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International Literacy Day

Promoting literacy for a world in transition:
Building the foundation for sustainable
and peaceful societies

Speakers' biographies



8 September 2023

Education
2030 

Please see full list of speakers in the [agenda](#)

Opening Session

Ms Stefania Giannini



Ms Stefania Giannini was appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education in May 2018, becoming the top UN official in the field. In this position, she provides strategic vision and leadership in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda, encompassed in Sustainable Development Goal 4. During her term, she has given fresh impetus to multilateral and bilateral partnerships, increased global focus on education's ethical role in providing learners with the skills to respond to 21st century challenges; heightened attention to the responsibility of universities in achieving the Sustainable Development

Goals, and fostered closer relations between education, culture and the social and natural sciences. She affirmed UNESCO's leadership in the context of the COVID-19 response, the most profound disruption to education in recent history, through global evidence, guidance, policy dialogue and collaborative work with UN partners to support countries and jointly advocate for prioritizing education in the recovery.

She has encouraged mission-oriented approaches with public and private partners to build resilience and reimagine education, including through the Global Education Coalition. With an academic background in the Humanities, Ms Giannini has served as Rector of the University for Foreigners of Perugia (2004 – 2012), being one of the first and youngest women to hold this position in Italy. As Senator of the Republic of Italy (2013 – 2018) and Minister of Education, Universities and Research (2014 – 2016), she developed and implemented a structural reform of the Italian education system, centred on social inclusion and cultural awareness.

Mr Borhene Chakroun (Moderator)



Mr Borhene Chakroun is an engineer, with a PhD in Education Sciences from Bourgogne University in France. Borhene worked during the 1990s as a trainer, chief trainer, and project manager. He has also worked as a short-term consultant for the EU, World Bank and other international organisations before coming to the European Training Foundation (ETF) in 2001. At the ETF, Borhene worked as a Senior Human Capital Development specialist. He is now Director of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Division at UNESCO-HQ. Borhene has conducted a range of policy reviews and skills systems diagnosis in different contexts. He has authored and co-authored various articles and books in the field of skills development and lifelong learning. Much of his most recent work focuses on global trends in reforming education and training systems and global agenda for skills development in the context of the 2030 Sustainable

Development Agenda.

H.E. Ms Dipu Moni



H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni is the first female Education Minister of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, serving since January 2019. She was the first female Foreign Minister of Bangladesh as well from 2009 to 2013. She is a lawyer of Bangladesh Supreme Court, holding Master of Laws from the University of London and LLB from Bangladesh National University. She also holds Master of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health and completed a course on Negotiations and Conflict Resolutions from Harvard University. She worked for women's rights and entitlements, health legislation,

health policy and management, health financing, strategic planning, and health and human rights under the Constitution and law in Bangladesh's economic and social development programs and foreign policy issues regionally and globally. Dr. Moni is currently leading a massive transformation in the education sector of Bangladesh that entails national curriculum reform exercise, early childhood care and education, fostering digital education and minimizing the learning loss attenuated from the Covid-19 crisis. She is also a Leaders' Group member of the transforming education discourse implemented by UNESCO.

H.E. Ms Maria Brown Perez



María Brown Pérez holds a master's degree in Special Education and a Higher Diploma in Project Design, Management, and Evaluation. She has promoted quality education, inclusive and free of all types of violence. At the UNESCO Office in Quito and Representation for Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela she held the position of Education Officer for the Andean region, and later in 2020, she served as Deputy Director. In the public sector, she served as an advisor to the Vice-Ministry of Education, Undersecretary of Special and Inclusive Education, and Undersecretary of Educational Foundations, in the Ministry of Education.

Mr Laeek Siddiqui



Laeek Ahemad Siddiqui, is a young demographer and researcher. He is SDG4Youth Network Member from India. he works in many areas, like intergenerational education mobility, maternal and child health, nutrition, and gender issues. He was recently awarded PhD degree from prestigious International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). Currently, Dr. Siddiqui is working as a research scientist at IIPS Mumbai. In addition to his academic pursuits, Dr.

Siddiqui actively engages in social work. He collaborates with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in India, dedicating his expertise to empower young girls from marginalized communities. Through educational counselling, he strives to help these aspiring individuals fulfil their dreams of pursuing higher education, thereby creating opportunities for their personal and professional growth. He is also associated with Kzarvani Foundation Mumbai chapter.

Panel 1: Enhancing governance and Financing of literacy for Peace and Sustainable Development

Mr. Abdel Rahamane BABA-MOUSSA (Moderator)



Professor Abdel Rahamane BABA-MOUSSA is a Doctor of Education Sciences (University of Grenoble²). Since 2018, he has been a Full University Professor in Education Sciences at the University of Abomey Calavi in Benin. From 1998 to 2007, he was *Associate Professor at the University of Caen, Consultant-Trainer at the Regional Institute of Social Development of Rouen, Associate Consultant at ETHEIS-Conseil, Caen (France); Expert consultant for the International Organization of La Francophonie and UNESCO* (regulation of the quality of education, development of the sectoral normative framework for education, recognition and validation of prior learning, etc.). President and founding member of the Réseau Francophone

Africain d'Education Comparée (RAFEC) and Director of Publication of the *Revue du RAFEC* since 2017, he chaired the Association Francophone d'Education Comparée (AFEC), directed the journal "Education Comparée" (2009 to 2012). He was appointed Secretary General of CONFEMEN in 2019 after having been Permanent Technical Secretary of the Education Sector Plan in Benin (2014-2018), Director of Cabinet of the Minister in charge of Employment (2010-2014) and Director of Literacy and Adult Education (2009-2010).

Ms Diana Cristancho Diaz



Diana is a professional from Colombia currently working in Education and International Migrations. She has a master's degree in Human Rights from the University of Paris in France. She is the founder of FARO for Migrants and Refugees, an educational platform about international migrations and socioeconomic inclusion. In 2021, FARO won the UN Women France "Grand Public" award for the project "Migrant Women in Business", about inclusion through entrepreneurship and financial autonomy to reduce inequalities and unemployment. In the past 5 years, she has held multiple leadership roles in international conferences, including the Transforming Education Summit in New York, the Global Education Coalition Annual Meeting in Paris and UN Women events. Diana is also a Young Representant of the SDG4 Youth Network.

Ms Raphaëlle Martinez



With over two decades of experience in the education sector, Raphaëlle Martínez currently heads the technical team at the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Secretariat, whose primary responsibility is to mobilize and facilitate the use of evidence and good practices in country policy processes and global education dialogue. Her team covers policy areas such as teaching & learning, equity & inclusion, climate smart education as well as systems areas like data systems, planning & monitoring, sector coordination and domestic financing. Raphaëlle possesses a wealth of experience at the country level in various contexts and regions, including with other institutions such as UNESCO, where she worked as an education planning specialist and country office chief of education. Raphaëlle is a national of Argentina and holds two master's degrees from the Sorbonne University, France— in political science as well as in economic and social development studies

Ms Rebecca Telford



Dr Becky Telford, Chief of UNHCR's Education Section, is an education specialist with 20 years' experience in supporting children whose lives are affected by crisis and conflict. She has a diverse background working on issues of human development, humanitarian responses and collaborating with partner governments to strengthen systems. Working at headquarters and in the field, Becky has spent more than 10 years based in sub-Saharan Africa. She joined UNHCR in 2019 from the UK's Department for International Development following a career with UNICEF, NGOs and corporate foundations. Becky was awarded a doctorate from the UK's Leicester University in 2018 with a thesis that sought to understand the local realities of teaching with technology in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp.

As Chief of the Education Section, she sets strategic direction for UNHCR, and works to ensure refugee needs and voices are reflected in global policy, planning and programming. This means building and leveraging partnerships in support of refugee inclusion into strengthened national systems where refugee learners and their host country peers can all access quality education. She represents UNHCR on the Board of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and ExCom of Education Cannot Wait (ECW), and Chairs the global Education Research in Crisis and Conflict (ERICC) Board.

Ms Yayoi Segi- Vltchek



Ms. Segi-Vltchek is the Chief of Section, Migration, Displacement, Emergencies and Education - UNESCO HQ. Originally from Japan, Yayoi is a trained education policy and planning specialist. She studied International Education Policy and Development and Bilingual and Multicultural Education at Columbia University and Boston University, respectively. Yayoi started working for UNESCO in 1998 at the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. She has since worked in all aspects of education and intersectoral initiatives including youth and culture in Vietnam, the Pacific States based in Apia, Samoa, Eastern Africa based in Nairobi, and the Arab region based in Beirut. Prior to UNESCO, Yayoi had worked for ILO in Geneva on an international program to combat child labor through education. In the area of Education in

Emergencies, Yayoi has headed UNESCO's operations in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Somalia, and served as the representative of GPE Coordinating Agency / co-chair of Local Education Group in Yemen. Currently, Yayoi is leading the coordination of UNESCO's education response in Ukraine.

Panel 2: Effective programmes, contents and practices for unleashing the transformative power of literacy for sustainable and peaceful societies

Mr Anantha Duraiappah (Moderator)



Anantha Duraiappah is the director of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), UNESCO's first and only Category 1 Institute in the Asia Pacific. He is responsible for developing the Empathy, Mindfulness, Compassion, Critical inquiry (EMC2) model-the Institute's novel approach on Social and Emotional Learning -to achieving SDG 4. A strong believer in personalized learning and Artificial Intelligence for good, he

initiated and oversaw the development of the Institute's Artificial Intelligence-powered General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant learning platform-FramerSpace, now being used across many countries. He is an academic and science-policy advocate at heart and is a Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) and the World Academy of Arts and Sciences (WAAS). Anantha co-chaired the International Science and Evidence based Education

(ISEE) Assessment and the Biodiversity Synthesis Group of the Kofi Annan commissioned Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. He continues to publish extensively in the field of economics, environment and education. He is also an avid Kendo player.

Mr Dan Wagner



Dr Dan Wagner is the UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy, and Professor of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. He is Founding Director of the International Literacy Institute, co-established by UNESCO and the University of Pennsylvania, Founding Director of the federally-funded National Center on Adult Literacy, and PennGSE's International Educational Development Program. After an undergraduate degree in Engineering at Cornell University, and voluntary service in the Peace Corps (Morocco), he received his Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Michigan, was a two-year postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, a

Visiting Fellow at the International Institute of Education Planning in Paris, a Visiting Professor at the University of Geneva (Switzerland), and a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Paris. Dr. Wagner has extensive experience in national and international educational issues, and has served as an advisor to UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, USAID, DFID, and others on international development issues. In addition to many professional publications.

Mr Issa Golo Damgoto



Mr. Damgoto is the director of Literacy and Promotion of National Languages/Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion, Chad. He is responsible for the "Literacy" sub-component of the Project to Strengthen Education and Literacy in Chad (PREAT) and Chad focal point for the Global Alliance for Literacy in the context of lifelong learning, based in Humburg, Germany; He is member of the RAMAA national team.

Ms Maida Pasic



Maida Pasic is the Regional Education Adviser for UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Office (ECA). In this role she leads the implementation of UNICEF global and regional education strategies aimed at building resilient education systems that ensure inclusive and quality learning for all children in 22 countries in the region. Prior to joining ECA Regional Office, Maida was the Regional Education Specialist in UNICEF East Asia and Pacific (EAP) in Bangkok, where she was responsible for providing strategic technical guidance to UNICEF country offices on adolescent education and skills, gender in education, and education in

emergencies. Previously she was UNICEF's Chief of Education in Palestine, leading UNICEF's humanitarian and development education programme there. Maida started her career in UNICEF New York, where she worked in the UNICEF Global Education Team designing programs to address capacity development needs of national partners. In this role, she contributed to the development and formulation of Child-Friendly Schools approach, UNICEF's flagship approach to improving quality of education. Maida holds a Master of Arts degree from the New York University, USA; Master of Education degree from Columbia University, Teachers College, USA and a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Sussex, UK.

Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva



Ms. Rakhat is the team leader of the Quality Learning Ecosystems programme at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. She is an experienced education specialist with a demonstrated history of working in development and international education field, especially in post-conflict and transitional societies. She has a Doctor of Education degree from Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada) and a Masters in Education from the Institute for Educational Development at the Aga Khan University (Pakistan), skilled in training in curriculum and teacher development, policy analysis, research and evaluation, and report writing.

Researched and published on the issues of curriculum and textbooks, teacher education and development, citizenship and gender education.

Mr Mutlu Cukurova



Mutlu Cukurova is an assistant professor of digital technologies in Education at University College London. He is particularly interested in researching the potential of emerging Educational Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Learning Analytics to continuously support and evaluate students' skill development and conceptual understanding. His work is transdisciplinary and encompasses research in education, psychology, computer science, and Human-Computer Interaction. He has published over 100 publications on AI in Education, Human-AI Collaboration, and Adoption of AI, as well as 40 manuscripts published in peer-reviewed journals (including Computers & Education, BJET, Journal of

Computer-assisted Learning) and conferences.

Award ceremony of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2023

Ms Rana Dajani (Chair of UNESCO International Literacy Prizes Jury)



Rana Dajani Ph.D. molecular cell biology from U of Iowa, Tenured Professor at Hashemite University, Jordan, Cmalakova Fellow, Jepson school of Leadership, University of Richmond, Harvard Radcliff fellow, a Fulbrighter, Fulbright Foreign Student, 2000; Fulbright Visiting Scholar, 2012. Eisenhower fellow, former center of studies director, Hashemite University, Jordan, Yale and Cambridge visiting professor. Research area of expertise epigenetics and biomarkers of trauma among refugees and across generations and world expert on genetics of Circassian and Chechan populations in Jordan. Established stem cell research ethics law in Jordan. Advocate for biological evolution and Islam. Member UN women Jordan advisory

council. Writer in Science and Nature, established a women mentor network, received Partnerships for enhanced engagement in research (PEER) award 2014. Organized the first gender summit for the Arab world 2017. Most influential women scientists in Islamic World, 12 among 100 most influential Arab women 2015, women in science hall of fame 2015, King Hussein Cancer Institute for cancer and biotechnology award 2009 and 2016 Global Changemaker Award for celebrating 70 years of the Fulbright Programm. President of the

Society for the Advancement of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Arab World. women of influence in the Arab World 2021 Arabian Business magazine's list.

H.E. Mr Jin Yang



Ambassador YANG Jin was born in Shaanxi Province of China in 1961. His work experience covers a variety of posts at home and abroad in government offices, research institutes, education institutions, international organizations and foreign services. He is a current member of the Governing Board of UNESCO UIL. From 2016-2019, he was a member of the National Education Inspectorate of China. He served as Vice-President of the Chinese Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Chinese Association of Adult Education. Ambassador Yang Jin holds professorship from the National Institute of Education Sciences of China and East China Normal University. Ambassador YANG Jin holds a Ph.D. in economics of education from the University of Manchester and Bolton Institute of Higher Education where he also

studied for an M.Ed. in comparative education. His undergraduate studies were in mechanical engineering in Xi'an Jiaotong University of China.

Panel 3: Laureates of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes

Mr Hervé Huot-Marchand (Moderator)



Mr. Hervé Huot-Marchand has worked at UNESCO Headquarters since October 2019 as Chief of the Section for Youth, Literacy and Skills Development in the Education Sector. He has nearly 20 years of international experience in the field, notably in education and training in sub-Saharan Africa. He has worked for UNESCO and other bilateral partners. He was responsible for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar (BREDA), acting first as an expert and then as the regional adviser for sub-Saharan Africa from 2006 to 2016. In this capacity, he was actively involved in research, publications, policy support, and continuous development, monitoring, evaluation and coordination of TVET and literacy programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. From 2016 until his appointment to UNESCO Headquarters, he served as the Head of Office and UNESCO Representative to Mali.

Mr Jesper Rynnänen



Jesper Rynnänen is the Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer of GraphoGame, an education technology company from Finland. GraphoGame is a suite of evidence-based literacy apps for 4-to 9-year-olds. A social entrepreneur and Master of Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship from the London School of Economics, Jesper is focused on democratising access to world class early literacy education by distributing free-to-download gamified literacy apps on behalf of governments, foundations, and corporate social responsibility programmes. GraphoGame’s many language versions have been downloaded 5 million times and have over 500,000 monthly users.

Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman



Mr. Shahid-ur-Rehman is the executive director The Himalayan literacy Network Pakistan, a mobile schools project for nomadic pastoralists. He is also a mother tongue education trainer, a researcher and a writer.

Mr Stephen Bestbier



Stephen is a dedicated advocate for global literacy, currently serving as the Government Partnership Manager at Snapplify, a leading Edtech company that bridges the gap between technology and education to make literature more accessible to diverse communities. In his role, Stephen works towards the implementation of large-scale e-library projects worldwide. Before venturing into the Edtech sphere, Stephen spent over a decade as a language teacher, developing his passion for promoting literacy across a wide spectrum of cultural and economic backgrounds. His journey as an educator led him from the classrooms of Japan to the underprivileged township schools of South Africa, where he witnessed the transformative power of literacy firsthand. Stephen is dedicated to cultivating literacy skills and empowering young minds, with a particular emphasis on ensuring

access to mother tongue content, which he believes is essential for young learners to develop their sense of self and agency in the world. His vision extends to breaking down language barriers and ensuring that children and youth from all walks of life have the tools they need to unlock the world of knowledge through reading.

Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza



Mahbubur Rahman Turza exemplifies a journey deeply rooted in dedication and versatility within the NGO Friendship (www.friendship.ngo). Joining Friendship in 2014 as a Business Development Officer, he progressed through various roles spanning different functionalities, ultimately assuming the position of Assistant Director of Partnership Development. His remarkable achievements include leading the establishment of Friendship's dedicated partnership development function. In this capacity, Mahbubur manages partnerships and fundraising endeavors across multiple countries while nurturing strong relationships with Friendship International offices in France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the UK, and Belgium. As the Assistant Director of Partnership Development, Mahbubur plays a pivotal role in propelling the organization towards innovation and growth, addressing unmet community needs with a fresh and dynamic approach. He helped in the development and initiation of new initiatives

within Education Sector of Friendship. Mahbubur's commitment to personal and professional growth is evident through his roles as a Swedish Institute fellow for leadership and a StartingBloc Fellow. With a degree in business, he skilfully applies his knowledge to his work at Friendship.

Ms Catherine DeLaura



Catherine DeLaura has over 30 years of experience in education and international development and has dedicated the past 14 years to leading the DREAM Project as Executive Director. She holds an MBA in non-profit management and an MA in TESOL and is an expert in effective program design and management, monitoring and evaluation, training and capacity building, cross-cultural teams and strengthening organization-wide structures. Catherine is passionate about providing equal opportunities to members of underserved populations through education, health,

social justice and youth development.

Ms Dorothy Nakato Mubezi



Dorothy Nakato Mubezi is the Executive Director of the Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative (UNSAI) a Peer-led organization of persons with Psychosocial disabilities in Sub-Sahara Africa is changing the status quo of persons with disabilities in Uganda and Africa. She won a Fellowship with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (WNUSP) 2019, Dorothy during her Fellowship, conducted a case study “Access to gainful employment for women and youth with psychosocial disabilities in Africa” and published. She also supported co-facilitating Bridge CRPD-SDGs Trainings for Organizations of Persons with disabilities (OPDs) across Africa. Dorothy has incredible skills in Inclusive facilitation that she is on the IDA team that has built the capacities of persons with disabilities through Bridge CRPD-SDGs Train.

