

Preliminary findings: GCE member consultation on post-2015

Process

The GCE consultation was circulated through the GCE movement in July and August 2012. So far we have received 47 responses from 23 different countries and from all regions, with a total of 18 national coalitions or regional networks, 2 unions, and 27 others (members of national coalitions, INGOs, academics). Some consultation responses are based on large-scale community consultations, others on discussions within networks and organizations. **The consultation remains open and GCE members that have not yet replied are encouraged to do so by end 2012.**

In the meantime, this note represents the preliminary findings from this survey – it is not to be understood as a final summary of the survey, nor as a final GCE position. GCE will use the full set of responses to inform a draft position to be shared for consultation with the GCE membership.

Highlights from consultation responses so far

- **Financing for education and transparent and participatory decision-making** should be major priorities for government attention, action and accountability, and civil society monitoring. Governments must put in place structures and funding to reach education goals, and ensure that civil society is able to inform and monitor progress.
- **Equity** is crucial and needs greater emphasis; we should retain a focus on access, and strengthen this through an explicit link to equity and marginalization – taking into account who is missing out on education, not just how many. More broadly, there should be equity targets across education goals and attention on inclusive education.
- **Quality, learning and teachers:** the education MDGs are seen to have narrowed the EFA agenda, and taken quality out of the struggle for universal access: quality should be central, and closely linked to access. Indicators of quality and learning could include well-qualified teachers, relevant and inclusive curricula, a broader understanding of the nature of education, and indicators of learning.
- **Teachers** are neglected despite their huge importance to quality education. There should be a greater focus on trained and qualified teachers, and the pupil-to-trained-teacher ratio, whether as an indicator of quality or a separate goal
- **Free and public education:** governments must retain responsibility for education; expansion of private education adds to inequity; and governments must meet commitments on abolishing fees.
- **A rights basis** should underlie all discussions of education and future frameworks. These are rights in, to and through education, which are indivisible and without hierarchy.
- **Approaches to future goals:** there is support for the overall EFA framework, and calls to deepen it through more and better indicators (eg on equity in access, on quality) and perhaps additional goals (eg on teachers). Most responses so far in relation to any future MDG-type goal call for a much broader agenda to be included, beyond UPE.

Emerging themes in consultation responses so far

The range of education issues raised in response to the consultation is broad: this is a function both of different groups raising different priorities, but more of individual responses defining their priorities in rich terms. The consultation asked about education priorities (overall issues, government policy, monitoring, and topics for international accountability) and about reflections on the EFA framework and MDGs (both past and future). Responses to these three sets of questions are presented separately below.

Priority issues for government action, civil society monitoring and international accountability

- **Financing:** this is by far the most frequently mentioned concern so far, including overall education financing, domestic financing and donor financing. There is a range of sub-issues: overall allocations, sub-sectoral allocations, equity of budgets, effectiveness of spending, transparency of spending, donor commitments, donor transparency, etc.
- **Participation & transparency in decision-making and government accountability:** the second most-frequently mentioned issue. Most responses express concerns about this directly in terms of the importance of civil society participation in transparent decision-making processes; some also talk about donor funding for participation, and the need for spaces where civil society can present evidence and proposals to government.
- **Equity, marginalization, access and gender:** equity and marginalization are mentioned very frequently, explicitly in relation to access as well as more broadly. Gender also remains a key concern, again generally in relation to access as well as often more broadly, and often as an element of broader equity concerns.
- **Quality, learning and teachers:** quality is another major priority. A rich understanding of quality and learning emerges from responses: the need for high quality teachers and teaching; effective acquisition of competencies, knowledge and skills; relevant and accessible curricula and materials; “education beyond tests and rote learning”, etc. There was a strong call for greater government action and accountability in this area.
- **Other priority issues:** strengthening and implementing commitments and responsibilities for free and public education; rights-based policy; inclusive education, special needs and education for people with disabilities.

EFA reflections

Almost all replies express the view that the narrow agenda of the MDG has squeezed out quality in particular, as well as other “lost” elements of the EFA agenda, particularly lifelong learning and adult literacy.

- **Structure and approach:** There is general (if not universal) support for the existing format of the EFA framework, as a holistic framework with separate but linked goals. In particular, links between access (2) and quality (6) are emphasized. The clearest concern in terms of approach and structure is about indicators: there are a number of calls for more, clearer and deeper targets and indicators under each goal, particularly in terms of disaggregated targets as a strategy to combat marginalization and promote equity.
- **Deepening EFA goals:** Quality (goal 6) is mentioned most often as the current EFA goal in need of deepening. There is a call for clearer targets, and to specifically include relevance of education, teacher training / numbers, assessments of learning, as well as suggestions that quality should be an over-arching theme rather than a separate goal. In terms of the access goal (2), many respondents are calling for a stronger focus on equity, by including further

indicators and perhaps combining with goal 5. There are a number of calls to deepen goal 3 on lifelong learning and skills, either in terms of clearer or more ambitious targets, or in terms of re-building the profile and priority.

- **Adding to the framework:** the most frequently-mentioned topics for adding to the framework are training and conditions of teachers (sometimes as a separate goal, sometimes included in quality); and a clearer rights basis.

MDG reflections

Replies reflect some tension: the MDGs are felt to have had greater political traction – because of higher profile but also the tighter and clearer agenda – but the narrowness is felt to be a problem for the EFA framework and education rights broadly.

On the question of a possible future single goal on education within a broader development framework, the strongest theme in responses so far is that any future MDG should be much broader, including most or all of the full EFA agenda or at the very least a broader framing than the present MDG. Beyond or within that, there is a spread of opinion although some of the issues arising more strongly are equity and inclusion, rights, quality and learning, and free education.