



## **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HEARING ON EDUCATION FOR ALL**

**18 MARCH 2003**

### **STATEMENT BY THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION**

The GCE, a worldwide coalition of NGOs and teachers' unions with members in 150 countries, welcomes the European Parliament's Development Committee's decision to hold a hearing on education for all and supports the draft resolution. One hundred and fifteen million children continue to be denied the right to education; 65 million of them are girls.

Despite the fact that it is three years since the World Education Forum took place and donors made the commitment that no country committed to education for all would be thwarted by a lack of resources, the gains in terms of additional support have been minimal thus far.

#### **Fast track initiative**

The GCE welcomes efforts to coordinate donor support to 'fast track' countries but is concerned by the slow rate of progress in the fast track initiative so far. The last donor consortium meeting in November was disappointing to the extent that the donors present were unable to agree any additional funding targeted specifically to the seven countries whose plans were reviewed at that meeting.

We believe it is vital for the EU to provide a lead in financing the fast track initiative whilst at the same time, working to make the initiative more inclusive. Issues that we have identified through our contacts and discussions with colleagues in fast track countries from the government and the NGO sector, indicate that there is still a great lack of clarity around the fast track guidelines/ eligibility criteria, that Ministries of Finance have not always been sufficiently involved and that donors have been very unclear as to whether and to what extent they are prepared to support fast track plans.

If the fast track initiative is to stand any chance of delivering for the millions of excluded donors must:

- Immediately finance the seven plans that were approved in November
- Agree financing for any other plans that have now been finalised
- Agree a timetable for expansion of the FTI including to the 'Plus 5' high population
- Press for clarification of the eligibility criteria including the clause calling for the adjustment of teachers' salaries to 3.6 times GDP/capita.

### **Increase donor funding**

In our view all donors have a responsibility to live up to their commitments to place a higher priority on education. Despite signs of increased political support for aid to education, the results of EC negotiations with ACP countries for the EDF 9 programming exercise show that only around 6% of funds have been allocated to the education sector as a focal sector. Since governments North and South agreed the Dakar framework an emphasis on the education sector does not contradict the fundamental principle of country ownership. We hope therefore that the fast track initiative will benefit from the European Commission's ongoing exercise to identify and recommit dormant commitments. This will be essential to ensure greater EC support for education in ACP countries where many of the world's out of school children live.

We would also like to draw MEP's attention to the Council's acknowledgement in its resolution of 30 May 2002 that Member States need to increase their bilateral aid in support of developing country efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This is of course in line with commitments they entered into prior to Monterrey to increase overall aid levels to 0.39% of GNI by 2006. The European Parliament can play a vital role in monitoring member states' progress in increasing their support to basic education since the adoption of the resolution.

### **Improve donor coordination**

The GCE urges the EC and the Member States to intensify their efforts in the area of co-ordination and to go beyond information exchange towards single sector missions, evaluations and reporting on behalf of all EU donors. A lack of co-ordination on the part of donors serves only to weaken key government institutions in southern countries. For example, research conducted by a GCE member in Ghana found that in a single year the Ministry of Education hosted 54 donor missions - more than one a week<sup>1</sup>.

In a study conducted in 2000 in Tanzania the government attributed slow progress on the sector wide approach in that country to donors' unwillingness to coordinate their activities fully with government, to donor imposed conditionalities and to their lack of confidence in the government<sup>2</sup>. For their part, the donors cited problems on the government side for the lack of progress. However, there can be little question that the complexity and multiplicity of donor procedures and requirements is a major factor behind disbursement delays.

It is essential that the EU member states agree and uphold by 2004 at the latest specific measures to more effectively coordinate their support in developing countries. This agreement should cover the full range of donor activity in countries including financial reporting, monitoring and evaluation, dialogue with government institutions and the provision of technical assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> *Donor coordination in Ghana*, Louise Hilditch and Roger Nunoo-Mettle, ActionAid, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> *Increasing the effectiveness of donor coordination: a case study of the education sector in Burkina Faso, Bolivia and Tanzania*, ActionAid Alliance, 2001.