educators, challenges harmful narratives, and protects young people from digital distortions. Meanwhile, AHAED-led dialogues in Cairo (9 November 2025) and the 10th Arab Academy for Adult Learning and Development in Lebanon (26 October 2025) promoted empowerment-based adult learning linked to community resilience, climate action, and the Marrakech Framework for Action. Together, these initiatives signal a region-wide commitment to education that is public, rights-based, and future-ready.

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Protecting Education Amid the Artsakh Crisis

Amid the protracted crisis in and around Artsakh, classrooms in Armenia have become both a refuge and a frontline for protecting children's rights. The displacement of families from Artsakh, combined with ongoing security tensions and socio-economic uncertainty, has placed enormous pressure on schools, teachers, and learners, especially in border regions and host communities absorbing new arrivals. In this fragile context, education is doing far more than delivering curriculum, it is helping children regain routine, safety, and a sense of belonging.

Since the renewed escalation, civil society and national partners have played a crucial role in holding together the education system under strain.



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The Armenia and Artsakh coalitions have focused on safeguarding the right to education for displaced and conflict-affected learners, monitoring how schools are coping, and advocating to ensure that education remains protected from political and security-related threats. Their work sits at the intersection of humanitarian response and long-term recovery, connecting local realities in Armenian schools with global conversations on education in emergencies and the protection of education during conflict.

This write-up situates recent efforts from October-November 2025 within that broader arc. It highlights how coalitions, government, and humanitarian partners are working together to strengthen physical protection in schools, support displaced students and teachers, and sustain community-based initiatives that keep cultural and linguistic identity alive, demonstrating that even in times of instability, education can be a powerful anchor of resilience and hope.

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Protecting schools in unstable times

Coalitions and national partners concentrated on identifying the most urgent challenges facing learners and educators, particularly displaced students who continue to struggle for safe, quality education in their new communities. Significant attention went to physical safety in schools, including those in border regions, where the risk of renewed violence or disasters remains high. In cooperation with the VOMA Centre (an Armenian non-governmental organisation that provides intensive military and survival training to civilians) and the Red Cross Society, efforts have been underway to establish shelters designed to protect students and teachers from potential security-related threats, and the Ministry of Education has reported that 300 schools are already equipped with such facilities, with plans to gradually reach remaining schools.

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Supporting displaced learners and teachers

Over the past two months, partners monitored the education situation of displaced children, supported local schools in integrating new learners, and called for stronger international attention to protecting education from political and security pressures. Priority has been given to restoring learning continuity, reinforcing psychosocial support for affected learners, and ensuring that teachers receive the training and resources they need to work in crisis-affected environments. These efforts recognise that healing and learning must go hand in hand if children are to regain a sense of safety and future.

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Keeping identity and inclusion alive

Despite the difficult context, community-based initiatives have emerged to promote inclusion, preserve cultural and linguistic identity, and provide young people with safe spaces for learning, dialogue, and solidarity. These local actions complement national advocacy, as Armenia and Artsakh continue to feed their experience into GCE's global work on education in emergencies, insisting that the specific realities of Armenia and Artsakh are visible in international debates. Their message is that even in times of instability, education must remain a protected space where children can learn, belong, and rebuild their lives.

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GCE actively engages the 3rd Session of the UNFCITC in Nairobi

Building on the momentum of its campaign for education financing following the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) continued its strong advocacy for sustainable financing for public education through its engagements in the negotiations of the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation (UNFCITC).

GCE participated in the 3rd Session of the International Negotiating Committee (INC) of the UNFCITC held for the first time in Africa, in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10-19 November 2025. The movement was represented by Cecilia “Thea” Soriano (GCE), Bernice Mperegyeje (Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition – GNECC) and Cheikh Mbow (COSYDEP, Senegal).

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GCE urged Member States to adopt a binding Tax Convention and build a transparent, just, equitable, and accountable global tax system that will enable countries to sustainably finance quality public education for all and universal quality public services.

GCE worked with the TaxEd Alliance, Human Rights Watch and other organisations working on public services to propose the expansion of the text of Article 9 of the Framework Convention to explicitly mention the financing of quality public education for all and universal quality public services. This call is grounded on the Future is Public Manifesto and was delivered in the 3rd Session INC Plenary by Cheikh Mbow. His intervention can be read and viewed [HERE](#).

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Advocating on the sidelines, Bernice of GNECC, together with colleagues from the Integrated Social Development Center, attended a lunch meeting with government delegates from Ghana - HE. Daniel Nuer, who is also the Co-Chair of Workstream 1 on the Framework Convention and Mr. Jeswuni Abudu-Birresborn from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The government delegates were pleased to note the initiatives of the coalition on tax justice and education and expressed interest to collaborate with the coalition in information dissemination on the UN Tax Convention and tax reforms and education.

GCE's engagement in the 3rd Session, and the overall advocacy of the movement on the UN Tax Convention started in 2024, illustrates the contributions of the education coalitions to the overhaul of the global financial architecture and to the wider fiscal policy debates relevant to domestic resource mobilisation.

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Reflecting on the Nairobi negotiations, GCE members noted that the North -South divides where the Global North attempted to preserve the status quo by insisting on the OECD tax rules while the Global South lobbied for a treaty that will drastically change the current global tax rules. Despite the agreement of the majority of Member States on the Terms of Reference of the UNFCITC, the back-and-forth deliberations, delays the progress of the negotiations towards a substantive treaty.

Many Global South countries were absent from the deliberations in Nairobi. It is therefore, imperative for GCE, national education coalitions and tax justice movements to call on their governments to engage fully and speak out in the UNFCITC to drive changes to global tax rules and tackle illicit financial flows and tax abuse.

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From Safe Schools to Fair Funding: CSACEFA Nigeria Marks 25 Years of Education Advocacy

Nigeria's Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) closed its 25th anniversary Annual General Forum on a historic note, blending reflection, advocacy, and national recognition into one powerful moment for the education movement. During the 2025 Forum, the coalition brought together members, partners, and key education stakeholders to review progress, renew commitments, and set strategic priorities for the years ahead, while also stepping into the national spotlight with a prestigious award from ActionAid Nigeria recognising its contribution to the right to education.

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The gathering opened with a press briefing where CSACEFA members condemned the abduction and killing of pupils and teachers from St. Mary Catholic School, where 303 students and 12 teachers were abducted, and from Government Girls Comprehensive School in Maga, Kebbi State, where 25 students were abducted and the vice principal was killed. The coalition called on federal, state, and local authorities to fully implement minimum standards for safety and security in schools, insisting that no child should risk their life simply by trying to learn.

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In the same briefing, CSACEFA voiced alarm over current patterns of education financing, criticising federal allocations reportedly as low as 7.3 percent of the national budget and noting that combined federal and state education budgets amount to about 5.69 trillion naira (approximately 3.7 billion US dollars) across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory - figures that fall short of global and regional benchmarks. By linking insecurity with chronic underfunding, the coalition highlighted a stark reality that schools cannot be safe, inclusive, and high-quality without serious public investment and political will.

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Crowning this intense period of advocacy and reflection, CSACEFA received formal recognition and an award from ActionAid Nigeria as part of ActionAid's 25th anniversary celebrations. The honour acknowledged a long-standing partnership and ActionAid's foundational role in CSACEFA's creation and early development, while reaffirming the coalition's credibility and influence within Nigeria's education sector.

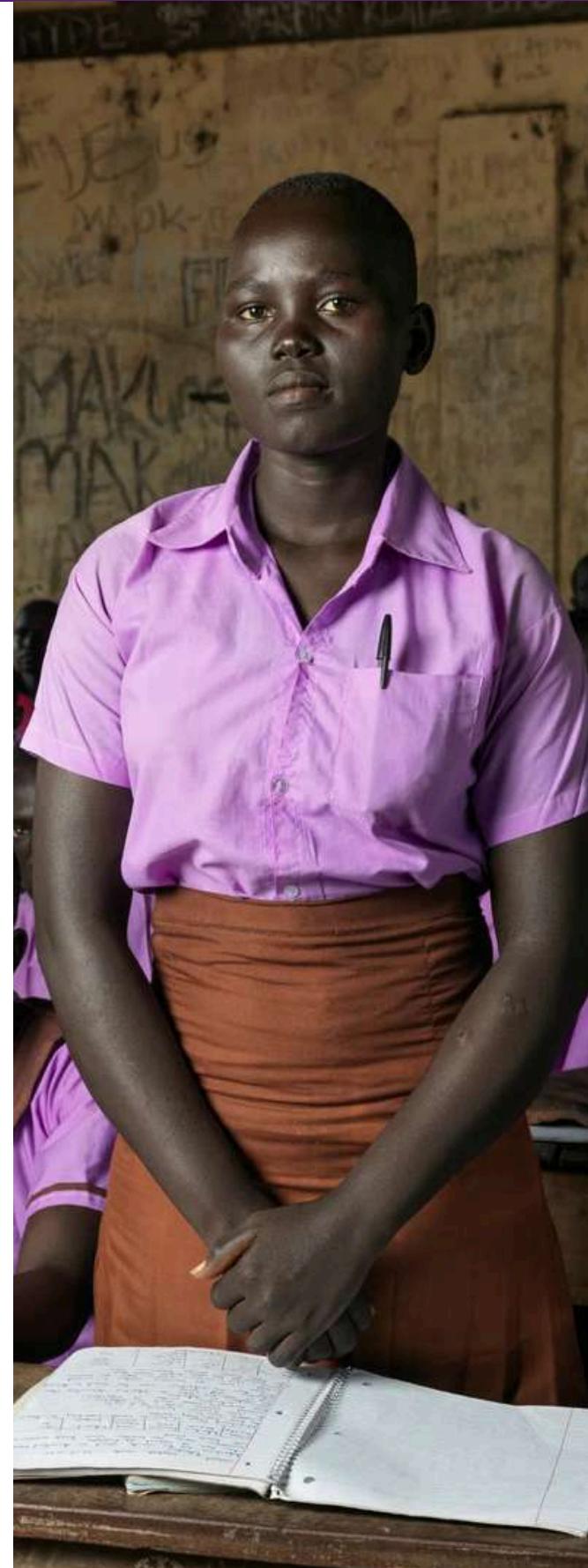
Together, the Annual General Forum, strong public advocacy on school safety and financing, and national recognition from a key partner signal a new phase of visibility and momentum for CSACEFA. Building on this foundation, the coalition remains committed to strengthening civic engagement, driving education reforms, and ensuring that every child in Nigeria can access safe, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities.

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Putting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion at the Heart of Education in South Sudan

Across Juba, Central Equatoria, and Western Bahr El Ghazal (South Sudan), education decision-making is starting to look and feel different. Over just eight months, the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) component of the Education Out Loud project has helped shift whose voices shape education policy and practice, ensuring that people who have historically been pushed to the margins are no longer left out of the conversation.



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From the outset, the GESI initiative recognised that education systems often ignore those most affected by exclusion. Through deliberate stakeholder mapping, the project identified a wide range of underrepresented groups, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), women and girls (especially young mothers), agro-pastoralist and fishing communities, orphans and children in need, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), minority ethnic groups, communities affected by conflict, the elderly, oil-producing communities, returnees, and even members of the organised forces. This mapping was more than a technical exercise. It exposed deep structural gaps in representation and created an entry point to build spaces where these communities could speak for themselves and be heard.

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As engagement deepened, these groups used new platforms to highlight the realities they face. PWDs brought attention to stigma, inaccessible school environments, and the lack of assistive devices, calling for teacher training, sign language, braille, mobility support, and tools like screen-reading software. Women and girls raised concerns over gender-based discrimination, early marriage, limited access to reproductive health information, negative attitudes to re-entry after childbirth, and the absence of menstrual hygiene facilities and women in leadership. Refugees, returnees, IDPs, and children in need spoke about poverty, documentation challenges, disrupted learning histories, and social exclusion, underscoring that neither displacement nor poverty should erase a child's right to education.

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To translate these voices into change, the GESI project convened inclusive dialogue sessions that brought together government officials, civil society, parents, teachers, community leaders, IDPs, and persons with disability (PWDs). These were designed as participatory spaces, where stakeholders jointly identified barriers to inclusive education and co-created solutions, often for the first time. One major outcome was the creation of an advocacy forum in Western Bahr El Ghazal, a locally led platform with its own leadership structure and WhatsApp group, where previously unheard communities now set priorities, coordinate action, and hold decision-makers accountable on education and inclusion.

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A key milestone was the development of Inclusive Education Guidelines, produced through consultations with a wide range of education stakeholders, including PWDs and their organisations. These guidelines provide a practical roadmap for schools, communities, and policymakers to embed inclusion in planning and implementation, covering accessibility, representation, and equity. Public awareness campaigns, including radio outreach to schools, markets, and community centres, helped ensure that the message of inclusive education reached far beyond the meeting rooms and into everyday conversations.

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The impact of GESI engagement is equally visible at the personal level. In Western Bahr El Ghazal State, the National Education Coalition (South Sudan) organised a training on inclusive education and advocacy. Participant Suzana Anthony Sabino, from Wau, emerged from the training as secretary of a new local-led advocacy group, a role that strengthened her leadership, communication, and facilitation skills. She now coordinates group communication, moderates meetings, and engages state authorities in education cluster meetings, and in November 2025 she represented the group during an inter-agency visit to Bazia to discuss education with community leaders after an influx of IDPs. As leader of the Youth Multipurpose Organisation, she has also cascaded inclusive education and advocacy skills to volunteers, extending the impact of her learning across schools and communities.

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For Laku Peter Samu, a person with a disability, the GESI workshops were a turning point in understanding disability inclusion and the barriers boys and girls with disabilities face in both urban and grassroots learning spaces. Through engagement with the Inclusive Education Guideline process and with organisations of persons with disabilities, he gained skills in identifying different types of disability and using disaggregated data for better planning and accessibility. Seeing diverse PWDs actively participate in discussions reinforced his belief that inclusive platforms are essential, and the training empowered him to more confidently support disability-inclusive initiatives.



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Workshops in Juba and Wau equipped marginalised groups with practical advocacy skills - understanding policy, communicating clearly, and engaging duty-bearers - turning them into active agents of change. Follow-up meetings helped track progress, identify gaps, and ensure that women, PWDs, rural communities, youth, and others remained part of the process, reinforcing that inclusion is continuous, not one-off.

Today, decision-making in the project areas is more representative, advocacy is stronger, and inclusive education is moving from principle to practice. By centring marginalised voices, especially those of persons with disabilities, the GESI project is helping education become a pathway to dignity, equality, and sustainable development for all learners.

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Telling the Whole Story: Training Zimbabwe's Media to See Every Learner

The Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) recently brought together its members and a group of journalists for a focused training on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), aiming to change how the country talks about, reports on, and advocates for education.

Zimbabwe has adopted strong policy frameworks, including the 2013 Constitution, the 2020 Education Act, the National Gender Policy, and the National Disability Policy, all of which commit the state to more equitable and inclusive education.



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Yet, many girls and marginalised learners still face daily barriers such as school-related gender-based violence, early pregnancy and child marriage, stigma and exclusion of learners with disabilities, poor sanitation, and stark inequalities between rural and urban schools. These realities rarely make it into mainstream coverage, meaning the public debate often overlooks those most affected. ECOZI's training set out to close this gap by equipping journalists and members to spot and challenge exclusion wherever it appears in the system.

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During the workshop, ECOZI members explored how to embed GESI principles into their programmes, campaigns, and community work, while journalists examined the power of media to shape public opinion and policy. Participants unpacked how gender intersects with disability, poverty, orphanhood, and geography to create overlapping layers of disadvantage, and reflected on how these dynamics are, or are not, captured in current reporting. They also learned practical techniques for framing stories, choosing inclusive language, and centring the voices of learners who are usually invisible in policy discussions.

What made the training particularly dynamic was the collaborative content creation. Mixed teams of members and journalists co-designed radio scripts, social media posts, podcast concepts linked to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender), and feature story ideas spotlighting the lived experiences of girls and learners with disabilities. This aligns with the Gender Strategy 2021 of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), which calls for stronger partnerships between civil society, education actors, and the media to put gender equality and social inclusion at the core of sector reforms.

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By the end of the workshop, participants left not only with new knowledge but with a renewed sense of responsibility. Journalists committed to monitoring and improving the way they report on exclusion and inequality, while ECOZI members pledged to keep feeding grounded stories and data into public debates. The next phase includes joint content production, follow-up radio shows and podcasts, and an analytical paper tracking how far GESI-sensitive reporting is taking root.

ECOZI believes that if Zimbabwe is serious about achieving equitable, quality education for all, then the voices shaping the national narrative must champion gender equality and social inclusion at every turn. For the girls of Zimbabwe, and for all learners who face daily barriers, that shift in storytelling could mean the difference between remaining invisible and finally being seen.

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ECOZI Zimbabwe Confronts the Silent Crisis in Teacher Well-Being

On 10 October 2025, in Gwanda, Zimbabwe, World Teachers' Day became more than a ceremony; it became a rare, honest reckoning with the emotional and mental strain carried by the country's educators. The Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI), teacher unions, civil society organisations, and education advocates gathered under the global theme "Recasting Teaching as a Collaborative Profession," and what emerged was a powerful, uncomfortable truth - collaboration alone is not enough when the mental health of teachers is in crisis.

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For many teachers, the Gwanda commemorations were the first time they could publicly voice what they usually carry in silence. They spoke of waking up with anxiety before school, facing overcrowded classrooms, endless administrative tasks, and workloads that leave them physically and emotionally drained. Others described the financial pressure that pushes them into “survival mode,” forcing them to juggle extra jobs just to get by. Some admitted that the emotional exhaustion has gone so far that they barely recognise themselves anymore. Together, these testimonies painted a picture of a profession under immense psychological strain, one that has been neglected for far too long in Zimbabwe and across Africa.

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These were not isolated complaints. They reflected a widespread, systemic problem: teachers are expected to be pillars of stability for learners while receiving little to no structured support for their own mental health. The Gwanda gathering shifted this conversation from whispers in staff rooms to a public, collective demand for change, asserting that teacher well-being is not a personal weakness but a policy issue.



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ECOZI did not let these testimonies end as stories. The coalition carried them straight into a high-level engagement in Kadoma, “ECOZI in Conversation with the Minister”, bringing together teacher unions, ECOZI members, partners from the India Conversation platform, and the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Torerai Moyo. This was not a token meeting but rather, it was anchored in the lived realities shared in Gwanda.

Teacher unions laid out the pressures confronting educators such as overwhelming workloads, limited resources, low pay, rising burnout, absenteeism, and “quiet exits” from the profession.

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They stressed that emotionally depleted teachers cannot provide the supportive, engaging learning environments children need. Crucially, unions also highlighted what happens after retirement - many former teachers, especially those returning to rural areas, face financial hardship, social isolation, and health challenges, with decades of stress catching up and little formal support to help them cope. What emerged was the fact that the system must care for teachers during their careers and after they retire.

The conversations in Gwanda and Kadoma highlighted that quality education is impossible without mentally healthy teachers. Teaching is deeply relational and emotionally demanding. Years of unaddressed trauma, pressure, and stress undermine teachers' ability to be patient, creative, and consistent in the classroom. Without access to counselling, mental health services, or supportive school cultures, many resort to concealing their struggles as a survival strategy, something that should neither be normalised nor ignored.

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When teachers receive mental health support, everything shifts. They are better able to manage classrooms, respond to learners' needs, and sustain their commitment to the profession. School environments become more positive and stable, and learners benefit from calm, present, and motivated adults. When teachers retire, adequate psychological, financial, and social support allows them to live with dignity, rather than slipping quietly into hardship after a lifetime of service.

What is unfolding in Zimbabwe mirrors broader realities across Africa, where educators in both urban and rural settings shoulder emotional burdens far greater than their job descriptions suggest. ECOZI's message, grounded in the Gwanda commemorations and the Kadoma dialogue, focuses on the fact that transforming education requires putting teacher mental health at the centre, not at the margins.

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Policies, infrastructure, and curricula matter, but they cannot substitute for the well-being of the people who make learning possible. As Zimbabwe looks ahead, ECOZI argues that a strong education system begins not with new buildings or revised syllabi, but with protecting the mental health of teachers during their years of service and long after they retire. When teachers thrive, learners succeed; when teachers are supported, communities flourish; and when teachers are truly valued, nations move closer to justice, stability, and sustainable development.