Realising the right to education for all

Global Campaign for Education discussion paper on education post-2015

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Executive Summary

This paper draws on a widespread consultation within the membership of the Global Campaign for Education to set out principles, proposals and reflections on the priorities for education post-2015.

Education is a fundamental human right, one that enables access to other human rights, be they cultural, social, economic, civil or political rights, such as the right to a good livelihood, to health and to political participation, among others. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights established the purpose of education as "full development of the human personality and… the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." This vision, endorsed by States around the world, must drive efforts in policy-making and underpin the international agenda including short-, medium- and long-term goals. Ensuring that every person in the world has a good quality (at least) basic education would be transformative for individuals, communities and nations. Yet despite the importance of this, its achievement is a long way off.

There are still 131 million children out of school, millions more in school but not learning and nearly one in six people cannot read or write. This is not due to a failure to recognise or understand the problem but, rather, to a failure of political will to take effective action. Underlying this is the failure to fully recognize education as a fundamental human right, and to take political action accordingly. Financing has been weak, attention has been focused too narrowly on enrolling children in primary school, and decision-making is exclusive and non-transparent. Understanding the right to education – and what that implies for State responsibility – is necessary to make progress.

GCE is therefore calling for a renewed focus on education that treats quality, equity and access as inextricably linked: without progress on all three, we cannot realise the right to education.

Quality education and equitable access have emerged as overwhelming priorities in the GCE consultation, along with financing and civil society participation in policy-making. Ensuring quality will require a focus on teachers – another major priority in consultation responses – including training, conditions and structuring the profession so as to attract and retain the best teachers. There needs to be attention on pupil-to-trained teacher ratios; appropriate curricula and infrastructure are also key concerns, but the insufficiency of trained teachers is seen overall as a more serious issue. Access, meanwhile, must go beyond enrolment, and beyond primary, to include the whole cycle of education from early years to adulthood. And a focus on equity, inclusion and non-discrimination will mean targeting the hardest to reach and historically excluded groups, which should be tracked through relevant disaggregated data.

In GCE's consultations so far, many members have chosen to highlight not just what we want to achieve, but the processes necessary to get there – notably sufficient, well-allocated, transparently-used finance, and government accountability through transparent sharing of information and opening up policy, planning and monitoring to broad citizen participation.

In terms of goal-setting, attention needs to be paid to the ways in which what and how we measure affect what we are trying to achieve. Some of the possibilities to consider are global goals with locally-set indicators; process goals including participation and financing; indicators that drive action in crucial areas such as trained teachers and quality teaching and learning environments; and approaches to measurement and evaluation that are rooted in education's broad purpose and bring in the full range of actors, from learners to teachers, and parents to community members.

There is still a huge mountain to climb to make the right to education a reality; now is the moment to learn from the last 25 years in order to tackle what remains the fundamental challenge of the 21st century – equitable access to quality education for all.

About this paper

This paper is based on a widespread consultation within the membership of the Global Campaign for Education, a civil society movement that promotes education as a fundamental human right, and holds governments and international institutions accountable for their commitments and responsibility to provide free, compulsory, high quality public education for all. GCE's membership includes national coalitions in nearly 100 countries – made up of civil society organisations, NGOs, teacher unions, rights activists, parents' associations, youth and student organisations and community organisations – as well as regional and international networks and organisations.

The GCE membership contributed to this paper through a survey-based consultation, to which we received inputs from more than 70 coalitions, networks and organisations based in more than 50 countries, some based on large-scale community consultations, others on discussions within networks and organisations, and through discussions in late 2012 and early 2013, including the Africa Network Campaign for Education For All (ANCEFA) policy forum, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) regional learning event, and a meeting of the GCE Northern coalitions. This input encompassed future education priorities, reflections on the EFA Dakar framework and the MDGs, and recommendations for future goals and frameworks.

This discussion paper presents the key themes and concerns that emerged as most important to GCE members during this consultation. It will be refined after the imminent meetings in Dakar and Bali for discussion within GCE. This will lead to a final position by mid-2013.

Introduction: why education should be a focus of the post-2015 agenda

Education is a fundamental human right, as recognised in the 1948 Universal Declaration. It is also an enabling right: access to a good quality education enables people to better access other rights – to a good livelihood, to better health, to political participation – that transform their own lives and in turn the wellbeing of their families, communities and countries. By investing in education, governments can reduce inequality, improve the quality of democracy, build prosperity and contribute to their citizens' wellbeing and empowerment. On an individual level, for example, the children of educated mothers are more likely to be healthy, better-fed and to survive beyond five years old, and educated African women are three to five times as likely to know basic information about HIV and AIDS as non-literate women. At the national level, over time, investment in education and skills training is three times as important to economic growth as investment in physical infrastructure.

Education is central to the achievement of much of the broader global vision enshrined in long-standing and universally accepted human rights law, which is also coming to the forefront of post-2015 discussions, as well as to tackling the continuing and the new challenges that face nations and the international community. Education is critical to consolidating democracies, supporting political participation and building stronger, more accountable institutions of governance; to fostering peaceful resolution of conflicts; to overcoming all forms of discrimination; to tackling youth unemployment and underemployment; to sharing the benefits of information technology and building knowledge-based economies; to both mitigating and adapting to climate change; to tackling inequality, including gender inequality; to halting the spread of infectious disease; to managing fertility and demographic transition through the realisation of sexual and reproductive health rights; and to building flourishing, equitable economies that overcome poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth and power.

Yet the current situation is that today – despite the progress made in getting children into school since 2000 – realisation of the right to education *for all* remains distant. The stagnating numbers of children out of school, the lack of education and training for young people, the often catastrophically poor quality of basic education and the fact that nearly one in six adults worldwide still cannot read and write – all these argue for a renewed, sharpened focus on education as fundamental to a global agenda post-2015.

The road to 2015 – what have we learned?

By 2015, the international community will have considerable experience of the setting of goals and agreement of frameworks for education, as well as a body of evidence by which to evaluate their success. The right to education was given formal global recognition in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stated that "everyone has a right to education", and this right was given further substance and detail by a wealth of legally binding international covenants and declarations, as well as detailed General Observations. Subsequently, at the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtien in 1990 and at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, a broad group of stakeholders – governments, civil society organisations, teachers and education experts – reached agreements on education priorities and what it would mean to realise education for all, with the Dakar forum producing a Framework For Action that details six goals and clear government commitments. With the agreement of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, governments affirmed the importance of education – including it as two of the eight goals – while narrowing the Dakar agenda to the goals of universal primary education and gender parity in access.

It is undeniable that through these declarations, agreements and processes, progress in ensuring that everyone has access to education has been made. It is also undeniable that this progress is insufficient, uneven and – most recently – stalling.

With regards to progress, we know that from 1999 to 2010, the number of children missing out on primary school fell by 47 million, and the number missing out on lower secondary school by more than 30 million. The proportion of girls enrolled in primary school rose from 79 percent to 88 percent in the same period. And 132 million more young people and adults – of whom 42 million are aged between 15 and 24 – are able to read and write than in the early 1990s.

But progress has been limited: more than 131 million children of primary and lower secondary age still remain out of school, many millions more young children are missing out on early childhood education and there is a huge gap in upper secondary education and skills and training for young people. Moreover, progress is not just incomplete, but stalling: the number of children missing out on primary school has not shifted since 2008, and has even grown in sub-Saharan Africa. Transition to secondary school remains weak and, globally, there were more children missing out on lower secondary school in 2010 than in 2008, in large part because of growing out-of-school populations in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. Global estimates indicate almost one in five women around the world cannot read and write – with the proportion in some countries being more than four in five.

There has, moreover, been particular lack of progress on two other aspects central to delivering education for all: equity and quality. Inequalities in educational access are persistent: girls are more likely to be out of school than boys; rural children are twice as likely to be out of school as urban children; national data show that racial and ethnic discrimination lead to severe exclusion from education; an estimated one third of children out of school have a disability; and children from the poorest fifth of households are four times more likely to be out of school than children from the richest fifth.

The failings on quality are also staggering: it is estimated that of 650 million children of primary school age, 250 million do not have even basic literacy and numeracy skills, let alone the social, creative or analytical skills that a good education should provide. It is a scandal that in many countries, children can complete two, three or more years of education, and not even learn how to read.

Of course, quality is not the only element of the EFA agenda that has been neglected: there has been less than spectacular progress on youth and adult literacy, skills and lifelong learning, early childhood education, secondary education, and an understanding of gender equality that goes beyond parity in access.

It is important not to characterise this as a collective failure to identify the issues of greatest concern. On the contrary, the aspects of education currently being highlighted as most in need of attention were already well recognised at Jomtien and have since been emphasised repeatedly. The failure is not one of understanding or identifying the challenges; rather it is one of action, of building the right to education into law and policy. The GCE consultation has revealed three particular factors that can explain this lack of action:

- **Political focus**: there is a very strong consensus that the narrowing of the EFA agenda to the access goals included in the MDGs meant that political action has focused on limited elements of what is needed in education, drawing government attention and donor funds to getting children into primary school, without a corresponding focus on what education actually means or comprises, even inside primary schools - let alone outside them.
- **Financing**: new UNESCO calculations indicate a $38 billion gap between the financing currently provided and what is needed to secure equitable, good quality education in early years, at primary school and at lower secondary level. Financing – both in terms of domestic allocations and spending, and in terms of donor contributions – was the most-mentioned concern in the GCE consultation, and in particular was most frequently mentioned as a priority for government action and as the issue on which governments should be held to account internationally. The Dakar framework for action on EFA did include commitments to provide financing (though not targets), yet this was not in the MDGs.
- **Governance**: another concern arising frequently in the consultation – particularly in relation to priorities for government policy action – is the need for much more open, transparent and participatory decision-making in the education sector. When policy priorities are decided behind closed doors and without the participation of citizens and civil society, it is far more likely that they will fail to address the real and urgent concerns of the population, or be adjusted in light of their actual impact. Civil society participation was a core dimension of the Dakar Framework for Action, and must remain so in the post-2015 agenda.

Underlying these is a failure to understand education as a fundamental human right. This has led both to a narrower understanding of education – often reduced from the broad purpose agreed in international human rights instruments to the acquisition of skills for employability, with an impact on curricula, teacher training and assessment – and to the comparative abdication of State responsibility.

The imminent 2015 deadline for achievement of both the MDGs and the EFA agenda provide us with a moment both to hold governments to account for their commitments, and also to review what we are holding them to account for. This discussion paper therefore draws on the collective learning and experience of GCE members to understand what has – and has not – been achieved under existing education frameworks, and also sets out some outline principles and proposals that draw on this learning.

The human right to education as the starting point

Many GCE members express concern that there has been a failure to root education goals, policy and practice in an understanding of fundamental human rights, and in particular the right to education. The right to education was formalised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and since then it has been reiterated and given further substance through numerous human rights treaties and conventions. A rich practice of interpreting, using and monitoring the treaties that include the right to education has yielded a framework through which the right to education is understood to mean that education must have four interrelated characteristics – the "4 As". Education must be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable.

States are the duty-bearers for fundamental rights. These 4 As, therefore, as well as unpacking the right to education, sum up state responsibilities for education. The implication is that states must:

- Ensure that education is **available to all** at all levels, and provide the financing to make this a reality;
- Ensure that education is **accessible to all**, without discrimination, including by the immediate removal of cost barriers (fees etc) at least for compulsory stages of education and increasingly at other levels, so as to ensure universality; and ensuring that there are no other obstacles in terms of geographic location;
- Ensure that education is aimed at the full development of personality and of citizenship, anchored in values that reflect and promote human rights, and is of good quality, requiring well-trained, professional and well-supported teachers and safe learning environments – or **adaptable**.
- Ensure that the content of education, infrastructure and pedagogical methods are relevant, inclusive and contextually sensitive – or **acceptable**.

The right to education is not explicit in the MDGs or even the EFA framework (although it is arguably implicit). Future frameworks need to be more explicitly rights-based; many GCE members are calling for the integration human rights standards into legislation and policy related to education.

Priorities for education post-2015

Overall aim: An integrated focus on access, quality and equity

The overwhelming priorities emerging from the GCE consultation in terms of what education should look like post-2015 are that education should be of high quality and equitably provided for all. These are not competing priorities, but rather factors that should be taken as inextricable. Many in the consultation stated that if there is to be a single goal on education in the future, it should be along the lines of "equitable access to quality education for all". As set out above, the State bears responsibility for this. It is important to understand these elements as closely linked:

- universal access without quality means that we are providing schooling, not education (that is, education is not acceptable or adaptable)
- quality without universal access means that there is a good education only for the few (education is not available or accessible)
- the failure to focus on equity risks entrenching the current situation whereby the populations who are most marginalised, excluded and discriminated against – those living in deepest poverty, girls, those with disabilities, those living in fragile states, street children, migrants, afrodescendants and linguistic or ethnic minorities – are left out. These are already the groups that have failed to benefit from recent expansion of education: this inequality must be redressed rather than entrenched.

What do we want in terms of equity?

Almost all the responses to GCE's consultation touched on equity, and there was a wide range of comments. Currently, the provision of education – and in particular quality education – is highly unequal, with gender, income, location, ethnicity and other aspects of identity playing a huge role in shaping the educational opportunities and experiences of individuals. There must be a focus on providing education for those who are hardest to reach – including many girls, those living in the deepest poverty, people with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, minorities and groups who face discrimination, and ensuring that education serves to overcome these multiple forms of discrimination.

More specifically:

- **Education for women and girls** is still a concern – up to now, gender equality in education has been largely understood in terms of gender parity in enrolment. However, it is necessary to go far beyond this to look at the experience of women and girls in school, gender-based violence, gender-sensitive curricula and gender stereotyping, etc.
- **Truly inclusive education** must be a priority. This implies recognizing – and valuing – difference and diversity, developing strategies that tackle both access – provision, infrastructure, etc – and content, in terms of appropriate curricula and teaching methods. Particular attention needs to be paid to learners with disabilities, who are particularly marginalised in policy-making.
- **Measurement of progress in education** must take account of these different groups, so as to better understand who is being left out, and to change policy accordingly. This requires disaggregated data.

What do we want in terms of access?

"Access" to education is too often used very narrowly, with discussion and monitoring of access frequently confined simply to enrolment in primary school. This does mark a narrowing of the agenda – even the MDGs, with their comparatively limited focus, included a goal not on just enrolment but on completion of a full cycle of primary education, and the Dakar Framework for Action went further. GCE understands access to education – the access to which the global community must commit – in line with the following principles:

- Access implies provision: a state responsibility for access to education implies a state responsibility for provision. Many respondents to the GCE survey pointed out the need to focus on **universal public education** as the key means to guarantee universality, and also to ensure equity.

- There must be **lifelong access** to education from the early years (early childhood care and education) through to adult education, including skills training and literacy programmes for those who have missed out. It is important to maintain a focus on primary access, but expand this to other also critical but often far more neglected levels. GCE members are calling for more action on ECCE, on adult literacy and on secondary education, while in our consultation, GCE members from Africa and Asia particularly pointed to the need for access to skills and vocational training
- Access must be about **more than enrolment**: governments must be held accountable for ensuring that children do not just begin primary education, but complete it. There needs to be much more attention to the transition between levels of education: ECCE, primary, secondary and increasingly tertiary. Primary education is not the sum of our ambition.
- A focus on access requires a focus on **barriers to access** – and in particular, cost. Public education must be **free** at all compulsory levels, and increasingly so at other levels.

What do we want in terms of quality?

The need for much greater focus on the quality of education emerged overwhelmingly from the GCE consultation. It was the aspect of education most cited as needing to be a government priority, by GCE members from all continents. It was also the most frequently mentioned aspect of any future single 'goal' on education, usually in combination with equity or as a priority aspect of a goal incorporating the full EFA agenda.

The GCE membership has a rich understanding of what quality is and requires, which relate to an understanding of the purpose of education and what the right to education implies. Quality education includes effective acquisition of capabilities, knowledge, values and skills – acquired through, as one respondent phrased it, "education beyond tests and rote learning". In terms of skills and knowledge, quality education this must include at least literacy and numeracy, knowledge including of humanities, science and arts, analytical and problem-solving skills based on critical thinking, and creative skills based on fostering imagination. It also includes comprehensive sex education and other life skills and work skills that can improve health, opportunities for meaningful employment and livelihood choices.

In terms of values and citizenship, quality education includes education for empowerment and for participation in democratic processes. It promotes and celebrates peace, solidarity, dialogue, cooperation, tolerance, diversity and non-discrimination, helping to challenge stereotypes and reduce gender-based violence. It should also promote sustainable living, well-being and dignity.

What are the features of universal, equitable quality education?

Different definitions of quality education – from UNESCO, UNICEF, GCE, INEE and others – all agree that professional, well-trained, well-supported teachers are absolutely necessary to ensuring education of good quality. Strong subject knowledge, well-developed knowledge of and skills in pedagogy, and a thorough understanding of (child) rights and inclusive education are all crucial to ensuring that children and adult learners receive the quality education described above, in a safe environment. Yet there is a gap of 1.7 million teachers to deliver universal primary education alone, and huge numbers of teachers are untrained. In Africa, UNESCO estimates that half of all teachers have little or no training.

The GCE consultation points to the massive concern about this trained teacher gap. The lack of high quality, well-trained teachers – and the impact this has on the quality of education - emerges as a priority concern for GCE members all around the world. Among GCE members outside Europe and North America (who were focused on donor action), the need to improve and invest in high quality teachers (whether through recruitment, training, conditions, etc) was the most common response to our question about the actions that their government should prioritise. Along with financing, quality and equity, teaching and teachers was one of the issues most mentioned in the consultation as whole.

Some of the specific concerns relate to:

- having sufficient trained teachers – governments should be accountable for the pupil-to-trained teacher ratio
- the extent and nature of teacher training – training must be expanded and improved, including specialised teacher training to ensure quality education for children that are often excluded, such as those with disabilities
- promotion of innovative teaching methods

- transformation of the teacher profession and teacher conditions so as to attract highly qualified professionals and raise standards – there is particular concern about the drive to 'de-professionalise' teaching through the employment of massive numbers of untrained or undertrained teachers, on low salaries, and attempts to hold them accountable through punitive testing or assessment regimes, rather than empowering them, through training and support, to be the best educators possible, and designing evaluation aimed at improving the teaching-learning process.

Other aspects of quality that are of concern:

- Curriculum reform, ensuring a curriculum that is both relevant and inclusive, promoting the needs of diverse learners such as girls and boys, children with and without disabilities, different ethnic, racial and language groups etc.
- Mother tongue teaching and materials
- Sufficient and appropriate infrastructure.

Process: how we achieve our post-2015 priorities

Financing

UNESCO has just released new figures indicating that the financing gap (after taking into account current domestic allocations and international development assistance) for equitable, good quality early childhood, primary and lower secondary education and basic adult literacy is $38 billion. (Figures are not available for upper secondary.) This means that governments, collectively, are falling $38 billion short of the promises they have made on education. This gap reveals the insincerity of the statement, endorsed by 161 governments, that "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources."

Financing – in terms of the availability of funds, the allocation and transparent use of funds, the level and nature of donor commitments – is by far the most frequently mentioned concern in the initial GCE consultation. It is undeniable that commitments to the principles and objectives set out above will get us nowhere unless there is sufficient, appropriate and accountably-provided financing. Financing is a huge missing piece of the MDG framework in particular. Specific concerns related to education financing include:

- The level of financing for education: GCE is calling for governments to spend at least 20 percent of their budgets, or 6 percent of GDP, on education. This benchmark should be clearly endorsed. Some countries are meeting this target easily; others are a long way off.
- There needs to be more attention to sub-sectoral allocations within the education budget. States should ensure that a significant proportion of the education budget is spent on basic education.
- Within education budgets, there needs to be attention paid to equity and meeting the needs of the marginalised. Disaggregated and public budget and spending figures are necessary for this.
- Governments should also work to expand their budgets – and limit aid dependency – through efforts to raise more revenue through progressive taxation. The international community should assist these efforts through the closing of tax havens and other loopholes.
- Donors must allocate at least 10% of their bilateral aid to basic education (counting a proportion of general budget support towards this.) According to the latest figures, low-income countries are spending, on average, just under 12 percent of their budgets on education, yet the DAC donors collectively allocated less than 3 percent of their development assistance to basic education from 2005 to 2010 (even counting 12 percent of GBS towards this total). The only conditions that can legitimately be attached to education financing relate to the transparent use of funds in line with budgets.
- Effective and well-targeted spending requires transparency: there must be full transparency of education budgets and spending, from local to national levels, allowing communities to understand – and influence – what is being funded, and monitor whether that funding arrives.

At a macro level, some GCE members have suggested that as part of the post-2015 framework, there should be a binding international timeline for closing the funding gap in education, with a clear indication of the contributions expected from different partners.

Accountable, transparent and participatory decision-making

The involvement of citizens – parents and teachers, community leaders and students – is vital in ensuring that education policies and programmes are relevant, that implementation is effective, that commitments are fulfilled and budget spent wisely. The necessity of citizen engagement for the achievement of Education For All was well recognised in the Dakar framework for action; governments must now put in place transparent and participatory structures to ensure that citizens are genuinely able influence priorities and to monitor and evaluate progress in the education sector. Transparency – about targets, processes, budgets, policies, plans and progress – is also crucial to enable decision-makers to be held to account.

Improving the transparency and the extent of participation in decision-making was the second-most frequently cited priority for government action on education in the GCE consultation, after financing. (Action on teachers was next.) Most responses addressed this directly in terms of the importance of citizen, community and civil society engagement in transparent decision-making processes. Some also pointed to the benefits of donor funding to support such participation and – whilst participation is of course about civil society claiming space as well as government offering space – the value of having formal spaces for civil society to present evidence and make proposals.

Education sector frameworks: legislation and governance

A number of GCE members highlight the importance of legislation – and even constitutions – that enshrine the right to education, and thus serve as a strong foundation for the achievement of education for all. Building on this foundation requires not just the structure but also the tools to implement; building the capacity of government officials is, in many countries, essential to creating a strong public education system. Weakness in government departments or delivery should be taken as a reason to strengthen capacity, rather than to turn to the private sector (which raises significant concerns about equity and accountability to the citizens as a whole) for delivery.

Implications for goals and frameworks

The value of global goals

The GCE consultation so far has been clear: there is value in having global frameworks, goals and targets for education. The EFA and MDG frameworks have provided a useful point of discussion, have helped increase the visibility of some specific education goals, and are felt to have led to some extent to more political and financial commitments to education. This argues for continuing with education-specific goals and frameworks, something almost every participant in the GCE consultation has supported. But while there is consensus on maintaining overall global goals, there is nevertheless a need for more sensitivity towards national contexts. This should be reflected in goals, objectives and in indicators.

The scope of education goals and frameworks

There is some tension in relation to concerns about the narrowness of the MDGs: the education MDGs are felt to have had greater political traction than the EFA goals in part because of their higher profile but also because they

set out a clearer and simpler agenda (and in fact these two features may be linked). And yet this clarity and simplicity arises significantly from a narrowing of the EFA agenda, which is overwhelmingly felt to have caused problems for achieving education rights and meaningful quality education. When it comes to negotiating this trade-off, GCE would not support the narrowing of the education agenda to just one or two aspects within a broader development framework. An overall post-2015 agenda must explicitly include education; if this is a single goal, it should be broad in scope (including equity, quality and access throughout the education cycle) and with a limited set of indicators and targets that highlight some of the priorities for delivering this vision.

The GCE membership expresses general (if not universal) support for the existing format of the EFA framework, as a holistic framework with separate but linked goals – while pointing to the need to make these link clearer (certainly in implementation) than previously. There must be more, clearer and deeper targets and indicators under each goal, both in terms of disaggregated targets as a strategy to combat marginalisation and promote equity and non-discrimination, and as a means to refocus attention on some of the goals (such as goal 6 on quality education) that have suffered from neglect, through setting a clearer agenda.

Moreover, any new framework must reflect and respond to legally binding human rights instruments already agreed by UN Member States. These already include a wealth of detail on the right to education that should inform post-2015 frameworks.

How do we approach goals, targets and indicators?

Part of the challenge is of course to think about how the goals, targets and indicators we set actually impact on the outcomes we are trying to achieve. That is, how will the attention they draw, the measurement they require, and the resources they attract will influence not just what governments can report (the number of children in school, the number of children passing a certain test) but what we actually want to hold them accountable for: children, young people and adults who have full and equitable access to an education of good quality?

True accountability for the achievement of education goals requires focus both on what is to be measured – clear indicators of relevant outcomes that reflect the purpose of education, of agreed structural indicators such as financing and legal frameworks, and of process goals – and on how that measurement happens. With regards to the latter, the full range of stakeholders should be engaged in defining indicators, and in monitoring and evaluation of progress. The MDGs and EFA goals were clear, but mechanisms for monitoring progress at national level were often vague. GCE members argue that results have often been biased or at least misleading: while celebrating increases in enrolment rates, children are dropping out of school, or even graduating without the ability to read a single word.

This therefore argues for goals, targets and indicators that:

- Capture what is important for improving the education system overall, and not just what can easily be measured (standardised test scores, for example, may indicate levels of preparation for a particular test, but not the quality of education);
- Get the right actors involved, so that the assessment process itself can contribute to achievement of goals; GCE is calling for improved, flexible measuring methods that involve a variety of stakeholders, with an emphasis on citizens, including parents, teachers and students;
- Target equity through disaggregated goals and targets;
- Drive necessary action to achieve outcomes, through a focus on structural and process requirements – this would include indicators related to the availability of trained teachers and safe, inclusive learning spaces, on civil society and citizen participation in policy-making, and targets and benchmarks on financing;
- Allow for flexibility and embrace diversity – perhaps by allowing space for national or sub-national goals, which should be subject to the same degree of scrutiny, but avoid a 'one size fits all' approach to measurement of progress;
- Include tangible targets and timelines, with intermediate targets, so that there is a clear, shared understanding of what is to be achieved, and so that actors can be held to account.

Conclusions

The GCE membership encompasses a very wide range of organisations and contexts – including local community-based organisations and international NGOs, teachers unions and parents' associations, grassroots activists and academics, all from nearly 100 countries. And yet, despite differences in some of the details of concerns, the consultation we have conducted so far, over several months, has revealed a striking consensus, pointing to the existence of shared realities.

This can be summed up as:

- The GCE movement is deeply concerned about the quality of education: there is a strong feeling that this has been neglected in the rush to get children into school – which in itself is not even complete. We are calling strongly to move beyond this fragmented and narrow approach by prioritising quality, access and equity as inextricable elements of achieving the right to education. Framing education as a fundamental human right, with States responsible for its acceptability, tackles this challenge.
- Quality and access goals cannot be achieved without a serious focus on tackling inequity, discrimination and marginalisation. This includes a continued and deepened focus on inclusive education with an emphasis on gender equality, as well as greater sensitivity to the situation of people with disabilities, those in poverty, those living in fragile states, migrants, afrodescendants and ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, and other excluded groups.
- In terms of quality, there are many factors to consider, including infrastructure, curriculum, use of mother tongue and materials. The one of most concern to GCE members is the devastating gap in trained, professional teachers. The strategy of employing low-wage, low-skill, barely trained teachers – and hoping for quality education as the outcome – has failed, as can be seen in disastrously poor achievement and literacy rates. It also risks children's safety. Training and supporting professional teachers must be a priority.
- Access must go beyond enrolment and beyond primary level, covering the whole education cycle from early years to adulthood.
- GCE members are calling for a much greater focus on the structural barriers to achieving education for all, including the lack of financing, poor accountability, negligible citizen participation and non-transparent decision-making, and poor monitoring. These must be taken account of in future frameworks.
- An understanding of rights has often been neglected, both in national policy-making and in international frameworks. The understanding that education is a fundamental right, and what that right implies, must be at the foundation of future frameworks.

While some progress has been made in ensuring that more children, young people and adults have an education, there is no room for complacency in a world in which nearly one in six adults can't read, and hundreds of millions of children attend school but are barely learning anything. Solving the education crisis remains the fundamental challenge of the 21st century, and it requires a framework that will drive the political will and the allocation of resources necessary to end this crisis.