

Global Campaign for Education

GCE ADVOCACY GUIDELINES

Background

The Global Campaign for Education represents the voice of Civil Society in education policy spaces and processes worldwide. Our members advocate and campaign together for a free, inclusive, quality education without discrimination, promote lifelong learning, and adequately value and support the teaching profession and youth, students and parents organisations.

Founded in 1999 during the World Education Forum in Dakar to provide a unified platform that coordinates Civil Society work on education, we are a global movement that comprises national education coalitions, networks and unions from around the world and international and regional organisations.

Coordinated by a Global Secretariat and under the strategic oversight of a board representing all constituencies, our mission is to promote and defend free, public quality education as a basic human right and mobilise public pressure.

Purpose

GCE prepared an Advocacy Framework to define the principles and approaches on which the movement is called to develop its advocacy actions. The Advocacy Framework is complemented by these Guidelines, aimed at clarifying the role of the International Secretariat and Members in realising the GCE Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

The Advocacy Guidelines is a flexible instrument aiming to facilitate GCE members and the International Secretariat to adopt implementation plans for their national, regional and international advocacy activities, in line with the priorities and key strategic actions stated in the GCE Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

Key Advocacy Actions

The Advocacy Guidelines suggests strategic actions for GCE members to consider for setting and implementing advocacy plans. This action list has been systematised based on the current work of many GCE members.

The key advocacy actions are suited for all priority areas and are not an exhaustive or prescriptive enumeration, but rather a guide to consider.

Considering the advocacy work's nature, the actions are organised at the national and regional/international levels, understanding that their interconnection is highly desirable, to maximise the impact.

National level

Capacity building

The growth and strengthening of our collective ability to influence is the primary condition of our advocacy work. We recognize that institutional capacity must be based on good governance principles, which allow for increased transparency and accountability while guiding political work in the right direction.

Capacity building must encompass secretariats, partners, activists and social actors with whom we work, to jointly strengthen and reinforce the role of organised civil society in defining the education political agenda and mobilisation for its fulfilment.

Networking

Being a global movement and recognizing that attacks and setbacks against education are often intense and widespread, GCE advocates networking as a political and organisational strategy that allows effective articulation between relevant stakeholders, which should include, with equal gender, to teachers, youth/students with and without disabilities and community leaders.

Networking requires active animation and facilitation by GCE members and usually involves, as a prior step, the identification of critical stakeholders in national and international settings, including activists from other sectors outside education. Then, social actors mapping should be a permanent process.

Mobilisation and participation

Putting Pressure on governments to develop public policies and measures that contribute to realising the human right to education, is probably the overarching goal of our advocacy work. This requires the constant consultation and mobilisation (including social protest) of civil society and of course supposes a political action that must respond to strategic plans and opportunistic events to which we must react.

Mobilisation is only possible if there are participatory practices in place among national coalitions, so that people quickly identify with the targets of our demands.

Participation in situational analysis and decision-making can be fostered by establishing task forces, permanent and ad-hoc committees, and working groups, and setting regional committees capable of evaluating and responding to territorial particularities.

Awareness-raising activities and local advocacy catalyse the expansion of grassroots and national volunteers and advocates for education. The continuing support to volunteers and members is crucial to ensure sustained mobilisation and participation of diverse constituencies, especially, advocates coming from marginalised communities.

Leading discussion forums

One of the most effective ways to position discussion topics is the organisation of public events, directly led by GCE members, such as conferences, workshops, webinars, fairs, etc.

These events provide the ideal space to hold technical and political debates on issues of interest to our members and often attract the attention of the press, academia, and political actors we wish to influence.

In addition, the discussion forums host communication actions of great value, such as political statements, calls, press declarations, publications, and other communications.

Advocacy-oriented Research

While recognizing the value of academic research, GCE prefers to link it to policy and advocacy action.

Advocacy-oriented research is our option, considering its usefulness for reports preparation, as well as for clarifying complex issues, and, of course, it is an excellent input for campaigns and communication work.

In any case, GCE members should strengthen their relations with academia, especially with public universities and institutes, which has been shown to bring reciprocal benefits: on the one hand, it allows enlightening political action with updated scientific evidence and, on the other, it offers academics the possibility of building practical effects of their intellectual work.

Technical guidance and coordination

As civil society leaders, National Education Coalitions and other GCE members, have the chance to support the work of community-based organisations, public servants and, in general, social actors interested in promoting the human right to education.

Our members' technical guidance includes ethical protocols, guidelines, manuals and toolkits to support transformation change.

This material must be carefully mediated, written and designed with friendly and gender-sensitive techniques and especially responsive to the particularities of the target audiences, such as rural communities, people with disabilities and linguistic communities.

Public Awareness and campaigning

Campaigns are traditional activities in GCE, which in itself is a permanent campaign with which we seek to achieve verifiable impacts.

The campaign's focus should be connected to the priorities established in the strategic plans and their duration can vary according to their specific aims.

The experience of the GCE members shows the enormous value of campaigns as a time-framed advocacy process, which is also highly appreciated as a learning source for future endeavours.

Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) is the GCE campaign flagship, where all members converge each year. Its simultaneous implementation in all regions marks the moment of greatest global significance carried out by civil society organisations.

Building sustained relationship with the media is crucial in sustaining and broadening the reach of public awareness campaigns.

Active engagement

Advocating for the full realisation of the human right to education usually leads to work on two sides: on the one hand, a critical work with governments and state actors, to promote the design, implementation and follow-up of public policies. On the other hand, it puts pressure on other powerful meta-state actors, who manage/manipulate mechanisms of political and financial governance with influence in the definition of the later public policies. We are talking, for example, of multilateral financing organisations and, of course, United Nations agencies and organisations, among others.

In the first case, it is desirable that the GCE members participate in the national debate on education, to advance towards the objectives of the SDG4 education agenda and the Transforming Education Summit agreements.

In the second case, it is advisable to exert constant pressure on multilateral organisations and especially financial ones, such as multilateral banks and the International Monetary Fund, so that their policies and decisions are adopted within the international human rights framework and thus comply with the goals of the 2030 Education Agenda.

Lobbying with parliamentarians is particularly relevant, not only for promoting legal reforms to progress in the 2030 Education Agenda, but also for ensuring that domestic legislation is approved in accordance with international human rights law.

National Education Coalitions and other GCE members working at national level should take part in relevant hearings, meetings, seminars, conferences, etc., organised by public institutions, as part of the education sector coordination, aiming at engaging in the situation analysis and influencing decision making. Engaging in informal processes such as breakfast meetings, visits to offices and sharing of information/researches could help in building champions/reformers for education within the government.

It is also crucial to strengthen engagement with governance and coordination bodies currently operating in the field, such as Local Education Groups (LEG), intergovernmental committees and other ad-hoc bodies, as well as strengthening working relationships with other actors outside the education sector, such as reproductive health and rights, climate justice, labour, tax justice, gender, disability, etc., with which it is possible to agree on common goals.

Finally, it is convenient that the GCE members working at the national level also participate in international advocacy spaces, if opportunity arises, such as the Civil Society Constituencies within the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), especially when they have the chance to

present their reports or participate in discussions in which their experiences can benefit the debate.

Strategic Litigation

Strategic litigation is not a common activity within the movement. This requires degrees of legal specialisation that are not always available to GCE members. However, it has been shown that strategic litigation (based on emblematic cases that can produce binding jurisprudence) leads States to adopt universally applicable public policies.

Association with organisations specialising in human rights litigation could be considered by GCE members.

Reporting & Monitoring

Reporting is a fundamental process in organisations. It is the ideal activity to render accounts of the work carried out and with this, by publicising the achievements and challenges, it also contributes to transparently increasing credibility and trust.

The report is also a means of dissemination and advocacy, provided that the findings and analysis are duly substantiated.

All GCE members must take reporting processes seriously and be aware of the benefits of their implementation.

The annual preparation and presentation of Spotlight Reports are fundamental to the movement since they express the findings and conclusions that states generally refuse to present and help coalitions to identify critical areas for their advocacy work.

Reporting is also a central input for monitoring processes, which must also be carefully planned.

Each member should have a Monitoring & Evaluation Framework, which includes all advocacy actions. This process is essential in strategy planning and always leads to improving present and future actions.

Regional/International levels

When setting their advocacy plans, both the GCE International Secretariat and Regional Members should consider the general principles stated by the Guidelines and the key actions suggested for the national level.

Supporting NEC advocacy plans

Regional members and the GCE International Secretariat play an important role in the movement. Not only because they are in charge of their own activities but because the role of coordination and support they develop is vital to maintaining an adequate articulation and a politically responsive orientation in the international arena.

Regional Members and the GCE Secretariat are not isolated entities, rather, they are nourished by the work carried out at the national level.

This means that a core advocacy responsibility is to support and enhance the work of the National Education Coalitions, so that an interaction can be built between national and regional levels, in which they mutually benefit from shared learning and practices. This coordination and support work is urgent and unavoidable and should be supported by the GCE Board.

Engaging in international advocacy spaces

Since its founding, GCE has been a central player in international debates on education. This involvement is not accidental, but is due to the political weight of the movement, such as the largest civil society network working for the human right to education.

The international governance and discussion spaces in which GCE participates include, among others, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the UNGA High-Level Political Forum and its consultation and participation structures, as well as the UN Human Rights Council, Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, UNESCO and its monitoring bodies of the SDG4 Education Agenda, UNICEF, the Commission on the Status of Women, the African Union human rights bodies, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, among others.

The GCE Secretariat and Regional Members should facilitate and support their members' engagement in their activities, as well as promote that these forums are used for the dissemination of the work that is carried out at national contexts and at the same time that the National Education Coalitions benefit from the scope of these forums.

Participation in international conferences

International conferences are opportunities to discuss and share on thematic updates of interest to the movement, so we should promote our positions and policy recommendations as a way to link our members and take a visible position on our strategic areas.

In preparation for participation in these conferences, the GCE and Regional Members secretariats should collect and systematise the visions of the movement, so that a coordinated voice is expressed. The results or conclusions of the conferences should always be shared with the membership. Protocols and mechanisms for participation and representation in education policy bodies should be agreed and implemented.

Whenever possible, the direct and representative participation of the GCE constituencies will be sought.

Participation in Civil Society Forums and Networks

There are a number of civil society-led forums and networks where GCE Regional Members and the International Secretariat participate. GCE is ready to contribute and engage in critical actions within these spaces, which are frequently opened to our members' participation.

Considering the wide variety of approaches of these forums and networks (teachers, youth, disability, gender, tax justice, financing), the Regional Members and Secretariat should encourage the joint participation of National Education coalition representatives and consider the engagement of "thematic champions" within the movement.

Strengthening GCE Movement advocacy voice on key thematic issues

The GCE Strategic Plan offers the ideal context to implement global advocacy actions aimed at transformational change and to scale-up our impact.

The Education Financing Observatory is one such initiative, which depends entirely on the direct involvement of the National Education Coalitions for its success.

This is a paradigmatic case of the need for close and coordinated work at the national, regional, and international levels.

The GCE national members participating in the Observatory should include this initiative in their financing proposals, while the GCE International Secretariat has the necessary technical structure to implement it.

The implementation of the GCE Gender Strategy is another case in which action should be carried out at the national level, with the support of regional and international structures, since social, cultural, and political transformations should take place with greater urgency at the community context.

To advance in these areas, the entire GCE membership must reach political and operational agreements as soon as possible.

Capacity Building Initiatives

GCE Regional Members and International Secretariat are called to promote and develop training activities and tools for our members, aimed at developing technical skills and updating knowledge on human rights, in general, and the right to education in particular.

The organisation of these activities (induction and specialisation) should be permanent. Courses, manuals, toolkits, etc, should have an appropriate focus for the public for which they are intended and facilitate intergenerational, interethnic and international exchange, offering the necessary gender balance among participants.

Harnessing existing knowledge, learning from diverse practices from different regions and collectively

understanding and strategizing on education and development is GCE's approach to capacity building instead of a "banking" or top-down/prescriptive system.