



There is a huge need for well-trained and well-supported teachers, United Nations officials have warned. They call for the recruitment of millions of professionals, particularly in African and Arab States worst hit by the teacher shortage.

Some 5.2 million teachers need to be hired worldwide to reach the [Millennium Development Goal](#) (MDG) of achieving universal primary education by 2015, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#))

reported in a study to coincide with [the World Teachers' Day](#)

. That figure includes 1.58 million new recruits and 3.66 million to replace those leaving the profession.

“The challenge goes beyond numbers – more teachers must mean better quality learning, through appropriate training and support,” the heads of four major UN agencies and a partner organization said in a joint message for World Teachers' Day.

“Far too often, teachers remain under-qualified and poorly paid, with low status, and excluded

from education policy matters and decisions that concern and affect them,” the officials added, calling for effective international action in support of national efforts to bolster teachers and education institutions, and improve education opportunities.

[The joint message](#) was issued by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova; UN International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General, Guy Ryder; UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, Helen Clark; UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director, Anthony Lake; and Fred van Leeuwen, the General Secretary of Education International (EI), which represents teachers' organizations across the globe.

Fifty-seven million children of primary school age are absent from classrooms, according to UN figures. At the current rate, nearly half of those children will never enrol in school, and more than a quarter will start school late.

Many of those children who do enter school are failing to learn to read and write by the time they reach fourth grade, the officials noted.