**Education Financing Observatory**

**Concept document**

**1. Introduction**

In line with the GCE’s education financing and education in emergencies strategic focus areas, GCE is setting up the Education Financing Observatory (EFO) as a structure with a long term goal of tracking the changes and trends of public education financing and the multiple intersecting issues such as tax justice, debt alleviation and increased privatization in education that compound the complexity of public education financing. *An observatory is defined as “a network of stakeholders responsible for producing, analysing, and disseminating data in a meaningful manner that reflect collectively in prioritizing issues on development. Data and information resources produced by the local networks are used to support decision-making and formulation of better-informed policies at various scales of governance” (UN-Habitat.d., p 18).*

For GCE, the EFO aims to strengthen civil society participation, especially of GCE members, in generating and sharing evidence-based information and insights from varying national, regional and international contexts in order to shed light on the current financing shifts in the global education landscape. This will enable GCE members to create advocacy campaigns, projects and programmes to push for the implementation of actions to demand and improve education financing in their respective regions. The EFO will strengthen the capacity of the GCE to generate and gather evidence-based insights and resources to better respond and effectively deliver transnational and global policy advocacy and campaigns in response to the ongoing financing crises in education.

The establishment of the Education Financing Observatory (EFO) is GCE’s key output of the Education Out Loud (EOL-OC3) project towards the improved coordination and delivery of stronger transnational, regional and global education policy, advocacy and campaigns that inform inclusive allocation of resources in education. In this regard, the GCE’s research and advocacy efforts from different regions have to be strategically coordinated in order to effectively target decision makers at all levels in the global education sector.

This concept document aims to provide information about the objectives of the EFO, provide information about what it entails, and describes preparatory and maintenance activities relating to the operation of the EFO.

**2. Contextual Background**

The GCE continues to be a global education movement that is active in delivering strong policy, advocacy and campaigns that respond to the evolving global education challenges. The financing of quality free public education is integral to the human rights normative framework and is one of the central obligations of governments and the international community. In view of the growing privatisation, commercialisation and commodification in and of education, education systems are becoming increasingly inequitable, deepening broader economic exclusion, which threatens progress towards free quality public education for all. The GCE believes that education financing should aim to strengthen public education systems as stated in human rights law. While the GCE recognises that private education is part of the education sector in many countries and acknowledges the important transitory role that not-for-profit private institutions may play in providing education under particular situations, the expansion of for profit and fee paying education is contributing to increased inequality and exclusion in education systems.

Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, the world was already facing formidable challenges in fulfilling the promise of education as a basic human right; more than 250 million – were out of school[[1]](#footnote-0) and nearly 800 million adults were illiterate[[2]](#footnote-1).

With the onset of the COVID19 pandemic, we have seen the largest disruption of education in history having a near universal impact on learners and teachers around the world from pre-primary to secondary schools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, universities, youth & adult learning, and skills development establishments. At its peak 1.58 billion children and youth, from pre-primary to higher education, in 200 countries[[3]](#footnote-2) were negatively affected by the pandemic in one way or another. The most marginalised and underserved children – with disabilities, low-income families, girls etc – have been pushed even further to the margins. The need to advocate and ensure the provision of and access to quality education has never been more urgent.

From an education financing point of view, the estimation of the annual financing gap to reach SDG4 - quality education - by 2030 in low and lower middle income countries is $148 billion[[4]](#footnote-3). Additional costs due to COVID19 related school closures risk increasing this financing gap by up to one third, or between US$30-45 billion[[5]](#footnote-4). In light of this increased risk, there is an urgent need for civil society to ensure accountability in that education financing reaches the most marginalised and that these resources are used to strengthen free public education systems for the benefit of all.

**3. Aims and objectives**

The EFO as a structure responds to the GCE Strategic Plan and will inform the work of the policy, advocacy, campaigns and research work of the GCE. The **overall objective of the EFO is** to provide a multi stakeholder platform to support the GCE movement with generating evidence and strategically guide the use of the evidence and knowledge to inform policy and advocacy on education financing in strengthening and delivering strong public education systems and the implementation of Education 2030 Agenda/SDG4. This contribution will be driven by the tracking of trends and challenges of national budgets for education according to the 4S framework, while facilitating stronger linkages between national, regional and global level education financing advocacy, campaigns and social accountability mechanisms to help in guaranteeing that resources are converted into delivery on the ground.

**Specific Objective 1:** To create a systematic approach to collect, monitor and track education financing data according to the 4S framework.

**Specific Objective 2:** To bring global awareness to the importance of tax justice as integral to domestic resource mobilization in free public education financing.

**Specific Objective 3**: To bring global awareness on the impact of privatization and commercialization and the internal and external debt on the national public education system.

**Specific Objective 4:** To strengthen the capacity of GCE members in conducting evidence-based advocacy thereby enhancing CSO influence in national and international education policy platforms and GPE processes towards the better allocation of investments in education.

**4. EFO Structure and Processes**

Against the background provided above, the Education Financing Observatory is established as a network of experts and coalition representatives from the GCE membership who are heavily involved and invested in monitoring education financing trends, financing emerging issues and challenges and financing advocacy in their respective national and regional contexts as well as at the international levels. This work will be facilitated by a technical team in charge of setting up and maintaining engagement of the EFO network.

The members of the EFO network will be involved in monitoring and tracking education financing knowledge and insights in their respective organizations. The goal is to share expertise and knowledge in how best to monitor, track and analyze evidence-based education financing information and knowledge to support GCE’s advocacy on education financing. This in turn will allow the GCE to produce evidence-based research, advocacy and campaigning resources.

The EFO’s primary objective will be delivered through three correlated processes with the aim of strengthening GCE’s advocacy. These processes include: (i) Data monitoring & tracking (ii) Analysis of information on education financing through the exchange of knowledge and (iii) Advocacy & reporting.



**3.1 Data Monitoring & Tracking**

The monitoring and tracking of education finance data is a core activity of the EFO as it is the first step in designing effective, evidence-based advocacy responses. In close collaboration and coordination with regional members, the EFO will systematically gather the critical financing information and knowledge gathered and produced by GCE members. A core activity of the EFO is the sharing and exchanging of knowledge about global education financing. The EFO will also monitor, track and organize the education financing data produced by other parties that records the gaps, threats, advances and trends in national and international education financing. This data generally comes from different sources, using different collection and interpretation methodologies, which results in varied reporting and data processing. Therefore, it is necessary for the EFO to build knowledge databases that allow human rights based interpretations of education financing data, comparisons and in particular, highlight the existing contradictions found in education financing data.

Given that education financing encompasses multiple processes, the EFO will monitor and track the following mechanisms and phenomena:

1. **National budgeting** of countries according to the 4S scheme[[6]](#footnote-5)- share of budget going to education, size of overall budget, sensitivity and scrutiny of education budgets
2. The impact of **internal and external debt** on the national public education system
3. The impact of **privatization and commercialization** of education
4. **International cooperation** for education and the role of international development banks, global education funds, bilateral and multilateral cooperation for education financing.

**3.2 Analysis of information on education financing**

Based on the data collected in the data monitoring and tracking phase, the EFO will conduct technical analyses of the information necessary to produce thematic reports, which will then serve as inputs for evidence-based advocacy actions. The EFO will promote the ongoing debate of education financing among the GCE, disseminating the views of GCE members in this regard through blogs, Communities of Practice, case studies, article collections and thematic publications. The EFO will produce annual reports on its work with comparative data on the state of education financing in the world.

**3.3 Advocacy**

Advocacy is fed by the systematization of data and subsequent analysis can promote the necessary transformations at the national and regional levels and in the global finance architecture. Coordinated efforts to influence the decisions of governments and global education funds such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will have technical support from the EFO. Education financing advocacy efforts that flow from the data analysis and reporting will be driven by campaigns, project and capacity building.

**Campaigns:** the EFO will support ongoing campaigns on education financing, providing the information and technical resources to develop other campaigns.

**Projects**: the EFO will make it possible to develop and support EOL advocacy projects with special funding that seek a specific impact such as the *Tandem for Education Financing[[7]](#footnote-6)*. This project will focus on tax justice as an integral part of domestic resource mobilization for education.

**Capacity building**: The EOF will organize capacity-building activities amongst its members and contribute to GCE’s existing learning processes, such as the Education Financing Community of Practice. Those activities include webinars, development of technical tools and academic resources that will enhance GCE's Policy, Advocacy, Research and Campaign work so that members have access to quality technical and academic resources, to understand, interpret and promote the availability of education financing data.

**5. EFO Road Map**

Phase one runs from June to October 2021. The finalisation of this concept note was the first output for phase one. The second output is to engage regional secretariats in order to plan regional and global consultations for the EFO. The outcome of these consultations will be a global research paper Mapping the Global Education Financing Landscape.

Phase 2 runs from November 2021 to March 2022. For Phase 2, the GCE will first run a pilot of the EFO in order to understand what would be the best way to deliver the action plan for the EFO in each region. The pilot will include one country per region (selected/identified during regional secretariat consultation in phase one) and will develop the three core processes of the EFO:

1. Monitor and track education financing data
2. Analysis of education financing data (and the exchange of knowledge)
3. production of country specific reports and advocacy actions

Following this, the EFO could then experiment with a data table comparing those countries. Running a pilot would allow us to see how the observatory might work, what resources are needed and which kind of approaches we could have. Once we have these processes in place, we can set a global action plan for the observatory in phase 3 (which runs from April 2022). At this stage, the GCE would hire a technical lead that will work with the secretariat in the design of the EFO action plan and develop the engagement protocol for GCE members. Phase 4 is then the actual implementation of the EFO. Please refer to the table below for the proposed timeline.

**6. Timeline**

| **Phase 1 : June - October 2021** |
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| **Output** | **Activity** | **Date** | **Person/Dept** | **Resources/Actions needed** |
| EFO consultations and set up | Finalization of EFO concept document | 11 June | PAC/MEL | Team sign off |
| Regional Consultation | 10 August | PAC | Regional sign off |
| * ACEA
 | 19 August 13h30 | PAC | NEC written feedback on Questions |
| * CLADE
 | 24 August 15h00 | PAC | NEC Written feedback on Questions |
| * ANCEFA
 | 27 August 11h30 | PAC | NEC written feedback on questions |
| * ASPBAE
 | 8 October |  |  |
| * Youth
 | 15 November |  |  |
| * INGO’s
 | TBC |  |  |
| Research paper *Mapping the Global Education Financing Landscape* in consultation with GCE regional members.  | TBC | PAC | Team sign off |
| Domestic financing toolkit (updated)[[8]](#footnote-7) | TBC | PAC | Team sign off |
| Preparations for launch: communications, event, supporting materials | TBC | PAC/COMMS | Team sign off |
| Official Launch of EFO | TBC | GCE Secretariat | Team sign off |
| **Phase 2: November 2021- March 22** |
| **Output** | **Activity** | **Date** | **Person/Dept** | **Resources needed** |
| **Pilot plan (5 countries): a comparative process** | Team setting and reference group | 11 October | PAC  |  |
| Process design | 29 October | PAC |  |
| Implementation | November 2021- February 2022 | PAC |  |
| Reporting | 31 March 2022 | PAC |  |
| **Phase 3: April 2022** |
| **Action Plan** | Technical lead advertisement/contract | April 2022 | Global Secretariat |  |
| Action plan design (with reference group) | March 2022 | PAC |  |
| Membership and engagement protocol | March-April 2022 | PAC |  |
| **Phase 4: 2022 Onwards** |
| **Implementation** | Implementation according to plan |  |  |  |

1. 258 million in 2018, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), “Out-of-School Children and Youth”, available at http://uis.unesco.org/en/ topic/out-school-children-and-youth [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. 773 million according to most recent UIS data: http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg\_policy\_brief\_covid-19\_and\_education\_august\_2020.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. https://www.developmentaid.org/api/frontend/cms/file/2020/09/374163eng.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. https://www.developmentaid.org/api/frontend/cms/file/2020/09/374163eng.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. https://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/resources/GCE%20Financing\_Matters\_EN\_WEB.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mCR1WTnWDH8AVo902Tc-jzIymbtfAa0l/edit [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. https://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/resources/GCE%20Financing\_Matters\_EN\_WEB.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)