

HMDC Presents... UNESCO: Full Report

HMDC Presents... UNESCO: COVID-19 Education and Technology Gaps (Research Report, December 2026)

Prepared for HMDC Forensics delegates attending Harvard Model United Nations Online, December 5-6, 2026. Every fact below comes from a page that was opened and read in October 2026. Each evidence entry names its publication and date so you can always see where a fact came from. Entries E42 to E52 were added in a third research round on October 14, 2026; they are placed in the section they support, so their numbers do not run in order.

WHAT OUR CHAIRS WILL FOCUS ON

Harvard says this UNESCO committee is about helping science grow around the world and helping countries work together on education. The October session looks at research and new technology in general, but our December session is narrower. In December, we will look at the learning gaps and the technology gaps that COVID-19 left behind, and we will be asked to build plans for how governments can shrink those gaps "across countries." Our resolution should therefore show what governments can do now, together, so that the children who fell behind during the pandemic can catch up.

Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committee Page, Last Accessed: October 2026.
<https://www.harvardmun.org/unesco-online>

The parts of this report that match that focus most closely are Part 1A (the harms), Part 1B (connecting schools), Part 1C (low-tech remote learning), Part 1D (catch-up teaching), Part 1E (public learning platforms) and Part 2B (what is working and what is not).

How we use this report: Our first job is the COVID-19 learning loss and the digital divide, so we build our speeches and clauses mainly from Parts 1A to 1E, Part 2 and Part 3A. Part 1F (phone bans and rules for AI) and Part 1G (AI tutors) are about newer technology questions that Harvard does not name for December, so we treat them as background only and use them in one short clause at most. The newer out-of-school numbers caused by wars and aid cuts (E42 to E44, E51) are useful as proof that the gaps are still growing, but we always tie them back to the pandemic gaps. We do not delete any of this research; we simply spend most of our time on the parts Harvard named.

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PART 1, THE TOPIC

The COVID-19 pandemic closed schools for most of the world's children in 2020 and 2021. Countries tried to move school onto the internet, television, radio and phones. That move exposed a deep "digital divide": children with devices and internet kept learning, while children without them often stopped. Years later, many students have still not caught up. UNESCO's task is to decide how the world closes these gaps and prepares for the next crisis, without letting technology cause new harm.

1A. The Harms: Who Was Hurt, How Many, How Badly

E1. UNICEF, August 26, 2020: Remote learning missed one in three schoolchildren

Tagline: Measuring who remote learning missed Source: According to... UNICEF, August 26, 2020 Link: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/covid-19-least-third-worlds-schoolchildren-unable-access-remote-learning-during>
 Fact: It states... at least 463 million schoolchildren (31 percent) could not use any form of remote learning during school closures, while about 1.5 billion were affected by closures at the peak. Nearly half of students in Eastern and Southern Africa and in West and Central Africa were unreachable. About 72 percent of the children who were cut off lived in the poorest households, and about three-quarters lived in rural areas. This means... The harm fell hardest on poor and rural children. Any UNESCO resolution must target those groups first, not simply the "average" student.

E2. UNICEF, November 30, 2020: Two-thirds of school-age children lacked home internet

Tagline: Counting children without home internet Source: According to... UNICEF, November 30, 2020 Link: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/two-thirds-worlds-school-age-children-have-no-internet-access-home-new-unicef>
 Fact: It states... about 1.3 billion children aged 3 to 17, roughly two-thirds of the world's school-age children, had no internet at home. In low-income countries fewer than 1 in 20 had home internet, compared with nearly 9 in 10 in high-income countries. Only 16 percent of children from the poorest households were connected, compared with 58 percent from the richest. In West and Central Africa, 95 percent were unconnected. This means... Online-only learning could never reach most of the world's children. Delegates must decide whether to fund internet access, low-tech options, or both.

E3. UNICEF, March 30, 2022: 147 million children missed most in-person school

Tagline: Counting lost classroom time Source: According to... UNICEF, March 30, 2022 Link: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/23-countries-yet-fully-reopen-schools-education-risks-becoming-greatest-divider>
 Fact: It states... as the pandemic entered its third year, 147 million children had missed more than half of their in-person classes over two years, a total of about 2 trillion hours of lost classroom time. In some countries many students never returned: 43 percent of public-school students in Liberia did not come back when schools reopened in December 2020, and in Malawi the secondary school dropout rate for girls rose by 48 percent between 2020 and 2021, from 6.4 percent to 9.5 percent. This means... The harm is not only slower learning but children who left school completely. A desirable resolution addresses re-enrolment, not only technology.

E4. UNESCO, June 13, 2025: 272 million children and youth out of school

Tagline: Counting children still out of school Source: According to... UNESCO, June 13, 2025 Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/countries-commit-reducing-number-out-school-children-165-million> Fact: It states... 272 million children and young people are out of school worldwide, 21 million more than UNESCO estimated in October 2024. That includes 11 percent of primary-age children (78 million), 15 percent of lower-secondary-age children (64 million) and 31 percent of upper-secondary-age youth (130 million). Ten conflict-affected countries with poor data, including Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia, add at least 13 million more. If countries meet their own 2030 targets, the number would fall by 165 million. UNESCO asks governments to spend at least 4 to 6 percent of GDP and 15 to 20 percent of public spending on education. This means... Years after the pandemic, the number of children out of school is higher, not lower. Delegates can argue that technology plans mean little for children who are not enrolled at all, and can cite UNESCO's spending benchmarks in funding clauses.

E5. World Bank, June 23, 2022: Learning poverty rose to 70 percent

Tagline: Measuring the learning poverty jump Source: According to... World Bank, June 23, 2022 Link: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/23/70-of-10-year-olds-now-in-learning-poverty-unable-to-read-and-understand-a-simple-text> Fact: It states... in low- and middle-income countries, the share of 10-year-olds who cannot read and understand a simple text ("learning poverty") was 57 percent before the pandemic and an estimated 70 percent afterward. In Latin America and the Caribbean it rose to about 80 percent, and in South Asia to 78 percent. This generation could lose about US\$21 trillion in lifetime earnings. The report, written with UNESCO and UNICEF, recommends the "RAPID" plan: Reach every child, Assess learning, Prioritize the basics, Increase teaching efficiency, and Develop well-being. This means... The core harm is lost reading and maths skills, with a huge future cost to whole economies. The RAPID plan gives delegates a ready-made, UN-backed framework to cite.

E6. Nature Human Behaviour, January 30, 2023: Learning deficit measured across 15 countries

Tagline: Proving learning losses were real Source: According to... Nature Human Behaviour, January 30, 2023 Link: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-022-01506-4> Fact: It states... a review of 42 studies from 15 countries found that students lost learning equal to about 0.14 standard deviations, roughly a third of a school year. The loss appeared early and did not shrink over time. It was larger for children from low-income families, larger in maths than reading, and larger in middle-income countries than in rich ones. Evidence from low-income countries was mostly missing. This means... Learning losses are scientifically confirmed, not guesses. The lack of data from the poorest countries is itself a problem UNESCO can address by funding learning assessments.

E7. OECD, December 5, 2023: PISA scores fell by a record amount

Tagline: Recording the steepest score drop Source: According to... OECD, December 5, 2023 Link: <https://search.oecd.org/newsroom/decline-in-educational-performance-only-partly-attributable-to-the-covid-19-pandemic.htm> Fact: It states... in tests of about 700,000 15-year-olds in 81 countries and economies, average maths scores fell almost 15 points and reading about 10 points compared with 2018. The maths drop was three times larger than any earlier change. The OECD says the pandemic explains only part of the fall, because scores were already sliding before 2018, and systems with short and long closures did not show clearly different trends. This means... Wealthy countries were harmed too, and closures alone do not explain the decline. Delegates from developed countries can argue that this is a global problem, not only a problem for poorer states.

E8. Harvard Center for Education Policy Research, February 11, 2025: Recovery has stalled even in a rich country

Tagline: Showing recovery is incomplete Source: According to... Harvard Center for Education Policy Research, February 11, 2025 Link: <https://cepr.harvard.edu/news/research-learning-recovery-has-stalled-despite-billions-pandemic-aid> Fact: It states... in the United States, 94 percent of elementary and middle school students live in districts that have not returned to pre-pandemic maths and reading levels. The average student remains about half a year behind 2019 students, and only 6 percent of districts recovered in both subjects, despite billions of dollars in federal aid. This means... Money alone has not fixed the problem, even in one of the richest countries. A UNESCO plan must focus on which programs work, not only on how much is spent.

E9. Harvard Graduate School of Education, May 13, 2026: A "U-shaped" and unfinished recovery

Tagline: Tracking recovery four years later Source: According to... Harvard Graduate School of Education, May 13, 2026 Link: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/news/26/05/new-education-scorecard-finds-u-shaped-recovery> Fact: It states... the fourth Education Recovery Scorecard, built by Harvard and Stanford researchers with data on about 35 million U.S. students through the 2024-2025 school year, found that the richest and poorest school districts recovered the most, while middle-income districts, which received little federal aid, remain far behind 2019 levels. Maths has bounced back faster than reading, which only began to improve in 2025. Chronic absence is still high: 23 percent of students missed school often in 2024-2025, compared with 15 percent before the pandemic. The researchers say a "learning recession" had already begun around 2013. This means... Targeted aid worked where it was spent, and children left out of the aid fell behind. Delegates can argue that recovery money must reach every group of students, and that getting children back into class every day matters as much as any device.

E10. Pew Research Center, October 1, 2021: The homework gap followed family income

Tagline: Linking income to schoolwork access Source: According to... Pew Research Center, October 1, 2021 Link: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/10/01/what-we-know-about-online-learning-and-the-homework-gap-amid-the-pandemic/> Fact: It states... in April 2021, 46 percent of lower-income U.S. parents whose children's schools had closed said their child faced at least one technology obstacle to schoolwork, compared with 18 percent of higher-income parents. Among lower-income families facing obstacles, 37 percent said their child had to do schoolwork on a cellphone and 23 percent relied on public Wi-Fi. This means... The digital divide exists inside rich countries as well as between countries. "Device plus connection plus help at home" must all be present for remote learning to work.

E11. GCED Clearinghouse (UNESCO), August 30, 2020: Eleven million girls at risk of not returning

Tagline: Warning about girls leaving school Source: According to... GCED Clearinghouse (UNESCO), August 30, 2020 (the Clearinghouse page shows no date; the date comes from the same UNESCO release as republished by The Guardian Nigeria on August 30, 2020) Link: <https://gcedclearinghouse.org/ko/node/85887> Fact: It states... of the 1.5 billion students affected by closures at the peak, 767 million were girls, and UNESCO estimated that more than 11 million girls might not return to school. About 130 million girls were already out of school before the pandemic. UNESCO and its Global Education Coalition partners launched a "#LearningNeverStops" campaign to keep girls in education. This means... Girls face extra risks such as early marriage and household work when schools close. A resolution can include gender-specific measures for re-enrolment and safe access to technology.

E12. ITU, November 17, 2025: 2.2 billion people still offline

Tagline: Tracking today's digital divide Source: According to... ITU (International Telecommunication Union), November 17, 2025 Link: <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2025-11-17-Facts-and-Figures.aspx> Fact: It states... about 6 billion people now use the internet, but 2.2 billion remain offline, and 96 percent of them live in low- and middle-income countries. Internet use is 94 percent in high-income countries but only 23 percent in low-income countries. Rural use (58 percent) trails urban use (85 percent), and mobile data remains unaffordable in about 60 percent of low- and middle-income countries. This means... The gap that hurt students in 2020 is still wide in 2026. If another crisis closed schools tomorrow, the same children would be left out again.

E13. Human Rights Watch, May 25, 2022: Pandemic learning apps tracked children

Tagline: Exposing student data tracking Source: According to... Human Rights Watch, May 25, 2022 Link: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/05/25/how-dare-they-peep-my-private-life/childrens-rights-violations-governments> Fact: It states... of 163 education technology products recommended by 49 governments during the pandemic, 145 (89 percent) appeared to monitor children or had the ability to do so, often secretly and without consent. Most sent children's data to advertising companies. Of 42 governments that built their own learning products, 39 handled children's data in risky or rights-violating ways. This means... Technology can harm students even when it gives them access. Expanding digital learning without privacy rules could trade one harm for another.

E42. UNESCO, March 25, 2026: Out-of-school numbers rose for the seventh year in a row

Tagline: Updating the out-of-school count Source: According to... UNESCO, March 25, 2026 Link:

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/more-children-out-school-7th-year-row-273-million> Fact: It states... the number of children and young people out of school rose for the seventh year in a row, to 273 million, about one in six of the world's school-age children. UNESCO names population growth, crises and shrinking budgets as the causes. Progress in keeping children in school has slowed in almost every region since 2015. At the current pace, the world would reach 95 percent upper secondary completion only in the year 2105. There is also hopeful news: since 2000, primary completion rose from 77 to 88 percent, and children whose families receive cash payments tied to school attendance are 36 percent more likely to be enrolled. This means... This is the newest official count, and it is still rising. Delegates can argue that recovery from the pandemic years is not finished, and can point to proven tools such as attendance-linked cash payments as part of the answer.

E43. UN News, June 23, 2026: 258 million children have their schooling disrupted by crises

Tagline: Linking crises to lost schooling Source: According to... UN News, June 23, 2026 Link:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/06/1167787> Fact: It states... a report by Education Cannot Wait, the UN's global fund for education in emergencies, found that conflict, displacement and climate shocks disrupt education for about 258 million school-age children, and 93 million of them are completely out of school. By Grade 6, only 30 percent of children in conflict-affected countries can read well, compared with 63 percent in countries mainly hit by natural disasters. Money problems and school closures caused by conflict explain nearly 80 percent of the cases where children left school. The fund's director called education support in crises "the insurance policy" that protects long-term investment. This means... COVID-19 was one crisis, but wars, floods and displacement keep closing schools today. Delegates can argue that every "emergency learning plan" must cover all kinds of crises, not only pandemics.

E44. UNICEF, September 2, 2025: Aid cuts could push 6 million more children out of school

Tagline: Predicting the damage of aid cuts Source: According to... UNICEF, September 2, 2025 Link:

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/education-aid-cuts> Fact: It states... international aid to education is projected to fall by US\$3.2 billion by 2026, a drop of 24 percent. If the announced cuts go ahead, 6 million more children could be out of school by the end of 2026, raising the global total from 272 million to 278 million, and about 30 percent of them live in humanitarian settings. At least 290 million students could see the quality of their education decline. Cote d'Ivoire and Mali each risk losing about 4 percent of current enrolment, about 340,000 and 180,000 students. This means... Shrinking aid is now a direct cause of lost schooling. Delegates from donor countries will be pressed to explain their cuts, and delegates from receiving countries can name exact numbers of children at risk.

1B. Solution One: Connect Every School to the Internet

This solution means building internet links (fibre, mobile towers or satellite) to every school, so that schools become connection points for students and communities. Its main advantage is that it attacks the root of the digital divide. Its main disadvantages are very high cost and weak proof that connection alone improves learning.

E14. IEEE Spectrum, December 2024: Giga is mapping and connecting schools

Tagline: Mapping the world's offline schools Source: According to... IEEE Spectrum, December 2024 Link:

<https://spectrum.ieee.org/school-internet-connectivity-globally-giga> Fact: It states... Giga, a joint project of ITU and UNICEF, aims to connect about 6 million offline schools by 2030 and has mapped roughly one-third of the world's schools using satellite images and machine learning. It reports nearly 8 million students connected in 141 countries. The estimated total cost is about US\$428 billion, and some governments cannot even provide exact school locations. This means... Advantage: there is already a UN-run program delegates can expand instead of inventing a new one. Disadvantage: the price is enormous, so delegates must say who pays.

E15. Giga, June 22, 2026: Giga's 2025 progress and limits

Tagline: Reporting Giga's latest results Source: According to... Giga, June 22, 2026 Link: <https://giga.global/the-giga-2025-report/> Fact: It states... in 2025 Giga worked with 47 countries and territories, completed detailed infrastructure mapping in 9 countries with work underway in 21 others, connected more than 700 schools serving over 400,000 learners in Botswana, and deployed monitoring tools across 15,000 schools in Honduras. It warns that digital inequality is widening because of access, cost, quality and skills. This means... Progress is real but slow compared with the goal of every school by 2030. Delegates can propose faster financing or regional partnerships to scale it.

E16. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, July 26, 2023: Connectivity is expensive and evidence is thin

Tagline: Weighing the cost of connectivity Source: According to... UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, July 26, 2023 Link: <https://gem-report-2023.unesco.org/> Fact: It states... only 40 percent of primary schools, 50 percent of lower secondary schools and 65 percent of upper secondary schools worldwide are connected to the internet. Moving to basic digital learning in low-income countries, and connecting all schools in lower-middle-income countries, would add about 50 percent to their existing funding gap for education goals. Solid evidence on technology's added value is scarce, and about two-thirds of education software licences bought in the United States went unused. This means... Disadvantage: connecting schools competes with teachers, books and buildings for the same limited money. Delegates should require evidence and planning before buying equipment.

1C. Solution Two: Low-Tech Remote Learning (Radio, TV, Phone, SMS)

This solution uses tools families already own, such as basic phones, radios and televisions. Its main advantage is reach and low cost, especially for poor and rural families. Its main disadvantages are that one-way broadcasts give little feedback, and results depend on someone guiding the child.

E17. Nature Human Behaviour, June 13, 2022: Phone calls plus text messages raised learning in Botswana

Tagline: Testing phone-based tutoring Source: According to... Nature Human Behaviour, June 13, 2022 Link: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-022-01381-z> Fact: It states... a randomized trial with about 4,500 families in Botswana during school closures found that weekly text messages plus short phone calls from teachers raised maths learning by 0.12 standard deviations, while text messages alone had no clear effect. The calls cost about US\$19 per child and ranked among the most cost-effective learning programs measured. This means... Advantage: a basic phone and a real human voice can protect learning without the internet. Disadvantage: text messages alone were not enough; human contact made the difference.

E18. World Bank, October 30, 2024: Radio and TV reached millions during closures

Tagline: Reviewing broadcast learning at scale Source: According to... World Bank, October 30, 2024 Link: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2024/10/30/learning-education-continuity-during-crises-covid19> Fact: It states... Peru's "Aprendo en Casa" program reached 7.2 million students by TV, radio and internet, working with over 1,100 local radio stations in Spanish and nine Indigenous languages, and Sierra Leone reached 1 million children by radio in 2020, building on its Ebola-era experience. The World Bank concludes that technology is "necessary but not sufficient" and that two-way contact between teachers and students multiplies learning. Only 3 of 54 low-income and fragile countries had internet use above 50 percent. This means... Advantage: countries with past crisis experience responded faster, so preparation pays off. Delegates can propose that every country keep a ready "emergency learning plan" using broadcast media in local languages.

1D. Solution Three: Catch-Up Teaching That Targets What Students Missed

This solution focuses on recovering lost skills rather than on devices: grouping students by level, giving teachers step-by-step lesson guides, and tutoring. Its main advantage is strong evidence at low cost. Its main disadvantages are the need for enough trained teachers and steady political commitment.

E19. World Bank, May 9, 2023: Teaching at the Right Level rated a "Great Buy"

Tagline: Ranking cost-effective learning programs Source: According to... World Bank, May 9, 2023 Link: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/05/09/education-smart-buys-cost-effectively-supporting-teachers-and-parents-can-lead-to-significant-learning-improvements> Fact: It states... an expert panel that reviewed more than 13,000 studies rated "Teaching at the Right Level" (teaching children by skill level instead of by grade) as a "Great Buy," already scaled in India, Cote d'Ivoire and Zambia. Structured lesson guides for teachers worked at low cost in Kenya, Liberia and South Africa. By contrast, handing out computer hardware alone was rated a poor investment because it usually does not add learning. This means... Advantage: proven, cheap methods exist to repair learning losses. This evidence lets delegates argue that "teachers first, devices second" is the more desirable order.

E20. World Bank Blogs, June 28, 2023: Few poorer countries have a recovery plan

Tagline: Exposing missing recovery plans Source: According to... World Bank Blogs, June 28, 2023 Link: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/recovering-and-accelerating-learning-after-pandemic-where-are-we-today>
 Fact: It states... schools closed for an average of 141 days, interrupting learning for about a billion students for over a year, yet only 18 percent of 60 low- and lower-middle-income countries had an explicit plan to recover learning. Education spending in those countries fell about 13.5 percent after the pandemic began and stayed below 2019 levels in 2021 and 2022. This means... Disadvantage: proven methods are not being used because money and planning are missing. A resolution could ask every member state to adopt and report on a national learning recovery plan.

E21. UNESCO, 2024: The world needs 44 million more teachers

Tagline: Quantifying the global teacher shortage Source: According to... UNESCO, 2024 Link: <https://gcedclearinghouse.org/node/134668> Fact: It states... UNESCO's Global Report on Teachers projects a shortage of 44 million primary and secondary teachers by 2030, including about 15 million in sub-Saharan Africa. Richer countries also struggle because teaching is becoming a less attractive job. This means... Disadvantage: catch-up teaching and technology both need teachers. Any plan that ignores teacher recruitment, pay and training will struggle to work.

1E. Solution Four: Public Digital Learning Platforms

This solution means governments build and maintain free national learning websites and apps, so families are not dependent on private companies. Its advantage is public control over content and data. Its disadvantage is that many platforms built in a hurry were later abandoned.

E22. UNICEF, December 21, 2022: One in three pandemic learning platforms stopped working

Tagline: Auditing national learning platforms Source: According to... UNICEF, December 21, 2022 Link: <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/1-3-digital-learning-platforms-developed-during-covid-19-no-longer-functional-0> Fact: It states... a mapping of 471 national learning platforms in 184 countries found that about one-third were shut down, outdated or only partly working. Over 70 percent had no offline mode (only 18 percent in low-income countries could work offline), just 22 percent had accessibility features for learners with disabilities, and 67 percent lacked interactive content. This means... Disadvantage: building a platform is easier than keeping it alive. Delegates should require long-term funding, offline access and disability access in any platform plan.

1F. Solution Five: Rules That Protect Students From Harmful Technology

This solution sets limits: phone rules in classrooms, data-privacy laws for education apps, and age and safety rules for artificial intelligence. Its advantage is protecting students' attention, privacy and well-being. Its disadvantage is that rules can also block helpful uses of technology.

E23. ITV News, July 26, 2023: UNESCO called for smartphone limits in classrooms

Tagline: Reporting UNESCO's phone warning Source: According to... ITV News, July 26, 2023 Link: <https://itv.com/news/2023-07-26/un-calls-for-global-ban-on-smartphones-in-schools> Fact: It states... UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report urged that smartphones be kept out of classrooms to improve learning and reduce online bullying, citing evidence linking heavy phone use to weaker results. UNESCO's Director-General said online connections are no substitute for human interaction. At the time about one in six countries restricted phones in schools. This means... UNESCO itself now warns that more technology is not automatically better. Delegates can support "technology only when it clearly helps learning."

E24. World Education Blog (GEM Report), January 23, 2025: 79 education systems now ban phones

Tagline: Tracking classroom phone bans Source: According to... World Education Blog (UNESCO GEM Report), January 23, 2025 Link: <https://world-education-blog.org/2025/01/23/to-ban-or-not-to-ban-monitoring-countries-regulations-on-smartphone-use-in-school/> Fact: It states... by the end of 2024, 79 education systems (40 percent) had smartphone bans in school laws or policies, up from 60 (30 percent) a year earlier. Removing phones in Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom reportedly improved results, especially for lower-performing students. Only 16 percent of countries clearly guarantee data privacy in education by law. This means... Advantage: phone limits are spreading fast and appear to help weaker students. Disadvantage: privacy protection lags far behind, which is a clear gap for a resolution to fill.

E25. GCED Clearinghouse (UNESCO), September 7, 2023: UNESCO's first guidance on generative AI in schools

Tagline: Setting rules for classroom AI Source: According to... GCED Clearinghouse (UNESCO), September 7, 2023 Link: <https://gcedclearinghouse.org/en/node/129359> Fact: It states... UNESCO's guidance on generative AI in education recommends a minimum age of 13 for classroom use of AI tools, data-protection and privacy standards, and teacher training. A UNESCO survey of more than 450 schools and universities found that fewer than 10 percent had any formal policy on generative AI. This means... The next technology gap is already here: AI tools are entering schools faster than rules. Delegates can build on this guidance rather than starting from nothing.

E26. Pew Research Center, January 15, 2025: Teen use of AI for schoolwork doubled

Tagline: Measuring how fast students adopt AI Source: According to... Pew Research Center, January 15, 2025 Link: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/01/15/about-a-quarter-of-us-teens-have-used-chatgpt-for-schoolwork-double-the-share-in-2023/> Fact: It states... in a survey of 1,391 U.S. teens aged 13 to 17, 26 percent said they had used ChatGPT for schoolwork, double the 13 percent in 2023. Older students used it more (31 percent of 11th and 12th graders compared with 20 percent of 7th and 8th graders). Teens were divided on what is acceptable: 54 percent said using it to research a new topic was acceptable, but only 18 percent said the same about writing essays, and 42 percent said essay writing was not acceptable. This means... Students are adopting AI in a single year, much faster than schools are writing rules (E25 found fewer than 10 percent had a policy). Delegates can argue that clear, shared guidance on acceptable classroom uses of AI is urgent.

E45. RAND Corporation, March 17, 2026: Student use of AI for homework jumped to 62 percent

Tagline: Tracking the rise of AI homework Source: According to... RAND Corporation, March 17, 2026 Link: <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2026/03/student-use-of-ai-for-homework-rises-as-concerns-grow.html> Fact: It states... in a survey of more than 1,000 U.S. students aged 12 to 29, the share using AI for homework rose from 48 percent in May 2025 to 62 percent in December 2025, driven mainly by middle and high school students. At the same time, 67 percent of students said using AI for schoolwork harms critical thinking, up from 54 percent. Only about one-third said their school had a schoolwide AI policy; many said the rules changed from teacher to teacher. A lead researcher said schools "need to be explicit about when and how AI can be used." This means... Students themselves see a risk to their own thinking skills, and most schools still have no shared rules. Delegates can argue that clear national guidance on classroom AI is now urgent, not optional.

E46. UN News, June 30, 2026: Children are turning to AI for homework and advice

Tagline: Measuring children's use of AI worldwide Source: According to... UN News, June 30, 2026 Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/06/1167841> Fact: It states... new UNICEF data from 10 countries show that at least 20 million children have used AI, and young people are adopting it more than three times faster than adults. About 13 million children use AI for schoolwork and homework, and about one in 10 turn to it for advice about things that worry them. UNICEF warned that "a generation is growing up inside a global experiment" and asked governments and companies to build safer AI, teach digital literacy to children and parents, and expand digital access "to prevent a widening AI divide." This means... The newest technology gap is the "AI divide." Delegates can argue that UNESCO must protect children who use AI and, at the same time, make sure poorer children are not shut out of it.

1G. Solution Six: AI Tutors With Teacher Support

This solution uses artificial intelligence chat tools as tutors, guided by teachers. Its advantage is personal help at large scale. Its disadvantages are early-stage evidence, the need for devices and internet, and privacy risks.

E27. World Bank Blogs, January 9, 2025: An AI tutor pilot in Nigeria

Tagline: Testing AI tutoring in Nigeria Source: According to... World Bank Blogs, January 9, 2025 Link: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/From-chalkboards-to-chatbots-Transforming-learning-in-Nigeria> Fact: It states... a six-week after-school program in Edo State, Nigeria, used a generative AI tutor with teacher support, and participants scored about 0.3 standard deviations higher in English than non-participants, which the authors compare to roughly two years of typical learning. Girls, who started behind, appeared to gain more. Attendance was disrupted by flooding, teacher strikes and students' work, and the results were not yet peer-reviewed. This means... Advantage: AI may offer large, cheap gains where teachers are scarce. Disadvantage: it is one short pilot, and it still required computers, internet and teachers, so delegates should call for more testing before mass rollout.

E47. Stanford University SCALE Initiative, October 7, 2024: An AI helper made human tutors more effective

Tagline: Testing AI that supports tutors Source: According to... Stanford University SCALE Initiative, October 7, 2024 Link: <https://scale.stanford.edu/news/how-ai-can-improve-tutor-effectiveness> Fact: It states... a Stanford study of 900 tutors and 1,800 elementary and secondary students tested "Tutor CoPilot," a tool that suggests helpful next steps to a human tutor during a live maths lesson. Students whose tutors used it were 4 percentage points more likely to pass their session assessments, and students of lower-rated, less experienced tutors gained up to 9 percentage points. The tool cost about US\$20 per tutor per year. This means... Advantage: AI may work best when it helps a human teacher rather than replacing one, and it can lift weaker tutors at very low cost. Disadvantage: the gains were modest, so delegates should present it as a support for teachers, not as an answer to the teacher shortage on its own.

1H. Lesser Solutions (Brief List)

- **Device hand-outs (laptops or tablets for every child):** popular but weak on their own. The 2023 GEM Report (E16) notes that Peru distributed over 1 million laptops without teaching support and saw no learning gains.
- **Open Educational Resources:** free, openly licensed textbooks and lessons that any country can translate and reuse (see E32).
- **Community learning hubs:** using connected schools, libraries or community centres as shared internet points for families without home access.
- **Teacher digital-skills training:** training teachers to use technology well, as recommended in UNESCO's AI guidance (E25).
- **Reducing data costs:** zero-rating (free data) for education websites through agreements with mobile companies.
- **Learning assessments:** regular, simple tests of reading and maths so countries can see who fell behind (the "Assess" step of RAPID, E5).

PART 2, THE UNITED NATIONS RECORD

2A. What the UN and Its Agencies Have Done

E28. ReliefWeb (UNESCO), Last Accessed October 2026: The Global Education Coalition

Tagline: Describing UNESCO's emergency coalition Source: According to... ReliefWeb (UNESCO), Last Accessed: October 2026 (re-checked October 14, 2026: the page shows no publication date; its content describes events of 2020) Link: <https://m.reliefweb.int/report/3672595/world/covid-19-how-unesco-global-education-coalition-tackling-biggest-learning-disruption> Fact: It states... UNESCO launched the Global Education Coalition in March 2020, bringing together more than 150 members from UN agencies, civil society, universities and companies. It worked with over 70 countries through three focus areas (connectivity, teachers and gender), for example community-radio lessons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and distance learning for 500,000 learners in Senegal. It targeted 400 million learners and 12.7 million teachers. This means... UNESCO already has a working partnership network that delegates can strengthen or redirect toward recovery and preparedness, rather than creating a new body.

E29. World Bank, March 30, 2022: Fewer than half of countries ran recovery programs at scale

Tagline: Checking the global recovery effort Source: According to... World Bank, March 30, 2022 Link: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/30/less-than-half-of-countries-are-implementing-learning-recovery-strategies-at-scale-to-help-children-catch-up> Fact: It states... a joint World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF survey found that fewer than half of countries were running learning recovery programs at scale, and only half of low-income countries planned to test where returning students stood. Countries spent on average just 3 percent of COVID-19 stimulus money on education, and low- and lower-middle-income countries spent under 1 percent. This means... The UN system identified the problem early, but countries did not fund the response. Delegates can debate whether to set a target share of crisis spending for education.

E30. GCED Clearinghouse (UNESCO), 2023: UNESCO's "Ed-Tech Tragedy?" review

Tagline: Questioning technology-first responses Source: According to... GCED Clearinghouse (UNESCO), 2023 Link: <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/resources/ed-tech-tragedy-educational-technologies-and-school-closures-time-covid-19> Fact: It states... UNESCO's 652-page study "An Ed-Tech Tragedy?" concludes that heavy reliance on connected technology during school closures often led to exclusion, sharp inequality and unintended harm, and that some models placed machines and profit above people. It recommends more human-centred and inclusive uses of technology in future. This means... UNESCO has openly judged parts of the pandemic response as harmful. This gives delegates room to argue for a "people first" approach without opposing technology entirely.

E31. UNICEF, Last Accessed October 2026: Gateways to Public Digital Learning

Tagline: Building public learning platforms together Source: According to... UNICEF, Last Accessed: October 2026 (re-checked October 14, 2026: the page shows no publication date; it describes the community of practice "as of 2026") Link: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/gateways-public-digital-learning> Fact: It states... UNESCO and UNICEF launched "Gateways to Public Digital Learning" at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit to help governments build quality, free national learning platforms. Over 30 countries now share lessons in its community of practice, with China and Finland as champion countries. It is developing international standards for public digital learning platforms, but it reports activities rather than measured learning results. This means... A UN-led standard for learning platforms is being written now. Delegates can propose that it include offline access, disability access and child data protection.

E32. UNESCO, November 25, 2019: Recommendation on Open Educational Resources

Tagline: Promoting free shareable learning materials Source: According to... UNESCO, November 25, 2019 Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer> Fact: It states... UNESCO's General Conference adopted the Recommendation on Open Educational Resources, which asks member states to support learning materials released under open licences so anyone can use, adapt and share them for free. It stresses access for disadvantaged learners and people with disabilities, sustainable funding and international cooperation, and asks countries to report on progress. This means... This existing UNESCO instrument can be cited directly. Free, translatable content lowers the cost of closing the gap for poorer countries.

E33. UNESCO, Last Accessed October 2026: Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Tagline: Setting global AI ethics standards Source: According to... UNESCO, Last Accessed: October 2026 (re-checked October 14, 2026: the page shows no publication date for itself; it lists the Recommendation's publication as 2022 and a "key facts" summary as 2026) Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics> Fact: It states... in November 2021 all 193 UNESCO member states adopted the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the first global standard on AI ethics. Among its principles is promoting public awareness and AI literacy through open and accessible education. This means... Any resolution on AI in classrooms can build on a standard every UNESCO member already accepted, which makes agreement easier.

E34. ITU, June 25, 2025: Giga opens a Connectivity Centre in Geneva

Tagline: Expanding Giga's support for countries Source: According to... ITU, June 25, 2025 Link: <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2025-06-25-Giga-Connectivity-Centre.aspx> Fact: It states... ITU and UNICEF opened the Giga Connectivity Centre in Geneva to help countries with buying and financing school internet, alongside a technology centre in Barcelona that builds open-source tools. Giga's goal is to connect every school by 2030, and its supporters include Switzerland, Spain and several technology companies. This means... The UN has built the machinery for school connectivity. The open question for delegates is funding: whether donors, companies or a new financing tool should pay.

E48. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, September 7, 2026: Fewer than 1 in 10 countries fund education fairly

Tagline: Measuring fairness in education funding Source: According to... UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, September 7, 2026 Link: <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/articles/what-does-2026-gem-report-say-about-access-and-equity-education> Fact: It states... the 2026 GEM Report introduces a new Equitable Financing in Education Index, which shows that fewer than 1 in 10 countries have funding systems with a strong focus on disadvantaged learners. One in three countries does not report gaps between urban and rural students, and one in two does not report gaps between rich and poor students. The report says that "progress is not possible without equitable approaches," and notes that 80 percent of countries have set at least some national education targets for 2030. This means... UNESCO now has a tool that shows which countries direct money to the students who need it most. Delegates can propose that countries use this index and report rural and income gaps, so help reaches the children the pandemic hurt most.

E49. United Nations Geneva, July 7, 2026: "We cannot allow the digital divide to harden into an AI divide"

Tagline: Reporting the first UN AI dialogue Source: According to... United Nations Geneva (UNOG Newsroom), July 7, 2026 Link: <https://www.unognewsroom.org/story/en/3190/global-dialogue-on-ai-governance-opening-session/9492> Fact: It states... at the opening of the first UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance in Geneva, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on countries to adopt an "AI Child Safety Pledge." Under it, no company would release an AI system children can use without child-specific safety testing and independent oversight, and a system would stop and connect a child to human help if the child shows signs of distress. He warned, "We cannot allow the digital divide to harden into an AI divide," and said billions of people still cannot reach the technology. More than 20 countries backed a UN-supported network to build AI skills in developing countries. This means... The UN's top official now links child safety and the AI gap in one message. Delegates can tie a UNESCO resolution on AI in schools to this pledge, which makes their clauses part of a wider UN effort.

E50. UN News, August 10, 2026: The UN calls for urgent action to protect young people online

Tagline: Protecting young people's online lives Source: According to... UN News, August 10, 2026 Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/08/1168103> Fact: It states... more than 8 in 10 young people aged 15 to 24 are online, and a new UN brief warns that they carry a large share of risks such as false information, harassment, unfair algorithms and harmful uses of AI. The brief says these harms come from business models that "monetise attention and personal data" and names tricks such as hidden advertising and "dark patterns" that push children to keep scrolling or spending. It urges governments, technology companies and researchers to put protection and youth participation first, and says the chance to write children's rights into AI rules "is closing." This means... Connecting more students to the internet also exposes them to these risks. Delegates can pair every connectivity clause with a protection clause, and can include young people in designing the rules.

2B. What Is Working and What Is Not

Working, according to the evidence above:

1. **Low-tech, human-contact learning:** phone calls with teachers (E17) and broadcast lessons in local languages (E18) reached children the internet could not.
2. **Shared frameworks:** the RAPID plan (E5) and the "Smart Buys" ranking (E19) give countries clear, cheap, tested choices.
3. **Partnerships:** the Global Education Coalition (E28) and Giga (E14, E34) show the UN can bring governments and companies together quickly.
4. **Rising attention to student protection:** phone limits are spreading (E24) and UNESCO has issued AI guidance (E25). The UN Secretary-General has now proposed an AI Child Safety Pledge (E49).
5. **Teacher-centred technology:** tools that support a human tutor, rather than replace one, show measurable gains at very low cost (E47).

Not working, or not yet working:

1. **Funding:** education received about 3 percent of COVID-19 stimulus money (E29), and spending in poorer countries fell (E20).
2. **Recovery planning:** only 18 percent of poorer countries had a clear recovery plan (E20), and losses persist even in rich countries (E8).
3. **Platform survival:** one-third of national platforms stopped working (E22).
4. **Privacy:** most recommended apps tracked children (E13), and only 16 percent of countries guarantee education data privacy by law (E24).
5. **The divide itself:** 2.2 billion people remain offline (E12), and Giga's progress is far behind its 2030 goal (E15).

6. **Access itself:** the out-of-school count has risen for seven years in a row to 273 million (E42), crises disrupt schooling for 258 million children (E43), and aid to basic education may have fallen by as much as 26 percent in 2025 (E36), which could push 6 million more children out of school (E44).
7. **Fair funding:** fewer than 1 in 10 countries direct education money strongly toward disadvantaged learners (E48).
8. **Rules for AI:** student use of AI is rising fast (E45, E46), yet only about one-third of U.S. students report a schoolwide AI policy (E45).

2C. Table of UN Resolutions and Major UN Instruments

Every symbol below was confirmed on an official UN site (digitallibrary.un.org, un.org or unesco.org) in October 2026.

Symbol	Year	Body	What it does (one plain sentence)
A/RES/70/1	2015	General Assembly	Adopts the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 4 on quality education for all.
A/RES/73/25	2018	General Assembly	Creates the International Day of Education, held every January 24.
A/RES/74/270	2020	General Assembly	Calls for global solidarity and international cooperation to fight COVID-19 (adopted April 2, 2020).
A/RES/74/275	2020	General Assembly	Creates the International Day to Protect Education from Attack (adopted May 28, 2020).
A/RES/74/306	2020	General Assembly	Sets out a comprehensive, coordinated global response to the COVID-19 pandemic (adopted September 11, 2020, by 169 votes to 2).
A/HRC/RES/44/3	2020	Human Rights Council	Reaffirms the right to education during the year schools closed worldwide (adopted July 16, 2020, without a vote).
A/HRC/RES/47/6	2021	Human Rights Council	Reaffirms the right to education amid COVID-19 and recognises the Abidjan Principles on public education (adopted July 12, 2021, without a vote).
S/RES/2601 (2021)	2021	Security Council	Condemns attacks on schools and encourages states to keep education going during armed conflict, including through distance learning and digital technology, using lessons from the COVID-19 response (adopted October 29, 2021).
A/RES/78/265	2024	General Assembly	"Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development," which recognises AI and other digital divides between and within countries (adopted March 21, 2024, without a vote).
A/RES/79/1	2024	General Assembly	Adopts the Pact for the Future, whose annex, the Global Digital Compact, commits states to close digital divides (adopted September 22, 2024).
A/RES/79/194	2024	General Assembly	Addresses information and communications technologies

			for sustainable development, including digital divides (adopted December 19, 2024, without a vote).
UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (instrument, no A/RES symbol)	2019	UNESCO General Conference, 40th session	Asks member states to support free, openly licensed learning materials (adopted November 25, 2019).
UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (instrument, no A/RES symbol)	2021	UNESCO General Conference	Sets the first global ethical standard for artificial intelligence, adopted by all 193 member states.

Note: no Security Council resolution deals mainly with education technology gaps. S/RES/2601 (2021) is listed because it is the closest: it encourages distance learning and digital technology to protect education in conflict zones.

2D. Where the Major Blocs Stand

Countries do not debate alone; they often vote and speak in groups. The positions below come from each group's own documents or from respected reporting. Use them as a starting point, then check your own country's record.

1. **United States:** The United States is leaving UNESCO, with its exit taking effect in December 2026, and is also stepping back from other UN bodies. The White House said membership was not in the national interest (see E37), so expect its delegate to resist new spending commitments. Source: According to... CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), January 15, 2026. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/opting-out-united-states-stop-engaging-more-un-entities>
2. **China:** China presents itself as a leader in "smart education" and, at its 2025 World Digital Education Conference, proposed the Wuhan Initiative: shared international standards for digital education, linked learning platforms, open-source models and shared computing power for developing countries, and ethical rules for AI in schools. Expect China to support global platforms and cooperation it can help lead. Source: According to... Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, May 2025. http://en.moe.gov.cn/features/2025WorldDigitalEducationConference/WuhanInitiative/202505/t20250516_1190886.html
3. **European Union:** The EU's Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) seeks "high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education" and admits that the pandemic exposed gaps in access, school equipment, teacher training and skills. Its 2030 goal is to cut the share of 13-14-year-olds lacking basic digital skills to below 15 percent; today more than 40 percent fall short. Source: According to... European Commission, page updated June 5, 2026. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/actions/plan>
4. **African Union:** The AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026-2035 lists digitalization, AI and education in emergencies as cross-cutting themes, and warns that education funding is "falling behind" because of high debt. It notes that low-income countries spend about US\$60 per student, compared with about US\$8,000 in high-income countries. Expect African delegates to demand funding and debt relief, not only technology. Source: According to... African Union, March 2025. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44940-doc-AU_CESA-2026-2035_Strategy_ENGLISH.pdf
5. **Group of 77 and China (developing countries):** This group of more than 130 developing countries calls for "greater access to innovation, technology transfer, capacity-building support, and sustained financing," and asks to "close the technological gap within and among countries." Expect it to argue that rich countries and companies must share technology and pay for infrastructure. Source: According to... Group of 77, October 10, 2025. <https://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=251010>
6. **Small Island Developing States:** In the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda (2024-2034), small island states committed to "bridging digital divides," building digital infrastructure and strengthening preparedness for pandemics, and noted that COVID-19 "further exacerbated" their challenges. Expect them to stress that distance, storms and small budgets make connectivity harder and more expensive for them. Source: According to... United Nations (Office of the High Representative for Small Island Developing States), May 2024. <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/abas-booklet.pdf>

PART 3, INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

This Part covers international organizations, partnerships and NGOs working on the topic. Single-country domestic policy is left out; each delegate should research their own country's record separately.

3A. Funding Partnerships

E35. Global Partnership for Education, June 1, 2020: More than US\$500 million for pandemic learning

Tagline: Funding emergency learning in poorer countries Source: According to... Global Partnership for Education, June 1, 2020 Link: <https://globalpartnership.org/news/gpe-increases-covid-19-coronavirus-emergency-fund-us500-million> Fact: It states... the Global Partnership for Education raised its COVID-19 response to more than US\$500 million, open to 67 countries, to fund distance learning that prioritises the most vulnerable children, including girls, children with disabilities and children without electricity or internet. It aimed to sustain learning for up to 355 million children; by the time of the announcement, 48 countries had applied for a combined US\$511 million. This means... Demand quickly exceeded the money available. Delegates can debate expanding pooled funds like this one as a ready "emergency education fund" for future crises.

E36. Center for Global Development, September 22, 2026: Aid to basic education is falling fast

Tagline: Measuring the drop in education aid Source: According to... Center for Global Development, September 22, 2026 Link: <https://www.cgdev.org/node/3136371> Fact: It states... total foreign aid from donor countries fell 23 percent in 2025, the largest one-year drop on record. Aid to education may have fallen about 15 percent, and aid to basic education (primary and lower secondary) by as much as 26 percent. The United States alone gave 46 percent of donor countries' direct aid to basic education in 2024, so its cuts hit especially hard. When African governments responded to the 2025 cuts, they focused mainly on health, and education "barely registered." The Global Partnership for Education moves about US\$1 billion a year and is seeking at least US\$5 billion for its next funding round. This means... The money that paid for pandemic recovery and school connectivity in poorer countries is shrinking right now. Delegates must explain how their plans will be paid for, for example by protecting funds for basic learning first or by asking more donors to join pooled funds.

E37. Associated Press (via PBS NewsHour), July 22, 2025: The United States will leave UNESCO

Tagline: Losing a major UNESCO member Source: According to... Associated Press, July 22, 2025 Link: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-to-leave-unesco-again-2-years-after-rejoining> Fact: It states... the United States announced it would withdraw from UNESCO, with the exit taking effect in December 2026, only two years after rejoining. The White House said membership was not in the national interest and criticised UNESCO's "divisive social and cultural causes" and its 2011 decision to admit the State of Palestine. United States contributions make up about 8 percent of UNESCO's total budget. Director-General Audrey Azoulay said she deeply regretted the decision, that UNESCO had prepared for it, and that no staff layoffs were planned at that stage, though resources would be reduced. This means... This committee meets in the same month the United States leaves UNESCO. Delegates should expect debate over who fills the funding gap and how UNESCO keeps its education programmes running with less money.

E51. Brookings Institution, April 17, 2026: What happened to Nigeria's schools when aid stopped

Tagline: Studying a country after aid cuts Source: According to... Brookings Institution, April 17, 2026 Link: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/nigeria-education-usaid-exit-responses/> Fact: It states... the cancellation of more than 80 percent of U.S. foreign aid commitments in 2025 forced Nigeria to close major reading programmes. By December 2025 only about 38 percent of the donor money needed for education in emergencies had arrived. Nigeria spent about 3 percent of GDP on education in 2024, below UNESCO's 4 to 6 percent benchmark. In response, Nigerian philanthropists pledged large new funds (one businessman committed about US\$688 million over 10 years), and the Global Partnership for Education invested US\$288 million in July 2025 in basic learning. Brookings urges that outside partners support national priorities and that local groups track how education money is spent. This means... When donors leave, countries must find money at home, from local philanthropy and from pooled funds. Delegates can use Nigeria as a real example of why a resolution needs both domestic funding targets and stable international funds.

E52. CSIS, January 15, 2026: The United States is stepping back from more UN bodies

Tagline: Tracking the U.S. retreat from the UN Source: According to... CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), January 15, 2026 Link: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/opting-out-united-states-stop-engaging-more-un-entities> Fact: It states... a January 7, 2026 U.S. government memorandum named 35 intergovernmental groups and 31 UN entities the United States would stop engaging with. CSIS notes that the United States announced in July 2025 that it would leave UNESCO, in "a months-long process that will conclude in December 2026," and that the first Trump administration took the same step. This means... The U.S. exit from UNESCO is part of a wider pull-back from the UN, not a single decision. Delegates should not expect the United States to fund new UNESCO programmes, so other donors and new funding ideas must fill the gap.

3B. Research and Measurement Bodies

E38. OECD, December 5, 2023: What PISA 2022 says about phones and teacher support

Tagline: Linking phones and teachers to scores Source: According to... OECD, December 5, 2023 Link: <https://search.oecd.org/newsroom/decline-in-educational-performance-only-partly-attributable-to-the-covid-19-pandemic.htm> Fact: It states... 65 percent of students said digital devices distracted them in at least some maths lessons, and students distracted by classmates' devices scored 15 points lower. Students with strong access to teacher support scored 15 points higher and felt more confident learning remotely, yet only about one in five said they got extra help from teachers in some lessons. This means... The OECD's evidence supports investing in teacher support and managing device use, not simply adding more screens.

E39. Brookings Institution, January 14, 2026: AI's risks to students currently outweigh its benefits

Tagline: Weighing AI risks for children Source: According to... Brookings Institution, January 14, 2026 Link: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-direction-for-students-in-an-ai-world-prosper-prepare-protect/> Fact: It states... the Brookings Global Task Force on AI in Education consulted more than 500 students, teachers, parents, experts and leaders across 50 countries and reviewed over 400 studies. It concluded that, at this point, "the risks of utilizing generative AI in children's education overshadow its benefits," because overreliance can weaken basic learning, well-being, trust and privacy, and careless rollout may widen social divides. It also says these risks are fixable. Its 12 recommendations include AI that guides thinking instead of giving answers, AI literacy for students, teachers and parents, teacher training, creative financing to close the AI access gap, strong regulation, and buying only technology that protects student privacy. This means... One of the world's leading think tanks warns against rushing AI into classrooms. Delegates can use its recommendations as a checklist for a clause on AI in education, balancing access for poorer countries with protection for every child.

3C. International NGOs and Watchdogs

E40. Human Rights Watch, May 25, 2022: Recommendations to governments and companies

Tagline: Proposing child data protections Source: According to... Human Rights Watch, May 25, 2022 Link: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/05/25/how-dare-they-peep-my-private-life/childrens-rights-violations-governments> Fact: It states... Human Rights Watch urges governments to audit the learning apps they endorse, remove those that fail, require deletion of children's data, pass child-specific data protection laws, ban behavioural advertising aimed at children, and fund safe online education so that children's data is not the hidden price. This means... These recommendations can be copied almost directly into resolution clauses on student privacy.

E41. J-PAL, June 13, 2022: Low-tech learning evidence from Botswana

Tagline: Supporting evidence-based low-tech programs Source: According to... J-PAL (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab), June 13, 2022 Link: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/media/12096> Fact: It states... J-PAL, a global research network based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, lists the Botswana study "Experimental evidence on learning using low-tech when school is out" in its Africa research collection, connecting it to the network of researchers who test programs with randomized trials (the results are reported in E17). This means... International research networks such as J-PAL help UNESCO tell which programs truly work. A resolution can ask that new education technology be tested before it is scaled up.

3D. Proposed and Emerging Efforts

1. **Global Digital Compact follow-up:** states agreed in A/RES/79/1 (2024) to close digital divides; delegates can propose education-specific targets under it.
2. **Gateways standards:** the UNESCO-UNICEF norms for public digital learning platforms (E31) are still being refined and could become a formal UNESCO recommendation.
3. **Giga financing ideas:** Giga is exploring "connectivity credit markets," loosely modelled on carbon credits, to pay for school connections (E14).
4. **AI in education rules:** UNESCO's 2023 guidance (E25) could grow into binding or reported national standards.
5. **Teacher workforce plans:** the 44-million-teacher gap (E21) has led to calls for international support for teacher recruitment and training.
6. **Replenishing education funds:** the Global Partnership for Education is seeking at least US\$5 billion for its next funding round (E36), while UNESCO prepares for the United States' exit in December 2026 (E37).

7. **AI guardrails for children:** the Brookings task force's 12 recommendations (E39) offer a ready list for clauses on AI literacy, teacher training, privacy and closing the AI access gap.
8. **Out-of-school targets:** countries have committed to national 2030 targets that would cut the out-of-school population by 165 million (E4).
9. **AI Child Safety Pledge:** the UN Secretary-General's proposed pledge (E49) would require child-specific safety testing before AI systems reach children; UNESCO could adapt it for schools.
10. **AI capacity network:** more than 20 countries backed a UN-supported network to build AI skills in developing countries (E49), which could help close the AI divide in education.
11. **Equitable financing index:** the new GEM Report index (E48) could become a reporting tool countries use to show their education money reaches the students who need it most.

KEY VOCABULARY

1. **Digital divide:** the gap between people who have internet, devices and digital skills and people who do not.
2. **Learning poverty:** the share of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple text.
3. **Learning loss (learning deficit):** the skills students would have gained in normal schooling but did not because of disruption.
4. **Homework gap:** students who cannot finish schoolwork at home because they lack a computer or internet.
5. **Remote learning:** teaching students who are not in the classroom, through internet, TV, radio or phone.
6. **Connectivity:** having a working link to the internet, for a home, a school or a whole country.
7. **Open Educational Resources (OER):** learning materials anyone may freely use, change and share under an open licence.
8. **Teaching at the Right Level:** grouping children by what they can actually do, rather than by age or grade, and teaching from there.
9. **Structured pedagogy:** giving teachers clear, step-by-step lesson guides and matching student materials.
10. **EdTech:** short for education technology; apps, devices and platforms used for learning.
11. **Standard deviation:** a statistics unit researchers use to compare how big an effect is; in education, 0.1 to 0.2 is a meaningful change.
12. **Data privacy:** a person's right to control who collects, uses and shares information about them.
13. **AI divide:** the gap between people and countries that can use artificial intelligence tools and those that cannot.
14. **Out-of-school children:** children of school age who are not enrolled in any school.
15. **Technology transfer:** sharing technology, and the know-how to use it, from richer countries or companies with poorer countries.
16. **Bloc:** a group of countries that often speak and vote together, such as the African Union or the Group of 77 and China.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should UNESCO prioritise connecting every school to the internet, or first fund low-tech options and teachers that reach more children today? Defend your country's choice with evidence.
2. Who should pay the estimated hundreds of billions of dollars needed for school connectivity: wealthy governments, technology companies, development banks or the countries themselves?
3. Since education received only about 3 percent of COVID-19 stimulus money, should states agree on a minimum share of crisis spending for education?
4. How can UNESCO protect students' data and attention (phones, apps, artificial intelligence) without blocking technology that helps learning?
5. What specific steps would bring girls, rural children and children with disabilities back into school after a long closure?
6. Should new education technology be required to show test results before governments buy it at scale? Who should run those tests?
7. What should a national "emergency learning plan" include, so that the next pandemic, war or disaster does not repeat the losses of 2020-2022?
8. Is AI tutoring a realistic answer to the 44-million-teacher shortage, or a risk that widens the divide between connected and unconnected students?
9. With the United States leaving UNESCO in December 2026 and education aid falling, which countries or funds should fill the gap, and what should be protected first?
10. Should UNESCO adopt a version of the Secretary-General's AI Child Safety Pledge for every AI tool used in schools?

