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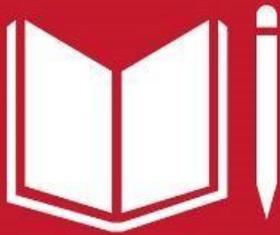www.campaignforeducation.org

GCE-ECOSOC SIDE EVENT

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

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9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

LEARNING BRIEF

This Learning Brief was compiled by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) following the webinar held on 26 April 2023 as a Side Event at the United Nations' 2023 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum. The brief highlights GCE's youth constituency key advocacy interventions for education continuity during crises and the post-pandemic era by focusing on protecting quality inclusive education during emergencies and strengthening global partnerships amongst youth organisations, governments, and non-state stakeholders. The brief also highlights key challenges and opportunities that young people can capitalise on for them to fully access education as a right, and not as a privilege. The youth emphasised the need to address education financing and tax justice to achieve education equality.

MAY 2023

Introduction

This event brought together the youth and students to discuss and share experiences on their advocacy and campaign work they have undertaken on education emergencies, including building resilient organisations and partnerships to accelerate the recovery of education in the post COVID-19 era. The discussions were centred around the theme, *"Accelerating the Recovery of Global Education through Youth and Students' Organisation Post COVID-19"*; GCE panel discussion, with the purpose of realising the following objectives:

- To provide a platform for the presentation of the work of youth and student organisations within GCE and their respective work in relation to SDG 9 and 17.
- To present the need for global partnerships and lobbying in building better education in the post COVID-19 era in accordance with SDG 17.
- To provide key recommendations and a call to action by the youth and students which will be shared with UNESCO and governments calling for sufficient funding for education to be widely accessible in the post COVID-19 era.

GCE engaged youth and student representatives from Africa, Middle East, Europe, and Latin America to contribute into a panel discussion, sharing experiences on the role that youth and students have played at local, national and regional level to accelerate the education recovery after COVID-19 in their respective countries and regions. With the focus on education in emergencies and the role of youth in global partnership to advance and ensure success of the Education 2030 Agenda, the panel featured youth and student representatives including; Mr Abideen Olasupo, Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBDYI) in Nigeria; Ms. Karelle Cazelle, Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) in Cameroon; Ms. Carmen Romero, Global Student Forum (GSF); Ms. Lutfiyya Dean, All Africa Students' Union (AASU); Ms Tazneem Alhmooze, Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) in Palestine and Dr Ester Simon, Youth Constituency Representative in the GCE Board.

The subsequent sections of the learning brief provide highlights and lessons shared from this intervention in achieving these objectives.

"People under the age of 25 today—that is, those most affected by the erosion of human capital—will make up more than 90% of the prime-age workforce in 2050. Reversing the pandemic's impact on them and investing in their future should be a top priority for governments. Otherwise, these cohorts will represent not just a lost generation but rather multiple lost generations".

Mr. Norbert Schady, Chief Economist for Human Development at the World Bank.

Importance of youth engagement post COVID-19

General context: In the current context, young people remain at risk of being left behind in education, economic opportunities and health discussions so the active participation of youth and youth organisations to recover from the COVID-19 impact is crucial enabling young people shape better future for themselves and the following generation. Yet the slogan, *"Youth for SDGs and SDGs for Youth!",* stresses the importance of young people in addressing the repercussions of the pandemic and take immediate actions for structural transformation for an inclusive recovery towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Nonetheless, statistics show that young people are largely excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives and future as it is estimated that in 2020, more than 770 million young people and adults still lack basic literacy skills, two-thirds of whom are women. This number includes 98 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Youth unemployment rate in 2020 was 17.2%, compared to 6.6% of the total workforce. These gaps have been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic posed a major challenge to the educational, economic and health sectors, it established new horizons for exploring learning patterns that are compatible with the requirements of learning and working in pandemic conditions and establishing a new culture of lifelong learning within these patterns. These opportunities need to be seized with the cultivation of strong youth engagement and partnerships which may be realised through various scopes.

Why is it important to engage youth and youth organisations including recommendations to strengthen youth engagement.

- ♦ Direct collaboration with youth organisations is a necessity for deep structural and cultural changes and a global shift towards more sustainable and equal economies, societies, and equal rights.
- ♦ Youth organisations have the best ability to analyse local contexts and identify the various and multiple needs of current generations and to develop response mechanisms that are adaptable to different contexts based on a human rights-based approach.
- ♦ If response mechanisms are developed from a youth perspective, they will be able to predict the future and adapt to its variables. Any action (s) taken for a better present or future must be inclusive for the youth and to engage them, all stakeholders must work to build a real partnership with youth organisations.
- ♦ Youth and youth organisations have shown leadership in initiating transformational change and social innovations, so they should not only be seen as beneficiaries or volunteers, but active partners. It's time for a true partnership between the youth and CSOs. Young people should not be included as passive participants but should be a driving force involved in public action and structures as equal partners.
- ♦ It is the responsibility of young people not to remain neutral and should take the initiative. They should play a leading role in shaping a better future for themselves and their peers. It is of utmost importance for youth organisations to organise themselves and unify youth action within a shared vision.
- ♦ Governments need to adopt policies and regulatory frameworks concerned with increasing youth engagement and influence in public policy spaces.
- ♦ In processes of strengthening peace and global solidarity, it is necessary to consider youth perspectives and integrate key elements of intergenerational solidarity.

Interventions of youth and student organisations within GCE and their respective work in relation to SDG 9 and 17

Education in Emergencies: Youth led actions to accelerate COVID-19 recovery from BBDYI and ANCEFA.

Panellists from BBDYI and ANCEFA reflected on the impact of education in emergencies and how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the schooling system and the financing of education, reflecting in the context of Africa. The following reflection, practices and lessons were noted from BBDYI and ANCEFA, including future recommendations on making education more sustainable and innovative.

- ♦ It is a known fact that there is an education crisis in the world and the COVID-19 pandemic affected the schooling system. There is no doubt that the pandemic negatively affected the financing of education as priorities shifted to COVID-19 mitigation measures.
- ♦ The effects in Nigeria are as severe as they can imagined as it is estimated that approximately 19.7 million out-of-school children are in Nigeria, which was accelerated by COVID-19 amongst other social issue such as poverty, early marriage, insecurity, gaps in policies and socio-cultural norms.
- ♦ To mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in Nigeria, BBYDI intervened by stepping-up its advocacy for EdTech, conducted workshops and trainings around learning and COVID-19, where the 'Harnessing EdTech' report produced by GCE was simplified the translated so that it became accessible to everyone in the country and rolled-out radio programs in the same issue.

Recommendations from BBYDI and ANCEFA:
- ♦ Recommendation to adopt various strategies including availing funding for youth-based organisations, providing capacity support for youth and students, facilitating collaborations, and enabling platforms.
- ♦ Need to encourage re-enrolment in schools by focusing on learners and students at risk of dropping out.
- ♦ Lobbying for an increase in budget allocated to education.
- ♦ Lobbying for reduced harmful tax incentives to corporations.

Experiences on global partnerships and lobbying in building better education in the post COVID-19 era in accordance with SDG 17 from GSF and AASU.

Panellists from Global Student Forum (GSF) and All Africa Students' Union (AASU) on the interventions of youth and students in facilitating partnership and providing genuine representation of young people and students across the world towards contributing to the realisation of SDG17.

Why is the SDG 17 important for the improvement in global partnerships between developing and developed states to promote young people's education:

♦ SDG 17 is a vision for improved and more equitable trade, as well as coordinated investment initiatives to promote sustainable development across borders. It is about strengthening and streamlining cooperation between nation-states, both developed and developing. The Goal has 17 targets to be achieved by 2030, broken down into five categories: finance, technology, capacity building, trade and systemic issues.

♦ Global Student Forum joined forces: Includes All-Africa Students Union (AASU), the European Students' Union (ESU), the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), the Commonwealth Students Association (CSA) and the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Students Organization (OCLAE) with the mission to represent the political, economic, cultural and educational interest of secondary and tertiary level students across the world towards the international community.

♦ This formation has been a direct response to the renewed importance of internationalism and global solidarity demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating consequences on the most vulnerable among us.

Key Interventions:

♦ **Capacity Building:** GSF launched the Academy in Leadership and Advocacy (ALA), a one-year educational programme for up to 60 student leaders from the regional and national membership of the GSF to ensure that young people have adequate skills and knowledge to confront the challenges and limitations they are encountering. The academy is composed of online masterclasses aimed at supporting student representatives in developing their skills for quality advocacy and successful campaigning, mobilisation and leadership of student organisations on the national and regional level.

♦ **Research:** Student impact on higher education globally as a comparative project investigating student agency and impact on higher education. Carried out through capacity building seminars on research and undertaking research on student representation and movements in supporting human rights.

♦ **Climate action and sustainability:** Actions were undertaken through Student Summit on Climate Action and Biodiversity to bring back into surface conversations on preserving the climate after COVID19. COP27 Student Presummit to strengthen student voices in COP27 and forwarding recommendations on education, climate and sustainability.

♦ **Decolonising Education School Curricula 101 Toolkit:** The Decolonising Education School Curricula 101 also covers topics including, but not limited to defining decolonisation, the

history of colonialism, oppression in education, attitudes and skills, global education and analysing educational systems.

♦ **Emergency panel on Ukraine:** To discuss conditions of students in the region including structural racisms in a new refugee crisis that emerged from the war in Ukraine.

♦ **Justice for Africa - Joint Letter to IMF:** 71 youth and student-led organisations from over 30 countries issued an urgent letter to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ahead of the Bank-IMF Development Committee meeting which took place in Washington DC on the 12th April 2023 and also came together to issue a joint declaration of student demands for the EU-AU Summit.

♦ **Side Event-UN 67th Commission on the status of women:** to bring up youth voices in debates on how to ensure that women in the STEM are included in decision making and funding.

Comments/Q and A session

Comment (Milagrus Liteplo: School of Development Youth Forum, Argentina): *"All the challenges in education can be solved through development and inclusion, we need to look for measures to address the problem of inclusion in the education sector. For all those interested, we teach free of charge, but interested participants just need to have an internet connection".*

Question (directed to Tasneem): *Are opportunities for international youth to build a community with ACEA as we have French Tech in France and EdTech, we want to bring together communities, we have 444 groups just to better know our innovation. Do you have the ability and capacity to support financial action from UNESCO or UNICEF to have a tech community at a global scale?*

Response: *We should have more meetings to promote solidarity amongst the youth. GCE-Youth Action Group could create a platform for youth organisations where people can add their different activities and work. Also, members can join GCE youth organisations as members.*

Closing Remarks and Conclusion: Dr Ester Simon, GCE Board Member-Youth Constituency Representative.

♦ This side event is carried out alongside the ECOSOC Youth Forum, gathering young people in New York to engage in a dialogue with Member States and other actors to voice their views, concerns and actions on how to transform the world into a fairer, greener and more sustainable place guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9 and 17.

♦ This is an important opportunity for youth to also reflect on SDGs' progress as they are critical in creating a sustainable future for all, where no one is left behind.

♦ This is a critical moment to showcase how young people have been in the centre of development, capacity building, and governance and being recognised as key stakeholders

that offer solutions and resolutions to key issues that affect their development, thereby not just serving as participants.

♦ Considering that the 2023 Youth Forum is organised to focus the SDGs 9 and 17 as the centre of discussions, the GCE youth constituency has highlighted the importance of education in achieving other SDGs, not just as a basic human right but as a powerful tool to create a more prosperous and equitable work for all.

♦ The presentations and reflections shared by the panel have provided testimony on the commitment of young people and youth organisations towards accelerating progress on sustainable development goals, particularly SDGs 9 and 17. Youth and students have shown great leadership and bravery from the experiences and insights shared in this panel discussion in showcasing their contributions to accelerating COVID-19 recovery.

♦ In conclusion, it is important to understand that education is an important empowering tool for young people that promotes innovation and builds the skills needed to realise all the SDGs. So we need to continue working together toward a future where education is accessible to all with no one left behind.

Resources

➢ The webinar recording can be accessed: here.