

GCE Global Youth & Student Caucus 2022 Report



BACKGROUND ON GCE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

“It is both right and timely that GCE should create the opportunities for children and youth to engage in decision making and governance structures, not only in terms of value and legitimacy but also in terms of learning from the unique perspective that they can bring to our work.” ([GCE Policy Resolution 2015](#))

Since 2018 when the amendment regarding the youth constituency and its equal representation on the board of the GCE was first voted for, there have been numerous strides towards this representation. Currently in 2022, the board seats for the constituency for international youth and student-led organizations is represented by Martina Darmanin nominated on behalf of the European Students’ Union (ESU) and Ester Simon, nominated on behalf of the All-African Students’ Union (AASU) –member of the Global Student Forum. This is a historical win for the youth & student movement within the GCE.

Between 2020 and 2021, youth and students’ engagement has focused on convenings that contextualize the realities on the ground in which young people operate. Many national coalitions within the GCE membership have reported negative effects of privatization and public-private partnerships in terms of their impact on equality and the promotion of an education consistent with human rights and the public good. Additionally, repression and resistance are two trends that have emerged throughout the Covid-19 crisis particularly in relation to young people’s responses to authoritarian rule, political violence, and the repression of active citizenship among human rights defenders and civil society. Criminalization and repression of students, youth, teachers, and human rights defenders fighting for social justice and specifically issues. The criminalization and shrinking of space for youth and student-led social justice organizing has been seen to be on the rise during this “new normal” we find ourselves facing.

As GCE grows and strengthens its youth and student engagement, it has become increasingly imperative to create spaces and platforms for youth and students to build bridges of solidarity and capacity across the membership. Creating brave spaces and platforms for youth and students to lead discussions, document perspectives, co-create strategies and develop shared agendas for education advocacy and activism within GCE is a fundamental goal. GCE heard this resounding call from youth & student activists from across the movement and acknowledged that the time is ripe to convene a gathering of youth, students, and organizational representation. It is with this in mind that GCE

planned to host a Global Student & Youth Caucus in March 2022.

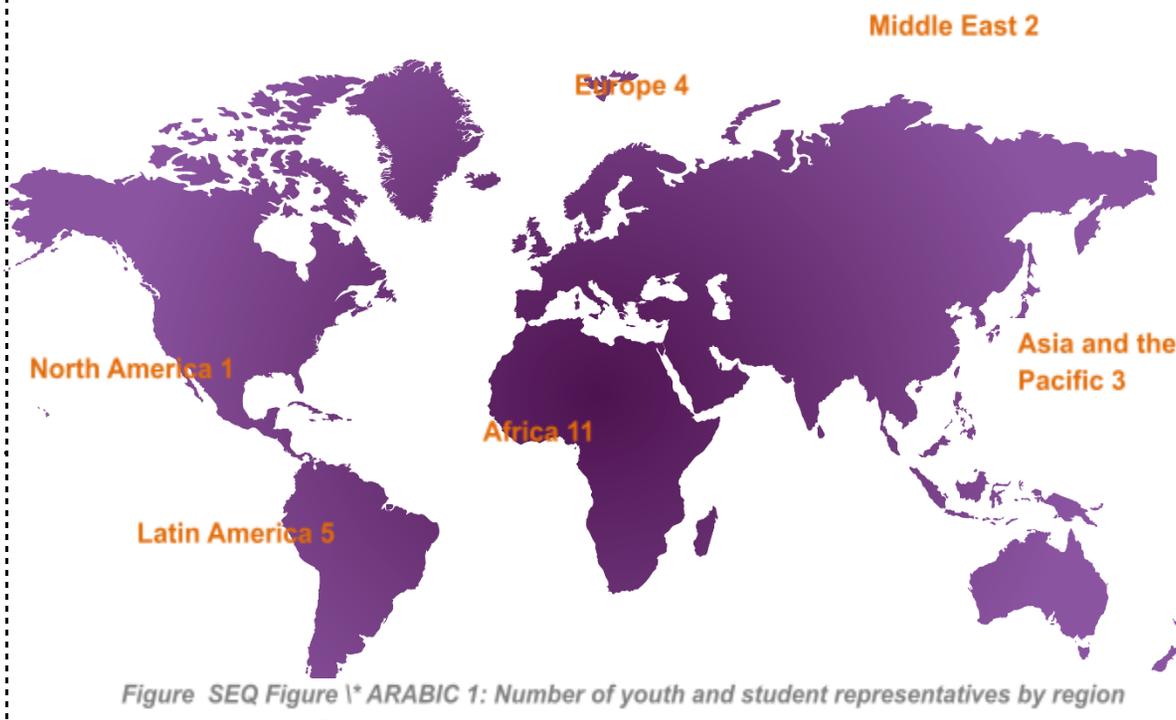
SNAPSHOT OF THE GCE 2022 YOUTH AND STUDENTS' CAUCUS



26 Youth and Student Representatives

5 Regions represented

10 Speakers and Presenters from GCE regional coalitions, GCE Secretariat and strategic partners.



PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES OF THE YOUTH CAUCUS

The Global Campaign for Education convened the Global Youth and Student Caucus in Arusha, Tanzania, between 18 and 20 March 2022. The Global Student & Youth Caucus was aimed at creating an enabling safe space for youth and students to meaningfully engage on the youth engagement strategy as well as ideate around student and youth led actions that may feed into the mechanisms for achieving impact across the movement. The need for a youth and student led space to build solidarity, share insights and co-create our shared vision for actions across all regions of the movement. There is a need to bring together a variation of youth and students and allow the flow and exchange of ideas as well as involving youth and students in decision making in a meaningful way.

The main objectives of the youth and student caucus were:

- To create a safe and enabling space for youth and students to lead on discussions and planning pertaining to the Youth Engagement strategy
- To allow space for deepening our exploration of a shared politic and shared culture of working when it comes to youth and student engagement.
- Create space for designing and agreeing on mechanisms for achieving impact and enacting the constitutional amendments taken at the 2021 World Assembly.

The main outputs were:

- Discussing, identifying & inputting key strategic objectives for the Youth Engagement Strategy.
- Conceptualizing and establishing a Youth Action Group
- Ideating & planning for cross regional activities that are in line with strategy
- Agreeing on shared advocacy, research & campaign activities.
- Agreeing on establishing more consistent and deliberate channels for national and regional youth engagement.

The global youth and student's caucus gathered youth network representatives from different regions globally in order to gain nuanced perspectives based on various contexts globally. A total of 26 delegates attended and participated within the GCE Global Youth & Student Caucus. Delegates in attendance represented global fora such as GPE, GSF and UNESCO as well as regional coalitions and organizations from Nigeria; Palestine; Honduras; Peru; Colombia; Ghana; United States of America; Namibia; Zimbabwe; Belgium; Cameroon; Austria; Brazil; Belgium; South Africa; Philippines; Albania & Tanzania

CAUCUS PLANNING & HOSTING

“Being the first Arab youth representative in the caucus that was held in Tanzania, was an experience that exceeded my own expectations.” – Rantia Sabbah, Arab Campaign for Education for All, Palestine

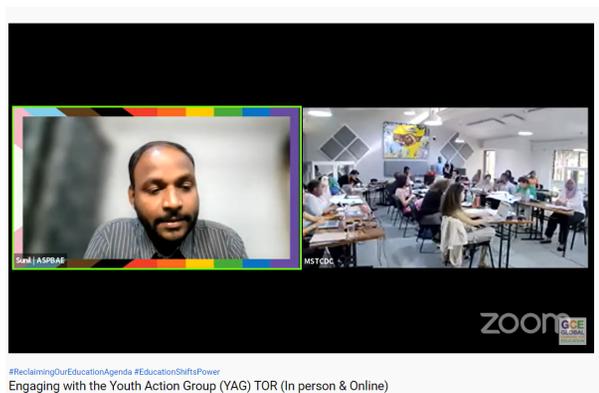
A central politic and way of working when it comes to the organizing of the caucus and general engagements have been rooted in consultation, co-creation, and genuine inclusion. In planning toward the caucus GCE employed a nomination system for the attendees to the caucus, in order to ensure that regions, coalitions and partners felt genuinely represented in the space. Planning toward the caucus began in 2021 with broad level membership consultations which included regional members, youth constituency members and allies including GCE US, UNGEI and Action Aid International. In 2021 a series of youth and student focused engagements also contributed to the overall planning toward the caucus. During these engagements, some strategic recommendations, analysis, and

ideation for the GCE youth engagement strategy were brought forward by youth and student organizations. The planning of the caucus was finalized in 2022 after securing an invitation list, and finalization of programmatic elements towards achieving the objectives of the caucus. In February 2022, the GCE planning team hosted a pre caucus consultation in order to share the proposed programme, gain feedback and allow participants to volunteer themselves for various roles and responsibilities for the facilitation during the caucus itself.

During the caucus, the team of volunteers led on social media posts, co-facilitation and moderation and leading on group discussions. Facilitation of the caucus was led mainly by GCE board representatives Martina Darmanin, Ester Simon, and Xena Scullard on behalf of the GCE secretariat. All facilitators as well as participants were part of the programme design and participation.

“For me, a critical lesson was how purposeful and intentional GCE is in ensuring that students and young people are not only engaged to check boxes but are meaningfully involved in creating their strategies and activities. I am a firm believer in the Youth Action Group's capacity to advance excellent and inclusive education for everyone, and I am looking forward to seeing the group's influence in their particular regions and globally. Additionally, I have been a part of several global events, meetings and conferences, but GCE is the only one that I am aware of that is quite purposeful about representation, ensuring that language is not a barrier to students and young people participating in their work. That truly struck a chord with me. I'm sure it comes at an additional cost, but it demonstrates their commitment to student and youth involvement beyond token gestures.” – Taibat Aduragba Hussain, Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, Nigeria

In line with the politics of inclusion, GCE ensured language justice as far as possible by ensuring that interpretation for both online and offline proceedings was available. The language options included Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese. The languages provided were based on the feedback received from participants in terms of their access needs as well as our knowledge of the language preferences of members who presented virtually. The GCE secretariat, through the leadership of the administration team, Boitumelo Kgomo and Salma Deedat, collaborated closely with our hosting MS TCDC center, to ensure that equipment, management and procuring of interpretation services were in place. The youth caucus took on a virtual format; during key proceedings we included virtual participation via zoom and Facebook live. Online participants included regional coalitions, ACEA, ANCEFA, CLADE, ASPBAE, GPE as well as GCE secretariat staff. These inclusions within the caucus allowed for intergenerational engagement and gleaning perspectives from national, regional and international members. Online members presented their organizations' programmatic focus as well as engaged the caucus on how youth and students are involved within their work. The director of the MS TCDC center was also able to address us where she shared her own vision for youth and student activism and drove home the importance of feminism and self-determination in leadership.



Sunil Gangavane "ASPBAE"



Nelsy Lizarazo "CLADE"



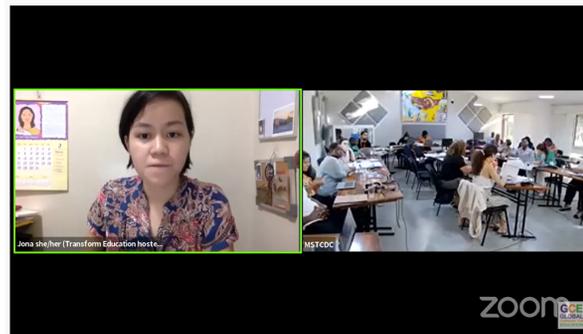
#ReclaimingOurEducationAgenda #EducationShiftsPower
Engaging with the Youth Action Group (YAG) TOR (In-person & Online)

Solange Akpo "ANCEFA"



#ReclaimingOurEducationAgenda #EducationShiftsPower
Engaging with the Youth Action Group (YAG) TOR (In-person & Online)

Abeer Tamimi "ACEA"



#ReclaimingOurEducationAgenda #EducationShiftsPower
Engaging with the Youth Action Group (YAG) TOR (In-person & Online)

Jona Turalde "UNGEI/TE"



#ReclaimingOurEducationAgenda #EducationShiftsPower
Engaging with the Youth Action Group (YAG) TOR (In-person & Online)

Foluyinka Fakoya Global Partnership for Education

The programme was designed around three in person days the invitees had in Tanzania, including key outcomes and outputs that were agreed in pre caucus consultations. Below the outcomes, learnings and energy from each day is elaborated.

DAY 1: 18TH MARCH 2022



Team building exercises.

Discussing global youth and student representative structures.

Exploring areas of work per region and representative structures through world cafe group activities (Team building & sharing activity).

The overall flow and engagement on day

one of the caucus was filled with excitement and genuine connection building among all participants. During the high-level conversation on global youth and student representative structures, participants shared their experiences, learnings and recommendations for global structures who are engaging with youth and students at various levels. During the world cafe sessions participants had the opportunity to present their work and share the focus of their organizations. This was a very fruitful exchange as many in attendance had never met before or been exposed to the various levels of organizing within the room.

The themes which emerged from day one conversations are embodied under the following reflections:

Disconnected structures

A key theme that emerged from day one was the perspective and experience of youth and students of being part of disconnected structures. Many students and youth expressed frustration due to the lack of truly representative national, regional, and global strategies which include their expertise, experiences, and solutions in a comprehensive progressive manner. There are many different structures and fora which are engaging with development issues particularly those focused on education and SDG 4. The main issue that was raised during day one caucus discussions was the fact these fora are using “tokenistic”, “cherry picking” and “tick box” approaches to engaging youth and students. It was clear to see that youth and students are participating in various fora at national, regional and global levels yet, they are not connected in a coordinated and consistent manner. During day one discussions, the potential solutions raised were paradigm shifts and new ways of working. This was voiced as a necessity in order to ensure that young people are engaged as full partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of strategies and programs and policies. Another key reflection was the fact that many national, regional and global structures are not “speaking to one another” in meaningful and collaborative ways. Rather, there is a reality that youth and students face, reminiscent of feeling like they are part of structures that are duplicating if not operating in siloed ways. This was raised as a major gap and

threat to movement building that is youth and student led, but more importantly as a weakness in terms of disconnected strategies while fighting for similar goals.



GCE Global Caucus Youth Representative

Value of well-connected movements

“The youth caucus was an eye-opening chance for me to hear students' and young people's education stories and lived experiences in their local regions. Hearing a participant speak about education and youth organizing in Palestine made me realize how little I know about other places, which prompted me to learn more about Palestine's history, and I've been following the country's current events via social media ever since. The event was quite remarkable as we saw a diverse group of participants from various countries, races, backgrounds, and religions come together. We all gained a shared understanding of several important concepts such as inclusion, diversity, representation, co-creation, and

connection” – Taibat Aduragba Hussain, Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, Nigeria

Reflections and expressions were shared by participants numerous times on day one of their appreciation for being in a shared space with other young people. It was raised that not enough resourcing and deliberate intention is made to bring together young activists and change makers into a common space to learn, share and simply connect through dialogue as

human beings and young people and not just as activists. The discussions and presentations shared during day one allowed the participants to collectively begin to see their diversity but also, our similarities across contextual realities. Participants highlighted the value of being able to share the various contextual realities they face and how that impacts them on a personal as well as political level. More opportunities of connection spaces, strategies and intervention were called for in order to encourage well connected trans-continental move



GCE Global Caucus Youth Representative



Martina Damian, GCE Board Youth Representative

DAY 2: 19TH MARCH 2022



Mapping of organizing and strategies across youth and student networks

Engagement with Youth Action Group (YAG) Terms of Reference

Reviewing draft GCE Youth and Students' Strategy

Unpacking a shared politic among the youth and student structure

Day two of the caucus saw the ushering in of palatable creative and solution driven energy within the group. The focus of the first portion of the day was around fleshing out how, where and what youth and student movements are doing across geographical borders in order to support GCE's goal of mapping the movement. The second half of the day moved into the reflective energy of the YAG formation and articulating a shared politic for our YE strategy. Discussions were robust, engaged and deeply animated, a key signal that participants were able to see themselves and their agendas within the processes and structures being reviewed. There were lengthy discussions held around the YAG Terms of Reference specifically, around areas of representation, composition, and age for membership. All feedback, changes and inputs made to the YAG process were documented and voted upon. Ester Simon, board representative led us well in reaching consensus and establishing a shared vision for the YAG. Another point of robust discussion was the shared. politic session where debate, ideation and motivation were given for what should be centered as our GCE shared politic rooting our strategy.

Themes which emerged from day two conversations may be embodied under the following reflections:

Representation and membership

“The discussion of representation in the youth initiative is important to ensure the election process of the Youth Action Group with the participation of the Coalitions, the number of members of each organization and the internal constitution for decision-making.” Paulocesar Santos, Integra La Educación Se Respecta, Latin American and Caribbean Student Movement (MELAC), Peru

Representation was an important and constant theme that emerged throughout the caucus. Representation in terms of who and what is centered and occupying various spaces, the reasoning behind the selectiveness in centering certain issues versus others and finally how does the GCE youth constituency begin to disrupt these representation issues. Frank and honest conversations were facilitated around what we mean collectively when speaking about decolonial praxis and politics. One of the key discussions was around global north and global south realities within the space and outside of the shared caucus space and how those realities should be acknowledged and shifted through our shared strategic visioning. The shared understanding across all participants was that the caucus provided a good opportunity to begin to define and embody a decolonial agenda as youth and students. The shared understanding in the room was articulated in the resounding consensus that colonization was designed as an oppressive tool and finds itself within all fibers of the way a society functions. Participants also expressed that despite the fact that generations have passed since the end of

formal iterations of colonization, the legacies and impacts of this perverted tool still exist today and are disproportionately more viscerally experienced by previously colonized peoples. Participants shared that a decolonial agenda that is intersectional needs to be one of the rooting politics within our engagement as a GCE youth and student constituency.



GCE Global Caucus Representatives

Regarding the YAG ToR, participants raised numerous questions of clarity around membership criteria and special circumstances under which organizations may become members. One such point raised was of youth and student bodies which are affiliated to regional structures, but not formal members in their own right of the youth constituency. This brought up the question around the GCE membership protocol and how this protocol may be reviewed and changed in order to allow for greater representation within the GCE youth

constituency as well as take into account the nuance which is indicative of the ways in which youth and student structures operate.

Visioning & Reform

Another key takeaway from the caucus day two proceedings was the energy of visioning among all participants, having the space and time to truly reflect, engage and co-create in community, allowing for attendees to see themselves in every outcome. The session on reviewing the strategy allowed for participants to engage more deeply with the draft strategy and identify the gaps, the challenges and the missing links within the previous draft strategy. After experiencing one another's perspectives and understanding the vast power that sat within that space, visioning was a common theme throughout day two and day three.

It then became obvious that with being immersed within political conversations with fellow youth and student activists that reform would be an emergent energy and theme. Reform of the personal, the institutional and the global was a source of great discussion and sharing well into the evening on day two. Insightful recommendations for reform at various levels were made by participants and found itself woven into the GCE Youth and Student Engagement strategy of 2022.



GCE Global Caucus Youth Representative

DAY 3: 20TH MARCH 2022



Mapping synergies across our regional representation

Updating the Youth and Students' Engagement Strategy

Finalizing youth focused strategic objectives

Day three of the caucus was defined by youth and student organizations being galvanized. There was a collective push to complete what the caucus had come together to do but also a deep sense of feeling spurred to drive the shared momentum created in this space forward. The final day focused on finalizing our mapping objectives started on day one

and two. The mapping involved paired exercises where groups explored the areas of synergy and collaboration across their national and regional organizing. Groups shared possible areas of sharing knowledge, expertise and resources both on a regional level but also through the GCE youth constituency activities. The second half of the day continued with group work and presentations focused on the updating of the Youth and Students' Engagement strategy and finalizing strategic objectives for 2022 - 2024.

Themes which emerged from day three conversations may be embodied under the following reflections:

Situated Solidarity

“The sessions allowed us to know the work of students at a global level, as well as to share views on the situation of the Latin American region, adding to the work of the national coalitions with youth and students, in order to weave meeting points in relation to the problems and educational needs, for that reason a mapping of synergies was carried out. Solidarity is also a key aspect in the face of the common problems and expectations that have been discussed in the caucus to dream of a joint work.” - Diana Ayala, Dakar Forum, Honduras

Participants raised the reality that globally, youth and student networks need modes of connection, collaboration, and opportunities to coordinate with each other across regions. The



GCE Global Caucus Youth Representatives

absence of enabling environments and channels to connect various contexts nationally, regionally, and globally is a major threat and challenge to solidarity across our movements. The concept and politics of solidarity arose across all three days; however, the third day marked a move toward situated solidarities. After engaging for the past few days, participants were now sharing areas of work or action where they could offer each other solidarity linked to a particular need. This emerged as sharing issues and proposed strategies and then identifying among each other how best others could “show up” and get involved, support, amplify and offer situated solidarities. This marked an important moment within the whole process as this enabled thinking and planning around how GCEs’ strategies, approaches and mechanisms may

Unapologetic Strategies

While drafting the updated Youth and Students’ Engagement strategy, being unapologetic became a key emerging theme. Unapologetic about “calling out”, “calling in”, disrupting current ways of working and visioning without fear. The culture of ageism, gatekeeping, corruption and distorted power dynamics within our movements and more broadly our systems globally was raised as a key focus for our objectives. Participants shared that without disrupting and unapologetically calling out these threats to our movement building, there may be no movement or change. Many participants shared having had these experiences within their own organizing, structures and more broadly the systems which they fight. “We cannot begin to change the system unless we change ourselves first” was a shared sentiment. The combination of reform and self-awareness provided fertile ground for participants to map

the 2022 – 2024 youth and student engagement objectives while being conscious of the embodied work that it will take both internally and externally. Being unapologetic about disruption, radical action and dismantling was a core takeaway from our day three discussions.



GCE Global Caucus Youth Representatives



GCE Global Caucus Youth Representatives

“Through these shared spaces, I was not only able to see the fights we need to fight, but also the fights we’ve won. I realize, now more than ever, that our fights for equal human rights, no matter what background we come from, can always intersect with each other. This is a reflection that our fights are one, and that with enough understanding and open hearts, we can collectively change the world for better.” – Rantia Sabbah, Arab Campaign for Education for All, Palestine

WAY FORWARD

Prior to concluding and leaving the caucus, clear decisions were made around next steps and actions necessary to harness the power generated by the gathering. The GCE secretariat through the Youth Engagement officers with support from board reps were the custodians of incorporating, finalizing, and driving the various action pieces forward in order for the work to begin as a constituency.

The key actions from the Youth Caucus agreed were:

- 1. Incorporate feedback and finalize Youth Action Group Terms of Reference**
- 2. Incorporate ideation and planning into finalizing the Youth and Students' Engagement Strategy**
- 3. Host a global consultation meeting in order to share finalized pieces of work with participants and other key stakeholders**
- 4. Support the board representatives to get the Youth and Students' Engagement strategy approved at board level**

Youth Action Group Terms of Reference:

The YAG Terms of Reference was adapted to include the inputs and changes made at the caucus which resulted in the final version of the Youth Action Group terms of Reference.

Youth and Students' Engagement Strategy:

The draft strategy had quite substantial edits and updates made as a result of the caucus deliberations and contributions. The updated strategy features a full global contextual analysis which was provided and co-created with participants through group work. The updated strategy also features new political statements which guide and root the new strategic objectives. Ensuring that the updated Youth and students' engagement strategy aligns with the broader GCE strategic objectives was an important finalization consideration, as we understand the YE strategy to be a supportive mechanism for the overall GCE movement building work. All of these efforts resulted in the updated 2022 - 2024 GCE Y&S Engagement Strategy which may be found here [2022 - 2024 GCE YE Strategy](#).

A global consultation was held where regional, global and constituency members were invited to engage with the revisions and provided a space to approve it as a true reflection of caucus engagements as well as engagements with youth and students that took place through 2021 to 2022. The global consultation took place on 3 May 2022 via zoom. Reflections shared by regional and youth constituency members may be found in the jam board images found below. Overall members felt that the updated strategy and the YAG Terms of Reference adequately reflected the agendas, needs and priorities of youth and students globally. Below are some of the reflections captured during the global consultation.



Feedback captured from youth and students at the global consultations

YOUTH & STUDENTS' FEEDBACK ON THE CAUCUS

Feedback from youth and students on the youth caucus was widely positive. Feedback on the caucus from participants was gathered and posted as a GCE blog post on the GCE website.

“Participation as young people is very important to amplify the needs and challenges we have as youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, to agree on strategies and learning that can be had thanks to the exchange of cultures with other young people who suffer similar problems.” – Andres Ramos, Colombian Coalition for the Right to Education, Colombia

Through these shared spaces, I was not only able to see the fights we need to fight, but also the fights we’ve won. I realize, now more than ever, that our fights for equal human rights, no matter what background we come from, can always intersect with each other. This is a reflection that our fights are one, and that with enough understanding and open hearts, we can collectively change the world for better. – Rantia Sabbah, Arab Campaign for Education for All, Palestine



“In addition to sharing the vision of Honduras at the national level, we have also shared realities from other parts of the world to work on intersectionalities and plan across the eyes of countries and regions. The idea represents not only once but also the presence of the voice of all youth at the regional, Central American and Latin American and Caribbean levels.” Diana Ayala, Dakar Forum, Honduras

“What stands out for me from the youth caucus is that amazing feeling of knowing, growing, understanding together, co-creating solutions and sharing the same space with other diverse students and young people.” – Taibat Aduragba Hussain, Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, Nigeria.



CONCLUSION

Throughout 2021 to 2022, the strides taken as GCE to embody a more genuine, meaningful, and inclusive approach to youth and student engagement can be seen in the outputs of the Youth and Students' Engagement strategy. The intentional consultations, convenings, approaches and changes made reveal a shift in culture and purpose. Youth and students across the GCE movement and beyond are being engaged and leading in meaningful and structural ways and thus the movement is on a trajectory of focusing on youth involvement at all levels of GCE's core work. This is merely the beginning of a new generation and era of organizing, advocacy, knowledge exchange and influencing on a global scale when it comes to SDG4 and broader achievement of equal education and justice.