

Education Heroes

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Background

- The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered health, economic and social crises of extraordinary proportions that have the potential to seriously undermine the (already slow) progress made by developing countries towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- The World Bank's (WB) own figures suggest that by 2021 an additional 110 to 150 million people will have fallen into extreme poverty, living on less than US\$ 1.90 per day

Background Continues...

- The WBG agenda reveals the unwillingness of the donor community to take concrete measures to scale up and strengthen public financing of development, and an inability to agree on a multilateral resolution to unsustainable sovereign debts.
- Furthermore, they demonstrates a lack of resolve to create a global body to deal with massive tax avoidance and evasion, which is strongly detrimental to countries in the global south

Background Continues...

- The economic crises within countries and globally will likely lead to fiscal austerity, increases in poverty, and fewer resources available for investments in public services from both domestic expenditure and development aid. All of these will lead to a crisis in human development that continues long after the pandemic has ended
- Schools also play a critical role around the world in ensuring the delivery of essential health services, nutritious meals, protection, and psycho-social support. Thus, school closures have also endangered children's overall wellbeing and development, not just their learning

Background Continues...

- A report issued by the new joint World Bank-UNESCO Education Finance Watch (EFW) in February 22, 2021 states that education budgets are not adjusting proportionately to the challenges brought about by COVID-19, especially in poorer countries
- Despite additional funding needs, two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have, in fact, cut their public education budgets since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the same report

Background Continues...

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2018-19, high-income countries were spending annually the equivalent of US\$8,501 for every child or youth's education compared to US\$48 in low-income countries. COVID-19 is only widening this huge per-capita education spending gap between rich and poor countries
- The proportion of 10-year-olds unable to read a short, age-appropriate text – was 53 percent in low- and middle-income countries prior to COVID-19, compared to only 9 percent for high-income countries. COVID-19 related school closures are likely to increase this 53 percent share to as much as 63 percent

Background Continues...

- The combination of being out of school and the loss of family livelihoods caused by the pandemic may leave girls especially vulnerable, and may aggravate exclusion and inequality – particularly for persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups
- **“External financing is key to support the education opportunities of the world’s poorest,”** said Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General at UNESCO

How GCE envision the future?

- The immediate future after the pandemic, will leave the conditions of inequality exposed in all areas. Specifically in education, the situation of exclusion of populations that have historically been discriminated against will be more evident.
- Fiscal weakening will have negative impacts on education budgets and will depend on the political will of governments to try to level these effects, so that excluded populations can benefit from affirmative actions
- Governments may increase their pressure on CSOs and increase shrinking space in order to avoid demands of securing effective plans and budgets for the education sector as well as other sectors as health and social security to recover

How GCE envision the future?

- Moreover, governments in an attempt to avoid their responsibilities, may be inclined to rely on the private sector for the provision of education, which will increase exclusion and affect the provision of free, quality education
- Education is a human right, but it doesn't stand alone, rights can't be fragmented, and in this context health and social well being go hand by hand with education
- It is not realistic to expect education to be achieved if students are not healthy and are hungry, if not starving
- Debts are another big challenge that faces the development of low and lower middle income countries that are already facing difficult economic situations, that have become worse with the pandemic

What is GCE doing?

- The cancellation or relief of debt, the redirection of international cooperation and the elimination of tax burdens on the most impoverished sectors.
- Public budgets should prioritize budget funding for health and education and strengthen teacher training for the use of educational technology.
- The international community should also facilitate access to educational informatics systems and platforms in the best conditions

What is GCE doing?

- The issue of poor countries that are suffering from heavy debts, should be addressed very seriously and creditors should be requested to cancel these debts, so poor countries are freed from this burden and can better plan for the development of their countries
- To support the design and implementation of school reopening strategies that include services to support children's education, health and psychosocial wellbeing, and other needs

What is GCE doing?

- The recovery of learning must respond to emergency plans that attend to students who are lagging behind in a virtual and face-to-face way
- For them, it will be necessary to offer immediate access to a “digital and technological basket” that facilitates internet connectivity and the acquisition of computer equipment. Other alternatives such as the use of public communication means as TV and/or radio should be considered in order to reach greater numbers of students
- Proper solutions for tax justice and tax evasion are imperative in order for low and lower middle countries to recover and be able to design effective plans and measures

What is GCE doing?

- We should begin to look at education, health, social wellbeing and other needs of people, as rights, and enough financing should be secured for and lower middle income countries to achieve real development in these sectors, but not considering this as “humanitarian aid”, but as concerted efforts of the international community showing real solidarity of peoples and peoples around the world
- The solution is not individual that implies one specific area or country, it is a common cause that concerns the whole world
- GCE is well aware of the importance of activating Civil Society and community involvement in the achievement of a “building back better” situation in order to overcome the negative effects of the pandemic

GCE initiatives: One Billion Voices

- Several initiatives have been launched by GCE in order to achieve this involvement and tackle different pertaining issues
 1. One Billion Voices Campaign
 2. Debt Research
 3. Education in Emergencies Campaign

1. One Billion Voices

- One Billion Voices Campaign, that was launched in January 2021 and aimed at gathering GCE members all over the world to jointly address the global education financing crisis worsened by the pandemic, but that also existed before it, to secure an increase in public financing of education in order to ensure inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all
- The OBV campaign is seeking to have people affected by the pandemic to share their experiences and stories and call for urgent action to fund education

1. One Billion Voices

- Our interest is not only to gather stories for the purpose of documentation, but it to disseminate these stories through different tools such as films, infographics, TV screenings, radio programs, etc..... as lessons that can teach and influence others in a positive way
- Through the OBV campaign, we want local voices to be heard all over, localize advocacy efforts, taking into consideration specific circumstances of the different countries and cultures

2. Debt Research

- GCE is undertaking a research on Debt and Education in partnership with Open Society Foundations and ActionAid International
- Exploring the relationship between debt and domestic financing in 7 countries (Mongolia, Nepal, Zambia, Gambia, Lebanon, El Salvador and Georgia)
- This research is being coordinated with several national coalitions members of GCE and will focus on understanding the financing crisis (debt, tax and privatization), proposed solutions and recommendations
- Activating the capabilities and encouraging national coalitions in producing research related to debts, learning loss, etc, aiming at producing local information, not only being “researched”

3. Education in Emergencies Campaign

- Education in Emergencies Campaign including advocacy, capacity building and learning and service delivery for refugees and displaced in unstable and countries living under emergencies and crisis.

4. Education Budget Tracking

- Financial Tracking System recently launched aiming to collect information and data from member organizations to help in tracking the achievement of the SDG4



The Future

Together We Can Reach **There** Safely