

Teacher Pay in Crisis

Donor Practices, Challenges,
and Opportunities in Emergency
and Protracted Settings

Mary Mendenhall, Ed.D.
and Sarah Etzel
With key contributions from
Alby Ungashe and Ahmad Araman

December 2025



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
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To cite this report:

Mendenhall M., & Etzel S. (2025). *Teacher Pay in Crisis: Donor Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities in Emergency and Protracted Settings*. Brussels: Education International (EI).

Education International (EI)

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing over 33 million education employees in 375 organisations in 180 countries and territories.

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Published by Education International - December 2025
ISBN: 978-92-9276-037-3 (PDF)

Cover photo: University of Cape Town (fivepointsix - istockphoto.com)

Acknowledgements:

This study was commissioned by Education International (EI), which is the Global Union Federation that brings together organizations of teachers and other education employees from around the world. The research team would like to thank all of the study participants who shared their time, experiences, and insights during this study, especially given the unprecedented disruptions in the education sector during this time. We extend our gratitude to our EI colleagues who provided support and constructive feedback throughout the study: David Edwards, Sonia Grigt, and Isidora Vitorovic. We would also like to thank members of the advisory group for providing important insights and feedback at key stages of this study: Fatou Niang (ECW), Rebecca Telford (UNHCR), Said Yasin (Education Above All), and Yusuf Sayed (University of Cambridge).



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Acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic	MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
CBO	Community-Based Organization	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CCTE	Conditional Cash Transfer for Education	NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
CT	Community Teachers	NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ECW	Education Cannot Wait	ODA	Official Development Assistance
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Conflicts	OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee
EMIS	Education Management Information System	PEACE	Public Expenditures for Administrative Capacity Endurance (Ukraine)
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	PFM	Public Financial Management
EUR	Euro	RCRF	Recurrent Cost and Reform Financing Project (Somalia)
EU	European Union	REAL	Restoring Education and Learning Project (Yemen)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	RRS	Refugees and Returnees Service
FER	First Emergency Response	SBS	Sector Budget Support
FTS	Financial Tracking System	SCD	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
GBS	General Budget Support	SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
GPE	Global Partnership for Education	STG	System Transformation Grant
GNI	Gross National Income	SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
GDP	Gross National Product	UN	United Nations
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
IFRC-DREF	International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies - Disaster Response Emergency Fund	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
IP	Implementing Partner	USD	United States Dollar
IRB	Institutional Review Board		
JRP	Joint Response Plan		
KI	Key Informant		
MoE	Ministry of Education		
MoF	Ministry of Finance		
MoECHE	Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (Somalia)		
MoGEI	Ministry of General Education and Instruction (South Sudan)		
MPF	Multi-Partner Fund		





Executive Summary

Teacher Pay in Crisis: Donor Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities in Emergency and Protracted Settings investigates how donors approach teacher compensation in contexts affected by emergencies and long-term crises. Despite global recognition of teachers as essential to the delivery of quality education, especially in Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) settings, compensation for these educators remains precarious, fragmented, and often unsustainable.

As education systems face increasing strain due to conflict, displacement, and economic instability, donor agencies play a vital role in ensuring that teachers—of all profiles—are paid. This study, commissioned by Education International (EI), explores the current practices, challenges, and opportunities in donor funding for teacher pay. It also assesses the feasibility of a proposed global fund for teacher compensation, as recommended by the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession (2024).

Drawing on a multi-phase qualitative research design that included a desk review of donor funding data, interviews with 16 donor representatives, and 14 representatives from UN agencies, INGOs, and the Global Education Cluster, this study examines donor practices and policies related to teacher compensation in crisis-affected contexts.

The high-level findings indicate the following (see report for further details):

- **Reluctance to fund recurrent costs:** While most donors lack formal policies on teacher pay, they commonly, yet reluctantly due to sustainability concerns, fund temporary or emergency “incentives.”
- **Fragmented and inconsistent payment practices:** Teachers in EiEPC settings often rely on inconsistent, short-term project funding, leaving them vulnerable to delays, reduced income, and job insecurity.
- **Systemic and logistical barriers:** Challenges include complex disbursement logistics, currency devaluation, weak data and financial systems, lack of harmonization among actors, and exclusion of refugee and community teachers from national payrolls.
- **Opportunities for reform:** Innovations like mobile payments, along with strategies to address systemic barriers through public financial management reform, and salary harmonization

efforts offer potential avenues for improving teacher compensation practices (among others).

To improve teacher compensation in EiEPC contexts, the report offers several recommendations:

- **Improve coordination practices:** Establish clear policies and coordination mechanisms among donors, implementing partners, and governments.
- **Harmonize teacher pay:** Promote consistent, equitable pay structures across actors that align with national systems and payment amounts.
- **Invest in systems:** Strengthen national financial and data systems to ensure available funding and to facilitate payroll integration.
- **Prioritize teacher voice:** Engage existing teacher unions, or support the creation of new unions or professional associations, through which representatives of all teacher profiles have a say in coordination and planning processes.

Recognizing that the sustainability of teacher compensation demands attention to national systems and infrastructure, this report ultimately focuses on long-term reforms needed to strengthen national governments' ownership and management of teacher payment practices. However, each EiEPC setting inevitably brings its own set of realities related to broader economic, political, and social factors that necessitate a variety of context-specific approaches. Given this complexity, shorter-term reforms within the parallel systems inhabited by I/NGOs are also discussed.

Across all contexts, donors face real constraints in their efforts to pay teachers. This reality, exacerbated by the current global aid crisis, demands attention to reimagining funding strategies that uphold the dignity and rights of teachers working in EiEPC settings.



Introduction

Teachers are the backbone of any education system and must be supported—especially in education in emergencies and protracted crises (EiEPC) where they serve as the primary safeguard for children’s right to education (Jalbout & Bullard, 2022; Mendenhall et al., 2018; Shah, 2023). Global norms and standards, including the INEE Minimum Standards (2024) and the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers (1966), call for teachers to be fairly compensated through regular, predictable payments that reflect their qualifications and responsibilities. Compensation systems—whether salaries, stipends, or incentives—must be coordinated, equitable, and sufficient to allow teachers to focus fully on their work without seeking supplementary income (INEE, 2024). These systems should promote dignity, professionalism, and inclusion, especially for teachers from marginalized or displaced communities. Moreover, adequate compensation is widely recognized as foundational to teacher well-being and teacher workforce stability, prerequisites for providing quality education (UNESCO, 2019; UNESCO, 2022; UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024).

Yet, in many emergency and protracted crisis contexts, teacher compensation remains precarious, fragmented, and oftentimes inequitable (Angong et al., 2025; Zaw Lat et al., 2025). Teachers are often underpaid—or not paid at all—due to government budget constraints, systemic breakdowns, or donor hesitance to take on what are viewed as recurrent, development-sector costs. Donors often support teacher compensation only as temporary, gap-filling measures, typically routed through NGOs and UN agencies rather than directly to governments. Payments are frequently tied to short-term project or budget cycles, leaving teachers vulnerable to freezes, stop-work orders, and long payment delays. Refugee teachers, in particular, may be excluded from national payrolls due to legal or administrative barriers, leaving them reliant on short-term projects and unstandardized incentive structures.

To address these challenges, it is critical to raise awareness of the long-term costs of not investing to sustain a qualified and motivated teaching workforce, and to emphasize the importance of a whole-of-government approach in developing sustainable financing strategies—with domestic financing at the core and external financing playing a catalytic role (see UNESCO & Government of Chile, 2025 for recent call to action on these points). Governments and partners must mobilize adequate education financing, including through domestic resource mobilization, to support the teaching profession and implement comprehensive policies that ensure the attraction, retention, training, and career progression of teachers (UNESCO & Government of Chile, 2025).

While some harmonization efforts exist, most compensation structures are inconsistent and disconnected from national frameworks—especially in refugee contexts where legal and administrative barriers prevent formal employment. Ultimately, donors and governments increasingly expect teachers to deliver inclusive, high-quality learning—including in EiEPC settings—yet hesitate to invest in the financial systems (or needed reforms) that would sustain them. With 272 million children and youth out of school globally, including an uptick in countries affected by conflict, decreasing public spending on education, and stagnating or declining education aid (UNESCO, 2025a), teacher compensation policies and practices are in crisis and merit closer attention.

Study Scope & Aims

This study examines donor policies and practices related to teacher compensation in EiEPC contexts, exploring how bilateral, multilateral, and philanthropic funders navigate the complex challenges of supporting teacher pay while balancing concerns about sustainability, coordination, and long-term system strengthening. Through interviews with donor representatives and implementing partners, this study investigates the tensions between immediate humanitarian needs and longer-term development objectives, analyzing how different funding streams and modalities, payment mechanisms, and coordination approaches affect teacher compensation in EiEPC settings. While the majority of the findings and related recommendations focus on national government leadership, changes to short-term approaches occurring within parallel systems where most IPs operate are also addressed.

Research Questions

The study was guided by three overarching research questions:

- How do **donors approach** teacher compensation in crisis-affected contexts, and what **factors** shape their funding decisions and implementation strategies?
- What are the **primary challenges** donors and implementing partners face when providing teacher compensation support in crisis settings?
- What **opportunities** and **promising practices** exist for mitigating these challenges and improving the effectiveness and sustainability of teacher compensation support?

Given the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession's recommendation (2024) to "*establish a Global Fund for Teachers' Salaries to provide time-bound support for the sufficient, timely and regular payment of salaries of teachers working in crisis-affected contexts or similar situations of threat or vulnerability*," the study also aimed to assess the feasibility and potential value of creating such a fund.



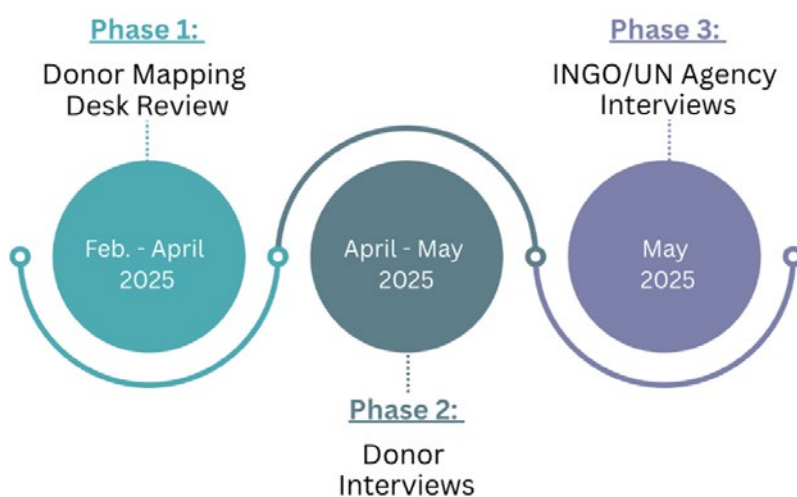
Study Methodology

This study employed a multi-phase qualitative research design to examine donor practices and policies related to teacher compensation in crisis-affected contexts. To inform its conceptual framing, the research team first conducted a review of scholarly and grey literature on teacher pay, education financing, and education in emergencies. These insights helped shape interview tools and data collection strategies. The team also held informal conversations with researchers, practitioners, and donors to both share knowledge and assess interest in participation. An expert advisory group, comprising academics and practitioners with relevant expertise, provided critical input.

The research team conducted a three-phase data collection process between February and May 2025. **Phase 1** involved a desk review of major donor databases to identify projects that included teacher salary components. This process highlighted both documented examples and key gaps in transparency across donor reporting practices. **Phase 2** involved 15 semi-structured interviews with 16 donor representatives from 12 organizations, including bilateral, multilateral, and philanthropic funders. These key informant (KI) interviews captured organizational approaches, constraints, and strategies for funding teacher pay across diverse settings.

Phase 3 included 12 interviews with 14 representatives from UN agencies, INGOs, and the Global Education Cluster (see **Image 1** for study timeline). These KIs, often functioning as donor implementing partners, provided contextual detail on how donor policies and

Image 1: Timeline of Data Collection Phases



practices translate into field-level realities. Questions explored specific teacher payment mechanisms, relationships with national systems, and donor influence on project-level decisions. Data were collected virtually via Zoom and analyzed using a combination of open and closed coding, drawing from both donor mapping activities and interview transcripts.

Throughout the study, all participants were assured confidentiality, and findings were anonymized by

organization type to preserve the integrity of responses. The study received Institutional Review Board approval from Teachers College, Columbia University, and used informed consent protocols for all participants. The research faced limitations, including a compressed timeline, reduced donor availability due to sector-wide disruptions, and limited geographical breadth, with findings focused largely on

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. The complementary donor desk review process was further limited by a lack of transparency and accessible information across donor databases. See **Appendix 1** for a detailed description of the research methodology.

Structure of the Report

The report is organized into the following sections:

- Section 1:** *EiEPC Funding Background* (not teacher compensation-specific)
- Section 2:** *Study Findings*
- Section 3:** *Cross-cutting Implications*
- Section 4:** *Recommendations*
- Section 5:** *Conclusion*



Section 1: EiEPC Funding Background

Funding for education interventions in emergencies and protracted crises is quite complex, involving diverse configurations of stakeholders spanning from global to sub-national levels. Donors, intermediaries (i.e., UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs), national governments, and communities all play unique roles in both supplying and distributing resources in EiEPC contexts ([UNESCO, 2025b](#); Homonchuk, Fraser & Lacroix, 2025). Consequently, efforts to measure and track the flow of funds to EiEPC are exceedingly difficult, evidenced by recent research from UNESCO that points to large data gaps around humanitarian and development aid funding for education (UNESCO, 2025b). Information gaps are even more acute around funding for teachers' pay in EiEPC, compounded by the reality that stakeholders use different terms to refer to financial support provided to teachers—e.g., salaries, incentives, stipends, etc.—with few universally agreed upon definitions. (See **Table 1** for an overview of the definitions used throughout this report.)

Table 1: Key Terms & Definitions

Term	Definition
Domestic Financing	Funding for education or teacher salaries that comes from a country's own revenue sources, such as taxes or reallocation of national budget lines. Domestic financing refers to the funding of activities, projects, or initiatives using resources generated within a specific country. This can include government revenue, private savings, or other forms of capital raised within the nation's borders
Funding Modality	The mechanisms or methods used to manage and disburse funds, including how the money is transferred and managed, and the accompanying rules and processes (e.g. budget support, pooled funds, project-specific support).
Funding Stream	The sources or origins of money available for a particular purpose (e.g. teacher compensation), including the pathways through which money flows from funders to recipients.
Incentives (alternatively referred to as stipends in some contexts)	A lower-level form of payment that is often provided to unqualified or trainee teachers, including classroom assistants or para-teachers. May include additional in-kind benefits (e.g., food, accommodation) and is typically not equivalent to formal salary scales. (Adapted from INEE Minimum Standards, 2024)

Term	Definition
General Budget Support (GBS)	<p>Bilateral or multilateral donors provide unrestricted funds to a country's national treasury to support the overall budget, often linked to broader development strategies or reform policies. Encourages alignment with national priorities and use of government systems. Donors provide GBS to countries with stronger public financial management systems. (Adapted from INEE's Reference Guide for External Education Financing and GPE's Funding Modalities Aligned with Country Systems)</p> <p>A derivative of GBS might include aid-on-budget or ringfenced budget support, which involves transfers to a separate, or ringfenced account at the national treasury. This approach may also be used for Sector Budget Support (see below) (see GPE's Funding Modalities Aligned with Country Systems for more details on this approach)</p>
Harmonization (of teacher pay)	<p>Donor and partner coordination around procedures, rates, and reporting aimed at minimizing duplication and promoting coherence in teacher pay and education financing systems in a given country. (Adapted from INEE Reference Guide for External Education Financing)</p>
Non-monetary benefits	<p>Non-cash motivation strategies such as housing, food assistance, training, or professional development opportunities.</p>
Pooled (Multilateral) Funding	<p>Resources from multiple donors are combined and disbursed through a shared fund—such as ECW or GPE—often managed by a multilateral body. (Adapted from INEE Reference Guide for External Education Financing)</p>
Project Support	<p>Donor funding channeled directly to a specific project, typically implemented by NGOs or UN agencies and often outside government systems. (Adapted from INEE Reference Guide for External Education Financing)</p>
Salary	<p>A scheduled gross annual payment for a full-time, qualified teacher, based on official pay scales. It excludes ad-hoc or performance-based bonuses (e.g., hardship allowance), but includes regular allowances (e.g., holiday or regional bonuses). Reported salaries are pre-tax and exclude employer contributions to pensions/social security. (Adapted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics)</p>
Sector Budget Support (SBS)	<p>Bilateral or multilateral donor funds are provided through a country's national treasury to support an agreed education sector strategy. Funds are managed through government public financial systems. (Adapted from INEE Reference Guide for External Education Financing).</p>

To frame donors' practices around teacher payment in emergency contexts, the following sections first provide an overview of **streams** (or sources) that fund EiEPC generally, the **modalities** (or mechanisms) through which they provide funding, and the **amounts** contributed over time, along with associated challenges and tensions.



Funding Streams

Situated within the humanitarian-development nexus, EiEPC interventions can be funded by a diverse array of funding streams. These include both internal and external contributions from public, private, and multilateral stakeholders, each with distinct roles, relationships, and priorities. See **Table 2** for an overview.

Table 2: Funding Streams for EiEPC

Internal Contributions	
Public	National and sub-national governments (e.g., state, district) provide funding for education.
Private	Private providers (e.g., for-profit, faith-based) may also fund educational services outside of the public system (Menashy & Zakharia, 2017).
Household	Families and communities (e.g., individual parents, school management committees, parent-teacher associations) provide funding for education in crisis contexts via school fees and other forms of support on a local-level (Homouchuk, Fraser & Lacroix, 2025).
External Contributions	
Bilateral Donors	<p>Bilateral donors provide funding from a single country (e.g., Germany, United States, United Kingdom, etc.) and typically provide funds in ways that align with their foreign policy interests (INEE, 2010).</p> <p>These stakeholders may fund education by providing financial support to governments directly, or funding programs/interventions through implementing partners or their own embassies within a given country (INEE, 2010).</p>
Multilateral Donors	<p>Multilateral donors are entities that receive funds from numerous member states (e.g., UN Organizations, European Commission, Development Banks).</p> <p>UN organizations provide different types of support; for instance, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) oversees the process for gathering humanitarian appeals for crisis situations, some of which is allocated to education. UNHCR implements and funds education programs in refugee-hosting contexts, while UNICEF is an implementing partner of education interventions across a range of contexts (INEE, 2010). The World Bank is a prominent multilateral donor primarily funding development work through national governments, while the European Commission has both a development arm through the European Union, and a humanitarian arm—European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). ECHO is restricted from working with national governments and primarily funds its own education projects within specific countries (INEE, 2010).</p>

Private Sector Donors	<p>Private sector donors include private foundations, faith-based organizations, and corporations (e.g., Aga Khan Foundation, LEGO Foundation, Education Above All).</p> <p>These stakeholders typically prefer to implement their own educational interventions/projects, rather than supporting governments (INEE, 2010).</p>
INGOs / NGOs	<p>Non-profit organizations that have a specific mission and operate independently of government control, with national and/or international reach.</p> <p>These organizations—e.g., the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, etc.—typically work as implementing partners to carry out education interventions funded by bilateral, multilateral, and private sector donors (INEE, 2010).</p>

Funding Modalities

External stakeholders outlined in the previous section provide funding support through a range of **modalities** (or mechanisms), a term broadly defined as instruments used to provide funding, but that can also be used in reference to resource mobilization processes (INEE, 2010). Common development-sector funding modalities include sector budget support, general budget support, and joint or co-financing arrangements, where budget support is provided under specific results-based conditions (INEE, 2010; *GPE, 2024c*). Development and humanitarian stakeholders use modalities such as pooled funds and project-specific support. See **Table 3** for an overview of Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE), two of the primary pooled funds for development and humanitarian education aid. Humanitarian appeals are a strategy to generate additional EiEPC funds, but are not necessarily a mechanism to distribute them (INEE, 2010; *GPE, 2024c*).



Table 3: Pooled Funding Mechanisms

Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is a global fund that focuses specifically on rapid education interventions in emergencies and protracted crises. Established in 2016 as a trust fund hosted by UNICEF, ECW's mission is to generate increased political and financial buy-in for EiEPC interventions, ECW works to deliver agile, short-term funding in collaboration with multilateral agencies, governments, and civil society actors ([ECW, 2025a](#); [ECW, 2022a](#)).

ECW has raised significant awareness for EiEPC, reaching over 11.4 million children in 48 countries across the world ([ECW, 2024](#)). Since its launch in 2016, ECW has raised \$1.6 billion for its trust fund, and mobilized \$2.88 billion in total when including in-country program support (i.e., funding mobilized by domestic stakeholders in addition to external funds from ECW donors). Historically, top donors include Germany (\$358 million total contributed); the United Kingdom (\$277 million); the United States (\$164 million); Denmark (\$161 million); Norway (\$131 million); Canada (\$126 million); Switzerland (\$80 million); the LEGO Foundation (\$64.9 million); the European Commission (\$60.7 million), and France (\$54 million) ([ECW, 2025c](#)).

ECW works through three primary windows: (i) First Emergency Response (FER), which prioritizes streamlined funding during onset emergencies; (ii) Multi-Year Resilience Program (MYRP), which coordinate multi-year humanitarian interventions to align with host government priorities and humanitarian/refugee response plans; and (iii) Acceleration Facility, which mobilizes funds to strengthen the EiEPC ecosystem beyond specific projects ([ECW, 2022a](#); [ECW, 2019a](#)).

Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) leverages collaborative funding processes to transform national education systems. As a trust fund hosted by the World Bank, GPE channels pooled funds from numerous donors towards long-term collaborative partnerships with national governments. While focused primarily on educational development, GPE also provides support to crisis situations to help countries plan for and transition to recovery ([GPE, 2025a](#); [GPE, 2025b](#)).

GPE works in 90 countries around the world to support approximately 160 million children and has mobilized over \$10.4 billion in donor funds since its inception in 2003 ([GPE, 2025c](#); [GPE, 2025d](#)). The top ten donors for GPE's 2021-2025 financing period were the European Commission (contributing 19.2% of total funds); the United Kingdom (14.2%); the United States (12.5%); France (9.4%); Germany (9.2%); Canada (5.8%); Norway (4.9%); Denmark (4.0%); Sweden (3.1%); and Australia (3.0%) ([GPE, 2025d](#)). The vast majority of GPE's total funding has been allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa (74.96% of total funds or ~\$7.7 billion) ([GPE, 2025d](#)).

GPE's work within countries begins with a partnership compact, which is a document developed by national and global stakeholders that outlines the education priorities for a given country, in alignment with domestic policies and education sector plans, and details how GPE funding will be used to achieve these goals ([GPE, 2024a](#)). Countries are then eligible to receive grants such as the System Transformation Grant, a System Capacity Grant, a Multiplier Grant, and in some cases, a Girls' Education Accelerator Grant ([GPE, 2024a](#)).

Since its launch in 2016, ECW's projects have trained over 188,407 teachers and supported the recruitment and/or financial compensation of approximately 169,680 teachers^{1, 2} ([ECW, 2024](#); [ECW, 2025b](#)).

Looking forward: 2026 marks the final year of ECW's #222MillionDreams campaign (2023-2026), which aims to raise \$1.5 billion to support the educational needs of the 222 million children and youth impacted by global crises ([ECW, 2022c](#)). ECW mobilized 62% of the funds for this campaign by the end of 2024, with ~\$566 million remaining to be raised from 2025-2026 ([ECW, 2025](#)). To meet this goal in a time of "systemic funding gaps" ECW acknowledges the need to diversify funding sources and explore funding streams beyond development aid, such as climate finance and philanthropy ([ECW, 2025, p.8](#)).

Teachers are often included within GPE's grants, with activities primarily focused on teacher training. From 2016-2020, over 1.5 million teachers were trained through GPE's funding, while an additional 1.9 million were trained from 2021-2024 ([GPE, 2024b](#)). Of the 75 grants that GPE financed in 2023, 68% had activities related to teachers ([GPE, 2023](#)).

GPE doesn't report overarching data on teacher compensation activities, but a review of their partnership compacts reveals several notable examples (see **Appendix 2** for more information). Across partnership compacts, avenues to support teacher compensation include results-based financing tied to execution of domestic teacher salary budgets, incentive schemes for targeted groups of teachers (e.g., female teachers), capitation grants that could be used to pay teachers, and mixed donor and domestic financing plans to pay teachers.

Looking forward: GPE recently launched its replenishment campaign for the 2026-2030 period, with a \$5 billion fundraising goal ([GPE, 2025e](#)). The campaign centers on the strategy of "rethinking how education is financed to enable long-term, sustainable investment" ([GPE, 2025f, p. 12](#)). To drive this shift, GPE aims to unlock domestic resources and catalyse diverse funding sources; in doing so, GPE hopes to triple its replenishment amount by generating an additional ~\$10 billion in co-financed funds from external stakeholders (e.g., private sector and philanthropic partners; development banks) ([GPE, 2025f](#)).

- 1 Figure is the authors' calculation; achieved by combining data from ECW's country level indicator: "number of teachers/administrators recruited/financially supported."
- 2 During the timeframe when desk review data was collected for this report (March - May, 2025), each country page on Education Cannot Wait's website featured a dashboard with country-specific funding levels and data for several indicators, including the indicator: "number of teachers/administrators recruited/financially supported." ECW has since updated their website and removed these data dashboards from their country pages, meaning that several of the figures cited in this report are no longer verifiable online. The research team has a copy of the raw data that can be made available for verification upon request.



Funding Amounts: Historic Trends & Present Crisis

External funding for EiEPC may come through both humanitarian and development funding channels (INEE, 2010; UNESCO, 2025a). For the purposes of this report, we use the terms ‘development funding’ and ‘humanitarian funding’ in reference to specific data sources, with the former referring to official development assistance (ODA) data and the latter referring to data sourced from UN OCHA’s humanitarian funding database. In practice, however, the distinctions between development and humanitarian funding for EiEPC are not clear cut. For instance, 89% of finance for refugee education is labeled as ‘development’ rather than ‘humanitarian’ (UN/INGO KI). A lack of data transparency can make it challenging to discern what percentage of ODA ultimately goes to EiEPC (UNESCO, 2025a). While data transparency is also an issue with humanitarian education funding, there is an assumption that amounts generated from humanitarian educational appeals will be used to fund EiEPC (UNESCO, 2025a).

Development Funding Overview

Donor countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) collectively spent \$13,142 million on education in 2023, putting the total share of ODA allocated to education at 5.5% (*Donor Tracker, 2025a*). The top five donors include Germany, which contributed \$3,754.41 million for education in 2023, with estimates of worsening. Recent estimates from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) indicate aid to education may have fallen by as much as 12% in 2024 and is projected to decline an additional 14% between 2025-2027 (*UNESCO, 2025a*). Similar projections from OECD predict education ODA will fall by 18-22% between 2023-2025, largely due to cuts from major funders. Of the top five donors to education in 2023, Germany, France, and the United States (which collectively contributed 65% of total aid to education in 2023), as well as the United Kingdom, all reduced ODA in 2024, with further reductions announced in 2025 (*OECD, 2025; Donor Tracker, 2025b*).³

Humanitarian Funding Overview

Humanitarian aid contributions to education totaled \$1.11 billion in 2024, meeting only 29.7% of the estimated funding needs and accounting for approximately 3.11% of all humanitarian aid (*UNOCHA FTS, 2025*). This amount represents a drop from 2022-2023 funding levels, where humanitarian aid for education was consistent at approximately \$1.3 billion, and a trend reversal from the 2019-2022

³ Additional information on announced ODA cuts: In the United States, President Trump’s FY2026 budget request proposes a \$2.5 billion reduction – from the enacted 2025 budget – in combined funding for the newly reorganized State Department and USAID operations (*Executive Office of the President, 2025*). While not solely related to ODA, if enacted, this proposed budget reduction will undoubtedly impact the US’s ODA contributions in future years. The United Kingdom announced a reduction in aid spending from 0.5% to 0.3% of the country’s GNI by 2027-2028 (*House of Commons Library, 2025*), while numerous other countries, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Korea, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland, have all announced ODA budget cuts in 2025 and beyond (*Donor Tracker, 2025b*). Across the top 17 DAC donors, Donor Tracker estimates a reduction from \$198.64 billion spent on ODA in 2024 to \$145.34 billion spent in 2026 (*Donor Tracker, 2025b*).

period where humanitarian funding levels for education rose from \$735.7 million to \$1.3 billion (*UNOCHA FTS, 2025*). See **Image 2** for an overview of historic funding amounts for humanitarian education aid from 2016-2024.

Image 2: Trends in Humanitarian Education Aid Over Time

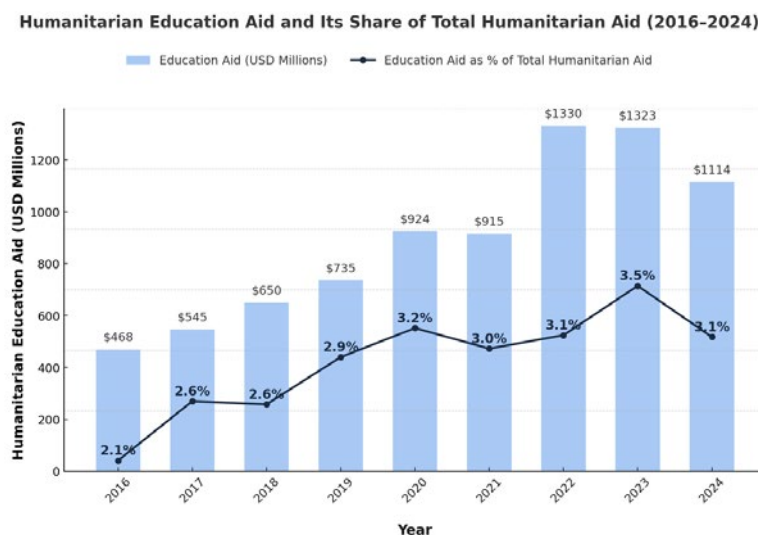


Chart Source: Authors' creation using data from [UN OCHA's Financial Tracking Service data visualization tool](#) (2025).

Humanitarian aid for education is primarily donated by governments, which contributed 57.5% of total education aid in 2024, multilateral organizations (22.2%), pooled funds (10.5%), private organizations (6.1%), and NGOs (3.8%). The top humanitarian education donors in 2024 were the European Commission (21% of total humanitarian education aid; ~\$235.8M); the United States (13.3%; \$147.9M), Qatar (13.1%; \$145.9M), Education Cannot Wait (6.5%; \$72.9M), and the United Kingdom (5.7%; \$63.9M) (*UNOCHA FTS, 2025*). While UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) data for 2025 is incomplete, the United States has dropped from among the top 5 donors, now contributing only 2.2% of total humanitarian education aid funding as opposed to 13.3% in 2024 (*UNOCHA FTS, 2025*).

Donors of humanitarian aid for education primarily channel funds through UN Agencies, which received over half (52.1%) of the total funding in 2024. Other recipients include International NGOs (30.5%), national governments (9.0%), national NGOs (3.3%). The top five recipients of humanitarian education aid in 2024 included UNICEF (29.3% of the total funding; ~\$327.1M); the World Food Programme (15.2%; \$169.8M); the Education Above All Foundation (EAA)⁴ (7.4%; \$82.4M); Save the Children (7.0%; 77.8M); and the Norwegian Refugee Council (5.0%; 55.7M) (*UNOCHA FTS, 2025*).

⁴ As a philanthropic foundation, EAA differs from other top humanitarian aid recipients in that it primarily redistributes aid to its implementing partners rather than delivering funds directly (Donor KI, 2025).



Current Aid Crisis & Implications

International aid is currently experiencing a crisis. In January 2025, the Trump Administration essentially decimated the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), effectively halting financial disbursements (Cavalcanti, 2025). As the US has been the largest donor to the humanitarian system—contributing 43% of all government funding in 2023—this action has already had negative effects across the aid sector, which will undoubtedly worsen for years to come (Cavalcanti, 2025). While the US aid cuts are so far the most drastic, other major donors have also cut ODA, including France, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, the latter of which decreased ODA spending from 0.5% to 0.3% of its Gross National Income (GNI) (*Huckstep et al., 2025*).

Aid reduction trends are taking place alongside increases in defense and security spending, indicating shifting priorities among donor countries. In June 2025, countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) committed to increase annual defense and security spending to 5% of their gross domestic products (GDPs) over the next 10 years (*NATO, 2025*), raising questions around what sectors may face funding reductions to offset these increases. As detailed in the previous sections, aid allocations for education have declined in both the humanitarian and development sectors, with grim implications for EiEPC (UNESCO, 2025a; OECD, 2025). Recent analyses from the Global Education Cluster (GEC) show dramatic cuts to education in UNOCHA's May 2025 humanitarian response plan, including a 43% reduction in individuals targeted for education assistance and a 33% reduction in funding to education overall. Donors cannot cover this gap, and the GEC estimates these cuts put an additional 33 million people in need of education assistance beyond the scope of donors (*GEC, INEE, & GGHEiE, 2025*). As a result, thousands of learning centers and education programs in EiEPC contexts have been forced to close, impacting children and teachers alike. Survey data collected from over 1,000 members from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) working in global EiEPC settings reveal that over one-third of respondents have been unable to pay teachers or have been forced to reduce wages as a result of aid cuts (GEC, INEE, & GGHEiE, 2025).

Amid unprecedented disruptions, international stakeholders have begun to chart a path towards a reimagined aid sector. At the recent International Conference on Financing for Development, UN and donor representatives reaffirmed their commitment to “*support adequate financing to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all*” (*UNDESA, 2025, p.4*), and proposed a three-pronged strategy that would focus on investments for sustainable development, debt crises, and financial architecture reforms (United Nations, 2025). How these commitments will impact the EiEPC funding remains to be seen, yet undoubtedly the current crisis and subsequent reform strategies will have a large impact on teacher payment practices in EiEPC settings.

Paying Teachers: Tensions around Diverse Teacher Profiles

Fragmented funding sources, parallel systems that bypass the state (sometimes out of necessity), mechanisms that may or may not align with national systems, and decreasing amounts of available resources all contribute to challenges funding EiEPC, which are further compounded by the complexities of paying teachers specifically (the focus of the remainder of this report).

Diverse profiles of teachers work in EiEPC settings, including national qualified teachers, national unqualified teachers (i.e., community or volunteer teachers), and refugee teachers (qualified and unqualified). Teacher payments based on these profiles may be considered the responsibility of different stakeholders, and you might find a mix of payment policies and practices for different teacher profiles working in the same setting (Angong et al., 2025; Mendenhall, 2025).

National teachers' salaries typically account for the largest share of domestic education budgets, in some cases as much as 90% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2025). National or civil servant teachers are seen as the responsibility of national governments, and donors' involvement in their pay can raise tensions around aid dependency and the long-term stability of domestic education systems. In refugee-hosting settings, the responsibility for paying refugee teachers is intertwined with whose responsibility it is to educate non-citizen children. Where national policy commitments and/or agreements for educating non-citizens do exist, these may or may not afford opportunities for refugee teachers to be included in national systems due to lack of formal training and right to work restrictions. When it comes to finances, host governments may lack sufficient resources to support their own teaching force, let alone provide payment for refugee teachers ([Hopper, 2024](#)), making efforts to integrate refugee teachers onto national payrolls challenging. In the absence of clear integration pathways within national pay systems (and the teaching profession writ large), refugee teachers continue to rely on the support of UNHCR and its partners. Community and volunteer teachers hired to support education of internally displaced learners may also face barriers to being included in the formal teaching profession, ultimately relying on UN agencies and I/NGOs for financial support (Angong et al., 2025). These organizations, regardless of which teacher profiles they are supporting, may increasingly struggle to cover teacher payments, particularly amid the latest and potentially persistent education sector funding cuts. These nuances across teacher profiles need to be carefully considered within teacher pay debates, while also noting their implications for equity concerns across teacher profiles.



Section 2: Study Findings

Donor Positions, Policies & Practices on Teacher Pay

Donors frequently provide financial support for teacher compensation in crisis contexts, but they are reluctant to do so given national governments' responsibilities for covering these expenses, the recurrent nature of teacher salaries, and concerns about long-term sustainability. Nevertheless, they recognized that this type of support might be a necessity in settings experiencing conflict or fragility.

None of the donors who participated in this study cited a specific policy for providing teacher compensation, though some have published guidance that speaks to this issue (see [*NORAD's Strategic Guidance Note on Teachers, 2021*](#)). The majority of donors (8 out of 12) described internal policy frameworks that enabled them to pay teachers (or at the very least, did not prevent them from doing so), yet shared that programming priorities and payment decisions were largely based on implementing partners' assessments of on-the-ground needs. Only one donor representative stated that his organization would not pay teachers. The philanthropic donor explained that because national charity law prevents them from providing direct government support, they cannot fund national teachers on the government payroll. As a result, they have adopted the position that it would be inappropriate to fund other teacher profiles, such as refugee teachers.

Other donors explained that any teacher compensation they do provide was to ensure "continuity of learning" through temporary, "stop-gap" measures, reiterating their reluctance to cover recurrent costs. Despite their reluctance, donors also acknowledged contextual realities that might override their preferences not to pay teachers. One example included a donor stepping in to cover subsidies for community teachers in Chad when the government discontinued its support of their payments, with the aim of transferring that responsibility back to the government as soon as possible. Other examples included acute emergencies, such as Gaza or Sudan, that required swift responses to prop up embattled education systems. Others noted the importance of responding to the needs of local education stakeholders and communities, particularly those in refugee-hosting settings (e.g., hiring more teachers to support double shifts that will accommodate increasing numbers of refugee learners).

When donors and implementing partners support teacher pay, they primarily do so through financial incentives, and not salaries. In these cases, incentives are teacher payments in the form of financial awards. Non-monetary awards may also be offered in tandem with monetary awards (see section on *Supplemental & Non-monetary Support for Teachers* below).

Despite resistance, donors and their partners provide significant teacher compensation in many contexts. Due to worsening conditions within Lebanon, the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) gave approval for \$37 million of funding originally budgeted for school construction to be repurposed for emergency teachers' incentives (FCDO, 2022). In Yemen, ECW, in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and UNICEF, supported 127,646 teachers through its Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP)⁵ in the amount of \$20 million US dollars (USD). Since 2021, the European Union (EU), in partnership with UNICEF, has supported 199,202 teachers (roughly all public school teachers) in Afghanistan through emergency cash support totaling €903 million Euros (EUR). In other settings, support is more modest, but still notable. The EU essentially supported the entire formal school system in Jordan's refugee camps, including the provision of payments for 1,767 teachers. Across all of ECHO's education projects from 2015-2019, 26% included incentives for teachers, underscoring ECHO and the EU's commitment more broadly to providing this type of assistance in their work (ECHO, 2020). In the case of Ukraine, the World Bank co-financed the salaries of 500,000 school employees (see Box 1 for more details). In refugee-hosting contexts, UNHCR may spend a significant percentage of its total operating budget for the education sector on teacher incentives, close to 80% as indicated elsewhere (Mendenhall, 2025). See **Appendix 2** for an overview of projects that fund teachers (and that were available in the public domain).

Teacher Pay Streams & Modalities in Crisis Contexts

External financing for teacher pay in crisis contexts is delivered through various funding streams. Bilateral, multilateral, and philanthropic donors provide funding to implementing partners (IPs) working in a specific country, which might include United Nations (UN) agencies (typically UNHCR or UNICEF) and/or a number of international and national non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs), who in turn directly pay teachers. These same donors also provide support through pooled funding mechanisms, including ECW and GPE, who contract international and national partners, who then directly pay teachers (see Image 3 for an overview of funding streams for teacher pay). In some cases, UN agencies, like UNHCR and UNICEF, act as quasi-donors through their partnership agreements with I/NGOs, who in turn carry out project implementation. In other cases, bilateral donors, INGOs, and UN agencies serve as grant agents for GPE grants. The World Bank is GPE's largest grant agent, overseeing 60.1% of grants, followed by UNICEF, which oversees 17.99% of grants (*GPE, 2025d*).

As far as **funding modalities**, few donors provide general budget or sector support directly to national governments in crisis contexts, preferring to turn toward multilateral funding opportunities like ECW and GPE. A number of ECW- and GPE-funded projects include support for teacher pay (see **Appendix 2**). The World Bank is the main donor

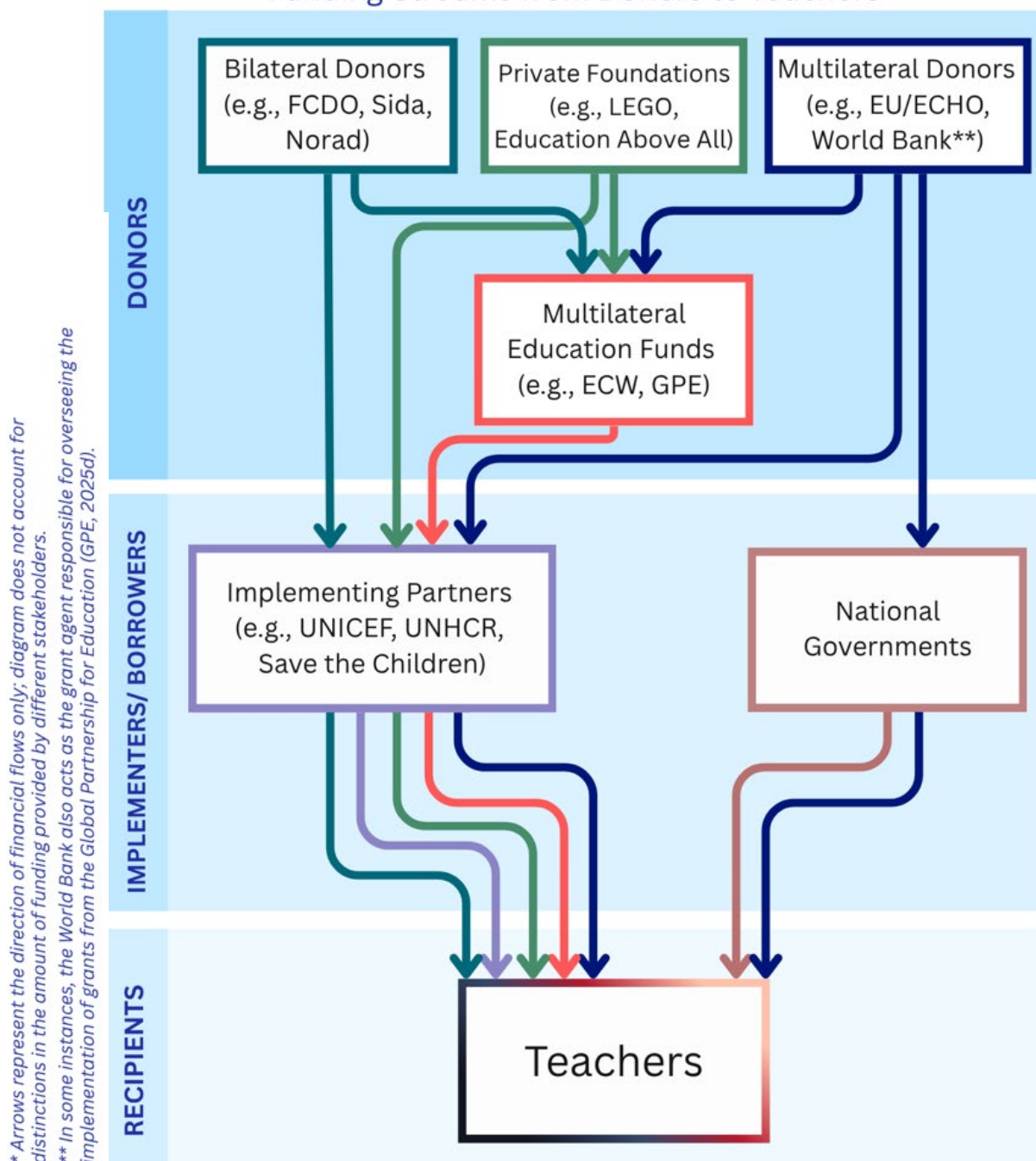
⁵ ECW's combined indicator of "recruited and/or financially supported" makes it difficult to ascertain exactly how many teachers received financial incentives.

providing direct financial support to national governments (through both grants and loans). Bilateral and multilateral support to governments is typically predicated on results-based performance mechanisms and conditional funding, which may include stipulations around teacher compensation. Ultimately, teacher pay is almost exclusively provided through specific project funds.

Donors also provide indirect support for teacher compensation through strategies to strengthen teacher payment systems and increase funding for teacher salaries through public financing management (PFM) reforms and related advocacy efforts. In some instances, donors may provide indirect funding at the school level through capitation grants that school leaders can use to cover teachers' salaries.

Image 3: Funding Streams for Teacher Pay

Teacher Payment in Crisis Contexts:
*Funding Streams from Donors to Teachers**



Predictable domestic financing of teacher salaries is the ultimate goal to ensure sustainability of the teacher workforce, and many teachers in crisis settings continue to be paid through domestic channels when functional governments remain in place. In the absence of functional governments, households are assuming increasing financial responsibility for education-related costs, and education actors are increasingly counting on their support in resource-scarce settings, a key point shared by a number of KIs. The previously cited ODI ERICC study further indicates that household expenditures on education are often greater than both domestic and external financing, often at the expense of other material needs (Homonchuk, Fraser & Lacroix, 2025). While household contributions will inevitably continue to be important sources for supporting education systems, in crisis and non-crisis settings alike, the undue burden on poor households is not being addressed in many EiEPC settings.

Supplemental & Non-monetary Support for Teachers

Non-salary support also plays a critical role in attracting, retaining, and motivating teachers across a variety of contexts, including remote, underserved, crisis-affected and/or refugee-hosting areas. IPs, and sometimes government entities, offer additional benefits, such as housing subsidies, hardship allowances (beyond their regular compensation), and relocation support to help make remote or difficult postings more feasible. In some settings, direct housing provision and transportation support (money or bicycles) are used to meet requirements and attract qualified teachers. IPs also commonly provide transportation stipends, food allowances, and small financial incentives to offset the costs of travel and participation in training and professional development.

Local community involvement further strengthens teacher support by offering in-kind contributions such as housing, land, and materials, particularly where formal systems fall short. In many rural and crisis-affected areas, community members help fill critical gaps by building or maintaining housing and supporting school infrastructure.

Despite these individual benefits and community efforts, in settings with heightened insecurity, no amount of compensation or supplemental benefits can mitigate the personal risks that teachers are asked to take in some locations.

"Some of [the teachers] were killed...they were attacked in the places where they stay." (NGO KI, Kenya)

Education actors also consider professional development to be an important component of non-monetary teacher support. Additionally, there are efforts to improve teacher recognition and employment stability through access to formal training programs that lead to certification and inclusion in national payroll systems. Diploma pathways and certification initiatives aim to ensure that teachers, including those from displaced or marginalized communities, receive the qualifications they need to gain employment security and advance in their careers.



The right to work (for refugee teachers) and the system's ability to absorb and pay newly qualified teachers (of all profiles) are other important issues, which we return to later in the report.

Innovative and/or Untested Financing Mechanisms for Teachers

Given funding constraints in the contemporary foreign aid landscape, KIs suggested exploring innovative and/or untested ways to mobilize resources for teacher pay beyond traditional ODA channels. Ideas included cash assistance, social impact bonds, and crisis insurance specifically in support of teachers (see Table 4 for key terms and definitions). Cash assistance is increasingly used to support individuals and families in resource-scarce environments, and presumably teachers are recipients in many settings. One KI shared an example where teachers in Kenya received mobile money payments triggered by crisis indicators, yet this was part of a broader emergency cash assistance program for parents and community members, not to compensate for their work as teachers specifically. More intentional efforts to identify and support teachers might go a long way in strengthening recognition of teachers' work and facilitating their retention. Similarly, insurance-backed models for financing emergencies have been used in sectors such as agriculture, but not yet for education. Two Donor KIs suggested exploring these types of crisis insurance or "catastrophe funding" to mobilize funds for teachers, but how this might work in practice merits further exploration (e.g., what would education-linked triggers entail across different settings?; UN KI, 2025). This approach is also entangled with the State's responsibility in any given nation for providing its own insurance (UN KI, 2025).

KIs also reiterated the need to mobilize domestic resources to support teachers' pay, noting that teachers' salaries can take up as much as 90% of national education budgets. Debt swaps were repeatedly cited by KIs as a potential avenue to free up domestic resources that could be allocated for teachers, while one Donor KI mentioned exploring tax reforms to generate additional funds. The issue of debt swaps is particularly timely as a recent report from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) revealed that many developing countries spend more domestically on debt interest payments than their health and education sectors (UNCTAD, 2025). Approximately 2.1 billion people live in contexts where debt interest payments exceed education spending specifically, largely due to the reality that debt in developing countries has increased twice as much as in developed economies since 2010 (UNESCO, 2025a). EiEPC countries, including refugee-hosting contexts, such as Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, West Bank and Gaza have a debt service that exceeds 20% of expenditures, others such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Iraq have a debt service under 15% (DFI, 2024; 2025).

While promising on many fronts, innovative and/or untested solutions also present their own tensions. KIs raised concerns around the feasibility of leveraging financing mechanisms such as debt swaps for

EiEPC, while more recent commentaries suggest that the focus on privatized forms of innovative finance, such as impact investments, “[take] attention away from the need to fulfill international and national public sector responsibilities” (see *Klees, 2025*). Despite these tensions, more resources are needed to finance teachers, and harnessing myriad strategies to mobilize domestic financing will be key moving forward.

Table 4: Innovative Financing – Key Terms, Definitions, & Examples

Term	Definition	Examples & Promises
Debt Swaps	An innovative finance strategy where one form of debt is “exchanged” for another—i.e., when an investor buys a country's sovereign debt or supports that country to refinance their debt in exchange for certain commitments. Calls for debt swaps are growing increasingly popular across sectors, with proposals for “debt for aid”, “debt for development,” and “debt for nature” (i.e., climate protection) swaps gaining traction in recent years, though the latter category was first proposed in the 1980s (<i>Airbel Impact Lab, 2024a; United Nations, 2025; Whiting, 2024</i>).	<p>Under the IRC's 2024 humanitarian debt swap proposal, countries would essentially be supported to refinance their debt at a lower rate, and in exchange, agree to commit their financial savings towards populations impacted by conflict and crisis (<i>Airbel Impact Lab, 2024b</i>). Existing examples of debt-for-education swaps, including in El Salvador (<i>UNESCO, 2025c</i>), Indonesia (<i>UNESCO, 2025d</i>), and Côte d'Ivoire (<i>World Bank, 2024l</i>), offer a window into what could be possible. The cases of El Salvador (2005-2013) and Indonesia (2002-2004) offer historic examples of European governments (Spain and Germany, respectively) exchanging a country's debt obligations for education sector commitments, including investments in school construction and teacher training (<i>UNESCO, 2025c; 2025d</i>). More recently in 2024, the World Bank launched a program in Côte d'Ivoire to support the country to secure more favorable commercial loans and buy back higher-cost debts. Through this plan, the Bank estimates that approximately €330 million in resources could be freed up in Côte d'Ivoire over next five years, which could then be reinvested in education (<i>World Bank, 2024</i>).</p> <p>The Sevilla Platform for Action, launched during the recent International Conference on Financing for Development (June 2025), reveals growing commitment to debt for development in the coming years. Specifically, Spain and the World Bank launched a global Debt Swaps for Development Hub, while Italy committed to refinancing EUR 230 million of debt from African countries through a Debt-for-Development Swap Programme (<i>United Nations, 2025</i>).</p>



Term	Definition	Examples & Promises
Crisis Insurance/ Insurance-Backed Models	<p>A model where insurance is used to provide additional, pre-arranged financing for disasters and emergencies. Predominantly used to mitigate growing risks associated with climate change, insurance models include indemnity insurance, where policies pay out once a certain spending threshold has been reached, as well as parametric insurance, where payouts are triggered based on pre-defined thresholds that indicate a climate crisis (e.g., rainfall level, wind speed, etc.) (Chapagain, 2024; Glinskis & Murphy, 2025).</p>	<p>Example: Disaster Response Emergency Fund of the International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies (IFRC-DREF)</p> <p>Recognizing the growing frequency and associated costs of climate crises, IFRC-DREF partnered with Aon, a private insurance broker, to create an indemnity insurance policy for its fund in 2023. Under the policy, once DREF annual spending reaches a pre-agreed upon level, the insurance policy pays out to supply additional disaster-relief funds. The policy has up to 20 million in Swiss francs of contingency funding available per year, and has thus far paid out 10+ million in Swiss francs. IFRC aims to increase the policy to 100 million Swiss francs of annual contingency funding (Chapagain, 2024).</p>
Social Impact Bonds	<p>An outcomes-based financing strategy where investors provide upfront funding and receive a return on their investment only when a certain impact target is met. Social impact bonds are essentially a “pay-for-success” strategy to finance social policies and programs (OECD, n.d.)</p>	<p>Example: Quality Education India Development Impact Bond (QEI-DIB)</p> <p>Designed to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for 200,000+ children in India, QEI-DIB received \$3 million in upfront funding from the UBS Optimus Foundation, a private investor that committed to investing annually as long as target outcomes are met. Under similar outcomes-based conditions, four additional funders cover service delivery, and provide additional incentives if outcomes are exceeded (Osborne & Gustafsson-Wright, 2020).</p>

Term	Definition	Examples & Promises
Cash Transfers/ Assistance	A financing strategy used to provide direct support to individuals in contexts of crisis through cash, electronic or mobile money payments (e.g., payments sent via cell phones), and/ or vouchers. Cash assistance can be conditional, where funds must be used for certain items and/ or services, such as educational supplies or school fees, or unconditional, where funds can be used at the recipients' discretion (<i>IRC, 2018; Bailey & Harvey, 2015</i>).	<p>Example (Conditional): <u><i>Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) Programme for Syrians and Other Refugees</i></u></p> <p>CCTE aims to increase educational access for national and refugee students in Türkiye. Through a partnership with the Turkish Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of National Education, Turkish Red Crescent and UNICEF, the program provides bimonthly cash support to families on the condition that children attend school at least 80% of the time (<i>UNICEF, n.d.</i>).</p> <p>Example (Unconditional): <u><i>IRC's Unconditional Cash Relief Programming</i></u></p> <p>Drawing on evidence that unconditional cash transfers are an efficient and effective way to provide support in humanitarian emergencies, the IRC delivers cash relief to individuals across all operating locations. Payments are typically delivered through pre-paid vouchers or digital payments. IRC has provided payments specifically as a way to support refugees, or in response to certain climate events. For example 18,000 people were provided cash assistance in anticipation of droughts in Somalia (<i>IRC, 2024; IRC, 2025</i>).</p>

Challenges & Opportunities

Study findings point to inter-related challenges across three key dimensions: financial systems, coordination mechanisms, and sustainability concerns. These challenges are elaborated on here, followed by practical opportunities and successful models that offer insights for strengthening teacher compensation in crisis settings.

Financial Systems & Resource Distribution

Teacher Payment Disbursements

Disbursement of teacher payments faces significant logistical and security hurdles in crisis contexts, particularly around physically getting funds to teachers safely. Given the inherent insecurity of crisis contexts, a challenge that was top of mind for several KIs was the ability to safely and efficiently distribute physical payments to teachers. Limited banking infrastructure often requires risky cash transportation methods, while electronic payment systems face challenges with teacher registration



and identification. Referring to a past project where his agency paid teachers in the DRC, one donor described the security considerations involved in distributing salary funds:

"In the DRC, you actually had to go with the cash, and that was very dangerous, because you could be robbed. There were all these militias that were specifically in DRC that were really dangerous for this handling of money. You actually were flying out with money to the biggest part of the country, and you had guards with weapons guard the people carrying the money, and then you had to distribute it from these offices, and you had to get the teachers to come to the offices to get the money. So it was very cumbersome, and still is a very cumbersome way of doing this... And that's one of the reasons for the governments to be unable to provide this salary to teachers; it's so difficult to physically distribute, because the banking system doesn't work."

Another donor experienced challenges paying teachers in Afghanistan, as the banks were not aligned with the international SWIFT system. As a result, their agency flew cash into Pakistan, where it was transported by bus to Kabul, and from there distributed to teachers at the local level — in the words of an NGO KI, "a logistical nightmare."

Teachers may also have to miss a day or two of work every month when they are paid to go to the capital or another location to get their payment in person. The complicated logistics of paying teachers can lead to delayed payments and frustration among teachers. Delayed payments may also be caused by funds not being released at the donor or IP level or temporary interruptions between grants. Delayed disbursements might mean that teachers go weeks or months without pay, driving attrition. In a more extreme example, government teachers in South Sudan have not been paid in close to two years due to public financing and budgetary shortfalls. An NGO KI commented: *"In South Sudan... teachers are enrolled on payroll, but the money isn't disbursed."*

Administrative Processes and Donor-imposed Reporting Requirements

Another challenge several KIs identified for disbursing payments was around navigating burdensome administrative processes and donor-imposed reporting requirements for their implementing partners. Due to the high-risk levels associated with teacher salary payments, donors often require various financial compliance procedures, such as audits, third party verifications, and other forms of documentation. One NGO described how these processes can create inefficiencies and result in payment delays, which ultimately creates stress for teachers. Similarly, a donor noted that numerous administrative layers exist between the source of funds and the teachers. She argued that the levels of bureaucracy involved with paying teachers could exacerbate inequities,

particularly in highly dispersed and hard-to-reach areas where payment information may be difficult to obtain.

Adjacent to the issue of reporting is that of corruption. Two KIs noted the paradox around the need for efficiency and the reality that funds are often mismanaged in emergency settings, and in many cases, may not actually end up in the hands of teachers. This tension highlights the need to strike a balance between accountability and efficiency in order to ensure equitable and sustainable payments for teachers in crisis settings.

Currency Fluctuations and Devaluation

Currency fluctuations and devaluation significantly impact payment processes for those paid in local currencies, including teachers. This can lead to real wage losses, where the salary amount that teachers receive is far less than intended. On the other hand, restrictive payment policies and/or lack of knowledge that changes are possible often prevent adjustments to maintain purchasing power. Drawing on a recent site visit in Bangladesh, an NGO KI described the issue and its implications for teachers:

"With the currency fluctuation and devaluation in Bangladesh—because the salary scales are pegged and don't change when the currency changes—our teacher salaries that were previously the equivalent of \$115 a month were then decreased down to \$80 or \$85 a month. It wasn't a matter of not having money, because our budgets are coming in US dollars, so it's the local currency that's fluctuating. Their actual wage decreased relatively dramatically, 20-30%. When you're making around \$100 a month, it's quite hard to even fathom how somebody could live on that amount of money, let alone when you're cutting it.... It's sort of a normal state of affairs that you have these large currency swings in a lot of countries, especially now with everything that's going on, and the fact that you have these standard rates, but they're not flexible to take into account currency fluctuation is really a big problem."

The "policy doesn't flex... so salaries stay fixed even when the currency collapses." (NGO KI, Asia)

The issue of currency fluctuations is not isolated to Bangladesh; it happens all over the world, yet stakeholders rarely adjust salary scales in response (or at least not in a timely manner). For example, another NGO KI mentioned that the Syrian pound used to be ~550 to the dollar before dropping to ~10,000 to the dollar, meaning employees who had made \$1,000 a month would earn \$20-30. On the other hand, in contexts such as Afghanistan, where on one occasion the currency grew 30% stronger against the dollar, partners saw their purchasing power decrease as costing frameworks were standardized through the



de facto Ministry of Education. These realities further complicate the amount of funding that ultimately reaches teachers, and can also create inequities between teachers who may receive funding in USD and those who are paid in local currencies.

Weak Data & Information Systems

KIs discussed how weak data and information systems constrain their ability to pay teachers. A central part of planning for and distributing salaries is having knowledge of how many teachers are actively working in a given school, what their qualifications are, what they should be paid, and how to reach them. In crisis contexts, this data is not always accessible, and donors and other stakeholders are not able to ascertain necessary information to verify that teachers have been regularly paid the amounts they are supposed to receive.

A central issue to breakdowns in data systems is the concept of “ghost teachers” — i.e., teachers who are listed on the official payroll but do not exist in reality and/or are no longer working (an issue primarily for managing teachers in national systems). For instance, in Sierra Leone, a donor encountered an issue where there were many teachers on the payroll who had since left the profession or had never existed in the first place. Similarly, one donor agency requires audits to identify ghost teachers, and would find teachers drawing salaries for years who were only working a few hours a month or splitting their time between three schools in order to have a full teaching load. In the absence of pension systems, the issue of ghost teachers and teachers protecting one another may be more prevalent (see Brandt, 2018). Regardless of these underlying reasons, donors and other stakeholders are often reluctant to fund teachers due to risks of corruption and people “playing the system.” Without adequate data mechanisms to monitor what teachers exist and ensure those who are present are properly paid, donors experience huge inefficiencies in already constrained budgets.

Public Financial Management

Closely connected to challenges around ghost teachers and fund mismanagement are issues around public financial management processes and financial systems more broadly. KIs spoke of limitations in these systems that further impact teacher payment practices. One UN KI discussed the need to transfer the responsibility for refugee teachers’ salaries from the international community to domestic systems, while simultaneously expressing a lack of confidence in current national-level structures to be able to distribute and monitor salaries. A donor raised concerns around project budgets disappearing after being disbursed to national-level actors. Especially in decentralized systems, control is often given up as money is pushed out to local ministries, raising further complications in the absence of clear mechanisms to monitor and ensure accountability for financial flows. In a more promising example, the World Bank’s support to Ukraine provided support for 500,000 teachers through national systems. Ukraine’s

Ministry of Finance verified its payments of teachers' salaries and then sought reimbursement from the bank (See Box 1 for more details).

Box 1: Funding Education at Scale During War in Ukraine

Following Russia's invasion in February 2022, the government of Ukraine was forced to navigate how to preserve institutional capacity and maintain core functions of the state during a time of crisis and increasing economic instability. The World Bank-led Public Expenditures for Administrative Capacity Endurance (PEACE) project began two months after the invasion to support the Ukrainian government to maintain state capacity and to deliver services through the war (*World Bank, 2025c*). A core component of this project is funding the wages of Ukraine's education workforce (*World Bank, 2022d; 2024h*).

With the exception of a two-week hiatus in the wake of Russia's invasion, Ukrainian education services run by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) have largely continued during the war, with the government committing to maintain the continuity of teachers' salary payments. Anticipating that economic constraints from the war would impact their ability to cover these payments, the government preemptively requested financial support from the World Bank (*World Bank, 2022d*). The PEACE project works directly through the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to fund teacher salaries through a process where the MoF first pays salaries and presents verification to the World Bank, after which the bank provides reimbursement (*World Bank, 2023*).

PEACE is distinct from other projects outlined in this report due to the drastic **scale** of its financing, the broad **reach** of payments to teachers, and its **alignment** with national systems.

Scale of Financing: Originally funded for \$1.5 billion in 2022, PEACE has since gone through seven rounds of additional financing with an eighth round approved in December 2024 (*World Bank 2022d; 2024h; 2024i*). A total of \$36 billion USD has been committed to PEACE from the original project through the seventh round of financing, with an additional \$15 billion USD proposed for the eighth round of additional financing, which is set to go through December 2026 (*World Bank, 2024h*). As of April 2025, the total project cost for support to the government and school employees' wage bill was approximately \$15.6 billion USD (*World Bank, 2025d*). See below for a breakdown of the amounts reimbursed by PEACE specifically for school employees wages ⁶(2022-2024).

⁶ In addition to contributions from PEACE, the World Bank's Lifting Education Access and Resilience in times of Need (LEARN) in Ukraine program has provided approximately \$200M in yearly funding for teachers' salaries beginning in 2024, with a total of \$862.3M in projected funding allocated for teachers through 2027. The yearly support is capped at \$200M to avoid duplication with other teacher financing efforts, including PEACE (*World Bank, 2024k*).



School employee wages reimbursed by PEACE as of November 30, 2024:

Eligible Expenditure Category	2022	2023	2024*	Total
School employee wages (US millions)	\$1,901	\$2,302	\$1,553	\$5,756

*Figure only accounts for January - August, 2024. Table Adapted from: [World Bank, 2024h](#).

Teachers Reached: For the past three years, PEACE has funded the salaries of the majority of Ukraine's national teaching force, or approximately 500,000 teachers ([World Bank, 2022d; 2025d](#)). These teachers may be instructing through in-person, virtual, or blended learning modalities due to the complexity of the current crisis and their own displacement status ([World Bank, 2022d](#)). Monitoring mechanisms are built in to ensure wages reach teachers, and results indicate the majority are paid on time with no wage arrears ([World Bank, 2025d](#)).

Alignment with National Systems: Funding for PEACE is delivered entirely through the government of Ukraine, with the MoF serving as the implementing agency and implementation overseen by a Deputy Minister of Finance (World Bank, 2022d). The MoF coordinates with relevant ministries (including the MoES) and state-level administrations, and is also responsible for payment verification and oversight, leveraging data from the State Treasury System (STS). Ukraine's high-quality education system and functioning civil service before the war enabled these processes to take place smoothly. Given the scope of the financing and broad reach of payments to teachers, monitoring and evaluation of PEACE is a complex task that has been aided by the fact that Ukraine's public financial management systems have continued to function throughout the war (World Bank, 2022d; [2023](#)). Noting this, as the conflict intensified and the scope of PEACE became broader, additional consultants were brought in by the World Bank to provide implementation support to the MoF, while third-party auditors and end-user surveys were engaged to support with verification of expenditures and ensure payments were made in a timely manner (World Bank, 2023).

Due to these factors, the PEACE Project exemplifies a nearly unparalleled example where donors committed to funding salaries for a country's teaching workforce through government channels. While extraordinary in the support that it was able to provide, the conditions that made the PEACE project successful may be challenging to replicate elsewhere.

Teacher Management Systems

Teacher compensation practices are nested under broader teacher management systems, which determine processes for recruiting, deploying, training, and setting employment conditions for teachers (Bullard, 2024; Mendenhall, 2025; Mendenhall, Gomez and Varni, 2018). Several KIs spoke of overarching teacher management challenges that subsequently impacted teacher payment practices.

One issue is the rigidity of teacher management systems that make it challenging, if not impossible, to follow teachers across national boundaries or even across districts in decentralized education systems. Emergencies often trigger high levels of mobility, as teachers are either displaced internally or crossing borders as refugees. Systems that do not allow for continuity of payment or recognition of qualifications across locations impede their ability to work and secure a livelihood.

Additional teacher management issues were particularly prevalent when it came to integrating refugee teachers within national education systems. These challenges ranged from minor administrative barriers (e.g., examples where teachers' refugee identification numbers did not work in the Ministry of Education's system) to greater forms of systemic exclusion and geographical segregation (e.g. lack of the right to work or encampment policies that physically isolate refugees in remote areas). Examples from the latter category include national authorities refusal to recognize and validate the refugee teachers' qualifications acquired from national teacher training institutes in the host country (Kenya example), and an overall absence of pathways for refugee teachers to become integrated on government payrolls (multiple contexts), largely due to a lack of political will, but also availability of funds. These challenges are further exacerbated in the absence of the right to work or ability to move freely in the host country. Despite differences in the scale of these barriers, all need to be addressed to ensure teachers can be adequately and fairly compensated.

Opportunities

To mitigate some of the risks associated with physical payments, KIs advocated for sending electronic or mobile payments to teachers. Mobile money and direct payment systems can improve efficiency and reduce burden on teachers compared to traditional payment methods.

These approaches, pending the context, may have their own complexities as well. Notably, ensuring that teachers are correctly registered within systems, have proper identification numbers, and have access to electronic platforms are key. Refugee teachers may face additional challenges accessing these systems if they are excluded from purchasing and registering a SIM card or creating a mobile money wallet due to legal status and lack of required documentation. Alternatives may be needed to facilitate their access (e.g., co-signers for registration paperwork). Clear guidelines are also needed to both understand and reduce possibilities of fraud through these approaches.

To mitigate currency fluctuations, support longer-term, harmonized approaches for compensating teachers, and facilitating national government oversight of payroll, all teachers would need to be paid in the local currency. Although most KIs did not offer specific strategies for countering currency fluctuations, steps could be taken to ensure flexible budgeting that allows IPs to: access pre-approved salary adjustment protocols based on exchange rate movements (e.g., assessed through purchasing power parity or other appropriate measures) and/or the establishment of contingency funds (with a 5-10% buffer) in every grant



for exchange rate losses, including clear guidelines for accessing reserve funds. Currency fluctuations would need to be managed and mitigated by the donor risk management mechanisms and not passed on to teachers. These approaches, which align with several guiding principles for EiEPC financing (including the need for “faster” and more “adaptive” financing; see INEE, 2025), would need to be further vetted and debated with donors, and humanitarian and development actors would have to commit to paying teachers in the local currency.

While financial management and corruption issues exist and are widely viewed as intractable, these problems should not be used as an excuse to avoid paying teachers. For instance, donors could work with national governments towards long-term goals of reducing system inefficiencies in order to maximize the fiscal space and increase domestic budget availability for teacher salaries. Given the resource and time intensive nature of these strategies, however, short-term reforms such as ensuring salary harmonization across IPs may need to be prioritized. Technology solutions can also be leveraged to enable better tracking and verification of teacher payments through real-time monitoring systems, which would help to build donor confidence in these efforts.

Box 2: Teacher Payment Crisis and Refugee Integration Challenges

Chad’s education sector has faced substantial challenges in its efforts to not only pay its own teachers, but also in integrating refugee teachers into their national system. These challenges have been primarily due to the lack of funding available and allocated for education in the government budget. Particularly in refugee settings, teachers are paid through a variety of funding from international donors, while also being largely dependent on parent contributions (Mendenhall & Hough, 2024). The Chadian government faces acute challenges in teacher compensation, especially in regions affected by crisis and displacement. The government’s chronic underfunding has led to a heavy reliance on parents and international partners to pay teacher salaries, particularly for community teachers who make up 76% of the primary teaching workforce. Nearly 80% of these teachers lack formal training, further impacting education quality. Since 2015, the government has been unable to pay community teachers, resulting in widespread school closures—such as the closure of 109 community schools in Lac province in 2018—when alternative funding was not secured. Parent-teacher associations have stepped in, providing resources that, in some years, outstrip government and NGO contributions combined.

Refugee education presents both challenges and promising practices. Chad hosts over 463,000 refugees, more than half of whom are children. Since 2014, the government has worked to integrate refugee camp schools into the national system, culminating in official state school status for these schools in 2018. This allows both refugee and Chadian children to access the national curriculum and exams, promoting social cohesion and educational continuity. However, the integration of refugee teachers into the national system remains

incomplete due to limited resources for salaries and training. While many refugee teachers have been admitted to teacher training colleges and earned formal teaching qualifications in both the primary and secondary education (Mendenhall & Hough, 2024), the lack of funding for their salaries undermines retention and quality. These teachers continue to be paid by UN and I/NGO partners.

Coordination structures, such as the Education Cluster and Refugee Education Working Group, have helped align humanitarian and development responses, but the effectiveness of these efforts is constrained by the persistent lack of resources for teacher pay and professional development. Recent reports recommend prioritizing investment in teacher compensation and capacity-building, with increased donor support, to ensure sustainable education for both Chadian and refugee children. Without addressing teacher pay, gains in access and integration risk being reversed, particularly in crisis-affected areas.(Mendenhall & Hough, 2024; St. Arnold *et al.*, 2023).

Coordination and Salary Harmonization

Effective coordination across donors, implementing partners, and national governments is a persistent challenge in crisis contexts, and multiple KIs raised it as an issue in this study. Insufficient or poor coordination hampers short- and long-term planning for teacher compensation, contributing to duplication of efforts, contradictory policies and practices that lead to teacher attrition, and missed opportunities for successful exit and handover strategies. The latest sector upheavals are further complicating coordination as projects are ending abruptly and community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs, in particular, are withdrawing from some locations, resulting in a loss of local-level networks.

Salary Harmonization among Implementing Partners

Coordination challenges for teacher compensation are most prevalent around the issue of salary harmonization. While some KIs described existing pay rate disparities within national contexts based on location (e.g., teachers in urban vs. rural settings) and educational providers (e.g., teachers working in public vs. private school settings), for the most part, responses focused on the tensions between humanitarian-development actors themselves and in relation to national pay scales.

The lack of coordinated and aligned payment approaches among humanitarian and development actors and national systems creates inequitable and fragmented compensation structures and undermines sustainability. International stakeholders are often working in the same locations, with similar teacher profiles, to achieve shared goals, yet end up paying teachers different amounts and creating tensions in the absence of harmonized payment frameworks.



Despite recent efforts to harmonize teacher pay in some settings (Mendenhall, 2024), KIs alluded to uneven progress. Implementing partners in Kenya's refugee camps make monthly teacher payments within a defined range set by the Kenyan government, which can vary considerably—from approximately 6,000 to 15,000 Kenyan Shillings per month. While this range may reflect different rates based on teacher profiles, qualifications, and displacement status (e.g. unqualified refugee teachers paid incentives or qualified national teachers), and/or education level (primary vs. secondary), different NGOs may pay different rates for the same teacher profile, creating instability among teaching personnel as teachers look for the higher paying opportunity (NGO KI, 2025).

In Myanmar, different donors set their own compensation rates and as a result, one key informant saw some actors paying teacher incentive amounts that were 3-4x higher than others. While this approach might be the result of budgetary disruptions in the sector and have different financial implications for the range of organizations working in these settings, these practices will inevitably lead to teacher turnover and teacher workforce instability. As one KI noted: 'when donors are paying different rates across projects, disruptions can occur as teachers start "following the money" to job opportunities that will provide the highest wages. A donor KI also captured the confusion that results from these approaches: *"Even though we are offering different types of remuneration and we can justify them according to the system, we should acknowledge that we are creating...confusion, and we can create distortions because of that.... So, I think that there is a double-edged sword with this approach, and we are very much aware of it."*

Coordination between Humanitarian-Development Actors and National Systems

The lack of coordination between humanitarian-development actors often extends to interactions with stakeholders in national education systems, raising similar issues around teacher movement, and broader implications for the sustainability and stability of teacher payments when international actors ultimately withdraw.

A shared concern across these findings is the reality that government pay rates are very low, especially in refugee settings. As a result, INGOs experience tensions between standardizing rates to avoid disruptions to national systems and ensuring sustainable transitions post-project vs. a desire to pay teachers livable wages when they have the means to do so.

KIs explained that international stakeholders tend to pay higher incentive rates than government pay scales, which often leads teachers to leave the national education system and seek employment in NGO-led education spaces. In Ethiopia, teachers who remain in the national system often feel discouraged and unmotivated when they compare their own low salaries to those of their counterparts who are paid far more by NGOs, especially when they are employed in similar positions with similar qualification levels.

On the other hand, INGOs that attempt to align their rates to government pay scales can face backlash from teachers who feel they are being paid too little. For example, one NGO shared that in Ethiopia, UNHCR works with the national government and the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) to set a standardized pay scale that implementing agencies are required to follow. Despite this, some agencies increase their incentive rates without approval, putting pressure on those who follow the low, government-backed pay rate. The NGO KI described the internal challenges that stem from being torn between wanting to adhere to coordinated rates and understanding that low payments prevent teachers from attending school and disrupt learning processes.

Another NGO explained that whether payment decisions are made based on what constitutes livable wages vs. adhering to a government rate affects the exit process post-project. If wages are increased and “another local actor has to pick it up again, then they might not be able to afford that amount.” For this reason, one NGO KI stated that they generally choose to adhere to government rates in order to ease handovers back to local stakeholders. In contrast, a donor KI challenged the notion of paying teachers rates based on the available resources in a given context. Citing the case of South Sudan, she questioned: “government teachers didn't receive salaries for months, so what does that mean for us? Should we stop paying those who are working for us because their colleagues working for the government do not receive salaries?” While extreme, this example illustrates the ethical questions donors and implementing partners consider when making decisions around coordination practices. To further illuminate the complexities of this issue, another study in Myanmar depicts efforts by community teachers to increase their low wages to align with government teacher salaries (Zaw Lat et al., 2025), showing the contextual nuances that need to be understood across different settings.

KIs further noted the equity implications of paying teachers different rates, and the subsequent interpersonal conflicts that could emerge between different profiles of teachers as a result. Examples include: heightened tensions between refugee and host communities due to different pay rates; creating conflicts between colleagues who work in the same school, with similar qualification levels, yet are paid different amounts by different stakeholders; teachers leaving the government system in order to seek NGO contracts, creating educational discontinuity in communities, and so on.

Payment sustainability post-project emerged as another primary concern. According to KIs, ultimately, the responsibility of paying teachers lies in the hands of national governments. They will be the ones responsible for paying and managing teachers once international stakeholders withdraw from a context. Often, projects are conceptualized with short-term perspectives in mind and can fail to consider long-term solutions.

These distortions ultimately affect long-term planning and handover efforts with national governments. Teacher pay offered by UN



agencies and NGOs is often higher than government pay scales, which compromises the transfer of responsibility back to governments that are unable to match those wages. Teachers may have also grown accustomed to higher wages and find it challenging to manage pay cuts, though other benefits (e.g., pensions) may make up for those losses.

Opportunities

Strong coordination mechanisms between donors, implementing partners, and governments are essential for effective teacher compensation, particularly around harmonizing payment scales and approaches. Multi-stakeholder engagement is critical for developing sustainable solutions and addressing compensation challenges holistically. International actors should also coordinate closely with national stakeholders from the beginning to mitigate these challenges as much as possible. The more involved national education authorities are in the decision-making process from the beginning (e.g., teacher recruitment, deployment), the easier transitions will be in the future (Mendenhall & Richardson, 2024), especially when it involves a handover from IPs to national governments.

Teacher unions (where they exist) should also be part of these deliberations. Stakeholders working with different teacher profiles (i.e., refugee teachers) who may not have immediate access to unions should seek alternative democratic structures to incorporate teacher input in coordination processes. Education actors should support efforts to create new unions or other professional associations that represent diverse teacher profiles where they do not exist. Through engagement with humanitarian and development actors, long-standing or newly created unions or other democratic structures for teachers will increasingly be able to advocate for the shared and distinct needs of different teacher profiles working in a particular context. These efforts would contribute toward stronger humanitarian-development alignment and the push across the education sector for transparency and accountability (GPE, 2024d). **Box 3** describes salary harmonization efforts in Cox's Bazar across different teacher profiles.

In another example, a donor shared how inter-agency coordination within a given context positively impacted their teacher payment decisions: “We are always saying that we are willing to compensate teachers, provided that this is part of the agreed coordinated mechanism.” In these cases, the presence of coordinated payment mechanisms can serve as an enabling factor for donors’ teacher compensation practices. In contexts where mechanisms do not exist, donors would want to see them created, preferably not through their own funding.

Finally, education stakeholders should utilize INEE’s *Guidance Note on Teacher Compensation in Fragile States, Situations of Displacement and Post-Crisis Recovery*, which includes practical and relevant considerations for managing and/or supporting teacher compensation today. IPs can utilize the guidance note, and domain-specific guiding questions, to bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss teacher compensation

policies and practices. Donors could encourage their IPs to employ this tool as part of project planning and implementation exercises. The guidance note is not meant to be prescriptive, and local education actors should have the opportunity to further contextualize this tool for the local setting.

Box 3: Education for Rohingya Refugees and Host Communities in Bangladesh

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, hosts one of the world's largest Rohingya refugee populations. An ECW-funded Multi-Year Resilience Project (MYRP) provided financial support to teachers in Cox's Bazaar in order Rohingya and other marginalized communities could continue to have access to education. The initial phase of the MYRP project ran from 2018 to 2020 with ongoing support provided as needed. Implemented by UNICEF, Save the Children, UNESCO, UNHCR, and local NGOs, the programme operates in close coordination with the Government of Bangladesh through their Joint Response Plan (JRP). Although working closely with the government of Bangladesh, funds for this project were channeled through implementing partners rather than the government due to the need for a rapid and coordinated response to the situation on the ground.

In order to boost teacher morale and decrease the amount of teacher turnover, ECW and its partners introduced an initiative aimed at harmonizing pay scales across all teacher profiles working in the area. This ensured fair and consistent compensation for both Rohingya community teachers (often volunteers or para-teachers) and host community teachers (including government-employed and NGO-contracted staff). The harmonization scale was determined through Education Sector minimum standards, and while they were not necessarily mirrored to the government pay scale, it allowed for consistency between implementing partners.

In addition to teacher payments, the MYRP invested in teacher training, standardized learning materials, and ongoing professional development, including in-service coaching, and peer-support networks.

Sustainability and Transition Planning

Donors are loath to support teacher compensation due to concerns about sustainability and who will assume responsibility when project funding comes to end. If national governments are already struggling to cover these expenses, donors expressed concerns about how they will be able to take over this responsibility in the future. The recurrent nature of teacher pay is unappealing to donors. One donor noted, *"teachers are this intervention that can never stop,"* and donors would rather have *"at least part of that be taken care of by the government, and [donors] will be doing more education investments than recurring funding."*



"Teachers are this intervention that can never stop."
(Donor KI)

External financing is also unpredictable, as we witnessed in the latest wave of disruptions incited by the Trump administration's decimation of USAID and its residual effects on the sector. Shifting domestic policy and spending priorities in other major donor countries further compound these effects (UNESCO, 2025). Reflecting on the context in Afghanistan, one NGO KI stated: *"When USAID funding ended... everyone was laid off very quickly and suddenly."* Another NGO KI in Kenya hypothesized about the impact of losing donor funding: *"If the [donor-funded] project ended today... those refugee teachers will go home."* In addition to these larger sector disruptions, short-term project-based funding cycles also create instability. Teachers (of all profiles) lose their jobs when projects end, and there is no transition strategy in place.

In settings where the government has agreed to a transition/handover plan, they are not always prepared to continue paying teachers and/or may be reluctant to absorb project-funded teachers. In instances when the Ministry of Education has agreed to a handover plan, the Ministry of Finance may not be prepared to financially support these expenses (a reality not limited to EiEPC handover situations). In more cynical scenarios, handover goals were never realistic. One donor KI shared: *"We all understand that this is not going to happen, and then we just put it in the document to make ourselves feel better. If the government could have taken those teachers, there would be no reason for us to intervene in the first place."*

"Even if you get buy-in, it doesn't mean governments will keep paying salaries." (NGO KI)

Opportunities

Teacher compensation must be viewed through a systems perspective, focusing on government alignment and sustainable transitions rather than temporary measures when at all possible. Donors and their partners need to engage in long-term planning, including clear transition strategies, when providing teacher pay to avoid dependency and ensure sustainability. One NGO KI stated: *"Having a long-term plan [is needed], and also having a good understanding of the whole landscape of teacher remuneration in the country. That also helps to understand why the teachers in the target area were not being supported, and potentially also identifying some opportunities or pathways towards recognition or getting [them] on the payroll."* Another Donor KI stated: *"It's thinking of whatever support we offer, that we're keeping in mind the system perspective—the idea that this is a temporary measure, but that ultimately we're working with the government, we're working with the system."*

Systemic solutions have historically faced challenges within the educational development space, as they require a great deal of collaboration across diverse stakeholders and the ability to work

iteratively and flexibly, adapting beyond one-size-fits-all solutions (*Faul & Savage, 2023*). This can be inherently at odds with traditional, linear models preferred by donors and policy stakeholders (Faul & Savage, 2023). KIs described further barriers to systems perspectives, such as parallel systems that emerge due to aid architecture, fragility and economic instability, and challenges around working with de facto authorities in contested political environments, all of which can cut out national-level stakeholders.

Noting these complexities, systems perspectives should still be explored as important avenues for supporting teachers, yet it is also important not to underestimate the time and attention needed to engage in these approaches. The experience of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in Cambodia reveals a positive example of collaboration between a donor and domestic stakeholders, but also a lengthy one that may still require ongoing support and engagement (see **Box 4**).

Box 4: Long-term Donor Engagement in Cambodia

Sida's support to education in Cambodia spanned 20 years, from 2001-2020. Teacher compensation support prioritized teachers working in remote and rural areas, with a particular focus on marginalized populations, in order to expand access to education in the country more broadly. Through direct support of the central government, Sida primarily supported teachers on the government payroll with an emphasis on teachers working with ethnic minorities and children with disabilities.

Throughout this 20-year period, Sida's approach to supporting teacher compensation was through direct budgetary support of the government. Partnering with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, as well as with UNICEF and other multilateral partners, Sida's financial support of the national education budget enabled the central government to better ensure the payment of government teachers' salaries. In addition to this direct budgetary support, Sida advocated for systems strengthening reforms in order to reduce corruption and ensure that teachers received their salaries regularly and on-time. Sida also supported payment system reforms and payroll management capacity building. This emphasis on direct budgetary support and system strengthening set the foundation for a sustainable exit strategy at the project's end so that Sida could successfully handover the financial cost and institutional coordination surrounding teacher compensation to the Cambodian government.

Upon the project's closure, Sida was able to successfully handover the mechanisms put in place, largely because of their investment in coordinating closely with the central government from the beginning, and ensuring that the national system strengthened its capacity to sustain these systems. Despite



this successful handover, ongoing challenges persist for maintaining access to high quality education, and Sida has emphasized the crucial need for the Cambodian government's continued investment in these systems in order to maintain and build on these achievements.

Reference: Millard, A. S., Dolf Noppen, L. T., & Džihic, Z. K. (2022). *Cambodia Case Study. Case Study report prepared as part of the Evaluation of Sida's Support to Education: Lessons Learned from 20 years and 5 countries*. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/08/22084853/EVA2022_1a_62524en.pdf

Another system-strengthening example comes from GPE's engagement in Somalia. Through a partnership compact, a transitional plan was put into place through which government authorities would gradually assume increasing responsibility for paying its teachers. Somalia appears to be making steady progress toward assuming full responsibility (see **Appendix 2** for more details), but again this example depicts long-term engagement by a multilateral donor. It is also important to note that the World Bank had already been financing activities for several years in Somalia to improve service delivery, public finance management, domestic revenue, and expenditure management. A donor KI commented specifically on the Somalia case, noting the importance of engaging the Ministry of Finance, in addition to the Ministry of Education, because they can show you the broader political and economic implications of decisions you might be making in the education sector, including different scenarios if there is not a clear transition strategy and handover plan in place with the government. Partnership with the MoF was particularly important in the case of GPE's involvement in Somalia as it enabled teachers' salaries to be included as a line item within the 2024 national budget passed by parliament. As a result, before donors provided initial funding for teachers, they were guaranteed that domestic funds would be available to transition teachers' salaries to the national payroll (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2024). (See **Box 5** for more information.)

Box 5: GPE & The World Bank in Somalia: Teacher Recruitment, Payroll Integration, and Systems Strengthening

The case of Somalia exemplifies instances where global stakeholders have collaborated with national system actors to support teachers' recruitment, payroll integration, and strengthen the civil servant payment systems more broadly. Two notable examples include GPE's partnership with Somalia, which includes a specific focus on teacher recruitment, and the World Bank's Recurrent Cost and Reform Financing Project (RCRF) project, which aims to support civil servant payments in the education sector and beyond and is in part funded by the World Bank led Somalia Multi-Partner Fund (MPF) (World Bank, 2025a).

GPE & Somalia

GPE's partnership with Somalia serves a promising practice of incentivizing teacher recruitment and payroll integration within the national education system. In their 2023 partnership compact, GPE and the Federal Government of Somalia outlined a plan to provide teacher salaries and incentives through combined donor and domestic financing efforts (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2023). Under *Output 2.1. Increased number of teachers deployed to public schools*, it was agreed that the government would recruit 3,000 teachers in 2023 (to be increased through 2026) and finance their salaries initially through donor financial support, with the goal of transferring them to the MOECHE's budget over the project duration (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2023). The partnership compact includes a results-based financing component to incentivize this transition. Specifically, it was proposed that 10% of the eligible allocation for the GPE System Transformation Grant (~\$8 million) would be awarded if the federal government retained and paid at least 90% of 2,600 newly recruited teachers from the MOECHE's budget by December 2024 (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2023).

The outlined plan to recruit and finance teachers was included within the GPE System Transformation Grant (approved in January 2024 for a duration of 36 months) where \$3 million was budgeted for donor funding to cover incentives for 3,000 teachers for five months (April – August 2024) at a rate of \$200 USD per month (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2024). These newly recruited teachers were then expected to be integrated within the MOECHE's budget beginning in September 2024, where they would be paid a monthly rate of \$330 per month, in line with the national pay scale. Funding for these teachers' salaries was included within the 2024 national budget passed by parliament, prior to the disbursement of donor funds. An additional \$150,000 of donor funding was budgeted to support overall recruitment and deployment processes for the 3,000 teachers (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2024). Prior to this, the government successfully recruited 2,616 teachers in 2023 and financed them from the national payroll at a rate of \$330 USD per month. These actions put the government on track to meet the top-up trigger and an additional 10% of the STG funding by December 2024 (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2024).

GPE's System Transformation Grant to Somalia also planned to provide \$5,000 capitation grants for up to 200 schools that could also be used for teachers' incentives (GPE & Government of Somalia, 2024, p.24)

The World Bank & Somalia

The World Bank leads multiple projects in Somalia and oversees the Somalia MPF, which is a mechanism where numerous bilateral stakeholders contribute funds that are then used in a coordinated manner for projects that meet the needs of the Federal Government of Somalia (World Bank, 2025a). Demonstrating the coordination benefits of a national-level pooled fund, the MPF had approximately 25 million in annual funding (Jan. - June 2024)



from top donors including Sida, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), FCDO, and NORAD (World Bank, 2024a).

One of the projects that has received funding from the MPF is the World Bank led Recurrent Cost and Reform Financing Project (RCRF) project, which is currently in its third iteration of additional financing (World Bank, 2025b). With the goal of improving service delivery within education and health sectors, this project primarily sits outside of the education sector and focuses on PFM, domestic revenue, and expenditure management reforms (World Bank, 2022a). A primary component of the RCRF is financing civil servants' salaries in Somalia, including teachers, on a declining scale until the government can assume responsibility for payments (World Bank, 2022a). Under the RCPF's prior iteration (Phase II), teacher salaries were financed under *Subcomponent 3.2.1. Teacher assessment and salary*; all teachers were required to take a literacy, numeracy, and pedagogy test to show "baseline teacher proficiency" before receiving payments (World Bank, 2018, pp. 24-25).

In a final example, the Rwandan government has been able to absorb not only refugee learners effectively into the national education system, but also refugee teachers, including taking over responsibility for their compensation (see **Box 6**).

Box 6: Refugee Education in Rwanda

Rwanda exemplifies a successful model of integrating refugee teachers onto a government's national payroll system. The Rwandan government has committed to including all refugee students in the national public education system and national education budget. This effort began to take root in 2015 when refugee students were newly allowed to enroll in their nearest local public school. Over the past decade, UNHCR and other organizations have invested significantly in supporting Rwanda's capacity to absorb refugee students into the national system and cover teacher pay for national and refugee teachers alike. This support came in the form of infrastructure building, systems strengthening, and teacher professional development.

A critical lesson in the case of Rwanda, is the importance of long-term trust-building and coordination between international organizations and national governments. UNHCR and other organizations' long-term presence and engagement in Rwanda's national education system is especially impactful in a landscape where education sector projects are largely short-term, making the establishment and implementation of clear transitions or handover especially difficult. This approach further incentivized continued coordination with a government that had already bought into the need for sustainable teacher compensation and access to education for all.

Reference: UNHCR. (2024, September). *Working with Ministries of Education: Good Practices from the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region*. UNHCR Africa.

Section 3: Cross-Cutting Tensions

The following cross-cutting tensions illustrate how current donor and government approaches to teacher compensation—though often well-intentioned—can inadvertently undermine the very systems they aim to strengthen. In particular, the growing reliance on communities and the raising of teachers' expectations without sustainable commitments are contributing to the further devaluation of the teaching profession in crisis-affected settings.

Growing Reliance on Community

When national governments are unable to compensate civil servants, including teachers who make up a sizable proportion of the national workforce, families and communities increasingly step in (Zaw Lat et al., 2025). In several interviews, KIs described families and communities in EiEPC settings as “donors” — contributing funds, housing, and even food to pay teachers and keep schools open. While this involvement reflects local commitment and resilience, it also reveals the fragility of public systems and the normalization of ad-hoc solutions where reliance on external, non-state actors (e.g., UN agencies and I/NGOs) makes it easier for governments to outsource their responsibility to pay teachers. In many EiEPC settings, similar to other low- and middle-income countries, communities shoulder more of the education burden than national (Homonchuk, Fraser & Lacroix, 2025), and are increasingly expected to do so. This growing reliance risks entrenching inequities among the most financially constrained households, and reinforces the idea that teaching—especially for marginalized or displaced populations—is a volunteer effort or a stopgap measure rather than a professional, salaried role worthy of state investment.

Raising Teacher Expectations without Guarantees

At the same time, donors and implementing partners often raise teachers' expectations through investments in training, certification, and short-term financial incentives. These efforts can improve teacher quality and recognition in the short term, especially among refugee and community teachers who have long been excluded from formal systems. However, without sustainable pathways to employment or integration into national payrolls, these interventions risk becoming hollow promises, sentiments shared by KIs. Teachers are left with new credentials but no job security, and many face abrupt loss of income when projects end. The mismatch between rising professional expectations and the absence of long-term employment prospects contributes to frustration and attrition,



while further weakening the credibility and consistency of the teaching profession. This is not to suggest that professional development and certification efforts should not continue. On the contrary, it requires a more comprehensive, systematic, and long-term approach that has not received the attention it deserves in EiEPC settings. Stakeholders supporting teacher professional development can also leverage their positions to engage in broader advocacy and systems strengthening work to increase long-term employment prospects for different profiles of teachers.

Compounding the Devaluation of Teaching

Taken together, these dynamics—growing dependence on communities to fill funding gaps and raising teachers’ expectations without sustainable commitments—compound the ongoing devaluation of teaching in crisis contexts. Rather than being seen and treated as essential, salaried professionals, teachers are positioned as expendable labor, expected to deliver quality education under precarious and often exploitative conditions in EiEPC (and other) settings. Their work is vital, yet undervalued. These trends not only jeopardize teacher retention and well-being but also undermine broader education system goals, as inconsistent compensation and workforce instability make it harder to provide inclusive, continuous learning for all children in crisis-affected settings.

Section 4: Recommendations

Tables 5-7 distills and categorizes key actions from the previous section for donors, implementing partners, and governments across short-, medium-, and long-term time horizons. The recommendations are further organized thematically and aim to capture both structural and programmatic interventions needed to improve teacher compensation in crisis contexts. While the majority of the recommendations indicate efforts to strengthen national governments' abilities to assume and maintain responsibility for teacher pay, improvements are also directed at IPs operating through parallel structures.

Table 5: Short-term Time Horizon

Recommendations in this category could be addressed immediately to improve the coordination and efficiency of practices largely led by international stakeholders. These actions could help to improve the short-term conditions of teachers while the groundwork is laid for longer-term (and more resource-intensive) reforms that would strengthen the overall sustainability of teacher compensation.

Theme	Recommendation	Primary Actor(s)
Coordination & Harmonization	Prioritize salary harmonization across agencies and align with national pay scales to reduce competition, mitigate inequities, and minimize teacher attrition.	Donors, IPs, Governments
	Leverage education cluster, local education groups, and/or other working group coordination mechanisms to develop agreed incentive frameworks that lay the groundwork for handover to national authorities.	Donors, IPs, Cluster and Working Group Leads
	Involve teacher unions (or equivalent democratically elected professional associations) that reflect diverse teacher profiles and local education actors in compensation planning and standard-setting.	Governments, IPs
	Utilize the INEE Guidance Note on Teacher Compensation in Fragile States, Situations of Displacement and Post-Crisis Recovery (and other teacher compensation-related advocacy tools) to facilitate improved practices across education stakeholders.	Governments, IPs, Cluster Leads



Theme	Recommendation	Primary Actor(s)
	Update the Guidance Note in alignment with the newly updated INEE Minimum Standards.	INEE
Recognition & Support	Continue providing non-monetary/in-kind support for all teacher profiles to offset low wages, remote placements, etc. (e.g., housing, transportation, etc.)	Governments, IPs

Table 6: Medium-term Time Horizon

Recommendations in this category require more planning and greater investments than those in the short-term category. Stakeholders should consider what steps are needed to realize these recommendations and begin planning for them.

Theme	Recommendation	Primary Actor(s)
Data Systems	Ensure teacher compensation is tracked in joint needs assessments, education sector planning efforts, and fundraising proposals to both improve visibility of this issue and to support evidence-based decision-making.	Donors, IPs, Governments
Payment Systems & Administrative Processes	Scale up use of mobile money and direct electronic payments to reduce delays, burdens, and security risks associated with cash disbursements.	Donors, IPs, National Governments, Private Sector
	Ensure all teachers are registered with ID and banking/mobile systems to enable smooth and verified digital payments. Explore alternatives for refugee teachers who may not have the same access.	Governments, IPs
	Invest in digital technologies to monitor teacher pay disbursements and ensure accountability.	Donors, IPs
	Establish policies and/or protocols for addressing currency fluctuations that mitigate disruptions to teachers' take-home pay. Examples include: pre-approved salary adjustment protocols, and accessible contingency funds in every grant for exchange rate losses.	Donors, IPs, Governments
	Explore strategies to maintain financial oversight without excessive administrative burdens that delay teacher payments.	Donors

Theme	Recommendation	Primary Actor(s)
Strategic Financing Approaches	Explore pooled funding and global, regional and/or national mechanisms to provide more sustainable, multi-year support for teacher compensation in emergencies.	Donors, Multilaterals (ECW, GPE, WB)
Recognition & Absorption	Leverage teacher professional development support to engage in broader advocacy and systems strengthening work that leads to long-term employment prospects for different profiles of teachers.	Governments, IPs
	Facilitate refugee teachers' access to certification and formal teacher status to ensure eligibility for national payroll (in tandem with right to work advocacy efforts).	Governments, UNHCR, Donors
	Reduce administrative barriers (e.g., ID system issues) that prevent integration of refugee and community teachers into national systems.	Governments, IPs
Planning for Transitions & Sustainability	Develop clear transition plans at project inception, outlining how and when national governments will assume responsibility.	Donors, Governments, IPs

Table 7: Long-term Time Horizon

Recommendations in this category require an extended period of time to bring to fruition. While described as long-term recommendations, stakeholders should consider what actions are needed in the short- and medium-term to realize these reforms and begin laying the groundwork to take action.

Theme	Recommendation	Primary Actor(s)
Financial Planning & Management	Advocate for and support national governments to reform public financial management systems to improve transparency and minimize leakage as it pertains to teacher payments and other education expenses.	Donors, Governments
	Invest in system strengthening over multiple years, including payroll capacity building, PFM reform, and fiscal decentralization.	Donors, Governments
	Support teacher salary inclusion in national budgets before donor disbursements (e.g., Somalia model).	Donors, Governments



Theme	Recommendation	Primary Actor(s)
	Consider alternative and/or innovative finance tools (e.g., debt swaps, crisis insurance, domestic reforms to mobilize top-down funding; and capitation grants, cash assistance to offset costs at the school/community level and reduce burdens on parents/families) where appropriate.	Donors, Governments
Data Systems	Strengthen EMIS and payroll systems to address inactive teachers*, track attendance, and verify payment eligibility. *taking note that complementary efforts may be needed to support teacher retirees in the absence of a functional pension system.	Donors, IPs, Governments
	Link teacher data systems across ministries (e.g., MoE and MoF) and local levels for coordinated oversight.	Governments
Political Commitment & Engagement	Engage Ministries of Education and Finance early and consistently in teacher pay reforms and transition planning (e.g., Somalia example).	Donors, Governments
	Promote political buy-in through sustained donor presence, trust-building, and clear incentive structures for government ownership (e.g., Rwanda case).	Donors, UN Agencies, Governments

Global Fund for Teachers' Salaries: Benefits and Concerns

This study also explored the feasibility and potential value of creating a **global fund** to support teacher pay in crisis-affected contexts. The United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession Recommendation 54 calls on the international community to "*establish a Global Fund for Teachers' Salaries to provide support for the sufficient, timely, and regular payment of salaries of teachers working in crisis-affected contexts for similar situations of threat or vulnerability*" (ILO, 2024, p.12).

The concept of a global fund was met with a mix of cautious optimism and strong skepticism by the KIs interviewed. While the idea acknowledges the pressing need to stabilize and sustain teacher compensation in crisis-affected contexts, most KIs—including donors, UN agencies, INGOs, and coordination bodies—highlighted substantial practical and political concerns.

Of 25 KIs consulted, only 7 (2 donors and 5 UN/NGO actors) saw clear potential in the proposal. These stakeholders emphasized the chronic instability teachers face due to project-based cycles and inconsistent humanitarian financing. They argued that a dedicated fund could provide long-term, predictable support, help retain teachers in critical times, and foster momentum around a neglected issue. Some also noted that such a mechanism could enable donors—particularly those not currently funding salaries—to engage with clearer structures and safeguards, potentially boosting overall sector collaboration.

However, the majority of KIs expressed serious reservations. Many cited the current upheaval in the aid sector—including declining ODA levels and increasing donor fatigue—as making the launch of a new fund highly unrealistic. Several donors and NGOs warned of fund proliferation, arguing that adding another mechanism could fragment the field further and detract from efforts to strengthen or consolidate existing platforms like GPE and ECW.

A recurring theme was concern over the implications for national education systems. Numerous KIs feared that externalizing teacher pay (more than it already is) could inadvertently weaken government responsibility, foster dependency, or spark political backlash—particularly if decisions about teacher selection, payment, or oversight were made outside local structures. These concerns were particularly acute regarding potential neocolonial dynamics and the risks of bypassing national sovereignty.

Operational feasibility was also a major barrier. KIs questioned how such a fund would be administered, how disbursements would reach teachers in fragile or contested areas, and whether it would result in equitable, conflict-sensitive support. There was little consensus on what teacher profiles would be eligible (e.g., refugee, government, community, volunteers), how long the support should last, or how to ensure effective transitions between emergency and development phases.

Some made alternative suggestions, including embedding a teacher salary window within existing funds, developing crisis modifiers within national budget support frameworks, or simply expanding direct support. Yet even these were seen as politically sensitive and administratively complex.

While the idea of a global fund for teacher pay resonates with many as an urgent and under-addressed issue, the feasibility of implementing such a mechanism remains doubtful. Without significant innovation, high-level consensus, and careful integration with national systems, the majority of KIs saw the risks of inefficiency, duplication, and political harm outweighing the benefits. **Table 8** outlines the high-level benefits and concerns shared by study participants.



Table 8: Global Fund for Teacher Pay - Benefits & Concerns

Potential Benefits	Key Concerns
Long-term Stability	Current Aid Landscape
Addresses payment gaps from short-term project cycles	Major donors reducing ODA amid funding uncertainty
<i>"[Creating] stability for teachers whilst being within a project cycle is very hard...having something like a global fund definitely offers advantages there." - NGO KI</i>	<i>"With the USA being decimated, who was the largest donor to education, and then the UK saying that they're going to reduce aid...I don't see right now that there would be a climate for this among the traditional donors." - Donor KI</i>
Potential Benefits	Key Concerns
Enhanced Collaboration	Fund Proliferation
Could reduce implementation burden on individual donors	Concerns about creating another funding mechanism
<i>"[A global fund could] take that burden out of all of our hands by creating baseline support for teachers." - Donor KI</i>	<i>"There are too many funds out there. Especially in the current context, we really need to consolidate." - Donor KI</i>
Potential Benefits	Key Concerns
Economic Impact	National System Dependency
Supporting teachers could strengthen local economies	Risk of undermining government responsibility
<i>"[Supporting teachers could] inject more money into the economy, potentially building a middle class." - UN KI</i>	<i>"Creating a global fund for teachers' salaries might send a message that there is global money available, leaving governments to focus on other priorities." - Donor KI</i>

Potential Benefits	Key Concerns
Momentum Building	Sovereignty & Neocolonialism
Addresses overlooked but critical issue	Concerns about external control over core state functions
<i>"[Paying teachers is] an important issue, and often in disasters, it's overlooked. People see the children but don't see the teachers." - Donor KI</i>	<i>"That invites neocolonialism from the donors...it's a lose, lose, lose proposition - lose for the teachers, lose for the country...and you're increasing the fragility of the system." - Donor KI</i>
Potential Benefits	Key Concerns
Structural Support	Implementation Complexity
Provides mechanisms for donors who haven't paid teachers	Questions about administration and disbursement
<i>"Even if we wanted to fund teacher salaries today, I'm not sure that we know how we would even go about it...having some kind of structure would help." - Donor KI</i>	<i>"If a country cannot manage it, how will a donor at a global-level manage 40,000 teachers?" - Donor KI</i>
Potential Benefits	Key Concerns
Measurable Results	Practical Feasibility
Concrete outcomes donors can communicate	Multiple KIs questioned if it could actually work
<i>"It's something very concrete and maybe easy to show results, because you can then easily say how many teachers that have been supported." - Donor KI</i>	<i>"It's so layered to actually do this...it makes the idea of a global fund feel far removed from the reality on the ground." - Donor KI</i>



Section 5: Conclusion

The research findings underscore the urgent need for more systematic, equitable, and sustainable approaches to teacher compensation in crisis-affected settings. At a time when teachers are expected to deliver inclusive, high-quality education under extraordinarily difficult conditions, the current patchwork of short-term, externally-driven funding streams is not only insufficient—it is unsustainable. The study highlights critical areas for continued investment: stronger advocacy to prioritize teacher pay in both humanitarian and development agendas, the generation of robust evidence to demonstrate the value of investing in teachers, and the development of coherent global frameworks and accountability mechanisms for teacher compensation. Systematic data collection and cross-agency mapping efforts—across all teacher profiles—will be essential to understanding existing payment practices and identifying models that work.

Yet, these efforts must contend with a dramatically shifting aid landscape (UNESCO, 2025a). As multiple stakeholders noted, the sector is in crisis, marked by severe funding cuts, abrupt project terminations, and growing uncertainty about the future of donor support. Within this context, a number of cross-cutting tensions have emerged. Growing reliance on communities to cover education costs (Homonchuk, Fraser & Lacroix, 2025), including paying teachers, in the absence of sufficient government resources and donor support, and the raising of teacher expectations through temporary projects with no pathway to further professionalization and employability, may inadvertently contribute to the continued devaluation of the teaching profession. These dynamics threaten to weaken education systems further, especially where handover and transition plans are absent or unrealistic.

Still, moments of disruption can also be moments of possibility. If approached strategically, this crisis could serve as a catalyst for rethinking how teacher compensation is prioritized, financed, and coordinated (while also noting that teacher compensation is part of a larger financial system that requires attention). Donors, implementing partners, and national governments must collectively adopt a systems lens—one that emphasizes long-term planning, coordination with national education and finance authorities, and meaningful engagement with teachers themselves. Most critically, the sustainability of teacher compensation systems may ultimately depend on national governments being able to assume an expanded role, with donors providing time-bound support. Only through coordinated, transparent, and politically committed action can we ensure that teachers—particularly those on the frontlines of crisis—are paid fairly, consistently, and with the dignity they deserve.

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Appendix 1: Study Methodology (Expanded)

Initial Study Design

Prior to officially beginning data collection, we engaged in preliminary efforts to inform the design and methodology of this study. Specifically, we: (i) conducted a review of the scholarly and grey literature; (ii) held informal conversations with stakeholders knowledgeable about education finance and/or donor practices across the humanitarian-development nexus; and (iii) established an expert advisory group to guide us in through the study. Collectively, these actions informed our understanding of the theoretical knowledge base and practical landscape surrounding teacher compensation in crisis contexts.

Literature Review

Drawing on intersecting bodies of knowledge related to the status of the teaching profession, teachers in emergency contexts, and education financing across the humanitarian-development nexus, we reviewed extant research to situate our study against an interdisciplinary base of scholarly and grey literature. This process primarily served to inform the overall study conceptualization, data collection tools, and data analysis plans. Moreover, findings from the literature review also fed into the background sections of this report.

Informational Conversations

We engaged in informational conversations for two distinct reasons: (i) to share knowledge with others conducting similar forms of research; and (ii) to gauge interest from potential study participants. These conversations dually served to inform donor representatives on the purpose of our research and deepen our understanding of the current realities facing the aid sector and impacting donors' practices around teacher compensation in the future.

Establishment of Advisory Group

Given the complex nature of teacher compensation in crisis contexts—which spans disciplines such as education, economics, and political science, among others—as well as uncertainties in the contemporary aid landscape, we assembled an expert advisory group to guide our work. Emanating from practitioner and academic backgrounds, the advisory

group consisted of individuals with expertise in key areas related to teachers, education, and education finance in crisis contexts. Advisory group members provided advice and feedback at the outset of the study to guide the research design and data collection tools, and reviewed the final draft.

Data Collection: Our Approach to Donor Mapping

We conducted three complementary, iterative phases of data collection to map donor practices related to teacher compensation in crisis contexts:

Phase 1: A semi-systematic desk review to identify education projects from major donors that have provided and/or currently provide funding for teacher payments.

Phase 2: Key informant interviews with representatives from major multilateral and bilateral donors, development banks, and private foundations known to fund education projects across the humanitarian-development nexus.

Phase 3: Key informant interviews with representatives from UN agencies and INGOs at the global, regional, and national levels who held knowledge of donor practices related to teacher compensation in emergency contexts.

Data collection took place over a four-month period from February-May 2025, followed by a period of data analysis from May-June, 2025. This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Teachers College, Columbia University in January 2025. All key informants received and were asked to sign informed consent forms, including participant's rights, prior to participating in interviews. All personal identifiers and organizational connections have been omitted from this report to preserve the confidentiality of our participants.

Phase 1: Donor Mapping Desk Review

Prior to beginning qualitative data collection, we conducted a desk review of donors' project databases to identify documented instances where donors and their implementing partners had provided some form of payment to teachers, or budgetary support to national governments to enable them to support their teaching workforce (see **Appendix 2** for the desk review findings). This stage helped us to understand the landscape and also informed targeted questions that we were able to ask specific donors during our key informant interviews.



Donor Sample Selection

We reviewed the databases of 14 major donors:

- BMZ & GIZ
- EU & ECHO
- LEGO
- DANIDA
- FCDO
- SIDA
- CIDA
- GPE
- NORAD
- ECW
- IrishAid
- World Bank

These donors were chosen due to their known involvement in funding education in development-humanitarian contexts, and in some cases, teachers. For the most part, this list mirrored our qualitative data sample.

Desk Review Search Strategy

While we aimed to conduct a semi-systematic review of donor databases, we found this to be impractical for a variety of reasons. At the outset, we discovered significant variations in how donors document, categorize, and store project information, which prevented us from employing a universal search strategy. In some instances, donors' project libraries contained thousands of entries with detailed documentation, while others contained very few details of their projects. Each of these cases presented unique challenges (see limitations section for further details).

As a result of these challenges, we leveraged different techniques across donor databases, but for the most part our search strategy followed some variation of the following steps:

1. Located a given donors' library of education projects/grants
2. Conducted keyword searches on project documents (e.g., teacher compensation, remuneration, salary/salaries, pay/paid, incentives, payroll, stipend, allowance, etc.)
3. Captured detailed information on projects where we found documented examples of teacher pay (e.g., lead donor, project duration, implementing partners, total funding amount, amount allocated to teachers, payment method, number of teachers paid, etc.)

We then triangulated the information found through our desk review with projects mentioned by donors during the qualitative data collection process to find additional examples and fill information gaps. Overall, we identified **25 projects** that provided some form of payment to teachers (these projects are located within **Appendix 2**).⁷

⁷ Note that this is by no means an exhaustive list of projects that provide funding to teachers. Given the limitations of the desk review process, there are likely projects that did not make it into this sample. These examples do, however, provide a snapshot of past donor practices around teacher compensation in emergency contexts, serving as a starting point for future research.

Phase 2: Donor Interviews

For the second phase of data collection, we conducted interviews with donors from multilateral and bilateral funding agencies, development banks, and philanthropic foundations. These interviews served as the primary form of data collection and provided us with key insights on donors' positions, policies, and practices around teacher compensation in emergency contexts.

Donor Sample and Recruitment

We leveraged a purposive sampling technique to identify and recruit donors known to finance education projects in contexts of crisis. Selection criteria were primarily based on education financing levels documented in databases such as the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and UNOCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS), as well as through anecdotal evidence on donors known to provide funding to teachers. Our final sample of donor organizations was chosen in collaboration with Education International. Once the sample was solidified, we conducted outreach via email to identify individuals within the chosen organizations best placed to speak on the topic of teacher compensation practices.

A total of **16 donor representatives** (n=16) from the following **12 agencies/organizations** agreed to participate in this study:

- BMZ
- CIDA
- ECHO
- ECW
- EAA
- FCDO
- GPE (2)
- IrishAid
- NORAD (2)
- SIDA (2)
- The Lego Foundation
- The World Bank

Donor Data Collection

Over the course of a month, we conducted **15 semi-structured interviews with a total of 16 donor representatives**. In two instances, we conducted multiple interviews with different representatives from the same agency/organization; in one instance, two representatives were present in the same interview.

Interviews took place virtually via Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. At the outset of each interview, we explained the purpose of the study and asked participants to keep in mind key definitional distinctions related to teacher pay, teacher profiles, and emergency contexts that would be used throughout the interview. Specifically, we clarified the term "teacher pay" may refer to teachers' salaries or teachers' incentives and it would be important for participants to point



out these distinctions within their responses. We also noted that we were interested in understanding payment practices across a range of teacher profiles (national teachers, refugee teachers, among others) and emergency contexts, from acute onset to protracted settings.

Participants were asked to recount their agencies' practices around paying teachers and reflect on factors that may impact those practices, such as internal policies or organizational stances, external factors within the contexts where their projects took place (e.g., crisis status, relationships with national governments, presence of other donors, etc.), and global level factors (e.g., competing global priorities, normative scripts, etc.). We also asked them to share challenges, lessons learned, and promising practices related to compensating teachers that could be applied to other contexts. Additionally, we probed participants on their organizations' future plans regarding teacher payment and their recommendations for what needs to change to ensure sustainable improvements for teacher payment in crisis contexts. In conclusion, we asked participants to share detailed information on specific projects within their education sector portfolio that fund teachers, which we triangulated with our desk review data.

Phase 3: UN/INGO Interviews

For the third phase of data collection, we engaged in interviews with key informants from UN agencies and the Global Education Cluster, as well as representatives from International NGOs working at global, regional, and national levels. Drawing on their expertise as implementing partners for many of the donors we spoke with in Phase 2, key informants in this category were able to provide insights on how donor policies/stances on teacher compensation translate into practice within specific contexts.

UN/INGO Sample & Data Collection

Participants in this sample were largely identified through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. For the most part, UN and Education Cluster participants were identified through purposive sampling based on their knowledge of teacher compensation practices for specific profiles of teachers (i.e., refugee teachers) or global advocacy efforts around the teaching profession. INGO participants, on the other hand, were identified both through purposive sampling and snowball sampling, in which we asked donor representatives from Phase 2 to recommend individuals from their partner INGOs who might be willing to participate in this study. The purpose of the latter strategy was to identify participants who could provide context-specific examples to supplement the global-level perspectives shared by many donors. Although we asked participants to recommend their colleagues, all information was kept confidential and no details of individual responses were shared with any participants.

Over the course of two weeks, we conducted **12 semi-structured interviews** with **14 total representatives** from the following

organizations/agencies (multiple representatives from an organization were present during the interview in two instances):

- ADRA (2)
- IRC Asia
- IRC Kenya
- IRC Latin America
- IRC Uganda
- NRC
- Save the Children Kenya
- Save the Children London
- Education Cluster (2)
- UNICEF
- UNHCR
- UNESCO

These interviews also took place virtually via Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. Similar to Phase 2, we began interviews by explaining the study purpose and key definitional distinctions relating to teacher profiles, crisis stages, and payment types. UN/INGO participants were asked questions similar to those asked of donors, with a few notable differences. For Phase 3 interviews, we placed more emphasis on the specific projects that UN/INGO participants were implementing and probed for detailed practices around teacher payment. We also asked UN/INGO participants to reflect on the extent to which practices across the distinct donors who funded their projects impacted their decisions to pay teachers.

Data Analysis

We engaged in an iterative process of open and closed coding to analyze our qualitative data. After an initial round of open coding, we developed a closed codebook consisting of emic codes that emerged from the data, as well as etic codes informed by our interview protocols, scholarly and grey literature, and reflections shared by our advisory group. We then conducted a second round of closed coding, assigning key thematic categories to each member of the research team. Team members then wrote thematic memos to outline and analyze findings across each primary thematic category. Through the memo writing process, we were able to ascertain key informants' perspectives across each theme and subtheme, taking note of points of convergence and divergence in their stances on specific issues.

Study Limitations

Desk Review Limitations

Several factors limited the desk review process and prevented us from completing a full systematic review of donors' databases:

- 1. Lack of transparency:** Overall, we found there to be a general lack of transparency around donors' teacher payment practices. In some instances, data on teacher



compensation was lumped in aggregate categories such as “teachers recruited and/or compensated,” which prevented us from accurately ascertaining if teachers had actually been paid on a given project (e.g., ECW). In other instances, some documents briefly indicated teachers were paid, but provided no additional information (e.g., amount, duration, profile of teachers, who paid/processes for transferring payments, etc.).

2. **Lack of documentation:** In some cases, we heard anecdotal evidence that a specific project had provided funding for teachers’ compensation, yet could find no documentation that proved teacher payments had taken place, let alone the amounts provided. This means we could have missed projects that did in fact pay teachers but provided no documents to indicate as such.
3. **Volume of projects vs. study timeline:** For some donors, project libraries were incredibly expansive containing hundreds of entries over a period of several decades (e.g., the World Bank). Due to the short time frame during which this study was conducted, it was impractical to conduct a comprehensive search of these libraries.
4. **Inconsistencies across donors:** We found that each donor website had a distinct process for storing past project data, some of which were far easier to navigate than others. Moreover, donors each used varied terms and captured different types of project information within their project/grant documents, which made cross-donor comparisons difficult and limited information we were able to universally collect for this desk review.

Qualitative Data Collection Limitations

The qualitative data collection process was limited by the following factors:

1. **Contemporary challenges across the aid sector:** The start of this study corresponded with unprecedented disruptions to foreign aid as USAID was essentially decimated by the Trump Administration (*Cavalcanti et al., 2025; Daniel, 2025*). Announcements of drastic aid reductions from other major donors, such as FCDO, Switzerland, etc. followed shortly thereafter, causing further upheaval (*Huckstep et al., 2025*). As a result, stakeholders in donor organizations expressed limited bandwidth and desire to participate in this study, which may have impacted our study sample and/or the responses that we received from those who did agree to participate.

- 2. Study timeframe & sample size:** In addition to corresponding to a challenging moment in history, the timeframe of this study was somewhat brief, with only a few months of data collection. As a result, the sample size is on the smaller side at $n=27$, and the depth of information gathered and analysis may have been limited by the short duration.
- 3. Limited geographical reach:** The vast majority of participants spoke to teacher compensation practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. While this is largely due to the reality that these regions tend to be where the majority of EiEPC projects are concentrated, as a result, the findings from this study may not be as representative of other locations.
- 4. Lack of diversity among NGO representatives:** Within the NGO respondent sample, there is overrepresentation from organizations such as IRC, Save The Children, and UNICEF, limiting the perspectives and range of organizational dynamics represented in the data collection.
- 5. Insufficient focus on gender dynamics in the teaching workforce:** Historically, female teachers are underrepresented within emergency education contexts, and often face additional barriers to participating in the teaching workforce (*INEE, 2023*). Throughout the study, this reality was repeatedly reaffirmed by respondents and past research. Yet, the design of this study does not inherently address gender dynamics in the teaching force.



Appendix 2: Projects Funding Teachers

Table 9: Grants/Projects that Fund Teachers

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Education Cannot Wait	Central African Republic (CAR)	Title:	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: CAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: Community teachers 3,481 teachers (21% female, 79% male) were “recruited and/or financially supported” as part of the MYRP in CAR. MYRP <i>Output 3.2. Female teaching staff/ community teachers recruited and deployed</i> included a planned activity to pay 9 months of teachers incentives for 2,000 teachers at a cost of \$600 per unit (ECW, 2019b, p.97).
		Duration:	2019-2027	
		Project Cost:	\$59.5 million USD	
		Active Grantees:	Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, UNHCR, UNICEF	
Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Education Cannot Wait	Bangladesh	Title:	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: Refugee teachers 1,775 teachers (67% female, 33% male) were “recruited and/or financially supported” as part of the MYRP in Bangladesh. Salary payments were provided to teachers working in refugee camps in order to maintain the pool of existing teachers. This action took place as part of the MYRP’s <i>Outcome 1.3. An increased pool of qualified teachers is available</i> (ECW, 2022b, p.12).
		Duration:	2022 - 2024	
		Project Cost:	\$45.4 million USD	
		Active Grantees:	Plan International, Save the Children, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF	
		Past Grantees:	UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF	
Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Education Cannot Wait	Afghanistan	Title:	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: National teachers, with a focus on female teachers 5,823 teachers (35% female, 65% male) were “recruited and/or financially supported” as part of the MYRP in Afghanistan. Teachers were recruited and received salary support under MYRP <i>Output 2.2. Teaching staff, with a focus on female teachers, are recruited and deployed</i> (EWC, 2018, p.51).
		Duration:	2019-2025	
		Project Cost:	\$80.2 million USD	
		Active Grantees:	Aga Khan Foundation, Save the Children	
		Past Grantees:	UNICEF	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Education Cannot Wait	Syria	Title:	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: Volunteer teachers • 8,557 teachers (49% female, 51% male) were “recruited and/or financially supported” as part of the MYRP in Syria. • Under MYRP <i>Output 2.3. Teachers and education personnel are financially supported services</i>, the project provided teachers and education personnel with stipends/incentives (ECW, 2020, p.51). • Stipends/incentives were provided to teachers working on a voluntary basis in non-government areas. • Payments weren’t able to be provided to education personnel working in formal education settings in Government of Syria, Turkey, and Kurdish-controlled areas, nor were stipends to teachers working in formal education settings outside of Idleb, Aleppo, and UNRWA schools due to partner “red lines” that were determined based on political realities(ECW, 2020).
		Duration:	2020-2023	
		Project Cost:	\$30 million USD	
		Past Grantees:	Save the Children; UNICEF	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Education Cannot Wait	Yemen	Title:	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: Volunteer teachers • 127,646 teachers (26% female, 74% male) were “recruited and/or financially supported” as part of the MYRP in Yemen. • A core component of this project was recruiting teachers and providing financial support; ECW grantees were tasked with recruiting volunteer teachers who received monthly cash incentives (ECW, 2025d).
		Duration:	2020-2023	
		Project Cost:	\$20.2 million USD	
		Past Grantees:	Norwegian Refugee Council	



Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Education Cannot Wait	Nigeria	Title:	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: National female teachers 1,859 teachers (57% female, 43% male) were “recruited and/or financially supported” as part of the MYRP in Nigeria. Under MYRP <i>Outcome 1: Increased access to quality, inclusive, holistic education for crisis-affected girls and boys</i>, the project sought to provide teacher stipends to incentivize higher portions of female instructors (<i>ECW, 2021</i>).
		Duration:	2021-2027	
		Project Cost:	\$35.1 million USD	
		Active Grantees:	Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, UNICEF	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
European Union	South Sudan	Title:	IMPACT South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: National teachers With the goal of improving overall teacher attendance in primary schools, IMPACT disbursed capitation grants to schools to be spent on teacher incentives. This intervention was supported by payroll audits and other verification procedures (<i>EU, 2023</i>).
		Duration:	2017-2020	
		Project Cost:	€31,662,500	
		Contractor:	Euroconsult Mott MacDonald	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
European Union	South Sudan	Title:	OUTREACH South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile(s): Qualified national teachers; non-qualified, volunteer teachers in hard-to-reach areas Building from the EU’s IMPACT Project, OUTREACH provides targeted incentive payments on a smaller scale for teachers in hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan (<i>EU, 2023b</i>). The target groups for this project include: (i) 1,750 qualified teachers deployed in hard-to-reach areas; (ii) 5,500 volunteer/non-qualified teachers in hard-to-reach areas; and (iii) 30,000 primary school teachers (<i>EU, 2023b, p.11</i>);
		Duration:	2020 - Present	
		Project Cost:	€15,000,000	
		Contractor:	UNICEF	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
European Union	Sudan	Title:	Integrating Refugee Children into the Sudanese Education System and Improving the Quality of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile(s): Volunteer teachers in refugee and host communities • As part of a strategy to provide technical assistance to support the recruitment, retention, and certification of voluntary teachers in refugee and host communities (activity 2.8), this project contributed incentive payments to an unspecified number of voluntary teachers (EU, 2023c, p.12).
		Duration:	2018 - Present	
		Project Cost:	€25,000,000	
		Contractor:	UNICEF	
Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
European Union	Afghanistan	Title:	European Union Programming in Afghanistan (Not Project Specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile(s): National teachers • Since 2021, the EU has supported 199,202 teachers (roughly all public school teachers) in Afghanistan through emergency cash support. These efforts were to enable public school teachers to stay in the profession and prevent the collapse of the education sector when schools abruptly closed in August 2021 (EU, 2024a; European Commission, 2025a; UNICEF, 2022). • In this context, the EU does not channel funds through de facto authorities, working only with NGOs and UN Agencies (European Commission, 2025a). The EU worked in partnership with UNICEF to distribute emergency monthly payments (of 9,000 Afghani or ~ \$100 USD) for a period of several months. A total of EUR 50 million was budgeted for incentives and specific payment mechanisms were put in place to distribute funds to teachers (European Commission, 2022; UNICEF, 2022).
		Duration:	2021 - Present	
		Project Cost:	€903 million	



Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
European Union	Myanmar	Title:	European Union Programming in Myanmar (Not Project Specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: Not specified Within the EU's Special Measures for Myanmar (2024), <i>Output 2.1. Enhanced capacities of educators to deliver quality education to vulnerable children, youth, and women, including those with disabilities</i>, lists the provision of teacher stipends and compensation as a potential activity (European Commission, 2024).
		Duration:	1994 - Present	
		Project Cost:	€444 million (€33 million in 2025)	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
European Union	Jordan	Title:	OUTREACH South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: National teachers working in refugee settings This project was designed to increase educational access for Syrian students in refugee camps in Jordan for the 2021-2022 school year (EUTF, 2021). As the primary donor, the EU essentially supported the entire formal school system in the camps, including the provision of salaries for 1,767 teachers (EUTF, 2021).
		Duration:	2020 - Present	
		Project Cost:	€15,000,000	
		IP:	UNICEF	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
FCDO	Lebanon	Title:	Support to Lebanon's Reaching All Children with Education Plan II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile(s): National teachers Teacher incentives were not originally approved as a component of this project, but due to depreciating conditions within Lebanon, in 2021 FCDO gave approval to repurpose \$37 million in funding for teachers' incentives (originally budgeted for school construction) (FCDO, 2022, p.2). Monthly incentive rates were set at \$90 USD and teachers were required to register in SIMS systems where their identity/attendance information could be verified before receiving funding (FCDO, 2022).
		Duration:	2016-2023	
		Project Cost:	£78,130,250	
		Active Grantees:	The Government of Lebanon	
		Additional Actors:	The World Bank	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
FCDO	South Sudan	Title:	Girls Education South Sudan Phase 2 (GESS2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: National teachers • As the largest education project in South Sudan with a primary focus on girls' access to education, GESS has distributed cash transfers to over 2 million girls to support their school fees and learning expenses (FCDO, 2024; FCDO, 2025) • While teacher payment was not part of the project design, project leaders recognized the drastic salary conditions teachers in South Sudan experienced over the project duration (e.g., rapid devaluation and severe payment delays), and engaged in advocacy/lobbying efforts to urge the MoGEI and MoF to prioritize disbursement of funds for teachers' salaries (FCDO, 2025). • GESS2 also provides Capitation Grants to primary and secondary schools, which can be used to pay teachers. These grants are intended to mitigate the financial burdens of education that often fall on families/communities. As of 2024, over 4,500 grants had been distributed to primary schools and over 450 to secondary schools. Capitation grants for primary schools were paid by South Sudan's MoGEI, while GESS finances secondary school grants (FCDO, 2025; GESS, 2025)
		Duration:	2018-2025	
		Project Cost:	£69,999,975	
		IPs:	GESS2 is implemented by a consortium led by Mott MacDonald that includes BBC Media Action, Montrose, Windle Trust International, Adventist Development Relief Agency, Africa Education Trust, Community in Need AID, Hope Agency Relief Development, Mission to Alleviate Suffering in South Sudan, and the Stromme Foundation	
		Additional Donors:	European Union, Global Affairs Canada, Government of Norway, SIDA, and USAID	



Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Global Partnership for Education	Somalia	Title:	GPE Partnership with Somalia / Somaliland	<p>GPE & Somalia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Profile: National teachers Within the 2023 GPE Partnership Compact with Somalia, <i>Output 2.1. Increased number of trained teachers deployed to public schools</i>, outlines a plan to provide teacher salaries and incentives through combined donor and domestic financing (<i>GPE & The Federal Government of Somalia, 2023, p.20</i>) The recruitment of 3,000 teachers was planned for 2023, with the goal of continuing to recruit additional teachers through 2026. A total of \$3,000,000 was budgeted for this activity under GPE's System Transformation Grant to Somalia (<i>GPE & The Federal Government of Somalia, 2023; GPE & The Federal Government of Somalia, 2024, p.65</i>) The compact states that the salaries for these newly recruited teachers would initially be financed by donors and progressively transferred to the MOECHE's budget. This transfer was incentivized through an 8 million dollar top-up allocation that would be awarded if at least 90% of 2,600 recruited teachers were retained/ paid out of the MOECHE's budget by December 2024 (<i>GPE & The Federal Government of Somalia, 2023, p.28</i>). As of 2024, the government was on track to meeting this target and had included the payment of 3,000+ new teachers on the national payroll (<i>GPE & The Federal Government of Somalia, 2024, p.37</i>) GPE's System Transformation Grant to Somalia also planned to provide \$5,000 capitation grants for up to 200 schools that could also be used for teachers' incentives (<i>GPE & The Federal Government of Somalia, 2024, p.24</i>) <p>GPE & Somaliland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher profile: National female teachers; teachers in hard-to-reach areas The 2023 GPE Partnership Compact with Somaliland includes an intervention to incentivize the hiring of female teachers and deployment of teachers to remote areas through stipends and hardship allowances (<i>GPE & Republic of Somaliland, 2023, p. 12</i>).
		Duration:	Partners since 2012	
		Project Cost:	\$256,348,035 USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	Delegation of the European Union to Somalia	
		Grant Eligibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiplier Girls Education Accelerator System Capacity System Transformation 	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Global Partnership for Education	South Sudan	Title:	GPE Partnership with South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher profile: National teachers GPE's 2024 South Sudan Partnership Compact specifically includes a top-up trigger related to teachers' salaries. Under <i>Trigger 3: 80% Salary Execution Target for MoGEI</i>, if the Ministry executed 80% of its annual salary budget for FY2024/25 (and disbursed funding at national and subnational levels), it would receive an additional 5 million USD (<i>GPE & Republic of South Sudan, 2024</i>, pp. 33-34).
		Duration:	Partners since 2012	
		Project Cost:	\$115,100,857 USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	FCDO, USAID	
		Grant Eligibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiplier Girls Education Accelerator System Capacity System Transformation 	
Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Global Partnership for Education	Yemen	Title:	GPE Partnership with Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher profile(s): National female teachers in rural/remote areas GPE funded a \$72.6M USD Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant in Yemen from 2014-2022 with UNICEF as the grant agent; the following details relate to this specific grant. As part of this grant, 2,300 rural female teachers (RFTs) were provided with retroactive salary payments and then paid incentives from 2014-2022. (GPE, 2022). Retroactive payments were designed to allow RFTs to remain in schools and encourage girls' participation in education; payments were necessary considering that the majority of Yemen's teaching force (~two thirds) had not received consistent salaries since 2016 (<i>GPE, 2022</i>). Support for rural female teachers continued in the 2021/22 and 2023/24 school years under the World Bank led REAL Project (see above) (<i>GPE, 2022</i>).
		Duration:	Partners since 2003	
		Project Cost:	\$177,567,502 USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	UNESCO Doha Office for Gulf States and Yemen, Doha, Qatar	
		Grant Eligibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiplier Girls Education Accelerator System Capacity System Transformation 	



Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
Global Partnership for Education	Nigeria	Title:	GPE Partnership with Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: National female teachers • GPE's 2024-2027 partnership compact with Nigeria outlines the potential for a \$25 million Girls Education Accelerator Grant. A component of this proposed grant would provide financial incentives for female teachers as part of a broader effort to incentivise the targeted recruitment and deployment of female teachers (GPE & MoE Nigeria, 2024). • As part of GPE's Multiplier Grant for Nigeria, variable funds can be used by the government to pay for teacher allowances and incentives, but not statutory salaries (GPE & MoE Nigeria, 2024).
		Duration:	Partners since 2012	
		Project Cost:	\$288,153,797 USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	USAID	
		Grant Eligibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiplier • Girls Education Accelerator • System Capacity • System Transformation 	
Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	Yemen	Title:	Yemen Restoring Education and Learning Project (REAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile(s): National teachers; female teachers in rural areas • Recognizing that disruptions in civil servant salaries impact educational continuity in Yemen, this project sought to support teachers through performance-based cash transfers and incentive payments. • 35,118 regular teachers and 2,135 rural female teachers were provided with incentives and "salary allowance support" as part of the REAL project (World Bank, 2024b, p.2). • Payments took place under Subcomponent 1.1. Support to Teachers, which was funded for \$38.2 million USD (World Bank, 2022b; World Bank, 2020).
		Duration:	December 2020 - June 2025	
		Project Cost:	\$152.80 million USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	Save the Children Fund, UNICEF, World Food Programme	
		IPs:	Save the Children International, UNICEF, World Food Programme	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	Chad	Title:	Chad Improved Learning Outcomes Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile(s): Community teachers • A large component of this project, <i>Component 3: Strengthen Recruitment and Financing of Teachers</i>, sought to support the salary payments of community teachers (CTs) in Chad, who are typically paid by parents and communities (65%), rather than the government (1%). Under this component, in 2022 the World Bank committed to funding CT salaries for one year, after which they would be financed from the government budget (World Bank, 2022c). • Financing for Component 3 was contingent on government commitment to integrate CTs onto state payrolls and pay them from state budgets (World Bank, 2022c). According to the 2024 project implementation status and results report, the “performance-based conditions for Year 1 related to the payment of CTs have been completed,” yet it is somewhat unclear what conditions this refers to and what commitments were met (World Bank, 2024c, p.13). • As of 2024, the project had supported six months of payment arrears to CTs during the 2022-2023 school year; yet the government had not paid the remaining balance for 2022-2023, and arrears for 2023-2024 were still unpaid (World Bank, 2024c).
		Duration:	April 2022 - October 2027	
		Project Cost:	\$150 million USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	The Republic of Chad	
		IPs:	Chad Ministry of Economy and Development Planning	



Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	Ukraine	Title:	Public Expenditures for Administrative Capacity Endurance (PEACE) Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: National teachers • The PEACE project has provided financing for the salaries of approximately ~500,000 civil servant teachers beginning in 2022. • Funding is provided through a process where the Ukrainian Ministry of Finance first pays civil servants and then sends documentation to the World Bank, after which reimbursement is provided (<i>World Bank, 2023</i>). • As of November 2024, a total of \$5,756M USD had been reimbursed by PEACE for the wages of school employees (<i>World Bank, 2024</i>). • Beyond the PEACE Project, an additional \$862.3M has been allocated for teachers' salaries for 2024-2027 through the World Bank's Program Expenditure Framework (REF) for Ukraine (<i>World Bank, 2024d</i>).
		Duration:	June 2022 - December 2026	
		Project Cost:	\$9471.90 million USD (\$36,046 million USD committed)	
		Coordinating Agency:	Ukraine	
		IPs:	Ministry of Finance (Ukraine)	
Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	Central African Republic (CAR)	Title:	CAR Accelerating Results in Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile(s): Community teachers and contract teachers • As of 2024, this project proposes supporting the integration of 2,000 community teachers into the public service workforce, and supporting the recruitment of an additional 4,350 contract teachers (<i>World Bank, 2024e</i>). • The project will commit to initially paying contract teachers' salaries, with the goal being to transfer them to the public payroll, overseen by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform (MFARA), within the fourth year of the project (<i>World Bank, 2024e</i>). • The project will explore avenues to pay teachers through mobile money (<i>World Bank, 2024e</i>).
		Duration:	December 2024 - October 2030	
		Project Cost:	\$120.06 million USD	
		Coordinating Agency:	Central African Republic	
		IPs:	Ministry of National Education (CAR)	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	Somalia	Title:	Additional Financing for Somalia Recurrent Cost & Reform Financing Project (RCRF) - Phase III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: National teachers • With the goal of improving service delivery within education and health sectors, this project primarily sits outside of the education sector with a focus on PFM, domestic revenue, and expenditure management reforms (<i>World Bank, 2022a</i>). • A primary component of the RCRF is financing civil servants' salaries in Somalia, including teachers, on a declining scale until the government can assume responsibility for payments (<i>World Bank, 2022a</i>). • Under the RCPF's prior iteration (Phase II), teacher salaries were financed under Subcomponent 3.2.1. Teacher assessment and salary; all teachers were required to take a literacy, numeracy, and pedagogy test to show "baseline teacher proficiency" before receiving payments (<i>World Bank, 2018</i>, pp. 24-25).
		Duration:	2022 - 2026	
		Project Cost:	\$92 million USD	
		Borrowers:	Federal Republic of Somalia	
		IPs:	Federal Member State Galmudug, Federal Member State Hirshabelle, Federal Member State Jubaland, Federal Member State Puntland, Federal Member State Southwest, Ministry of Finance, Federal Government of Somalia	

Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	Sudan	Title:	Sudan Primary Education Emergency Support Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: Not specified • This project did not pay salaries of teachers, stating explicitly that no civil servant salaries would be paid; however, given that the majority of teachers across Sudan had not been paid for an extended period of time, the project allowed school grants to be used to provide supplementary incentive support to teachers to ease the school reopening process (<i>World Bank, 2024f</i>). • The project intended to disburse 8,000 school grants across approximately 3,000 schools (<i>World Bank, 2024f</i>).
		Duration:	2024-2026	
		Project Cost:	\$41.90 million USD	
		Borrowers:	UNICEF	
		IPs:	UNICEF	



Lead Donor	Location	Project Overview		Description of Teacher Payment Practice
World Bank	South Sudan	Title:	Additional Financing for Building Skills for Human Capital Development in South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Profile: National teachers, with a focus on female teacher recruitment • This project is a continuation of financing from the World Bank's original Building Skills for Human Capital Development Project in South Sudan; additional financing was requested primarily due to the ongoing crisis in Sudan and its effects on South Sudan's refugee-hosting capacity (<i>World Bank, 2024g</i>). • A new component of the additional financing package, Subcomponent 3.4. Recruitment of qualified teachers, allocated \$10 million specifically to recruit and finance the salaries of teachers in 200 re-operationalized schools in refugee-hosting areas. The aim is that these teachers will be paid through project funds for 2-3 years during the implementation period before being transferred to the government payroll (<i>World Bank, 2024g</i>).
		Duration:	2024 - 2028	
		Project Cost:	\$44 million USD	
		Borrowers:	South Sudan	
		IPs:	Ministry of General Education and Instruction; Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology	





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Teacher Pay in Crisis

Donor Practices,
Challenges,
and Opportunities
in Emergency
and Protracted
Settings

Mary Mendenhall, Ed.D.
and Sarah Etzel
With key contributions from
Alby Ungashe and Ahmad Araman

December 2025

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Published by Education International - December 2025

ISBN: 978-92-9276-037-3 (PDF)

Cover photo: University of Cape Town (fivepointsix - istockphoto.com)



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