



Concept Note

Context

The Transforming Education Summit convened by the United Nations in September 2022 mobilized over 130 countries to explore all options and innovations in response to the major challenges in education, including the catastrophic learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises.

The coronavirus has disrupted education all over the world, with more than 1.6 billion learners affected by school closures.¹ The Asia-Pacific is one of the most hit regions. Approximately 1.2 billion² students across the region have in total lost about 1.1 trillion hours of in-person learning as a result of COVID-19-caused school closures.³

The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in education, with the disadvantaged groups suffering more, including girls, children with disabilities, and students from low-income families, ethnic minorities and remote rural areas. UNESCO warned that this unprecedented disruption to in-school learning might reverse the substantial progress made on girls' education in the past decades, and 11.2 million girls might not return to school anymore.⁴ Besides, it is projected that in the developing parts of Asia, learning losses for the poorest quintile of students are 33% higher than for the richest quintile of students.⁵

COVID-19 has also deepened the pre-existing learning crisis. In 2019, the learning poverty rate – the share of children who cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10 – was already estimated at 57 percent in low- and middle-income countries. In 2022 this rate has surged to 70 percent, with the highest increases seen in South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, where schools have been closed the longest.⁶

1 UNESCO, UNICEF, and World Bank. 2021. *The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery*. p.5. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/the-state-of-the-global-education-crisis-a-path-to-recovery>.

2 UNESCO. 2022. *Learning recovery and addressing the learning crisis in the Asia Pacific: policy brief*. p.1. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381978>.

3 UNESCO. 2022. *Summary report of the 4th meeting of the Regional Network of the SDG 4 National Coordinators: back-to-back meeting of APREMC-II*. p.3. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382668>.

4 UNESCO. 2020. *COVID-19 education response: how many students are at risk of not returning to school?* p.5. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992>.

5 Asian Development Bank. 2022. *Falling further behind: The cost of COVID-19 schools closures by gender and wealth*. p.54. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/784041/ado2022-learning-losses.pdf>.

6 UNICEF. 2022. *The State of Global Learning Poverty*. p.16. <https://www.unicef.org/media/122921/file/State%20of%20Learning%20Poverty%202022.pdf>.

Such severe learning losses have devastating socio-economic implications. The productivity and lifetime earnings of affected students are projected to decrease, and the unemployment rate in many societies is estimated to increase, which will aggravate poverty and backslash the long-term economic growth. In Asian developing countries, learning loss due solely to COVID-19 school closures may reduce lifetime earnings of the affected students by USD3.2 trillion (at constant 2020 prices).⁷ It is also estimated that by 2030, school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to unemployment of 5.44 million people in the skilled labor force and 35.69 million people in the unskilled labor force around the world.⁸

Apart from COVID, other types of crises – violence, armed conflict, diseases, refugee and internal displacement, natural hazards including climate-induced disasters, food shortage and poverty – also contribute to global learning losses. The United Nations joint initiative “Education Cannot Wait” indicates in 2022 that 84% of the children losing access to schools are living in areas with protracted crises.⁹

Learning recovery from different crises, particularly COVID-19, has been placed on the high agenda of the international community. It means not only bringing all learners back to school and achieving effective remedial learning, but also improving and sustaining the wellbeing and development of students and teachers, filling divides, and equipping youth with the competences and skills for life, work, and sustainable development.

Urgent actions are needed to speed up learning recovery, and a powerful engine is education innovation, which is critical for inclusive, equitable, and quality education as well. The Transforming Education Summit also emphasized the need of innovations to prepare today’s learners for a rapidly changing world.

In its broadened sense, educational innovation involves all dimensions of the education ecosystem, including but not limited to 1) innovations for inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools; 2) teaching innovations to cultivate competences and skills for life, work, and sustainable development; 3) innovations in digital learning; 4) innovations for the development of the teaching profession; 5) innovations in education financing; and 6) innovations in education partnerships.

Globally and in the Asia-Pacific region in particular, various innovative education policies and practices have emerged and accelerated learning recovery. Many countries have initiated innovations to increase autonomy and flexibility of schools to create a stable and conducive learning environment. A variety of innovative modalities (digital, low-tech and no-tech) have been introduced to ensure the continuity of learning and expand the access. Some countries have created specific systems to facilitate the communication between educators and learners and to support their psycho-social well-being. Innovative training packages are helping teachers adapt to distance education and identify solutions to achieve high

7 Asian Development Bank. 2022. *Falling further behind: The cost of COVID-19 schools closures by gender and wealth*. p.52. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/784041/ado2022-learning-losses.pdf>.

8 Cohen, Spencer, et al. 2022. “Potential Economic Impact of COVID-19-Related School Closures.” Asian Development Bank Economics Working Paper Series 657. p.17. <https://www.adb.org/publications/economic-impact-covid-19-related-school-closures>.

9 UN. 2022. *Global Estimates: Number of crisis-affected children and adolescents in need of education support*. p.20. https://www.educationcannotwait.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/ecw_globalestimatesstudy_june2022.pdf.

inclusivity and efficiency. Innovations in university-school partnership are contributing to leveraging more resources to support foundational education.

Despite the existing efforts and achievements, many societies are still suffering lingering learning losses. Concerted endeavours are needed to invigorate education innovations for effective learning recovery across the world.

About Wenhui Award

Against the above background, this year's Wenhui Award is themed "Educational Innovations for Learning Recovery" with the objective to identify, acknowledge and encourage innovative policies and practices in various dimensions of the education system in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Wenhui (文暉) Award was jointly created in 2010 by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) and the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO, to recognize and reward individuals or institutions that have made outstanding contributions to educational innovation in the Asia-Pacific region. Wen (文) in Chinese encompasses the meaning of culture, knowledge, wisdom, moral and ethics, and the desire for learning. Hui (暉) symbolizes the creative and radiant force of education that enables civilization and culture to flourish. Taken together, the name of the Award personifies the power of educational innovation in enabling individuals, institutions, societies, and cultures to thrive.

The Award shall be conferred on two individuals or institutions in the Asia-Pacific region for their outstanding efforts and achievements in educational innovation focused on the specific theme of the current edition. The two winners will each receive a Certificate of Excellence and a prize of USD20,000. In addition to the winners, Honourable Mention will be granted to individuals or institutions that have demonstrated commendable innovative educational practices. Since the inception of the Wenhui Award, there have been 22 winners and 34 Honourable Mentions from 19 different countries.

Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

Eligibility of Applicants and Nominees:

- Be individuals or institutions from UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region¹⁰;
- Have initiated, developed and implemented innovative practices that are in line with the latest developments in education in the 21st century and that help to improve access, equity and quality of education in the Asia-Pacific region;
- Have proved that their innovations have exerted positive impacts on education opportunities and quality in the Asia-Pacific region;

¹⁰ List of UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region: <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/asia-and-pacific>.

- Be persistently dedicated to popularization of education, enhancement of education quality, and promotion of lifelong learning.

Assessment Criteria for the Innovations:

All the educational innovations submitted for the Wenhui Award will be assessed equally against the following criteria:

1. Relevance (to the latest developments in education in the 21st century; to Sustainable Development Goal 4 aiming to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; to the Asia-Pacific region; AND to the specific theme of the Award of the year);
2. Timeliness (started within the recent 3 years, with the key part completed by the time of application/nomination);
3. Effectiveness (in tackling specific challenges/issues in education);
4. Scale of benefits and long-term impact (evidenced by specific indicators, such as number of beneficiary countries in the Asia-Pacific region, number of beneficiary educational institutions, number of beneficiary students, teachers, school leaders, and community members, etc.);
5. Inclusion (of people who are disadvantaged on the basis of gender, age, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, culture, language, and/or physical, social, economic or other status);
6. Engagement of stakeholders and partners from different sectors (public and non-public), if applicable;
7. Originality (how creative and unique the innovation is);
8. Sustainability (of the good practices, benefits and positive impacts of the innovation), scalability (the capacity to expand in coverage and grow in impact without much extra resources), and replicability (to other educational institutions, other stakeholder groups, other areas of the beneficiary countries, and even possibly other countries and regions).

Application/Nomination Procedure and Required Materials

Applications for Wenhui Award can be submitted through the following two alternative channels:

Channel A. Direct Application

Applicants directly submit the **required materials** (listed below) to the Wenhui Award Secretariat at the email address Wenhui.Award@unesco.org by **27 January 2023, 23:59 Bangkok time (UTC+7)**.

Channel B. Nominator-Initiated Application

The **National Commissions for UNESCO** or **UNESCO Field Offices** in the Asia-Pacific Member States identify potentially qualified nominees and innovations, invite them to submit all the required materials to the nominator by a specific date, and then nominate them to the Wenhui Award Secretariat. Nominators shall send all the **required materials** (listed below) and the **nomination letter** from their official email

addresses to the Wenhui Award Secretariat by **24 February 2023, 23:59 Bangkok time (UTC+7)**.

**Such nominations should be initiated by UNESCO National Commissions or Field Offices in the Asia-Pacific region. Individuals and institutions do not need to contact the potential nominators.*

**Only UNESCO National Commissions and Field Offices can be nominators for the Wenhui Award.*

Information on National Commissions for UNESCO: <https://en.unesco.org/countries/national-commissions>.

Information on UNESCO Field Offices: <https://en.unesco.org/countries/field-offices>.

**Applicants from Channel A need to indicate their preferred nominator in the application form.*

Required Materials:

1. A fully completed **application form** (<https://bit.ly/Wenhui22AFA>) or **nomination form** (<https://bit.ly/Wenhui22NFB>);
2. **Detailed introduction of the innovation**, using the given template (<https://bit.ly/Wenhui22TDS>);
3. **Supporting materials**, including at least one of the following:
 - a) brochure of the innovation (no more than 12 pages, in PDF format);
 - b) link to photos (no more than 5, in JPG or PDF format) or a video (within 5 minutes) about the innovation;
 - c) link to the website of the innovation;
 - d) link(s) to the social media platform(s) of the innovation;
 - e) media coverage on the innovation (either the web link or PDF version).

**The above list is for both direct applications and nominator-initiated applications; for nominator-initiated applications, the nominators need to collect all the required materials from the nominees and then submit them to the Wenhui Award Secretariat.*

**All the links should be put on the application/nomination form, while the PDF documents need to be sent by email to the Wenhui Award Secretariat together with all the other application/nomination documents.*

Selection Process

Step 1: Pre-Screening

The Wenhui Award Secretariat will pre-screen all applications received by the deadline based on the eligibility and assessment criteria.

Step 2: Selection by Nominators

**This step is only for applications directly submitted to the Wenhui Award Secretariat (Channel A), and applicants do not need to initiate contact with any potential nominator.*

The Wenhui Award Secretariat will send the applications that have passed prescreening to the nominators chosen by the applicants themselves, either UNESCO National Commissions or Field Offices. The nominators will review and decide whether to nominate the applicants for further selection.

The nominators shall directly send the **nomination letters** by email to the Wenhui Award Secretariat. The letter needs to state the reasons for the nominator to recommend the nominee and the innovation for the Wenhui Award. It should be signed by the Secretary-General of the nominating National Commission for UNESCO or the Head of the nominating UNESCO Field Office, or their authorized officer, with an official stamp if available.

Step 3: Shortlisting

Upon receiving the nomination letters for direct applications (Channel A), the Wenhui Award Secretariat will further review and shortlist based on the eligibility and assessment criteria. For those nominations initiated by UNESCO National Commissions and Field Offices (Channel B), the Secretariat will also conduct prescreening and shortlisting based on the same criteria.

Step 4: Final Assessment

The final assessment of shortlisted applications/nominations is conducted by a Jury consisting of multiple members who are from different countries and organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and have extensive expertise and experience in education.

Step 5: Result Announcement

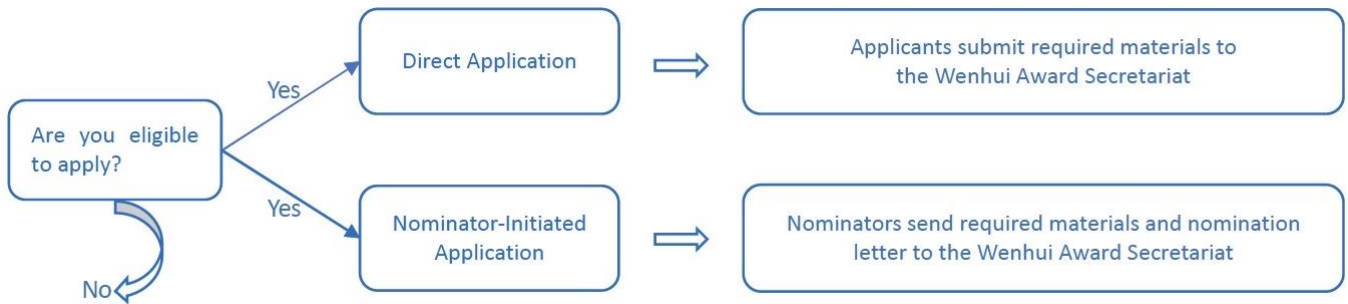
The winners of the Award and the recipients of Honourable Mention will be notified by email shortly after the Jury has made its final decisions, and upon written confirmation of acceptance, the results will be officially announced online in due course. The winners will be invited to the Award Ceremony to be held virtually or in person in China.

Inquiries & Contact

For inquiries about Wenhui Award application, nomination, and selection process, please check the above information and the Frequently Asked Questions at <https://bit.ly/Wenhui22FAQAN> (for applicants and nominees) and <https://bit.ly/Wenhui22FAQNM> (for nominators). If you have any further inquiries, please contact the Wenhui Award Secretariat at Wenhui.Award@unesco.org.

Annex: Flow Chart for Wenhui Award Application and Selection

Application



Selection

Direct Application

