

GCE Feedback on the second consultation on Global and Regional Activities Program

The GCE welcomes the opportunity to feed into this consultation and are grateful for the open and consultative way in which this process is being managed.

OVERALL COMMENTS

1) Not all of the development objectives are covered by the activities.

GCE feels that the first and the last development objectives are not well represented in the activity areas that GRA is considering funding (*“Strengthen capacity of country and regional level entities to develop, implement and/or monitor sustainable national education sector programmes”* and *“Strengthen South-South networks and partnerships”*).

These form two of the five development objectives of the whole GRA but do not form a similar proportion of activities in the current draft activities. We feel there needs to be more on practical capacity building for civil society and establishing South-South networks and partnerships.

2) Timeline of the funding and the activities is not consistent.

A number of the projects have activities that won't be completed until after 2013. This is understandable as many projects need to last for 4 years not 2 years. We understand because of the financing commitment that the GRA can only agree to 2 years of funding at this stage, but it would increase effectiveness of the projects and the management process if decisions on projects could be agreed for 4 years even though contractually the funding for the latter two years would only be confirmed if sufficient resources were secured from the 2013 fundraising round. GCE is hoping to submit a four year project for consideration as our work on the current CSEF project clearly shows the benefit to be gained from this capacity building would be deeper and have a more sustainable impact had the project been given a longer period to run.

3) The current model of change is narrow.

There remains a narrow path to change – mainly built around research and academic studies rather than other dimensions of achieving lasting and sustained change. The importance of public attitudes to education is not shown in most of the planned activities and engaging the opinions of parents and educators within the system is mostly absent. If a broader range of activities could be considered this would allow a greater chance of these ideas actually being implemented. Some specific suggestions are contained from GCE on this in the detailed feedback on the thematic areas.

4) Accountability and civil society affect all three themes

The role of accountability and civil society should be replicated in each thematic area rather than just under the learning outcomes paper. Though we appreciate that its cross-cutting nature is

acknowledged in the learning outcomes paper, we believe it should be detailed under each proposal. Other types of activity like academic analysis are correctly present under all three themes and the area of accountability and civil society should equally be present under each theme.

5) Supervising Entity clarification

GCE has been informed it is not possible to consider FTI playing a supervising entity role yet the consultation paper indicates some 5-10% of projects will still have that arrangement. It would be helpful to know more about why and on what grounds some projects will be operated directly by FTI.

EDUCATION FINANCING THEME PAPER

6) Include accountability in the Education Financing Theme

The area of education financing should include more on accountability from civil society. We appreciate that civil society is included under Activities 1, and 5 but we feel the omission of civil society from activities 2,3 and 4 (which always mentions donors and governments) is not appropriate.

Engaging wider public opinion is crucial to secure sufficient resources to achieve Education For All in the current financial climate. When considering the efficacy and equality of education financing – civil society has a vital role to play. A specific sub-theme should be developed within the education financing paper to address these issues in order to support civil society in ensuring that government funds have reached the local level and that funds are distributed more equally. As the paper rightly notes, significant funding needs to be concentrated on pro-poor policies; at the moment the majority of funds are spent on elite education, but there is no activity to engage local communities and civil society to help change this. Accountability needs to come from groups and citizens within the countries. Adding in a sub-theme on civil society and accountability would assist in implementing the studies being undertaken in the other sub-themes of financing.

6) Consider addressing other aspects of education financing.

The theme paper details that it is not only a question of the volume of education financing but it is also a question of how well it is spent. GCE supports this however, the activities don't tackle both areas – they go on to focus only on efficiency and ignore volume.

Similarly, innovative financing is important and could make a significant contribution to the achievement of Education For All and is welcomed. GCE particularly welcomes focussing on the predictability and scale of the innovative financing. However, innovative financing needs to be provided alongside more traditional external financing that we should also support such as ODA to basic education. The activities only focus on innovative financing, which could reduce accountability and attention on the core overall level of ODA funding to basic education, which in turn could reduce

overall funds for education. Though government budgets are tight and wider expansion through traditional means is difficult, if we stop making the case for these methods we are likely to see a decline in ODA to basic education which would have a damaging impact on our chances of achieving the MDGs on education and the EFA Goals.

We believe that greater focus within FTI and the GRA needs to be given to the volume of external ODA financing to basic education alongside the important work on innovative financing. For example, the theme paper in its second sentence focuses on allocations to education by developing country governments but the share of ODA that goes to basic education is absent.

GCE believes that most of the progress made on the Millennium Development Goals on Education since 2000 has come about from increased domestic allocations to education and improved policies. The average government expenditure on education in sub-Saharan Africa has now risen above 20% for example. However, apart from a few notable exceptions, this is not true for the donors – the share of ODA funds invested in education is lower than this. It is even worse if we focus on the equality of that distribution. Several countries focus their education aid on tertiary education in their own country or on dependent territories (for example, of the \$131 million in ODA to basic education that one European donor gave Sub-Saharan Africa, 52% went to one of their dependencies of 230,000 people. Similarly, another major G7 donor country gave over \$1.5 billion in education ODA in 2008 but 56% of that went on inputted student costs for foreign students to study at universities in the G7 country). ODA to education needs to be better spent with a higher percentage being invested on activities that actually contribute directly to the achievement of MDGs and EFA goals. Indeed, though the wider financial climate is difficult and ODA budgets in most countries are unlikely to grow in the next couple of years, major financing would be released if donors spent the same share of their ODA on basic education as the share of national budgets that developing countries' governments are spending on basic education.

In terms of specific activity we recognise that FTI GRA fund may not resource activities that create accountability on donor governments' financing through Education ODA. However given there are important studies that need to be done in this area if we are to achieve Education For All and that the FTI Board now represents donor and developing government interests equally, this perhaps should be considered. If this is not possible, it is still important that the GRA ensures that the innovative financing activities do cross-reference the importance of traditional ODA to basic education levels as well. Otherwise reduced attention on the core donor ODA allocations to education could outweigh any increases in innovative financing and reduce the overall funding available to meet the Education MDGs and EFA goals.

7) To build a good quality education system in a country we need multi –year and predictable funding.

By investing exactly the same sum of money in a predictable way you can secure better returns as the funds can be spent on sustained growth and expansion. The short-term and uncertain financing is one of the reasons why the mid-term evaluation of FTI found the investment in recurring costs like professional teacher salaries was so woefully low (13% rather than 70-85% an education system's costs). The GRA should include in its investigations a study into the inefficiencies and waste of donor

ODA that can be caused by only investing in stronger education systems through annual decision points as opposed to multi-year commitments.

On predictability, a litmus test that GCE proposes is that the money needs to be predictable enough for the Ministries of Finance and IMF missions to rely on it to arrive when they develop national plans and undertake assessments. Too often in recent years we have seen future donor commitments on Education being treated as unreliable by IMF missions and Ministries of Finance. This means that the decision to expand an education system's size and quality are not taken as the income is deemed uncertain. Even if the money does finally arrive the funds can get moved into government reserves.

8) Only a low percentage of funds for performance related ODA

GCE would also like the performance-related ODA that FTI is considering to be set at a relatively low percentage. Obviously if there is corruption then all funds would need to be stopped mid-contract. However, it would reduce the quality of the investment decisions if the contracts automatically restrict the majority of the funding to annual decision points. Even more than the Health sector, Education systems rely on multi-year investment and no progress can be made on issues like reducing class sizes - so crucial in affecting the quality of education – if most ODA to basic education is unpredictable. Planning and finance ministries won't train the new professional teachers needed to reduce class sizes if it is uncertain that there will be funds to complete the training or employ the teacher afterwards. We feel that a low percentage of funds being allocated on the basis of performance would still create a significant incentive for results without ruling out investment in the areas that require multi-year commitments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES THEME PAPER

9) Remarks on Introduction

Though some progress has been made on access we feel the text in the introduction on page 2 is too strong. Playing down access does not help the quality argument and with more children out of school in 2011 than there are in primary school in the USA and Western Europe combined (and a shortage of over a million teachers) there is a long way to go on access too. What is really needed is a harmonised agenda on access and quality which focuses on a good quality education for all.

10) Comments on Early Childhood

Rather than starting from a premise of cost containment, as we feel the proposed sub-theme paper does with low cost approaches, the GRA should start from a premise of what is minimally needed to deliver decent-quality ECE. Although parents are often targeted as a 'delivery mechanism' for ECD, we need to be careful here. Low income parents do not necessarily have much time, energy, affinity or flexibility to accommodate long hours of child care. Where social networks have been thinned out

– due to HIV or other things – the opposite is true: parents or caregivers need help, and are less able to fill the ECD gap. When family and national income rises, parents generally put their children into increasing amounts of time in non-parental care.

We feel many of the topics suggested by FTI have already been studied; the case has already been made for things like nutrition. But there are some things missing. For instance, the work force in ECD is a black box. Because the vast majority is non-formal, we do not know how big it is or what the cost is. And because the work force is not organized into collectives like trade unions, they are difficult to reach – as are parents. There are approaches that can be explored further such as SEWA who collectivized informal women workers and therefore could negotiate for social security provisions from private insurance companies and other actors. UNICEF, among others, has been studying ECD within a framework of social security and Education International has just launched a new group working on this area.

Some specific activities that the GRA could address:

- The ECD work force; how can we start to map it, especially among marginalized populations? Can this work force be organized and professionalized over time?
- The nuts and bolts of planning and financing ECD services in order to upscale and/or reach excluded populations; What is the role of the education sector?
- There is a big need for ECD expertise that can contribute to ECD policy making, planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, curricular or pedagogical inputs, etc. The Virtual University is trying to address this, but far more is needed.
- It would be good to highlight some interesting approaches and look at the costing structure for purposes of upscaling e.g. SEWA's child care in a framework of social security; India's public ICDS programme, the world's largest ECD system, is planning to add helpers to its centres in order to upgrade the educational value of the service. ADEA has done studies about ECD programmes and costing (Alain Mingat et al).
- Data collection in ECD according to internationally validated indicators has not taken off. This is also a shortcoming in the GMR which is confined to indicators such as coverage. World Bank and others have developed the Early Development Instrument, an indicator of developmental health at school entry. It is a population-based instrument to map risk at school entry. UNICEF and others have worked on ELDS (early learning and development standards). It would be good to have a widely-accepted instrument for collecting data in ECD for planning purposes and international advocacy.

11) Inclusion of adult illiteracy

While we agree it is important to ensure students can read with sufficient understanding to use reading as a means to instruction we believe this should not exclude adult literacy. If we are to successfully break the cycle of illiteracy then adult education is a vital component – literate mothers do not bring up illiterate children. GCE proposes that the activities are also open to supporting adult literacy assessment as an entry point to improve the quality of adult learning and opportunities for illiterate adults to read in the poorest countries. The activity categories listed such as research, data collection, knowledge generation, curriculum and learning materials development, teacher training

and supervision, technical workshops, national scale-ups etc – all apply to learning for illiterate adults as well.

12) Resource alternative developments on assessments

GCE feels that there is an important contribution to the debate on learning and assessment which is missing. The views of educators should be included here to ensure a fuller picture. This is particularly important given the note on page 6 that *“this work will feed the development of the Results Framework for the FTI”*. If the assessment processes and indicators are not balanced, then we risk significantly skewing education systems in countries. National accountability to citizens and users of the education system is vital –the work of UWEZO and others that is included helps build this effectively.

Furthermore within section 2.3.1 proposed approach we recommend adding “Assess the extent to which teachers had a role in developing or piloting the strategies” to the second bullet point and “cultural appropriateness and gender balance” to the text by the second tick-mark.

13) Language in Textbooks

We believe that control over the curriculum and production of resources such as textbooks must reside at the national level. Ideas such as systemising the production of textbooks using computers risk moving away from domestic production and, importantly, away from context relevant to that country.

Furthermore any public private partnerships in this area must not be made at the expense of national accountability. In the past we have seen external funders force governments to source textbooks from international sources and we believe FTI must not go down that route. Education ministries must be able to source textbooks using a method that they select.

14) Section on Teacher training

We have concerns about the start to section 2.3.6. Poor and under-resourced teacher training produces the results you’d expect, they are challenged by the same lack of teaching materials and opportunities for praxis as the students they will someday teach rather than being constrained by the theoretical part of teacher training. Instead of focussing on the major upscaled resources needed to improve teacher training and see the same results achieved in other parts of the world – the current theme paper proposes some unproven methods.

Similarly, the focus on instructional methods for classes of anything up to 120 students tackles the problem at the wrong end (last bullet point in section 2.3.2). Despite the widespread acceptance of the massive professional teacher gap causing large class sizes, and a focus at various UNESCO High Level Group Meetings on the teacher shortage and consequently high class sizes, these challenges are not prominent in the GRA papers. Instead of taking it as given that class sizes are and will forever be set at this size we should at least have a bullet to address the teacher student ratio.. We feel even the indicative framework has a better target than this consultation paper. We also feel that instead

of accepting poor teacher education programs we should resource activities for developing richer, stronger and more effective teacher education and recruitment strategies

The idea of cameras in the classroom supervising teachers (the logical extension of '*Proposing and piloting technologies and usage procedures likely to facilitate essential supervision from a distance*') is not a technique used in other parts of the world with greater resources and we find it bizarre to suggest it here. It isn't implemented elsewhere as it is an inappropriate idea that is costly and undermines the professionalism of the teacher - would the FTI Secretariat accept cameras in their office so that FTI countries can monitor them to ensure they are working to catalyze the partnership and raise funds effectively.

If the FTI GRA is to make a major contribution in this area, it should explore investment in activities that can secure greater support for teacher training and transfer best practice from countries with a high success rate of training teachers. Saying that the in situ supervision that works is expensive and therefore lets only research other options is inappropriate. The FTI should clearly lay out to decision makers the resourcing needed for the proven methods of strengthen teacher training to improve learning outcomes. If we were discussing the training of doctors, the Global Health Fund would be looking at securing the funds needed to create more doctors and strengthen their training – not proposing videos to ensure mass production of doctors or suggesting cameras in hospitals to ensure supervision of doctors from a distance. Similarly solutions like the second bullet on page 18 which propose “a package tool containing selected surveys and snapshots similarly quantified and of low inference will prepared in order to be implemented in selected countries” – would the Global Health Fund propose this sort of activity for activity for doctors or would it focus on the barriers to securing more resources for more doctors in low income countries with better training and support? We feel the emphasis in this paper is wrong and the focus too skewed to inappropriate and in some cases impractical suggestions that could distract from the core changes needed to the create better quality education systems needed in developing countries to achieve learning for all. We should concentrate on making the case for increased investment in this vital area and exporting lessons on teacher training from countries that have achieved tangible success (not promoting proposals that those countries would or have rejected).

15) Recommendations for section on *Political economy, accountability, sustainability including local level*

We have significant input on this section as it directly relates to the activities we would like to undertake.

Firstly, as already mentioned, we propose this issue of accountability is replicated in each theme paper. It is acknowledged in the text itself but when it comes to implementing the GRA, GCE feels it should be present in each theme. We do not ring-fence academic studies under one particular theme; similarly, we should not place accountability from civil society and the wider public under one theme.

Under the proposed activity we feel it is important to clarify the precise areas to be addressed will be consistent with the overall development objectives of GRA (rather than all the sub-theme activity

areas contained in the GRA). The current draft of the note indicates that there will be “Assessment of reform implementation processes via on-the-ground research of political economy and institutional change”. If this activity is to develop accountability between parents and educators and their local and national governments then the assessments of progress will need to relate to the areas they prioritise rather than all of the areas identified by the GRA sub-themes (though they will of course fit within the overall development objectives of the GRA itself). We feel it would be better to include this *assessment of reform implementation process* under each of the sub-themes than placing it under the area which is predominantly focussed on strengthening accountability.

We would expect activity in this area to link with the areas addressed in the results framework such as quality – but the specific activities would relate to quality improvements required in that context. There are many ways of advancing learning and the issues of accountability need to be set by in-country civil society groups and reflect the priorities needed in their country’s context. It is better for specific areas of technical advocacy capacity development to be established with the regional and national context and communicated clearly when the project is being considered, than for them to be restricted to the current list which omits major areas such as the volume of financing to education which is a major part of accountability from the wider public to their government.

Within the proposed approach, we are also unsure what is meant by benchmarking by foundations of international CSOs to supervise regional and local ones. GCE is committed to full reporting and involving experts in Monitoring and Evaluation in work to strengthen civil society coalitions and open to learning from best practice with foundations. The benchmarks for the project will be made clear and will need to be agreed by the supervising entity and the group assessing GRA proposals. However, the benchmarks that are proposed need to be set around the issues identified by the local and regional coalitions themselves. If we aim to strengthen accountability within civil society and between citizens and the governments on the provision of a universal and good quality education system then we need to include their views in designing the project.

HARDEST TO REACH CHILDREN THEME PAPER

16) Highlighting need to focus on child labourers as sub-group under out-of-school children

GCE are concerned at the limited reference to the role of education in the causes and consequences of child labour. There is a well-documented correlation between the incidence of child labour and access to and quality of education. Lack of access to good quality, free state education is not only one of the reasons why many children end up working, but is also the most important and sustainable intervention in reducing the incidence of child labour.

17) Mapping what is already known

GCE calls for more detailed understanding on what is already being done to identify out-of-school children, particularly the hardest-to-reach, and to address their specific needs and expectations through either formal or non-formal education services. There has been significant investment over a number of years by a range of service providers funded by different donor agencies, not only through EFA-FTI mechanisms, highlighting the need for greater coherence and information-sharing.

GCE recommends that a thorough mapping be conducted in a small number of FTI countries, and possibly in smaller geographical sub-sets, of all education interventions, not only those of the multilaterals, but also those provided by other actors (for example, national and international civil society organisations, private companies, public-private partnerships, etc.) in order to assess the impact of these disparate, unconnected activities and to introduce efforts to streamline activities to ensure greater impact, coherence and sustainability. It is not always an issue of greater investment of additional resources but also of ensuring that current and past investments are working more efficiently and effectively. These mapping exercises could be accompanied by joint consultative processes to design more efficient and coherent mechanisms to leverage programme outputs, improve collaboration, coordination and communications and reinforce outcomes and sustainability.

18) Focus on quality as a reason why children are out-of-school

Quality of education is a key element of why for example working children do not go to school or drop-out, particularly among the most marginalised communities, i.e. the hardest-to-reach children. GCE recommends identifying several pilot countries/areas in which detailed attention would be paid to understanding why children do not go to school and/or drop out and where this is because of quality of education. This would assist in remedial efforts to design action to address these reasons. Where these can be identified as issues stemming from challenges in teacher training, it would be important work closely with Education International and its member organisations to involve representative teachers' organisations in improving teacher training programmes or referral services.

19) Inclusion of accountability and civil society within management and implementation gaps

The sub-theme that looks at Management and Implementation Gaps highlights the importance of civil society organisations to engage with the government at different levels. This is partly present in the activities of this section where it is noted that "Management gaps can be substantially strengthened through partnerships between government and civil society"; however, this is missing in the proposed approach or expected deliverables section. If we place the work on accountability in this sub-theme it would address this issue.

The theme paper also addresses knowledge gaps in countries where there is a will to undertake the use of financial instruments to deal with poverty (p.12). However, civil society can play an important role in creating that will in countries which are not currently inclined to use financial instruments to deal with poverty.