

A SIGNIFICANT YEAR FOR EDUCATION; A HUGE YEAR FOR THE MOVEMENT: 2015 IN REVIEW

World Assembly and CSEF Learning Event

In February, 190 delegates from 91 countries participated in the Fifth GCE World Assembly, held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Addresses came from GCE co-founder and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Kailash Satyarthi; the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Education Kishore Singh; Professor Mary Metcalfe, visiting professor at the Universities of Witwatersrand and Johannesburg; and video addresses from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, and Global Partnership for Education Chair, Julia Gillard. As well as electing a new GCE Board, which for the first time has two representatives from each of the GCE regions and a new constituency representing international child labour, child rights and youth rights alliances, the movement passed new policy on vital issues including privatisation and education in conflict and emergencies, and discussed and passed the 2015-2019 GCE Strategic Plan. It remains crucial for us to act on these new resolutions and commitments in the years to come.

Held immediately after the World Assembly, the CSEF Global Learning Event was an important opportunity for coalitions and partners to come together to reflect on CSEF achievements and challenges, and to share lessons from across the programme. Through your invaluable contributions participants were able to hear examples of civil society engagement in diverse contexts, for example around the expansion of democratic and active movements, and increased citizen participation in policy dialogue. We also had the chance to discuss key civil society approaches going forward, including how to strengthen engagement with GPE processes, the importance of education financing in the post-2015 context, using research in advocacy, and engaging effectively in Local Education Groups (LEGs).

Opportunities for multilingual discussion were provided in plenary and in workshops to enable us all to engage with each other across regions, leading to enriched and truly informed debates. From your feedback, it is clear that the experiences of both the World Assembly and the CSEF Learning Event left us energised and motivated!

Education 2030 - steering the agenda

2015 represented a huge opportunity for GCE to continue to take an active role to steer the development of SDG4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action – both through collective debate and in vital global fora including the Inter-Governmental Network sessions in New York, the World Education Forum in Incheon, the UN Sustainable Development Summit, and finally the UNESCO High Level Meeting on Education 2030. In 2015 and as part of our Global Action Week campaign, GCE launched its review of the EFA Goals with substantial contributions from GCE members, and published a detailed plan to encourage governments to learn from past mistakes, to create a framework that would deliver the human right to quality education, and to commit to national plans for implementation.

The agreement of SDG4 and the Framework for Action, both of which reflect almost all the demands made by civil society for 'inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all', are major achievements.

This was the culmination of years of targeted advocacy at every level, and the sustained efforts of GCE members were well-acknowledged, with GCE President Camilla Croso invited as a keynote speaker to both the UN Sustainable Development Summit and to the UNESCO High Level Meeting.

While we celebrate today, we must push for action tomorrow. Firm, national commitments to implementation of the new agenda are still needed; national, global and thematic indicators need to be as steeped in human rights as the FFA – and the process for their agreement must also give space for civil society input; and, fundamentally, domestic and donor financing need to be in place to give the world a fighting chance to realise the ambitious new agenda. Disappointingly, some of the champion donors to education which we had celebrated in our [2015 Education Aid Watch](#) have already announced major cuts to education financing, and we must put significant pressure on donors to reverse this worrying trend, and on regional and global fora to support the growth of domestic budgets through, for example, taxation mechanisms. The GCE movement voted for the 2016 Global Action Week for Education theme to focus on education financing, and this work must be done in tandem with advocacy for serious commitments towards implementation. Indeed, our heavy engagement in developing the new agenda has already afforded us new opportunities in this arena. GCE has expanded into new spaces, such as the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which will be important in the new SDG period of implementation, while we also continue to work on our existing global engagement with UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education and the Global Education First Initiative, among others.

Vote for Education: Global Action Week 2015

Global Action Week played a significant role in the mobilisation of our movement in the run-up to the UN Sustainable Development Summit and the agreement of the Framework for Action. 2015's GAW coincided with the 15th anniversary of the Dakar World Education Forum and, as noted above, our publication [Time to Get it Right: Lessons from EFA and the MDGs for Education 2016-2030](#) provided us with a unique opportunity to draw attention to successes and shortcomings of the last 15 years of the EFA movement, and to lobby for the right to education 2000-2030. Coalitions and schools held a wide range of activities asking their governments to 'Vote for Education'.

Many coalitions produced shadow reports, recommendations or held events assessing their country's achievements in relation to the EFA Goals. A snapshot of GCE members' activities can be read [here](#).

Civil Society Education Fund: advocacy highlights, evaluation and 2016-2018 phase

2015 was also the culmination of the current phase of CSEF funding. This phase supported national civil society coalitions operating in 54 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and Eastern Europe. We have continued to see increased civil society participation in policy processes from CSEF coalitions, including engagement with Local Education Groups. From January to June alone, coalitions reported active engagement with 310 education sector policy dialogue and review forums. Coalitions in the programme continued their advocacy on national priority issues, for example girls' education in Mozambique and Nigeria, financing in Cambodia, Malawi and Zambia, and education in emergency in Vanuatu and Nepal. GCE shares news from across the CSEF coalitions through its newsletters, which you can access [here](#). CSEF coalitions have also been given profile through a variety of posts on both the [GCE](#) and [GPE](#) blogs this year.

In October we received the final evaluation report for the phase of CSEF ending in 2015, which provided some extremely encouraging findings – including the relevance, effectiveness and the impact (and ongoing potential for impact) of the programme. A final and very positive review meeting was held with UNESCO, our supervising entity for this phase of the programme, and many of the recommendations within the evaluation report and

those provided by UNESCO in the course of this phase had already been taken into account during the application process for the next phase of CSEF. We will continue to take these into account in the coming months.

At the end of October GCE finally received confirmation from the Global Partnership for Education that **US\$28.7 million in funding for a new phase of CSEF (2016-2018) was approved**. This came after a long proposal development process lead by GCE with active involvement of regional networks, national coalitions and other CSEF partners. The decision is a result not only of a convincing proposal, but also due to the impressive work by CSEF coalitions since the initiation of CSEF, which has demonstrated that education sector dialogue needs to happen with civil society at the table. The approval also demonstrates the commitment of GPE to the principle of civil society participation, and is crucial for the work of the global education movement and of civil society across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, Middle East and Eastern Europe. It is the first time that funding for three full years of CSEF (2016-2018) has been approved, which is an incredible precedent.

Growth of the movement

As well as the incredible news of the confirmation of the new CSEF phase, 2015 saw the continued broadening and strengthening of the GCE movement. We have welcomed four new members, from the Dominican Republic (*Foro Socioeducativo (FSE)*), Honduras (*Foro Dakar-Honduras*), Madagascar (*Coalition Nationale Malgache Pour l'Education Pour Tous (CONAMEPT)*) and Vanuatu (*Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition (VEPAC)*) – all of whom have been engaged with GCE as CSEF-supported coalitions. We have also made some progress towards reaching out to youth movements and organisations; while this has long been a subject of discussion within the movement, the 2015 World Assembly formally recognised the need to represent youth-led organisations, and a place on the GCE Board is now reserved for such groups. The GCE Board has since been developing a new strategy to engage these groups as GCE members – acknowledging the active participation of youth groups within our national and regional organisations, and seeking to engage them at international levels. GCE stands today as the biggest civil society movement working to realise the right to education for everyone, and it is extremely encouraging to see that there remains a clear interest and desire on the part of national, regional and global coalitions, alliances and organisations to become a part of our vibrant, engaged and active family.