

GCE Statement – Human Rights Day 2025

Human Rights Day is observed annually around the world on 10 December. It commemorates the anniversary of one of the world's most groundbreaking global resolutions: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, the International Human Rights Day theme — “Our Everyday Essentials” — reaffirms that human rights are not abstract principles but the foundations of our daily lives. The 2025 theme highlights human rights as positive, essential and attainable. A culture of human rights is, ultimately, a culture of equality, dignity, and justice.

At a time characterised by escalating conflict, climate emergencies, threats to democratic spaces, shrinking civic space, coordinated anti-rights and anti-gender movements, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) welcomes this theme and underscores that education is one of the most essential human rights. It is a chance to remind that education is not only a core legal obligation of States but a right that enables the realisation of all other human rights and the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The theme allows us to share a powerful synthesis of what we have been emphasising since the founding of GCE and throughout 2025: without equitable, relevant, and publicly funded education, societies cannot advance gender equality, climate justice, health, social protection, peace, or democratic participation. GCE has brought this intersectoral perspective consistently to global forums, insisting that education is not isolated from other rights — it is deeply intertwined with them.

At the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), we have repeatedly demonstrated how the implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on the full realisation of SDG4. We also underscored the centrality of education to gender equality, global health, to overcome poverty, reduce inequalities, and promote decent work among others.

During the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), we joined forces with the broader public services sector to show how tax abuse, austerity, debt, and privatisation undermine not only education but progress across the entire human rights and sustainable development framework. Today, over 46 developing countries spend more on

external debt servicing than on education, leaving millions without access to their everyday essentials.

GCE actively engaged in the intergovernmental negotiations for the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, and urged Member States to address global tax abuse and put an end to illicit financial flows to generate higher and predictable domestic tax resources for developing countries. This financing could ensure universal quality public education and services for all — the backbone for realising gender, economic and social justice in everyday life.

Within climate processes such as COP30, we emphasised that quality climate change education and environmental justice are everyday essentials for safeguarding people and the planet. With 1 billion children currently at extremely high risk of climate impacts, education must be a central pillar of global climate responses.

In humanitarian platforms and Education in Emergencies (EiE) processes, as well as during the Global Action Week for Education 2025, the movement reiterated that education is life-saving — a source of stability, protection, and hope for communities affected by conflict, disaster, and displacement. Yet EiE funding consistently represents less than 3% of humanitarian aid, despite rising needs and a record 43 million children displaced by conflict and crisis.

Across all these spaces, we stressed the fundamental role of education in achieving gender equality, and reaffirmed that only a gender-transformative approach to education can dismantle discriminatory norms, address gender-based violence, and expand life opportunities for girls, women, and gender-diverse learners.

However, not all forms of education can accomplish this. To truly bring about transformation, education needs to be firmly rooted in a human rights perspective. It should help learners develop critical thinking skills, foster solidarity, and promote peaceful coexistence.

Education enables individuals to comprehend their rights, engage actively within society, and develop the values that reinforce our collective humanity. It serves as a continual means of both empowerment and human development.

To defend the right to education is to defend human dignity itself.

To guarantee public education for all is to guarantee humanity, solidarity and justice.