



One last push to finance SDG 4: Inclusive, Equitable and Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All

Education as a Critical Enabler for Peace, Social Justice and all other SDGs

22 April 2026; 8:00 - 9:30 AM New York (2:00 - 3:30 PM South Africa)

The overall progress towards the SDGs has been slow and constantly at risk of reversal. Where progress has been made, it has been generally uneven and inadequate. Progress has stalled and even regressed in several countries and contexts. On its current trajectory, the world will not meet any of the 17 SDGs by 2030. Amidst persisting poverty, widening inequality and deepening climate vulnerability and waning multilateralism, current developments point to the further intensification of the global crises fueled by wars, rising geopolitical tensions, extreme inflationary pressures and energy insecurity.

The world faces a financing crisis that impacts most especially on essential public services. In education, it is expected that only 17 per cent of the SDG 4 targets will be reached with significant regression noted in SDG 4.5 on eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education. We are failing to reach the most vulnerable and the excluded which are the key promises of governments and the international community when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Evidence shows that the pledge to “leave no one behind” is a missed ambition of the SDGs, as seen in setbacks on gender equality and social inclusion. Despite strong commitments made by governments towards fulfilling the SDGs, key development targets remain severely and chronically underfunded. This is one major factor that accounts for the slow and missed targets of the SDGs.

Notwithstanding all these developments, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) pursues its mission of advancing the right to education. GCE holds its annual Global Action Week for Education 2026 (GAW 2026) during the FFD4 Week with the theme of education financing, calling on governments and the international community to “**Hold the Flame High**” for education. This year marks the 24th anniversary of GAW, which started in 2003.

GCE believes that education is a critical enabler for peace, social cohesion, gender justice and all other SDGs. GCE believes that education builds more inclusive and peaceful societies, helping us understand each other, fight extremism, and break cycles of poverty and violence. It promotes gender equality and equity, helping us challenge discrimination and create fairer systems for everyone. As such, there is a compelling need for the education movements to forge a stronger

push for financing education, particularly in light of economic and financial difficulties leading to budget cuts, shrinking fiscal space and diminishing official development aid.

The proposed side-event, therefore, aims to call on world leaders to reform the global financial architecture, invest boldly in education and propose concrete solutions to address the financing gap in education.

Concrete actions must be taken to address persisting problems that widen the financing gap, such as tax abuse, illicit financial flows, massive and unabated corruption, and declining development assistance. There is a need to institute measures to ensure effective debt relief through transparent, participatory and rights-based approaches to address the debt burden. The current international financial architecture must be reconfigured into one that is participatory, inclusive, and transformative, and guided by a vision of sustainable development for all.

We reiterate the need to strengthen investment in the social sectors, particularly the essential public services, through equitable, inclusive, and sustainable financing. Invest more and more equitably in public education, health and other social services through greater domestic resources supported by tax justice mechanisms, while ensuring accountability and transparency in public finance. This should include a commitment to developing integrated, long-term policy and sustainable financing strategies aimed at boosting investment in public education systems. Specific targets must be set for the most marginalised and excluded groups, including those living in rural and remote contexts, as well as conflict-affected areas.

Governments must secure increased allocations for neglected SDG targets, and promote transparent, inclusive and gender-responsive public sector budgeting. They should critically examine innovative financing schemes in the social sector. Such schemes should serve to strengthen the public sector, uphold human rights, and attend to the needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups. Governments must enforce regulatory frameworks and prevent privatisation and the corporate capture of public services.

Donor countries must allocate at least 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA, and ensure aid effectiveness in terms of scale, predictability, and allocation priorities as determined by recipient countries. Adequate share of ODA should go to human development, humanitarian aid and climate action priorities, including education, health, and social and environmental protection.

Programme (1.5 hours)

Introductions: Moderator: Cecilia Thea Soriano, GCE

Opening Remarks: Financing education is a political decision (5min)

Refat Sabbah

President

Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

The imperative of education financing: from systemic issues to budgets (5min)

Grant Kasowanjete

Global Coordinator
Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

Monitoring the Transforming Education Summit: Education Financing Track (8min)

Vernor Munoz
Former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education
Former Head of Policy and Advocacy, Global Campaign for Education

Education financing in the Asia Pacific

- **Declining spending and privatisation of education in Asia Pacific (6min)**
Rene Raya
Regional Policy Advocacy Coordinator and Lead Policy Analyst
Asia Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- **Impact of IMF impositions and austerity measures on education in Sri Lanka (6min)**
Shantha Kulathunge
National Coordinator
Coalition for Educational Development – Sri Lanka

Education financing in the Arab region (6 min)

Kamal Messaoui
Coordinator
Tunisia National Education Coalition - Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA)

The impact of debt on education in Africa (6 min)

Tahirou Traore
National Coordinator
Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous du Burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BF)
Africa Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA)

Tax justice and education: Country cases and advocacy in Latin America (6 min)

Israel Quirino
Program Officer
Latin American Campaign on the Right to Education (CLADE)

From global to national: Advocacy on tax justice and education financing

- **Changing the global tax rules: implications for the education sector (6 min)**
Ucizi Ngulube
TaxEd Alliance - Action Aid
- **Reflections on the UN Tax Convention negotiations and the role of national education coalitions (6 min)**

Bernice Mpere-Gyeke
National Coordinator
Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition

Summary and Calls to Action - 5 min

Organisers:

Global Campaign for Education (GCE)
Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA)
Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA)
Coalition for Educational Development – Sri Lanka (CED-Sri Lanka)
Coalition Nationale pour l'Éducation Pour Tous du Burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BF)
Latin American Campaign on the Right to Education (CLADE)
Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC)
Tax Justice Network
TaxEd Alliance- Action Aid