



Transforming Education Political Learning Session

Shifting power and narratives:

Learning from GCE's work as a movement at the UN and beyond

26 January 2026, 1400 South Africa Standard Time

Background

The year 2025 marked the hard work and dedication of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) movement in bringing the right to quality public education to the forefront of key intergovernmental meetings at the United Nations (UN) and beyond.

From the regional SDGs forums to FfD4, to HLPF2025, to the UNGA 80, to the HLSC meeting, to the African Union/PACTED, and the forthcoming WSSDII, GCE ensured that the education and development agendas of marginalised sectors were heard and able to demand actions from Member States. Faced with ODA cuts in education and a shrinking civic space with challenging political terrain to navigate, GCE rallied strongly for education financing and reform of the global architecture to support countries in generating sustainable financing for education and public services. With the rise of conservative governments and a gender backlash, GCE strengthened its work with UNGEI to advance gender-transformative education. With five more years to go towards fulfilling Agenda 2030, GCE centered education within the SDGs at the HLPF, and positioned the civil society agenda at the HLSC meeting and the World Summit of Teachers in Santiago.

However, the path toward meaningful global engagement has been far from straightforward. GCE and its national coalitions have had to navigate complex government processes, secure participation in official delegations, and engage strategically with key agencies. Preparation for these engagements requires rigorous evidence-building, a strong grasp of technical policy knowledge, and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that advocacy is grounded in lived realities rather than abstract rhetoric. This has been particularly evident in the experiences of national education coalitions participating in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

The current global landscape also presents new ideological and structural challenges. The growing influence of private actors and the commodification of education, driven by co-financing mechanisms promoted in spaces such as FfD4, has threatened progress in advancing education as a public good. These trends risk undermining the gains of the Transforming Education Summit, where civil society strongly advocated for the human right to education and against the dominance of the private sector in education policy-making.

Given the complexity of its multi-level advocacy from national to global and back, GCE must continue to evolve as a movement. In an era marked by political backlash and restricted civic space, GCE must draw lessons from its advocacy experiences, refine its strategies for collective action, and enhance its capacity to influence global power structures and narratives surrounding education. At the same time, GCE members must continue to reflect on their engagement in global policy spaces, enhance collaboration, and innovate approaches to sustain effective and inclusive civil society advocacy for free, quality public education for all.

Purpose, Objective, and Expected Outcomes of the session

Purpose

The Political Learning Session. This webinar will guide participants in reflecting on what defines social movements and how CSOs can strengthen their collective political consciousness. The session will explore:

- What distinguishes social movements from other forms of civil society organizing?
How Political Awareness Shapes Effective Advocacy and Engagement in Global and National Spaces.
- The key elements of the political landscape that affect CSO action include power structures, governance dynamics, and policy processes.
- Strategies to build and sustain political consciousness within the movement.
- Additionally, the webinar aims to provide a reflective and strategic space for members and partners of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to critically analyze their engagement in key regional and global intergovernmental processes that influence education. It seeks to strengthen the political understanding, collective strategies, and advocacy capacities of the movement amid an increasingly complex and shifting global education and governance landscape.

Objectives

1. Assess and Reflect:

Review and assess the participation of GCE members, lessons learned, and key outcomes from

recent and ongoing global and regional intergovernmental engagements, including the regional SDG forums, FfD4, HLPF 2025, UNGA 80, HLSC, African Union/PACTED and education financing campaigns.

2. Strategize and Strengthen Collective Action:

Identify which advocacy approaches and strategies have been most effective, and explore ways to deepen collective, coordinated, and partnership-based advocacy that advances the right to free, quality, and inclusive public education amid political and ideological shifts.

3. Enhance Political and Analytical Capacities:

Propose pathways for strengthening political analyses and contextual understanding of emerging education issues such as privatisation, financing reforms, and gender backlash, and for building transnational advocacy capacities.

4. Enhance Political and Analytical Capacities:

Strengthen members' ability to conduct and build transnational advocacy capacities that center on people's lived experiences as the face of education.

5. Learn, Share, and Build Capacity:

Facilitate mutual learning and sharing among GCE members and partners from their diverse advocacy experiences, while strengthening the movement's collective capacity to navigate complex and evolving advocacy spaces at national, regional, and global levels.

6. To strengthen the political consciousness of GCE members by deepening their understanding of how social movements are defined and sustained, and how power, policy, and politics shape the spaces in which CSOs operate. The session aims to equip participants with the knowledge and critical awareness needed to engage more effectively and strategically in global and national advocacy spaces, in line with GCE's vision and political positions.

Expected Outcomes:

- Participants should have a deeper understanding of how **GCE and its members can act more strategically and politically** in advancing education justice and civic engagement globally.
- A shared political and strategic analysis of GCE's recent regional and global advocacy engagements, including lessons and learned opportunities for collaboration
- A set of actionable recommendations for strengthening the movement advocacy strategies, partnerships, and coordination in future global education policy spaces
- Clear understanding and enhanced technical knowledge of GCE members engaging in various global and regional spaces.

Target Audience

- The Political Learning Session will be a dialogue among members and partners in education advocacy, targeting all GCE members who engage at the national, regional, and global levels.

Programme Outline

Date: 26 January

Time: 14:00-16:00 SAST (120 minutes)

Platform: Zoom

Languages: English, Arabic, French, Portuguese, Spanish

Programme Outline		
Session 1: Setting the scene, moderator Grant Kasowanjete		
Programme item	Speaker	Time
1.1 Welcoming & Opening remarks International Day of Education celebration: The role of education for “peace and development and focuses on achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all.”	Grant Kasowanjete Global Coordinator Global Campaign for Education	5 minutes
1.2 What defines social movements and how CSOs can strengthen their collective political consciousness.	Imad Sabi Former GCE Board Member Independent Consultant for the GCE evaluation	10 minutes
1.3 How political awareness shapes effective advocacy and engagement in global and national spaces.	Refat Sabbah President, GCE Secretary General Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA)	5 minutes
Session 2: SDG 4 - Moderator and short intro to session: Giovanna Mode, GCE Policy and Advocacy Adviser		

<p><u>HLSC and World Summit on Teachers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your reflections on the effectiveness of CSO influencing in the HLSC? Has GCE/CSO lost traction, considering the increase in global players in HLSC, such as the private sector? • Given the current discussions on post-2030, how can CSOs prepare for the deliberations while ensuring that the unfinished SDG 4 targets are not forgotten? • With all the political commitments for teachers from the World Teachers Summit to PACTED, how should GCE and EI monitor their implementation in the country and at regional and global governmental meetings? 	<p>Refat Sabbah</p> <p>Nelsy Lizarazo Vice-President, GCE General Coordinator Latin American Campaign on the Right to Education (CLADE)</p> <p>Education International (EI)</p>	<p>5 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p>
<p><u>On GTE and UNGA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the regional and global advocacy on GTE, what gains have we achieved in securing commitments to GTE? What are the prospects for the future? How should we work together as GCE? 	<p>Florence May Cortina Regional EOL Coordinator Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>
<p><u>On EiE platforms - ECW and INEE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there genuine gains/commitments for our EiE advocacy? Given the increasing global conflicts, what can GCE do to stand up for education? 	<p>Odinakachi Ahanonu National Coordinator Civil Society Action Coalition for Education for All & ECW NNGO Excom Rep</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities remain untapped by GCE's advocacy, and how can we successfully maximise them? What is the importance of partnerships in leveraging those opportunities? • How can we push for localization of EiE as a civil society? 	<p>Crispin Willaims GCE Board Member Europe and North America Campaign for Education</p> <p>Education Cannot Wait/UNICEF</p>	<p>5 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p>
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Session 3:SDG-4 within the global agenda - Moderator and short intro: Cecilia "Thea" Soriano

<p><u>On FfD4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCE formed an alliance with the Public Services sector to form a stronger voice for financing public services, including education in FfD4 and WSSII. What do you think are the gains and challenges of such a broader framework in financing? • Post FFD4, how will the GPE financing campaign help realise financing of quality public education for all? 	<p>Ashina Mtsumi Coordinator, TaxEd Alliance/Action Aid</p> <p>Mohammad Muntasim Tanvir Senior Education Specialist and Lead Education Out Loud Global Partnership for Education</p>	<p>5 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p>
<p><u>On HLPF - SDG 4 in the SDGs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your experiences in the VNR and SDG4 spotlight report and securing SDG 4 within the government reports? What are the benefits of engaging the VNR for education advocacy? • What were the gains, partnerships in HLPF that centred SDG 4 in the review 	<p>David Kumie Executive Director Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN)</p> <p>Sekonyela Mapetja Executive Director Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN)</p>	<p>10 minutes (5 minutes each)</p> <p>5 minutes</p>

<p>of the SDGs? Five years into the Agenda 2030, how can GCE with EASG ensure that SDG 4 and the right to education will mobilise urgent actions from governments towards transforming education systems and realise the LNOB agenda?</p>	<p>Cecilia “Thea” Soriano, Campaigns and Communications Manager, GCE</p>	
<p><u>Closing Session</u></p> <p>Ways forward for GCE to shift power and narratives in 2026 and beyond</p>	<p>Grant Kasowanjete</p>	<p>7 minutes</p>