

Canadian Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Alliance

Concept Note and Plan of Activities

Updated February 2005

1. Introduction: Canada, Civil Society and Education for All

In Dakar in 2000, Canada joined with other countries in re-asserting its commitment to the idea that good quality basic education is a universal right. Canada has played a leadership role in stimulating G8 governments to fund education for all, and rapidly increased its own foreign aid to education after 2000. It is an active member of the UNESCO EFA Steering Committee and the World Bank hosted Fast-track Initiative, which promises funding to all viable national education plans for basic education.

The reality, however, is that the world is still very far from the achievement of EFA. Eighty-six developing countries are off track to reach the 2015 goal of universal access to good quality primary education. More than 104 million children are out of school, and 55% percent of African girls do not finish primary education. The global funding for EFA has not lived up to international promises: the external financing gap for countries to reach universal primary education stands between \$6 billion and \$10 billion per year. Even if funding were in place, the political will and technical capacity to implement programs of universal basic education are often weak.

The gap between EFA rhetoric and funding, and between EFA funding and implementation, is precisely where civil society organizations have stepped in. Internationally, the Global Campaign for Education brings together regional and international organizations and national coalitions in a powerful attempt to lobby for more attention and greater funding of EFA goals. National civil society coalitions are keen to develop the capacity to hold their governments accountable to the promises of free public education.

In Canada, a long history of engagement in education for development, and the recent emergence on the domestic scene of evidence-based public education advocacy each suggest that Canada has an important role to play in supporting a new policy role for international and national civil society organizations. Canadian civil society organizations are also keen to hold their own government accountable to its EFA promises.

2. The Formation of a Canadian GCE Alliance

On December 1, 2004, six Canadian organizations came together to launch the Canadian GCE Alliance, form a steering committee and draft an action plan. These initial member organizations are: Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Canadian Teachers Federation, the Centre for Comparative, International and Development Education of the University of Toronto, OXFAM Canada, the World University Service of Canada, and World Vision Canada. The steering committee has since widened, as can be seen in the table below.

Our goal is to build a broad-based coalition of non-governmental organizations, teachers unions, church based development groups, Canadian educational advocacy organizations and Canadian research organizations with an interest in promoting the universal right to education. The Alliance is loosely linked to the Global Campaign for Education, an umbrella group that brings together national and regional coalitions of NGOs and citizen organizations to advocate for education for all.¹ The Canadian GCE Alliance focuses in particular on the role played by civil society organizations – both in Canada and abroad - in the achievement of the universal right to education.

This Alliance is similar to initiatives in a range of other countries. For example, Ireland has an "Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education" (partly funded by Dev. Cooperation Ireland). In the U.S., former Clinton economic advisor Gene Sperling has spearheaded the U.S. Chapter of the Global Campaign for Education, an extremely successful initiative with wide media coverage. One of its leaders, Senator Hilary Clinton, introduced the Education for All Act in the U.S. Congress in September 2004. In Norway, a civil society coalition has been spearheaded by the Teachers Union and funded by the Norwegian Government. Its activities have been focused on gender and education and the education of marginalized groups; its advocacy initiatives include media events that highlight the challenges faced by these groups in Norway in the present and past and their commonalities with excluded learners in the south.

3. Goals of the Canadian GCE Alliance

The Canadian GCE three primary goals:

- To enhance Canadian commitment to the achievement of the universal right to education by raising public awareness, stimulating evidence-based dialogue, and demanding better funding and more effective approaches to this issue within our foreign policy agenda.
- To support forms of research and policy dialogue that can encourage a sustained role for democratic engagement in the governance of education in developing countries.
- To provide a forum for debate, information sharing and discussion among those Canadian civil society organizations which are active in efforts to achieve universal publicly-funded basic education in developing countries.

4. Governance and Membership

The following organizations have designated a staff person to be a member of the steering committee of the Canadian GCE Alliance. Professor Karen Mundy of the University of Toronto, and her Centre at the UT will act as initial anchor for the Alliance. In addition two

¹ The Global Campaign for Education promotes education as a basic human right, and mobilizes public pressure on governments and the international community to fulfill their promises to provide free, compulsory public basic education for all people; in particular for children, women and all disadvantaged, deprived sections of society.

part time coordinators, both students at the University of Toronto, will join the steering committee.

The steering committee will be charged with planning a modest advocacy strategy and an initial public forum in the period between February 05 and April 05. Some individual members already have campaigns underway (Canadian Teachers Federation). Each of the founding members brings to bear important constituencies with a commitment to universal basic education.

Table 1: Steering Committee Members

Organization	Designate to Steering Committee	Constituency Represented
Centre for Global Governance and Educational Change, University of Toronto	Karen Mundy (Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty group, students and alumni with links to Faculties of Education in Canada
CCIC	Brian Tomlinson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian NGOs
Canadian Teachers' Federation	Barbara MacDonald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian teachers through the provincial and territorial teacher organizations.
OXFAM Canada	Mark Freid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxfam local committees
WUSC	Phillip Landon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni, University Student Committees and former Cooperants (many cooperant teachers)
World Vision	Kathy Vandergrift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local committees
Give Girls and Chance	Avril Benoit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local NGOs plus CBC and media groups
University of Ottawa	Richard Maclure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research team, students - expertise on civil society and education, child rights in Africa, Latin America
McGill University	Jackie Kirk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise on education in emergencies
Foundation Paul Gérin-Lajoie	François Gérin-Lajoie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian NGO with education expertise in la francophonie
Save Canada	Kim Kerr	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

In addition to these founding members, a small group of additional organizational partners are being sought to join this committee: including the Quebec counterparts of Oxfam Canada, WUSC and CTF. Together this committee will form a basic governance structure, set goals and mandates and clarify such issues as who gets to speak for the Alliance and when.

5. Initial Activities

In the period between January 2005 and March 31 2005, the Steering Committee proposes three key activities:

- I. Establishment of a Canadian Global Campaign for Education Website that host's basic information about Canadian aid to education, existing research on the universal right to education and the Global Campaign. The site will encourage a simple campaign of letter writing to relevant Canadian officials (Prime Minister, Minister of International Cooperation, Minister of Foreign Affairs and parliamentarians). The website will also provide links to events and activities undertaken by each individual organization in support of universal basic education
- II. A modest program of advocacy and campaigning. We will undertake: an op ed article on the reasons Canada should include universal basic education on its foreign policy agenda following the release of the International Policy Review; one media interview, one meeting with Parliamentarians and with the Minister of International Cooperation. We will explore participation in the Global Week of Action activities sponsored by the Global Campaign for Education Network in April 2005.
- III. Preparation of a policy briefing note and a "report card" on the fulfillment of Canada's commitments to universal basic education, to be presented at the Parliamentary hearings on the forthcoming International Policy Review, to the minister and to a forum of NGOs and academics.
- IV. On April 25 and 26 -- Hosting a forum for Canadian civil society organizations on the role of civil society (in Canada and internationally) in the achievement of education for all. The forum will have two components. In one part the focus will on how Canadian civil society organizations can support the global right to education. In the second part, focus will shift to the role of civil society in strengthening the effectiveness and volume of Canada's commitments to education for all.

Future activities might include:

- Development of an interactive, web-based information clearinghouse to support exchange of ideas among civil society organizations.
- Funded research and capacity development projects to support development of effective civil society advocacy and policy engagement.
- Coordination of annual Global Week of Action activities among member organizations.
- Advocacy related activities in Canada to press for greater Canadian involvement in global education for all efforts.

6. Funding

Small start up funding for the Canadian GCE alliance has been secured from CIDA. In addition, a small conference registration fee and voluntary contributions from members should suffice to support the organization for its first year. A team of student volunteers at the University of Toronto has already been contacted.