

#OneBillionVoicesForEducation The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) One Billion Voices for Education Campaign Launch

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JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA, January 19, 2021
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*Grant Kasowanjete, GCE
Global Coordinator*

The COVID- 19 pandemic is affecting the education of more than one billion people. It is also worsening the existing global education financing crisis thereby impacting the progress of the entire Sustainable Development Agenda and specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The One Billion Voices campaign aims to secure an increase in public financing of education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by elevating the voices from the billion learners who have been affected by the COVID pandemic and sharing their experiences and call for urgent action. The campaign will launch on 25th January and run throughout 2021.

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January 18 2021, Johannesburg, South Africa – The One Billion Voices Campaign led by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) will be launched virtually on 25 January 2021, 1:30pm SAST. The launch will feature a keynote address by GCE President Refat Sabbah, screening of the One Billion Voices Campaign film, regional panel discussions on the impact of COVID-19 on education and regional plans to finance education.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 1.5 billion learners had their education stopped or interrupted. Education systems continue to face a devastating crisis, the challenges around public financing and the ever-increasing pressure on resources for public services, are resulting in less prioritisation of education. While some learners have returned to school, the COVID-19 pandemic deepened digital exclusion of many especially vulnerable communities, including children with disabilities.

The world faces a tipping point where a seismic reversal in education progress has begun and has devastating effects on many other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the World Bank projects a potential 10% cut in education budgets due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only must these rollbacks on education financing be stopped but more and better financing for education must be secured and secured now!

“In such a time as this, it has become increasingly urgent and important for governments to involve civil society organizations in the drawing up of education budgets in order for them to provide inputs and comments to the budget. The overall strategic intent is for governments to live up to their commitment they have made to their citizens on domestic financing within the 2030 Framework to Action, by allocating at least 4% to 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) to education and/or at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education” . Grant Kasowanjete, GCE Global Coordinator.

Refat Sabbah, GCE President, further added: “All GCE members around the world, INGOs, regional networks and national education coalitions, parents, guardians, teachers and learners rally behind the One Billion Voices Campaign. GCE reaffirms its commitment to continue campaigning for publicly funded equitable and inclusive free quality education for all, including the need to improve and closely monitor domestic and international education financing mechanisms. This includes a call for strong publicly funded education systems that meet the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks, championing tax justice as a critical instrument to financing public education and effective response to the increased commercialisation of education, and the development of so called innovative financing mechanisms”.

GCE calls on the national governments:

- To increase state funding for education to 20% of public expenditure.
- To increase their tax base in order to increase resources, working towards a minimum tax-to-GDP ratio of 20%.
- To provide free quality education for all and end the trend towards the privatisation and commercialisation of education.

GCE calls on the national governments, and donors:

- To improve the quality of teaching through adequate recruitment, remuneration and continued teacher training.
- To ensure inclusive educational systems and institutions.
- To listen and respond to the voices of those affected. Space must be allowed for individuals and civil society to speak up.

GCE calls on donors:

- To enable urgent debt cancellation for the least developed countries; and Debt alleviation for middle and upper-middle income countries.
- To continue to work towards the goal of 0.7% overseas aid, with 20% of this spent on education.

Notes to editors:

1. GCE is a leading civil society movement that promotes and defends education as a fundamental human right. GCE has over 127 members, 94 of these are national education coalitions, 18 International NGOs and 15 regional networks and youth-led organisations. GCE advocates for education as a basic right. GCE defines education as the foundation for all forms of development and as a catalyst for growth. As a transnational organisation GCE believes that education is the key to ensuring sustainable and equitable economic growth, improved health and social development

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